

ASSESSING THE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN USING PREPOSITION OF TIME

MENGUKUR KEMAMPUAN SISWA DALAM MENGGUNAKAN PREPOSISI WAKTU

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Abstract: The use of preposition of time (at/on/in) still becomes problems for junior high school students. Therefore; it is important to conduct the research on the ability of using preposition of time. This study aims at finding out the students' level of ability and describing the problems faced by the students in using preposition of time. The descriptive qualitative method was applied in this research. The instrument was a test. The subject was the second class students of SMP Kristen Kefamenanu. In data analyses, there were four steps; categorizing, tabulating, analyzing and describing. The result showed that the students' average score in preposition of time is 67.33 at average level. The highest number of students is at average level and between 60-69 with the total student is twelve. The data showed that the students' average score in preposition AT is 66 at average level. The students' average score in preposition ON is 68.5 at average level. The students' average score in preposition IN is 67.5 at average level. It indicates that the preposition of AT is very difficult for students while preposition ON is more easy for them.

Keywords: preposition, time, at/on/in

Abstrak: Penggunaan preposisi waktu (at/on/in) masih sulit bagi siswa SMP. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk melakukan penelitian tentang kemampuan menggunakan preposisi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan siswa dan menggambarkan kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa dalam penggunaan preposisi waktu. Peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Subyek penelitian adalah siswa kelas II SMP Kristen Kefamenanu. Ada 4 langkah dalam menganalisa data yaitu mengkategorikan, tabulasi, analisis dan menggambarkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata 67.33 dan tingkat kemampuan rata-rata. Hal menunjukkan bahwa siswa mampu menggunakan preposisi waktu. Nilai tertinggi jatuh pada tingkat rata-rata dengan rentang 60-69 dengan jumlah 12 orang. Data menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata preposisi AT 66 dengan kemampuan rata-rata. Nilai rata-rata preposisi ON 68.5 dengan tingkat kemampuan rata-rata. Nilai rata-rata preposisi IN 67.5 dengan tingkat kemampuan rata-rata. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa AT sangat sulit bagi siswa sementara ON sangat mudah bagi mereka.

Kata Kunci: preposisi, waktu, time, at/on/in

INTRODUCTION

Preposition is a part of English grammar. Preposition is a word or group of words that is placed before a noun or a pronoun to show a relationship in a sentence. (Stobe, 2008: 108). Preposition is one of function words in English grammar. The use of the correct preposition is important in English grammar. In other hand, a preposition is defined as connecting word showing the relation of a noun or a noun substitute to some other word in the sentence. Preposition is a word that shows relation between noun or pronoun and the other words in sentence. e.g. *in, on, at, to, with, under, above, into, by, of etcetera*. Preposition is always used before a noun or pronoun and shows the relation of the noun or pronoun to the other words in sentence. Prepositions show many relations (for different nouns) in sentence.

Furthermore, Stobe (2008: 109) explains that the preposition **at** can be used to express both an event in time and time shown on a clock. The most common prepositions referring to time are **in, at**, and **on**. Other examples are *Graduation is in May* and *The party takes place on Saturday*. Use the question word **when** to identify prepositions that express time. Preposition which can refer to both place and time generally have a similar meaning in both cases. However, in expressions which refer to the future, *in* can mean 'later than now', e.g. *in six months, in a few minutes*. Learns may misunderstand these meanings of *in* when they first come across it and often avoid using it. Other prepositions (e.g. *after, before, by, during, since, till until*) can refer to time, but not usually to place, e.g. *after Saturday, during the week*. On the other case the students find problems to differentiate the use of it, at, on. Here are some examples that often make the students confuse such He was born **in** 1945, She will go to Jakarta **on** 26th March, The concert will begin **at** 7 O'clock, He gets up early **in** the morning, We enjoyed a lot **in** the summer.

