AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' MASTERY IN USING PREPOSITIONS AT THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STUDY PROGRAM OF STATE POLYTECHNIC OF CILACAP

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Abstract: *Communication skill in English is regarded important nowadays. People need to have good English communication skill to express their feelings better. Some Indonesian students find it quite difficult to communicate well in English. One of the aspects that need to be master well is vocabulary. Vocabulary does not refer to only the words, but it also includes parts of speech, such as verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions. Prepositions as one of the parts of speech play significant role in communication, but some Indonesian students face difficulties in applying them. This study is a case study in nature; it used combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in analysis. The subject of the study consisted of 22 students of Information Technology study program. In analyzing the data, two phases were done. Firstly, the writer analyzed the correct answers of the students and categorized them into the suitable profile. Finally, the writer analyzed the problems faced by the students in using prepositions.The result of the study showed that most of the Information Technology students 63.64% achieved satisfactory grade in using prepositions. The average percentage of the students' correct answer was 75.64% which means the students were on the average achievement in using prepositions. It could also be concluded that some students still found difficulties in applying the correct prepositions due to lack of understanding about using difference prepositions. More practice is necessary to improve the students' mastery to use prepositions.*

Keywords: *students' mastery, preposition*

INTRODUCTION

Communication skill in English is regarded important nowadays. People need to have good English communication skill to express their feelings better. Some Indonesian students find it quite difficult to communicate well in English. They should master both the skills and the aspects in English to create good communication. One of the aspects that needs to master well is vocabulary aspect. Vocabulary does not consist of vocabulary only, but it also includes parts of speech, such as verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs,

conjunctions, and prepositions. Preposition as one of the parts of speech plays significant role in communication, but some Indonesian students face some difficulties in applying it.

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 64) explain the difficulties in applying preposition as "The student has two main problems with prepositions; He has to know (a) whether in any construction a preposition is required or not, and (b) which preposition to use when one is required."

Regarding the difficulties stated above, it can be seen that the construction of the preposition is not learned well by the students in the schools. It may happen because in their native language, i.e. Indonesian language, they only meet some prepositions in use but the prepositions are used in wide areas of communication. The second difficulty also shows that the confusion students faced when they have to put the correct preposition when another is required. This confusion also leads to the classroom atmosphere. The teaching learning process in the classroom is not going to work well if the students feel confused at first.

Therefore, the lecturer gives his best teaching technique to help the students learn preposition correctly. The lecturer also takes students' prior knowledge in teaching preposition. Indeed, prepositions have many types, such as preposition of place, preposition of time, preposition of position, and others. The students' mastery to use preposition is not only the problems for the students, but also for the teacher.

This study aims to analyze the students' mastery to use prepositions (in, on,at) which focusses on two significant problems: (1) How is the profile of the students' mastery to use prepositions? and (2) What are the problems faced by the students of using prepositions?

The objectives of the study are (1) to describe the profile of the students'mastery to use prepositions and (2) to find out the problems faced by the students of using prepositions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Grammar in English Language Teaching

Nasr (1978: 74) in Kristianingsih (2002: 8) states "if language had no

grammar, no scientific ordering of its words in sentences, it could never be learnt by a native speaker or by foreign, nor could two people understand one another in it." The statement above shows that grammar plays important role in communication, both formal and informal communication. Classroom activity also includes good communication. It means that classroom activity should apply appropriate grammar, moreover for the teacher as the model in the classroom. Gerot and Wignell (1995: 3) strengthen this argument by stating "we need a theory of grammar or language which helps us understand how text works. As teachers we need to know how texts work so we can explicitly help learners learn how to understand and produce texts-spoken and written in various contexts for various purpose." It can be concluded that grammar is regarded as the basis and the foundation of a language in order to make it understandable.

Difficulties in Learning English Grammar

In learning English, grammar plays important role. To deal with that, many students who wish to learn English find some difficulties in learning it. For Indonesian students, they may find difficulties in applying the correct grammar because there is big difference between Indonesian grammar and English grammar. In English, word order is more important than in Indonesian. The basic pattern of English clause is Subject - Verb – Object(s) – Place – Time. This pattern is quite different with Indonesian pattern. This difference somehow makes the Indonesian students confused on applying the correct English grammar. Freeman (2000: 21) adds that English has a number of grammatical structures, for example progressive - ing, auxiliary be, and plural -s. Those grammatical structures do not occur in Indonesian. They may be one of the difficulties faced by Indonesian learners who wish to learn English.

Students' Mastery

The mastery learning theory is based on the Bloom's idea (on Eisner (2000: 4)) that cognitive introduction behaviors or students' characteristics (i.e. pre-learning, in which it is assumed to be necessary for learning a unit), emotional introduction features (i.e. the level of motivation to learn the

unit), and the quality of teaching activity (clue, reinforcement, students' participation, feedback, and correction) are the basic indicators of learning output. From the idea, it can be concluded that if the related introduction features of the students and the teaching activities are positive, the learning output will reach a high level and, in respect to these outputs, the differentiation between the students will be at the minimum level.

