

**The Ability of the Third Grade Students in Using Different kind of
Prepositions:
A Descriptive study at SMA N 1 Sungai Puar**

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Abstrak

Artikel ini ditulis untuk mendeskripsikan kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan jenis-jenis preposisi yang berbeda dalam bahasa Inggris dengan benar sesuai dengan fungsinya masing-masing dalam sebuah kalimat. Seringkali siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam menggunakan setiap preposisi dalam bahasa Inggris yang dikarenakan terdapat sejumlah kata dalam bahasa Inggris yang dapat digunakan sebagai preposisi dengan aturan-aturan tertentu. Penelitian ini merupakan sebuah penelitian deskriptif dengan menggunakan tes tertulis sebagai data penelitian yang berjumlah 60 butir soal yang harus dilengkapi dengan preposisi yang tepat. Dari hasil penelitian ditemukan bahwa kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan preposisi yang benar sesuai dengan aturan pemakaiannya masing-masing masih rendah dengan nilai rata-rata dari tes adalah 49,84. Secara umum nilai tersebut mengindikasikan bahwa kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan preposisi yang benar masih sangat kurang dan harus ditingkatkan lagi meskipun terdapat beberapa siswa dengan kemampuan yang cukup bagus.

Kata kunci: preposition, different kind of prepositions, students' ability.

A. Introduction

In learning English for both the foreign language and the second language, the learner should master the four basic skills in order to understand and use the language correctly. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills cannot stand alone; in other words one skill will support the other skills. Thus, the

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learner cannot learn only one single skill. Beside such basic skills in teaching and learning English, there are some supporting skills to assist the four main aspects of English, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

In the process of mastering the four major skills of English, grammar is one of the very important aspects to make correct and meaningful sentences and utterances. Grammar is known as a base to form and use a language. According to Klammer et al. (2000:3) grammar is a system of a language or a set of rules which ideally related to correct sentences while using the language. It means to produce a good sentence, someone should understand the grammar of the language well. In line with this definition, Isyam (2001) states that grammar is a set of principles or specific rules to arrange words and other elements into a correct sentence of the language. It gives meaning to anyone who uses the language either in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In short, grammar is a set of rules by which people speak and write. They allow people to use their language easily and naturally most of the time. So, if someone wants to master a language, he or she should comprehend the rules of the language well. In short, in order to understand and use English, one must have enough knowledge of grammar and the components because it is close related to its major skills which are used in daily communication because a language cannot be formed correctly without the knowledge of its grammar.

Preposition is one component of English grammar which is classified as function words and has some different functions. Yule (2009:160) says that preposition is a word used with noun or pronoun (and usually placed before it) to

mark its relation with another word and to form a phrase, which usually performs the function of an adjectives or an adverb. He adds that they have distinct character, suggesting position (*at, above, in, on*), direction (*to, toward*), time (*at, during*), limit of motion (*to, onto*), source (*from, of*), etc. These kinds of preposition could be found in daily life, especially in communication. So, based on the explanation above, an English language learner must gain the knowledge about the use of preposition well in order to be able to use each preposition properly.

Klammer et al. (2000:111) state that prepositions are words used as the signals in which a noun is coming because they occur before a noun phrase, and together they will constitute a prepositional phrase. They add that prepositions are put together with noun and can be placed before or after noun and connect their noun phrase object to some other words or phrase in a sentence by adding information provided by adverbs (place, time, or manner). Therefore, each preposition which will be used is based on what information exists in the sentence.

Related to this definition, Biber et al. (2002:28) define that prepositions are linking words that introduce prepositional phrases because a preposition is generally followed by a noun phrase. So preposition can also be seen as linking words that connect other structures with noun phrase. To support this statement, Yule (2009:160) says that in English, prepositions indicate the relationship between the following noun phrase and a preceding noun phrase, verb, or adjective. From these definitions of preposition, it is clear that each preposition is

used to explain the relationship of a noun or noun phrase with the rest of the sentence in indicating information in a sentence.

There are some kinds of preposition that can be used in the English language which are used in different situations. Each kind of prepositions will occur in different context because they have specific rules about when to use them correctly. The first kind of preposition is prepositions to show the time. Anderson et al. (2007:147&150) and Dignen et al. (2007:153) state that the preposition of time is used to say or indicate when something happens. They say that there are several prepositions that can be used as the preposition of time, they are *on, in, at, before, after, until/till, for, since, during, from.....to....., and by*. All of the prepositions above cannot be used in the same situation. In other words, each preposition has its own rule which settle when to use it correctly. For example, *it happened **in** the twentieth century, that house was burnt **at** night, and we were met **on** my birthday*

The second kind of preposition is prepositions to show the place. Dignen et al. (2007:151) state that preposition of place is used to tell someone where someone else or something is. They state that there are some prepositions that can be used to talk about location; they are *in, on, at, near, under, between, beside, among, above, and below*. For example, *my sister is cooking **in** the kitchen, I read it **on** a magazine the exhibition will be held **in** Japan, and the National Monument is **in** Jakarta.*