In accordance with the previous studies conducted by Saravanan (2014), Andajayani (2016) and Hendri & Andriana (2017) on the use of prepositions; the research findings showed that the students have lack of knowledge about using prepositions. There are many kinds and functions of prepositions in English, the students of junior high school are confused in using the correct preposition in good sentences of English. The researcher's

observation during his student did teaching practice showed that most students of junior high school have problems in using prepositions of time particularly AT, ON, IN. The students get difficulties in using the preposition (AT, ON, IN) for time. They are difficult to differentiate the functions of AT, ON, IN for time. This issue is related to a previous study conducted by Saravanan (2014) on the use of English prepositions place, time and direction in English. The results showed that the students found more difficulties in the use of prepositions of place and direction than the prepositions of time. This was due to the student's mother tongue interference. He stated that the reason for the errors was lack of understanding the usage and the inability to use an appropriate preposition to produce meaningful sentences. Therefore it is important to conduct the research on preposition of time particularly AT, ON, IN. This study focuses on the use of preposition of time particularly AT, ON, IN which is a problem for the junior high school students. The objectives of this research are to describe the students' level of ability in using preposition of time and to find out the kinds of preposition which is difficult for students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Andajayani (2016) conducted on Error Analyses in using Preposition showed that that from 1002 prepositions found in 72 students' writing, there were 117 incorrect preposition usage or 11.68%. In general the students are able to use preposition correctly. 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 over generalized the information from the target language.

Saravanan (2014) conducted a research on the use of English prepositions which examined the writing skill of the students at the undergraduate level, with a special focus on the use of prepositions of place, time and direction in English. The results showed that the students found more difficulties in the use of prepositions of place and direction than the prepositions of time. This was due to the student's mother tongue interference. He stated that the reason for the errors was lack of understanding the usage and the inability to use an appropriate preposition to produce meaningful sentences.

Basically, preposition is a word that shows relation between noun or pronoun and the other words in sentence. Stobe (2008:108) defines preposition is a word or group of words that is placed before a noun or a pronoun to show a relationship in a sentence. Greenbaum & Nelson (2002: 113) noted that prepositions introduce a prepositional phrase, and are followed by a prepositional complement. The preposition links the complement to some other expression. Prepositions describe the relationships such as space (place, position, direction) and time. Prepositions are used for many purposes such as preposition for time *e.g. in, on, at, etc*, preposition for place *e.g. in, on, at*, preposition for direction *e.g. to, towards, into, through etcetera*, preposition for agent *e.g. by*, preposition for device, instrument or machines. *e.g. on, by, with*, prepositions used after verbs to make prepositional verb. *e.g. look at, look after, laugh at*.

There are many functions of prepositions; such as space (place, position, direction) and time. The position of prepositions is explained in Eastwood (2002: 286) that preposition usually comes before a noun phrase, *e.g. into the building, at two o'clock without a coat*. Some prepositions can also come before an adverb, *e.g. until tomorrow through there at once*. Some prepositions are used before a gerund, *we're thinking of moving house*. The most common prepositions of time are **in**, **at**, and **on**. Examples; a) Mary was baor *in May*, b) *The meeting is held on Friday*, c) I get up *at 05 o'clock*.

Furthermore, Eastwood (2002: 295) notes the use of prepositions of time (AT, ON, IN). He explains that we use **at** with a particular time such as a clock time or meal time, *e.g. at half past five at breakfast (time) at that time at the moment*. We also use **at** with holiday periods of two or three days, *e.g. at Christmas at Thanksgiving at the weekend*. We use **on** with a single day, *e.g. on Tuesday on 7th August on that day on Easter Sunday*. While we use **in** with longer periods, *e.g. in the next few days in the summer holidays in spring, in July in 1992 in the 19th century*. We also use **in** with a part of the day, *e.g. in the afternoon in the mornings*, but we use **on** if we say

