

Evaluating the Students' Ability in Using Preposition of Place in Speaking Performance

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Abstract

The use of preposition of place in speaking performance still becomes problems for students. Therefore; it is important to evaluate the students' ability in using preposition of place. This research aimed at evaluating the students' ability and describing the problems faced by students in using prepositions of place in speaking performance.

The descriptive qualitative method was applied in this research. The instrument of this research was an oral test. To get the data, the researcher used Tape Video Recorder (TVR). There were 25 participants of the first semester students of English study program of Timor University chosen randomly as the sample in this research. There were four steps used in analyzing the data, namely transcribing, codifying, analyzing and describing.

The results of the research showed that five students passed and nineteen students failed in the test. The highest score was 80,95 and the lowest score was 31. There was one student categorized as very good; two students were categorized as good; three students were categorized as enough; eleven students were categorized poor and seven students were categorized as very poor. For the kind of preposition; the highest percentage was IN which was 67,53%. Then it was followed by ON which was 57,32%. The preposition BEHIND made 55,51% which was higher than NEAR/CLOSE which was 51,56% but it is lower than IN FRONT OF which was 56,57%. The preposition UNDER was 48,39% which was higher than AT. The lowest percentage was preposition AT which was 47,94%.. The students' average score was 54,60. Therefore the students' level of ability was categorized as poor. This means that the students failed in using prepositions of place in speaking performance.

Keywords: *prepositions, place, speaking*

Introduction

The purpose of learning English in Indonesia is students are expected to be able to listen, speak, read and write. Speaking is a complex skill; because it contains sound, words (vocabulary) and sentences (grammar). Speaking is one the skills that frighten the students. Since speaking skill involves many aspects; therefore many students avoid from the speaking class. Many students often face many difficulties in choosing the proper words, selecting the tenses, arranging words into a good sentence, and so on. In speaking process, it is automatically using the correct grammar. The speaking will be meaningful if the speaker uses correct grammar.

Grammar is important for language, because it makes meaning. Grammar names the types of words and word groups that make up sentences in any language. Every language in the world has it own system of grammar. English has broad grammar; including tenses, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, articles, preposition and so forth. Greenbaum & Nelson (2002, p. 3) mention that there are many grammars of English, that is to say books describing English grammar. They differ in how much of the grammar they cover and in how they set out the rules. There are also some differences in the categorization and terminology they use. This means that grammar becomes very important in language learning. Since English has broad grammar; it is becomes challenges of every learner to master the grammar of English.

Preposition is a part of English grammar. Preposition is one of the parts of speech in English. 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. 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**.

Since the prepositions are used for time, place and direction; they might make students to distinguish in using prepositions. The writer's experiences in teaching speaking for years at university show that the use of prepositions of place is still become problems in their speaking performance. They make many errors to place the correct prepositions of place in speaking performance. The students' ability in using preposition of place in speaking performance made the researcher to reflect and evaluate how well the teaching outcome of speaking to the first semester students of English study program of Timor University. Therefore; it is important to do the research on the use of prepositions of place in speaking performance. This research results comes to evaluate the students' ability in using preposition of place in speaking performance. The research findings also describes the difficulties faced the students in using preposition of place in speaking performance.

Review of related literature

The previous studies on the use of prepositions focused on the students' errors in writing skill; while this present study focused on the use of prepositions in speaking skill. Recently; a study on Error Analysis on the Use of Prepositions in Students' Writing by Andajani in 2016 showed that that from 1002 prepositions found in 72 students' writing, there were 117 incorrect preposition usage or 11.68%. In other words, in general the students are able to use preposition correctly. The dominant errors made by the students are errors on the use of prepositions of place. 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.

The study on Acquisition of English Language Prepositions in the Absence of Formal Grammar Teaching by Sudhakaran in 2015 showed that there were indeed

improvements in the use of prepositions by the students for both speaking and writing tasks. Regarding the types of errors, there were more errors of commission than errors of omission. A common error was the unnecessary use of the phrase involving a preposition, 'for me'. With respect to the progress made, in speaking tasks, most improvement was seen in the prepositions 'for', 'in' and 'about', while in writing tasks, the best results were with the prepositions 'to', 'of' and 'in'. He suggested that grammar should be taught in a way that is compatible with the natural processes of acquisition, rather than with the use of formal grammar rules.