The third kind of preposition is preposition to show movement. Dignen et al. (2007:151) state that preposition of movement is the prepositions which are used to talk about direction or where someone or something to go. They also state that there are several varieties of preposition of movement, such as *to, towards, into, out of, onto, off, across, along, over, through, up, and down*. For example, *we ran **into** the sea as soon as we arrived there, and he climbed **out of** the pool*

The fourth kind of preposition is preposition to show the means or agent. Anderson et al. (2007:149) state that this type of preposition refers to preposition used to explain the doer of an action or tools used to accomplish it. Preposition *with* and *by* are several preposition which can be used in this situation. Both of them can be used to explain about means, that is how to do something and tools to accomplish that action. For example, *you can learn a lot **by** reading the instructions, dry yourself **with** a towel, they chased the mangoes **with** a stick, and some thieves broke into my house **by** breaking the window, she came here **by** train, he was hit **by** a ball, and she was helped **by** her sister.*

Prepositions which are explained above are the most common prepositions which are taught at senior high school, especially in Indonesia. They are given integrated through texts because there is no specific lesson about English grammar at senior high school in Indonesia. Therefore, while giving some lessons about text type, the teachers also give materials about prepositions.

However, using correct preposition is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for non-native speakers to master. There are some reasons why prepositions may cause problems while they are being used both in written and spoken language. Sometimes they can be used in the same sentence but express different meaning (*He sat in the chair; He sat on the chair*). The first example (the use of *in*) indicates that someone is using armchair, and the second one (the use of *on*) indicates that someone is using a chair without the arm. Then, prepositions are often combined with verbs to create phrasal verbs (*to look after someone; to look down on someone*). Another reason is because a single preposition can be used to express several different ideas (*He is tall for his age; I swam for an hour*). It means a preposition can be used in some different context. So based on these reasons, using prepositions might be confusing if the English language learners do not understand the function of each preposition.

There is a phenomenon that can be found in the case of prepositions usage. Although the misuse of prepositions will not caused wrong meaning of the utterance, sometimes it might be confusing for a person whom one talking to. Someone will understand about what is meant by someone else while the others are confusing of this misuse. Sometimes the misuse of preposition will not set off problems, but in fact it is not used properly. Even though it could not caused mistakes, sometimes what someone wants to share will be different with what he or she said. In addition, the message said by someone could not be received by the others.

It was also found that the students might face some difficulties in using prepositions where they cannot use them correctly. They were still doubtful in using English preposition which might be caused by some reasons. First, the students do not understand about the preposition and its function in a sentence. This may become the main reason why they could not use preposition correctly even though they have learnt it. Second, they do not know which preposition will be used in a sentence. For example, they cannot choose one of the prepositions of place (*in, on, or at*) to tell about their friend's address. Third, they were lack of exercises. Usually, they only get a little exercise because they do not have much time to practice it in classroom. Even, their interest to review and practice it outside of classroom is very low.

Based on the explanation above, the writer wants to analyze this case. The writer wants to know and analyze how is the ability of the third grade students of the social science class at SMA N 1 Sungai Puar in using different kinds of prepositions.

B. Methodology

The type of this research is a descriptive research because the writer describes students' ability. According to Selinger and Shahomy (1989:125) descriptive research is used to obtain the information concerning the phenomenon that occurs when the research is done. In other words, this research used to get all wanted information related to what is being researched, that is the students' ability in using preposition. Moreover, Gay (2009:7) says that a descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. It involves collecting data through a

questionnaire survey, interviews, or observation in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study.

Sample of this research which consists of 32 students was chosen through cluster random sampling, they are two class of social science class from four classes available as the population. According to Gay (2000: 129) cluster random sampling is the process of selecting the sample based on the groups not individuals.

The instrument used to collect the data in this research is a test by which the students are asked to fill in the blank space in a sentence with suitable and correct preposition which consists of 60 items. The test was presented through some texts; they are descriptive text, recount text, and news item. These texts are chosen because the students have learned the texts before in the first and second grade.

C. Students' ability in using different kind of prepositions

After giving the test to the sample class of the research, total correct answers of each student were analyzed to get individual score in the test. The formula on page 35 is used to get the score of each test taker.

$$x = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

x = total score

f = total correct answer

n = total items

Students' Score in using preposition in different uses through texts.

Students	Score	Mark	Rating quality
1	42	D	Poor
2	43	D	Poor
3	57	C	Average
4	43	D	Poor
5	52	D	Poor
6	58	C	Average
7	37	E	Very Poor
8	38	E	Very Poor
9	57	C	Average
10	42	D	Poor
11	38	E	Very Poor
12	25	E	Very Poor
13	13	E	Very Poor
14	35	E	Very Poor
15	40	E	Very Poor
16	57	C	Average
17	40	E	Very Poor
18	63	C	Average
19	55	D	Poor
20	50	D	Poor
21	55	D	Poor
22	47	D	Poor
23	47	D	Poor
24	52	D	Poor
25	65	C	Average
26	62	C	Average
27	48	D	Poor
28	63	C	Average
29	72	B	Good
30	67	B	Good
31	65	C	Average
32	67	B	Good
Total score	1595		

The table above shows the score of the students which are gotten after calculating their correct answer from the test given. From the table, it can be seen that the highest score of the test is 72 and the lowest score is 13. Then, the percentage of the students score is presented in the following table.

