

**ERROR ANALYSIS: ANALYSING THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS IN
THE WRITING OF ESL STUDENTS OF SEKOLAH MENENGAH
SULTAN SALAHUDDIN ABDUL AZIZ SHAH, SHAH ALAM**

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"Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement." -Ludwig Wittgenstein

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ABSTRACT

Previous researches have found prepositions as one of the most troublesome items in English grammar and have been among the greatest predicaments for ESL students to master. Even though students are taught on the rules and structures of English prepositions, prepositional errors continue to prevail as one of the big “contributor” to the learner errors. This study is conducted to analyse the errors of prepositions made by the Form 4 students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, Shah Alam in written compositions. 43 out of 219 students of Form 4 were selected using the method of random cluster sampling as the participants of the study. The corpus of the learner language was collected from the written compositions of the school’s Mid-Term Examination for the year 2013. The results have indicated that the students were still below par from the excellent standard of using prepositions in English. Three main types of errors were discovered, firstly, (1) the substitution error; being the most frequently occurring error with 59.4 % of errors, followed by (2) omission error with 30.1 % of errors, and lastly, (3) the addition error, with 10.5 % of errors. Next, it was identified that “at” is the most frequently misused form of preposition in the students’ written composition, followed by the prepositions “of” and “on”. The results from the analysis of errors have found two significant sources which play significant parts in interfering and influencing such error productions, namely; (1) interlingual source as well as (2) intralingual source. Consequently, some recommendations on the teaching pedagogy for prepositions were discussed to give treatment to the errors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Learning a second language, let alone mastering it, is not an easy task for learners of second language (L2). Similar to that of the journey of acquiring a first language (L1), learning a second language requires a long and tough journey for one to go through before he can achieve a complete mastery of the language. Nonetheless, unlike acquiring L1, there is a slight difference in the significance on the production of errors in L2, as Brown puts it;

“Second language learning is a process that is clearly not unlike first language learning in its trial and error nature. Inevitably learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition, and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback of those errors” [p.257] (Brown, 2007).

Fundamentally, learning a second language involves a process in which success comes by profiting from making errors (Brown, 2007). Consequently the errors produced are used to obtain feedback from the surrounding, as it is with that feedback learners can make new attempts that successively approximate to the full mastery of the language (Brown, 2007).

In Malaysia, the English language holds the status as the second language, due to its dominance in its usage, after the national language *Bahasa*.