Wong is also in line with Bloom's idea on the variables of mastery learning. Wong uses different terms in the explanation. According to Wong (2002), to achieve student learning, some variables are needed. They are cognitive entry behavior, affective entry characteristics, and quality of instruction. Those variables are going to create good learning outcomes, which include level and type of achievement, rate of learning, and affective outcomes. Wong's idea can be simply drawn in Figure 1.
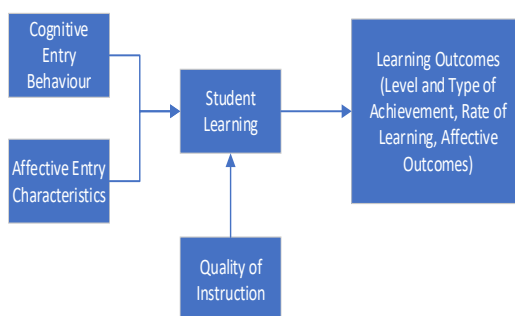

Figure 1. Variables of Mastery Learning (Wong, 2002)

From the descriptions above, students' mastery is regarded important in achieving good learning outcomes. Students' mastery is affected by three variables, i.e. students' characteristics, students' behavior, and teaching activity.

Prepositions

Preposition is crucial in English sentence because it shows the relationship between words. Frank (1972: 163) describes preposition as "a word that connects a noun or pronoun to another word in a sentence." In other words, preposition is a connective word that shows the relationship between the noun following it and basic sentence element, such as subject, verb, object or complement. Preposition is commonly used to indicate many relationships, such as position, place, time, manner, direction, etc.

For Indonesian learners, learning preposition is not a piece of cake since Indonesian only puts some prepositions to show many relationships. It may lead students feel confused and tricky to use the correct one in English. Thomson and Martinet

(1986: 64) explain the difficulties in applying preposition as "The student has two main problems with prepositions. He has to know (a) whether in any construction a preposition is required or not, and (b) which preposition to use when one is required."

Students need to understand a preposition before applying it in a sentence. Misuse of the preposition may lead to misinterpret of the sentence. Moreover, prepositions in English also collocate with some words. Zhang (2004: 111-145) adds "the collocations often show fixed use of prepositions." In other words, prepositions have many functions and types in English, so the students need to learn how to use them correctly as they play important roles in English sentences.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION
Subject of the Study

The subject consisted of 22 students of Information Technology study program. All subjects were in the third semester. The writer used random sampling, in which the writer chose the subjects randomly, because

the writer assumes that all subjects are in the same level of competence.

Design of the Study

This study is a case study by using combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in analysis. The quantitative approach is used to measure the profile of students' mastery to use prepositions in percentage. While, the qualitative approach is used to describe the problems faced by the students of using prepositions.

Procedures

In collecting the data, the writer did some steps. First, the writer administered a writing test. In this step, all subjects were asked to answer 25 questions about prepositions. There were 3 (three) chapters. The first chapter was that the writer asked the students to fill in the blank by using the correct prepositions. There were 10 numbers on the first chapter. The second chapter was that the writer asked the students to identify the prepositions and put them into the correct categories. There were 10 numbers on the second chapter. The last chapter was that the writer asked the students to complete short story by using the correct prepositions. There

were 5 missing parts on the third chapter. Then, the writer collected the students' result.

After the data were collected, the writer analyzed them. In analyzing the data, some steps were used. First, the writer analyzed thecorrect answers of the students and categorized them into the suitable profile. And the last, the writer analyzed the problems faced by the students of using prepositions.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The first analysis is the analysis of the students' papers, in which the data were analyzed in terms of the correct answers of the three chapters.
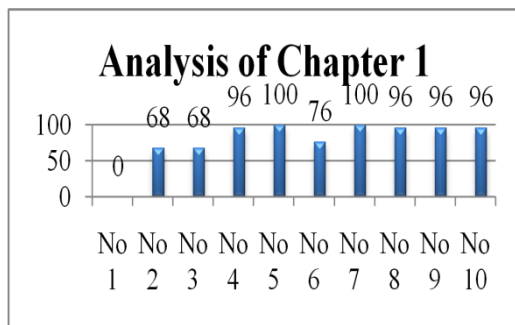

Figure 2. Analysis of Chapter 1

It is simply drawn in the figure 2. The first chapter was that the writer asked the students to fill in the blank by using the correct prepositions. There were 10 numbers on the first chapter. No student (0%) met the correct answer for question number 1.