Percentage of the students' score

No.	Interval	Grade	Rating Quality	Number of Students	Percentage
1	81-100	A	Excellent	0	0
2	66-80	B	Good	3	9,4 %
3	56-65	C	Average	9	28,1 %
4	41-55	D	Poor	12	37,5 %
5	0-40	E	Very poor	8	25 %

From the table above, it can be seen that there is no student got excellent grade. Then there were 3 students (9,4 %) who got B and the rating quality is good. Next, there were 9 students (28,1 %) who got C with the rating quality is average. After that, there were 12 students (37,5 %) who got D and the rating quality is poor. For the rest, 8 students (25 %) got E with the rating quality is very poor

Moreover, to find the mean score of the test, the following formula is used:

$$M = \sum x/N$$

$$\frac{1595}{32} = 49,84$$

Students' ability in using preposition in different uses

Students' mean score	Rating quality
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49,84	D (poor)
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The table above shows that the ability of the students in using different kind of prepositions was poor. Although they have ever given the materials of the use of preposition through understanding descriptive text, recount text and news item while in the grade X and XI, they seem to have problems in using preposition correctly in the text which were provided in the test of the research. Even though they were given some choices to answer the question, they still cannot complete the sentence with correct answer.

The data obtained in this research through a test show that the mean score of the students does not reach good mark. It indicates that their ability in using preposition is not good enough. In addition, this score also becomes a measurement of how good the students are in using correct preposition. Moreover, the percentage of their ability can be seen in the following table.

There are some possible factors why the students use wrong prepositions in each text given in the test. First, they do not know about what correct preposition should be used in certain condition, whether it is the preposition of place, time, means, or agent. Thus, they cannot decide which preposition will be properly used in a sentence. Second, they do not know the rules of each preposition which will be used in different condition. Thus, misuses of prepositions occur in the test. The last, they do not have good understanding of what preposition could be used in explaining a place, time, means, or agent. As a

result, they use a preposition which is not suitable with the information in the sentences in the text.

From the analysis of the result of the test, it is found that misuses of prepositions often occur in the test. The most common mistakes found are about the use of *in*, *on*, and *at* as the preposition of place and preposition of time. It seems that most of the students do not know very well about the rules of these three common prepositions. In using them as the preposition of place, the students cannot verify what preposition should be used with a place, town, country, or specific address. Besides, there are many mistakes made by the students in using the other prepositions of place such as *between*, *under*, *above*, *near*, etc. Then, in using them as the preposition of time, they cannot use proper preposition with days, date, month, year, or clock times. Therefore, mistakes in using these prepositions often occur because the students do not realize the rules of using these prepositions.

Other mistakes also occur when the students are asked to complete sentences in the text by using *with* and *by* as the preposition of means and agent. Commonly, *by* is used as the preposition of agent (*by Yayan*). However, both of them can be used as the preposition of means (*with a stick*, *by using a stick*). There are many students who cannot use these prepositions properly in the text. It is proven in the test that only a few students who can use them correctly.

From the result of the test, it can be seen that most of the student cannot answer the question correctly by using preposition even though they were given some choices of preposition which could be used. Many students used the other

prepositions which are not proper with the condition in the sentences. It seems that they do not know which preposition could be properly used for certain conditions. In other word, they failed to distinguish the use of each preposition. As the result, most of them use wrong preposition.

D. Conclusion

Based on the research finding, it can be concluded that most of the third grade students of social science class at SMA N 1 Sungai Puar were poor in using correct preposition in different uses. From the result of the test which was done by the students in this research, it was found that the score of the students do not reach good grade with the mean score is only 49,84. It means that their ability in using preposition is not good enough. In the other words, they have poor ability in using correct prepositions.

After doing the research, it is also found that most of the students failed to use correct preposition in a sentence. In other words, they use wrong prepositions. It means that most of them have bad ability in using prepositions. The research findings shows that misuse between the kinds of prepositions often occur in the students' answer that indicates that they are lack of knowledge about preposition. However, there are some of them who can use prepositions in the test given which means they have good ability to determine what preposition should be used in certain condition. In short, the students' ability in using correct preposition is still poor.

From the findings of the research, some suggestions are proposed for getting the better result in learning and teaching in using different preposition based on the function of each preposition for the teacher, and next researchers. The teachers should give more learning opportunities to the students to apply the materials especially in using preposition in different condition. The teachers are able to give homework about the materials and discuss the homework with the students together in order that the students understand the lesson well. The teachers are also suggested to give clear and detail explanation about the function of each preposition in order to give better understanding about the materials. Then, the next researchers are suggested to continue this research to find out the students' difficulties in using preposition. Thus, can give new information about problems occur while teaching and learning about preposition and can give the solution for the problems.

Note: This article is written based on the writer thesis with the first advisor is Prof. Dr. Jufrizal, M. Hum, and the second advisor is Drs. Don Narius, M. Si

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