

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 The Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of 150 male students from S.M.K. La Salle, Petaling Jaya who are in form 4 and 16 years of age. All the subjects are Malays whose native language is Bahasa Melayu. All of them have learnt English as a second language for ten years.

#### 3.2 Methodology

A test was designed for the students in the study. The test was divided into two major sections- a composition and a grammar test.

##### i) Composition

Each student was asked to write a composition entitled "The Most Horrible Day in My Life." They were required to write the composition of not more than 350 words.

## **ii) Grammar Test**

Worksheets consisting of a cloze test and sentence completion were given. Choices of prepositions were provided and students were asked to fill in the blanks by choosing the correct prepositions.

### **3.3 Administration of the Method**

The test was carried out in a normal classroom situation. Instructions were properly and clearly spelt out on the test papers. The time allocated for the completion of both tests was 1 hour and 30 minutes. At the end of the tests, 150 written essays and worksheets were collected.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

A total of 150 essays with a total running word count of approximately 22000 words and 150 worksheets were used to represent the students' samples on which an error analysis was undertaken. The method of analysis adopted for the written data had four related stages. They were as follows:

#### **Stage 1: Identification of Prepositional Errors:**

The tests and compositions were checked. Prepositions of place, time, direction and other prepositional concepts were underlined in the compositions. At the same time,

prepositional errors were identified in both the compositions and the grammar tests and of which were marked with a cross. The erroneous forms were categorized into the following prepositional concepts. They are as follows:

**Place:** in, at, against, on, underneath, off, behind, above, under and by.

**Direction:** along, across, at, into, forward, towards, away, onto, to and by.

**Time:** at, within, before, after, during, until, for, by, on, from and in.

**Manner-agent:** with, in, without, on, of, by, for, though, to and from.

**Cause-purpose:** by, from, of, with, under, up, for, to and on.

**Similarity:** as and like.

**Association:** between and among.

**Verb-prep:** put off, carry on, abide by, come across, speak against, look after, call off, go through and drop in.

**Adj-prep:** proud of, good at, similar to, angry with, keen on, absent from, work in, parallel to, different from and satisfied with.

## **Stage 2: Categorization of Prepositional Errors**

The grammar tests and compositions were checked for prepositional errors that had been marked. These prepositions were listed under their prepositional concepts. For example, based on the sentence context concerned, prepositions 'at', 'in' and 'on' were listed under the concept of time. The errors were then assigned to the different sub-categories. The sub-categories were as follows:

**i) Wrong Selection**

A wrong selection of preposition occurs when the students select the wrong prepositions. For example, 'They're going to perform the dance \*at Selangor.' There is a wrong choice of preposition 'at' instead of 'in'.

**ii) Omission**

An omission error occurs when a preposition is omitted from the sentence thus, causing a deviant structure, for example, 'The sun rises ^ the east'. Here, the preposition 'in' has been omitted.

**iii) Unnecessary Insertion**

An unnecessary insertion occurs when the students have included a preposition which is redundant in the sentence. For example, 'He reached \*in the office.' There is an unnecessary insertion of 'in' here.

**Stage 3: Tabulation and Frequency Count**

The prepositional errors in the different sub-categories in the tests and compositions were counted and tabulated. The figures obtained by this method would indicate the areas of difficulty within the different types of preposition.

#### **Stage 4: Identification, Description and Explanation of Common Prepositional Errors**

Having tabulated the prepositional errors in both the tests and the compositions, common prepositional errors were identified. A description of these errors was made. Some explanations for the occurrences of these errors were given. However, elaboration on the occurrences of those errors that are too few was not given as they posed little significance to the study.