which day, *e.g. on Tuesday afternoon on Friday mornings on the evening of the 12th*.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Since this study aims at finding out the students' ability in using preposition of time and describing the problems faced by students in using prepositions of time; therefore descriptive qualitative method was used. The descriptive qualitative method was used to analyze the data and to obtain more holistic illustration what goes in a particular situation and describe the finding to answer research questions. The instrument of this research was a test of preposition. The test consists of 20 items of multiple choice and 10 items of completion test. The subject of the research was the second class students of SMP Kristen Kefamenanu in the School Year of 2016/2017. The total number of the students were 20 students. There were two activities in collecting the data namely asking permission to the headmaster to conduct the research at his school and giving test to the students. In analyzing the data, there were four steps namely categorizing, tabulating, analyzing and describing. The final part is drawing conclusion and suggestion.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this part, the writer presented the result of the test done by 20 students, dealing with preposition of time (AT, IN, ON). The range of the scores is 0 up to 100. The scores are described in the tables to show the students' level ability and the problems faced by the students in using preposition of time (AT, IN, ON).

Table I
Students' Scores based on the Preposition of Time

No	Answer		Score	Level Ability
	RA	WA		
1.	16	14	53.33	Poor
2.	19	11	63.33	Average
3.	18	12	60	Average
4.	20	10	66.67	Average
5.	21	9	70	Good
6.	17	13	56.67	Poor
7.	18	12	60	Average
8.	20	10	66.67	Average

9.	20	10	66.67	Average
10.	21	9	70	Good
11.	20	10	66.67	Average
12.	22	8	73.33	Good
13.	24	6	80	Very Good
14.	22	8	73.33	Good
15.	20	10	66.67	Average
16.	21	9	70	Good
17.	23	7	76.67	Good
18.	20	10	66.67	Average
19.	22	8	73.33	Good
20.	20	10	66.67	Average
Average			67.33	Average

Note: IN: Initial Name, RA: Right Answer, WA: Wrong Answer

Table I presents the students' scores in preposition of time (at/on/in). The range of the score is between 50 up to 80. The scores show that the highest score is 80 and the lowest score is 50. The scores show that from the twenty students who did the preposition test, eighteen students passed the test and two students failed in the test. The score of each student reveal that one student got the score of 80. One student got the score of 76.67. Three students got the score of 73.33. One student got the score of 67.33. Seven students got the score of 66.67. One student got the score of 63.33. Two students got the score of 60. One student got the score of 56.67 and one student got the score of 53.33. The students' average score in preposition of time is 67.33. The students' level of ability is average.

Table II
Description of Students' Scores on Preposition of Time

LA	Score	NS	Description
Very good	80–100	1	There was one student categorized as very good. This means that she/he is able to use preposition of time (at/on/in) correctly.
Good	70–79	4	There were 4 students categorized as good. This means that they are able to use preposition of time (at/on/in) but less than very good.
Average	60–69	12	There were 12 students categorized as average. This means that they are able to use preposition of time (at/on/in) at

			average level.
Weak	50–59	2	There were two students categorized as average. This means that they cannot use preposition of time (at/on/in) correctly. They have low comprehension in using preposition of time (at/on/in).
Poor	0–49	0	There was no student at very poor level in using preposition of time.

Note: NS: Number of Students

Table II presents the number of the students within the range of the score from 0 up to 100. The data show that the highest number of students is at average level and the score between 60–69 with the total number of 12 students. Then followed by the good level with the total number of 4 students. The next rank is at weak level with the total number of 2 students and followed by good level with the total number of 1 student, while no students at poor level. This means that more students got the score between 60–69 with average level.

Table III
Students' Score Based on the Kinds of Preposition

NO	Kinds of Preposition		
	At	On	In
1	50	50	60
2	60	60	70
3	60	60	60
4	60	70	70
5	70	70	70
6	50	60	60
7	60	60	60
8	70	70	60
9	60	70	70
10	70	70	70
11	60	70	70
12	80	70	70
13	80	80	80
14	70	80	70
15	70	70	60
16	70	70	70
17	70	80	80
18	60	70	70
19	80	70	70
20	70	70	60
X	66	68.5	67.5
LA	Average	Average	Average

Note: IN: Initial Name, LA: Level of Ability

Table III presents the students' scores in kinds of preposition of time (at/on/in). In column AT, the scores show that the highest score is 80 and the lowest score is 50. The scores show that from the twenty students who did the test, eighteen students passed in the test and two students failed. The figures reveal that three students got the score of 80. Eight students got the score of 70. Seven students got the score of 60. Two students got the score of 50. The students' average score in preposition AT is 66. The students' level of ability is average.

