

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

The English language has more simple and complex prepositions than the Malay language. Thus, Malay learners are unable to use some prepositions such as **into**, **onto** and others as well as phrasal verbs accurately as they do not exist in Malay. They also face difficulty in using the simple prepositions in English as one preposition may have more functions compared to its equivalent in Malay. A preposition in English is easy to learn when it is similar to Malay in terms of position and functions. Conversely, a preposition is difficult to learn when its functions differ though its distribution in the sentence may be similar.

Based on the study carried out among the Malay learners on their writings in English, we can conclude that most Malay learners made errors in prepositions through inappropriate use, unnecessary addition and omission. Generally, most inappropriate use of prepositions is due to the interference of the Malay learners' NL in the learning of English prepositions. Some errors are caused by overgeneralization and ignorance of the rule restrictions in the use of English prepositions.

As for the unnecessary insertion of prepositions in their writing, Malay learners do not know that a transitive verb does not require a preposition after it. Moreover, they tend to overuse prepositions as in their NL a preposition is required in the context whereas in the English sentence a preposition is not required at all. Thus, redundancy occurs. In the case of omission of prepositions in their writings, errors are caused by the interference of their NL and the different structural patterns between English and Malay.

6.2 Findings and Recommendations

6.2.1 Implications for Second or Foreign Language Teachers

It is beneficial for the language teacher to know the errors and causes of prepositional errors found in the English essays of the learners. Subsequently, the teacher can focus on the problematic prepositions so that effective learning can take place. Besides identifying the specific prepositions that are difficult for the learners in this study, the Contrastive and Error Analysis approach used indicates to the teacher the degree of difficulty in learning prepositions. This would give insights to the teacher to decide which preposition is relatively difficult to learn, needs more emphasis, explanation and practice. Being aware of the causes of these errors in prepositions, the teacher is in a better position to adopt suitable teaching techniques and strategies to curb the overt influence of Malay and the difficulties found in English itself. By highlighting the influence of the mother tongue on the students' learning of English through the collection of errors in prepositions and asking the students to analyse those errors, learners learn to correct their own errors. The learners will be more aware and will be able to avoid making such errors with prepositions in their future writing.

Next, the teacher could tap on the students' mother tongue to teach English effectively. Writers such as Corder (1981), Krashen (1981) as well as Ard and Homburg (1983; 1992) have recommended that the learners use their mother tongue as prior knowledge to facilitate the learning of English. In order for Malay learners to learn English effectively, teachers should identify the similarities and differences between English and Malay prepositions using Contrastive Analysis. Only then can the teachers understand learners' difficulties in learning English prepositions.

The teacher can explain the similarities and differences of a particular preposition in the native language and target language to the learners. This would be beneficial to them. Then, some exercises aimed at reinforcing what was explained earlier should be given. Bearing in mind the similarities in both languages help learners to learn the target language effectively as the differences in both languages may impede the learning process. For instance, when the English preposition is an equivalent to the Malay preposition but the distribution is different, the teachers need to give more examples and exercises. This is to make sure learners understand the preposition's functions and avoid confusion. When a preposition does not exist in Malay, teachers can translate that preposition into Malay words to help learners understand and be able to use it effectively. Translation in teaching the target language has its benefits. Besides, learners also tend to translate. There are some learners who do not understand what is taught if they do not translate.

Teaching and learning English should not be focussed on memorising the definition of prepositions but their functions and meanings need to be reinforced. Prepositions with concrete concepts can be taught using simple written examples so that the Malay learners can understand the meanings of those prepositions easily. When the learners become familiar with the meanings of these prepositions through examples, they would depend less on their mother tongue to guide them in making the right choice of preposition in the sentence. For prepositions which have the potential of being over-generalized in its use, they can be taught using detailed written examples. Prepositions with abstract concepts are normally hardly demonstrated nor given a logical explanation. More exposure can be given to learners by providing them with more oral and written exercises on prepositions of this nature. Adopting teaching methods accordingly to facilitate learners' learning of prepositions is therefore pertinent. The use of virtual devices such as the system of dots,

arrows and boxes to indicate relationships of events, can be utilized to teach the meaning of prepositions. As for less proficient learners, drilling can be adopted to reinforce learning. Placing a less proficient learner next to a more proficient learner may enable learners to improve their proficiency in English.

Besides the influence of the mother tongue on the learning of English for Malay students, Gass and Selinker (2001, p.76) argued that it is pertinent to note that there are other contributing factors too such as “innate principles of language, attitude, motivation, age, other language known and so forth”. Much research has been carried out to identify these other factors (Anderson, 1983; Eckman, 1984; Flynn, 1983; 1986).

6.2.2 Implications for Syllabus Designers and Textbooks Writers

Syllabus designers and textbook writers need to consider on the whole as well as in specific the learners’ needs and the teachers’ needs in Malaysia as it has a multicultural society. This step is taken to ensure the suitability and practicality of the content and materials suggested.

6.2.2.1 Learner’s Needs

The learner expects to be successful in learning the second or foreign language despite making errors as he aims to master the language as he progresses. His success would motivate him to learn more and be confident to take risks and make mistakes. Opportunities must be created in the syllabus as well as the textbooks to enable the learner to be willing to share his knowledge and engage actively in the language classroom. Exercises for prepositions for example should not be a one-time exercise but reinforced in other chapters.

At the same time the learners need to be aware of the similarities and differences between English and other languages in Malaysia. Such useful information should be included in the book. Moreover, the explanation of the similarities and differences between English and other languages and exercises should be meaningful and creative as the learners need to build their confidence. Suggested activities in the textbooks should match the learners' interest and direction in order to keep them motivated and wanting to learn more as well as becoming more competent. Malay learners do not have access to, or experience of, a wide variety of texts written in English in their homes and especially in remote areas of Malaysia, the textbook may be the only source. Hence, there would be a need to supply more reading texts in English for the learners and for schools.

6.2.2.2 Teacher's Needs

Linguistics knowledge and language teaching are related. The teacher needs to be exposed to linguistics knowledge such as Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis to teach any language effectively. With similarities and differences between Malay (or other languages) and English incorporated in the textbooks, teachers can teach the language items and describe the language correctly to their learners. In addition, the teacher also needs to build his confidence to maintain the breadth, richness and variety of the language when teaching his learners. With such linguistics knowledge, the teacher can stimulate and challenge his learners to make learning more interesting and fun.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

It would be helpful to observe learners using prepositions rather than just analysing the final product of their essay pieces. One possible option would be to adapt the think-aloud method developed by Clayton Lewis and further refined by Ericsson & Simon (1980, 1987, 1993). Think aloud protocols involve participants saying whatever they are looking at, thinking, doing, and feeling, as they go about their task. By employing this method, researchers would be able to see first-hand the process of using prepositions in their essays rather than only its final product. The purpose of this method is to make explicit what is implicitly present in subjects who are using prepositions to write their essays. With these protocols, it is hoped that researchers would be able to find out which prepositions are used and why they are used by the Malay learners.

6.4 Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to predict the possible prepositions which Malay learners may face difficulty in learning by using the Contrastive and Error Analysis approach. From the corpus of sentences found from their essays, we are able to see that the main cause of their errors in using English prepositions is the interference of their mother tongue. In developing a response to the Malay learners' needs, teachers can draw on both the CA and EA approaches to errors. These two approaches have roles and functions which mutually complement each other. The findings from the Error Analysis confirm the predictions of the Contrastive Analysis though not completely in this study.