

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This study has revealed that the subjects made the most numerous errors in using the prepositions of time (17 %). Next are the prepositions of place (15 %), followed by the prepositions of direction (14 %), the prepositions of verb-prep (13.8 %), the prepositions of manner-agent (13.4%), the prepositions of cause and purpose (6.0 %), the prepositions of similarity (4.4 %) and the prepositions of association (3.1%).

The difficulties that the subjects encounter in using the English prepositions are reflected in the high percentage of errors in the three test instruments which are the composition, the cloze text and the fill-in-the-blanks questions used in this study. One significant finding in this study is that the subjects make most of the errors in the wrong selection of prepositions (Figure 7 & 8). The high percentage of errors in this sub-category also reveals that the Malay students face more difficulty in the selection of correct prepositions compared to the omission of prepositions and the unnecessary insertion of prepositions. A legitimate conclusion that can be drawn from the present study is that although the students have attained a certain level of proficiency in the target language, they have not fully mastered the use of some English prepositions

especially those with diversified meanings and functions. The prepositional errors that they often made in their essays and cloze texts are as follows:

Prepositions of time – ‘on’, ‘in’, ‘at’ and ‘for’

Prepositions of place – ‘in’, ‘at’ and ‘on’

Prepositions of direction – ‘to’, ‘through’, ‘towards’ and ‘into’

Prepositions of manner-agent – ‘on’ and ‘in’

Prepositions of cause -purpose – ‘for’ and ‘to’

Prepositions of verb-prep and adj-prep – ‘speak against’, ‘abide by’ and ‘drop in’

‘good at’, ‘proud of’ and ‘angry with’

Prepositions of Association – ‘between’ and ‘among’

Prepositions of similarity – ‘like’ and ‘as’

In this study, the major cause of prepositional errors was due to L1 interference, which are interlingual errors. These errors deviate from the norms of the target language as a result of transferring features or patterns peculiar from Bahasa Melayu to English. The other cause is overgeneralization of which the subjects’ familiarity with one form of preposition in the target language led them to use the same form even in a different context. This is followed by the incomplete application of rules. It occurs when the Malay students apply some rules of the target language and neglect others. The lack of knowledge, exposure and limited experience in the application of all the rules required cause the errors. The minor cause of errors is the ignorance of rule restrictions of which the subjects are not aware of the exceptions in the grammatical rules and after encountering a particular preposition with one type of verb, they attempt by analogy to

use the same preposition with similar words. A few errors are caused by false concepts hypothesized of which the students get to form some false prepositional concepts in the target language.

These causes of prepositional errors can be due to the difficulty in learning prepositions. The Malay students may find it easier to learn the application of a preposition, which has a clear meaning when it is used with certain words, such as 'on the table'. 'On' means above an object. Based on this knowledge, the students will be able to generate other correct sentences such as 'on the chair', 'on the floor' and others. However, this is not the case, when they are confronted with prepositions which seem to have no meaning for them, for example, 'to' in the phrase 'to my surprise'. The students do not know the meaning of the preposition in this utterance, thus, they do not why the particular preposition 'to' is used instead of others. When teachers are confronted for an explanation, a logical explanation for such occurrences cannot be given. The teachers would probably answer, "That's the way they're used or it just sounds right." Consequently, the students may derive that the correct use of these prepositions depends on intuition. Therefore, the method of teaching English prepositions could play a vital role in facilitating the learning of prepositions.

Before adopting the appropriate method, it is useful for a language teacher to know the errors and causes of prepositional errors found in the written texts of students. Consequently, the teacher can pay more attention to the 'problematic prepositions' so that effective learning can take place. Other than identifying the specific prepositions

that are difficult for the students, this study of error analysis also indicates to the teacher the degree of difficulty in learning those prepositions. This would help the teacher to decide where his priorities should be given to, that is, a preposition, which is relatively difficult to learn, needs more emphasis, explanation and practice. By knowing the causes of these prepositional errors, a teacher is in a better position to adopt suitable teaching techniques and strategies to curb the transfer-effect of mother tongue patterns and to overcome the difficulties inherent in the target language itself. This study of error analysis on prepositions should be useful to a language teacher in teaching prepositions, as it will give him the knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by the students in the use of English prepositions. With this, a teacher can be in a better position to discharge his duty more efficiently in the language classroom and hence, effective learning process can take place.

## **5.2 Suggestions for the teaching of English Prepositions**

ESL and EFL teachers need effective teaching approaches to teach the English prepositions to their students. The following suggestions may be useful for teaching English prepositions in secondary schools.

1. Prepositions that give concrete concepts can be taught through written examples in which the students can understand the meanings of the prepositions. If the students become familiar with the meanings of these English prepositions

through simple examples, this would reduce their dependency on their mother tongue to guide them in the choice of a correct preposition in a sentence.

2. Students tend to overgeneralize the use of English prepositions. This causes the students to be not able to use the prepositions correctly. Therefore, the language teacher should realize that it is not enough just to present or teach how a preposition is used but also to highlight the contexts. The teacher can show a preposition, which has the potential of being over generalized in its use, through carefully planned written examples.
3. English prepositions, which are potential areas of L1 interference, can be taught by adopting comparative technique. This would require the teacher's explanations of the differences and similarities of a particular preposition in L1 and L2, followed by some exercises aimed at reinforcing the explanations.
4. Visual device is another technique which can be utilized to teach the meaning of each preposition, for example, the system of dots, arrows, and boxes indicating the relationships of events.
5. Those prepositions that have abstract concepts when combined with other words are hardly demonstrated and given a logical explanation. However, more exposure can be given to the students by providing them with more oral and written exercises on prepositions of this nature. Besides that, meanings of each

preposition should be explained based on the sentence context. As for the weaker students, drilling can be adopted to reinforce their learning process.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

This study can be further extended in a number of ways. A further study on an 'in-depth' scale can be carried out to get a better insight into the persistence of prepositional errors in the interlanguage of the Malaysian ESL learners.

It is recommended that more prepositions are used and investigated for future research, as there are about fifty words in English which function as prepositions. By utilizing a bigger number of prepositions, the study will be more comprehensive. Besides that, a wider aspect of the study can be carried out to investigate prepositional errors on more complicated prepositional phrases, phrasal verbs and idioms.

A bigger number of subjects could be included in future studies, as a bigger corpus will make the study more significant, reliable and valid.