In column ON, the scores show that the highest score is 80 and the lowest score is 50. The scores show that from the twenty students who did the test, nineteen students passed the test and one student failed in the test. The figures reveal that three students got the score of 80. Twelve students got the score of 70. Four students got the score of 60 and one student got the score of 50. The students' average score in preposition ON is 68.5. The students' level of ability is average.

In column IN, the scores show that the highest score is 80 and the lowest score is 60. The scores show that from the twenty students who did the test, no student failed in the test. The figures reveal that two students got the score of 80. Eleven students got the score of 70. Seven students got the score of 60. The students' average score in preposition IN is 67.5. The students' level of ability is average.

The data show the three kinds of preposition of time namely at/on/in. Each kind has different average score. As it is shown in the table that the students' average scores in preposition AT is 66. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition ON is 68.5. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition IN is 67.5. The students' level of ability is average. Comparing these three kinds of preposition the students have similar level of ability but it indicates that the preposition of at is very difficult for students while ON is more easy for them.

Table IV
Description of Students' Scores on AT

LA	Score	NS	Description
Very good	80–100	3	There were three students categorized as very good. This means that they are able to use preposition AT
Good	70–79	8	There were eight students categorized as good. This means that they are able to use preposition AT but less than very good.
Average	60–69	8	There were eight students categorized as average. This means that they are able to use preposition AT but at average level. Many of them do not understand and use preposition AT.
Weak	50–59	1	There was student at weak level in using preposition AT. She only has little understanding to use preposition AT.
Poor	0–49	0	There was one student at poor level.

Note: NS: Number of Students

Table IV presents the number of the students within the range of the score from 0 up to 100. The data show that the highest number of students is at good and average level with the total number of 8 students. Then followed by the very good level with the total number of 3 students. The next rank is at weak level with the total number of 1 student and followed by good level with the total number of 1 student, while no students at poor level. This means that more students got the score between 60–69 and 70–79.

Table V
Description of Students' Scores ON

LA	Score	NS	Description
Very good	80–100	3	There were three students categorized as excellent. This means that they are able to use preposition ON. They can use preposition ON correctly.
Good	70–79	12	There were twelve students categorized as good. This means that they are able to use preposition ON. They can use preposition ON

			but less than excellent.
Average	60–69	5	There were five students categorized as average. This means that they are able to use preposition ON but at average level.
Weak	50–59	1	There was one student at weak level in using ON . She only has little understanding to use ON . She does not know anything on the use of preposition ON . Her understanding is very low.
Poor	0–49	0	There was no student at poor level.

Note: NS: Number of Students

Table V presents the number of the students within the range of the score from 0 up to 100. The data show that the highest number of students is at good level and the score between 70-79 with the total number of 12 students. Then followed by the average level with the total number of 5 students. The next rank is at very good level with the total number of 3 students and followed by good level with the total number of 1 student, while no students at poor level. This means that more students got the score between 70-79 with good level.

Table VI
Description of Students' Scores on IN

LA	Score	NS	Description
Very good	80–100	2	There were two students categorized as excellent. This means that they are able to use preposition IN . They really understand the use of preposition IN .
Good	70–79	10	There were ten students categorized as good. This means that they are able to use preposition IN but less than excellent.
Average	60–69	8	There were eight students categorized as average. This means that they are able to use preposition IN but at average level. Many of them do not understand and use preposition IN .
Weak	50–59	0	There was no student at weak level.
Poor	0–49	0	There was no student at poor level.

Note: NS: Number of Students

Table VI presents the number of the students within the range of the score from 0 up to 100. The data

show that the highest number of students is at good level and the score between 70-79 with the total number of 10 students. Then followed by the average level with the total number of 8 students. The next rank is at very good level with the total number of 2 students, while no student at weak and poor level. This means that more students got the score between 70-79 with good level.