17 students (68%) answered questions number 2 and 3 correctly. 24 students (96%) met the correct answer for question number 4. All students (100%) successfully met the correct answer for question number 5. Only 19 students (76%) correctly answered question number 6. All students (100%) perfectly answered question number 7. 24 students (96%) met the correct answers for questions number 8, 9, and 10.

The second chapter was that the writer asked the students to categorize the phrases in the correct column of prepositions. There were 10 numbers on the second chapter. 24 students (96%) met the correct answer for question number 11. 23 students (92%) answered question number 12 correctly. Only 9 students (36%) answered question number 13 correctly. 12 students (48%) met the correct answer for question number 14. All students (100%) successfully met the correct answer for question number 15. 23 students (92%) correctly answered question number 16. All students (100%) perfectly answered question number 17. 20 students (80%) met the correct answer for question number 18. Only 7

students (28%) correctly answered question number 19. All students (100%) met the correct answers for question number 20. It is simply drawn in the figure 3.
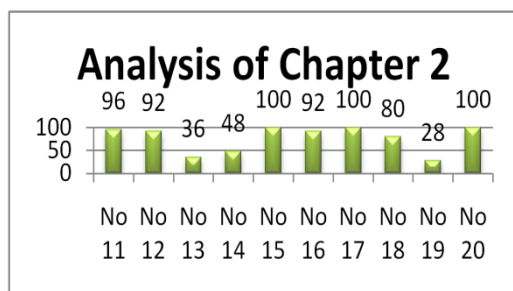
Analysis of Chapter 2

Figure 3. Analysis of Chapter 2

The third chapter was that the writer asked the students to complete the blank spaces on the short passage. There were 5 blank spaces on the third chapter. 16 students (64%) met the correct answer for question number 21. 23 students (92%) answered question number 22 correctly. 16 students (64%) answered questions number 23 and 24 correctly. All students (100%) successfully met the correct answer for question number 25. It is simply drawn in the figure 4.
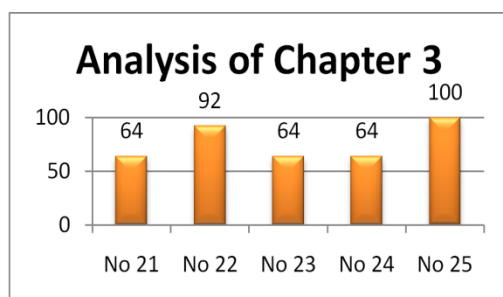
Analysis of Chapter 3

Figure 4. Analysis of Chapter 3

The second analysis is the analysis of the students' total score, in which the students' percentage of correct answer is put in the five grades as it is opposed by Tinambunan (1988: 129). From the grading system, it could be seen that no student (0%) achieved the outstanding grade of English preposition mastery. 1 student (4.55%) placed very good grade of English preposition mastery. 14 students (63,64%) achieved satisfactory grade of English preposition mastery and 6 students (27.27 %) achieved very weak grade of English preposition mastery. Only 1 student (4.55%) got the worst grade, i.e. fail grade of English preposition mastery.
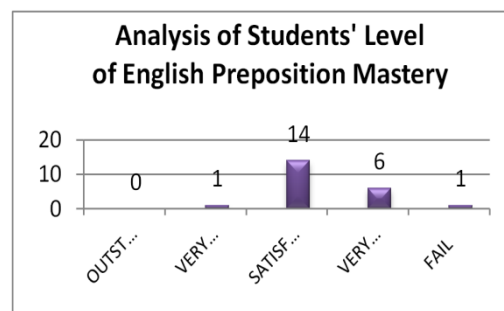
Analysis of Students' Level of English Preposition Mastery

Figure 5. Analysis of Students'
Level of English Preposition Mastery

The average percentage of the students' correct answers of English preposition mastery was 75.64 which was in the satisfactory grade.

The last analysis was figuring out the problems faced by the students on

using the correct preposition. Some problems came up as the students did the test. One of the problems was the students did not clearly understand the difference among the prepositions. They sometimes used the prepositions using their sense in the sentences. They were also less concerned on when they should use the prepositions because they might think that prepositions did not play big role in direct speaking. From the analysis, it could also be seen that the students sometimes used over generalization method in applying the correct preposition. They might ignore the context of the sentence or phrase. It could also be affected by the students' first language, i.e. Indonesian language. Indonesian language does not significantly differentiate among prepositions, so the students might place any preposition as long as it sounded good to their sense. Hence, the students still need more practice in applying prepositions to make their sense of English preposition better.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the result of the study, the writer concludes this study as most of the Information Technology students (63.64%) achieved satisfactory grade in using prepositions. The average percentage of the students' correct answer was 75.64% in which it showed that the students were on the average achievement in using prepositions. It could also be concluded that some students still found difficulties in applying the correct prepositions because they did not clearly understand the difference among the prepositions. More practice is regarded necessary to make the students' mastery to use prepositions better.

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