DISCUSSION

This part discusses the result of this research. The findings of data analysis showed that students' scores in using prepositions at/on/in is the highest score is 80 and the lowest score is 50. The scores show that from the twenty students who did the preposition test, eighteen students passed the test and two students failed in the test. The students' average score in preposition of time is 67.33. The students' level of ability is average. This means that they are able to use preposition of time. The data show that the highest number of students is at average level and the score between 60-69 with the total number of 12 students. The data show that the students' average score in preposition AT is 66. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition ON is 68.5. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition IN is 67.5. The students' level of ability is average. Comparing these three kinds of preposition the students have similar level of ability but it indicates that the preposition of at is very difficult for students while on in more easy for them.

The findings of the research showed that the students still find problems in using preposition of time (at/on/in) correctly. The following sections are some examples taken from the students' worksheet.

- a) Preposition "at"
 Student : I go to school **at** the morning.
 Correct : I go to school **in** the morning.

The data show that the student used incorrect preposition. She/he prefers to use at since she/he directly translated **at** into Bahasa Indonesia as "*pada*" so the meaning is *Saya pergi ke sekolah pada pagi hari*. While in English preposition, **in** is used to show the time such as in the morning.

b) Preposition “on”

Student : I study English **in** Tuesday

Correct : I study English **on** Tuesday

The data show that students used incorrect preposition. She/he does not distinguish the use of **in** and **on**. Preposition **in** is used to show longer time such as month and year while **on** is used to show short time such as hour and day.

a) Preposition “in”

Student : Marry was born **on** May 2001

Correct : Marry was born **in** May 2001

The data show that students used incorrect preposition. She/he does not distinguish the use of **in** and **on**. The same case as the previous example. The student tend to translate the word **on** as *pada* therefore the sentence is *Marry dilahirkan pada bulan Mei 2001*. Preposition **in** is used to show longer time such as month and year while **on** is used to show short time such as hour, day and date.

Murphy (2004: 242) noted that **in** is used for a longer period, examples, **in** October, **in** 2000. We may use **in** as **in** the morning; **in** the evenings **in** the afternoon. But **at** is use for a time of a day; examples, **at** 5 o'clock; **at** lunch time. **On** is used for days; examples **on** Friday, **on** Christmas day. Regarding to these findings of the research; it is assumed that the students may be difficult to distinguish the functions of these kinds of prepositions. The findings are similar to the previous study conducted by Loke, Ali & Anthony (2013). They investigated the use of Preposition of Time: **at/on**. Their findings showed that there were difficulties faced by students in handling preposition of time **on** and **at** in their writing. The findings have shown several insights in this study. Firstly, due to the type of essay used in this corpus which is an argumentative essay the distribution patterns of **ON** and **AT** are limited in this corpus. In an argumentative essays it refrain students from using preposition of time however where the prepositions are used errors were committed by students. The study has revealed that students' are having difficulties in understanding the correct use of preposition of time. For example students commit errors where they add **on** preposition in a

sentence where it is not needed and also use wrong preposition.

CONCLUSION

The students' average score in preposition of time is 67.33. The students' level of ability is average. This means that they are able to use preposition of time. The data show that the highest number of students is at average level and the score between 60-69 with the total number of 12 students. The data show that the students' average score in preposition **AT** is 66. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition **ON** is 68.5. The students' level of ability is average. The students' average score in preposition **IN** is 67.5. The students' level of ability is average. Comparing these three kinds of preposition the students have similar level of ability but it indicates that the preposition of **at** is very difficult for students while **on** is more easy for them. The findings showed that the students' difficulties frequently happened with prepositions of time (**AT**, **IN**, **ON**) in which the students had the greatest difficulty because of their ignorance of rules in translating directly from their first language.

However they have the average level in the test, but the majority of the students still have problems in using correct preposition of time (**AT/ON/IN**). The students do not use the preposition of time correctly. Therefore, it is suggested for the teacher to use suitable method in teaching prepositions of time particularly **AT**, **ON**, **IN**.

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