The study was conducted by Saravanan in 2014 on the Use of English Prepositions 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 research found that the students found more difficulties in the use of prepositions of place and direction than the prepositions of time because of their 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, p. 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. There are many functions of prepositions; such as space (place, position, direction) and time. The position of prepositions is explained in (Eastwood, 2002, p. 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*.

Prepositions of place covers at, on and in, above, over, below, under, near, close and by, in front of, before, behind, after, opposite, between and among. Furthermore; (Stobe, 2008, p. 110) noted that the preposition in often describes a location. Use in when the meaning is within. Place can refer to specific locations, such as *at your house*, or it can refer to a surface, such as *on top of the road*. The

question word where can help you identify prepositions that express a location or a place.

For this case; (Eastwood, 2002, pp. 291-295) explored more about the use of prepositions of place. **At** is one dimensional which is used to see something as a point in space **On** is two dimensional which is used for a surface. **In** is three dimensional which is used it to see something as all around. **Above** and **over** have similar meanings. We do not normally use above to mean horizontal movement. We use above with a measurement that we think of as vertical, such as temperature. **Below** is the opposite of above; under is the opposite of over. **Near** and **close** to mean not far from. Normally; we prefer in front of and behind to before and after **before** usually means 'earlier in time', and after means 'later in time'. But we also use before and after to talk about what order things come in. While **opposite** means 'on the other side from'. Let's compare **in front of** and **opposite**; e.g. *People were standing in front of the theatre waiting to go in but people were standing opposite the theatre waiting to cross the road.* **Between** is used with a small number of items that we see as separate and individual. **Among** suggests a larger number.

In showing where things are; it is important to use the preposition of place; such as at, on and in, above, over, below, under, near, close and by, in front of, before, behind, after, opposite, between and among. These prepositions are normally used to show location or place. In speaking performance; speakers tend to use the preposition of place to show the positions of things in the room. The ability to use each preposition depends on the speakers' understanding on how to use each prepositions of place.

Research method

This research aims at evaluating out the students' ability in using preposition of place and describing the problems faced by students in using prepositions of place in speaking performance; therefore descriptive qualitative method was used. The instrument of this research was an oral test. The topic was *Showing Where Things Are*. The students were asked to show all the things in the room orally. To get the data, the researcher used Tape Video Recorder (TVR). The samples of the

research were 24 students of the first semester of English study program of Timor University in the Academic Year of 2017/2018. The samples were chosen randomly from 100 students. In analyzing the data, there were four steps namely transcribing, codifying, analyzing and describing. In describing part, the researcher transcribed the data from oral into written form. In codifying part, the researcher noted codes to the prepositions of place which were used in speaking performance. In analyzing part, the researcher analyzed the data of the prepositions of place as the findings of the research. And final part is describing which describes the findings descriptively as the results of the research. In evaluating the students' ability in using preposition of place in speaking performance; the researcher used five categories of scoring namely 80-100 is categorized as very good; 70-79 is good, 60-69 is enough, 50-59 is poor and 0-49 is very poor and the passing grade is 60. These categories are based on the assessment standard used in Timor University.

Findings and discussion

This part presents the students' results in using prepositions of place in speaking performance. The data are presented in tables and the description describes the results of the research. There are seven kinds of prepositions of place found in the students' speaking performance; they are at, on, in, near/close, behind and in front of. They are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. The Correct and Error Usage of Prepositions of Place

No	Prepositions	Correct	Error	Σ
1	At	35	38	73
2	On	47	35	82
3	In	52	25	77
4	Under	30	32	62
5	Near/close	33	31	64
6	Behind	34	32	66
7	In front of	38	29	67
Total (%)		269(54,79%)	222(45,21%)	491

Table 1 presents the percentage of the students' ability in using prepositions of place in speaking performance. There are 7 kinds of prepositions of place namely at, on, in, under, near/close, behind and in front of. The data shows that the students make 35 correct usage and 38 errors of preposition AT. The data shows that the students make 43 correct usage and 35 errors of preposition ON. The data shows that the students make 52 correct usage and 25 errors of preposition IN. The data shows that the students make 30 correct usage and 32 errors of preposition UNDER. The data shows that the students make 33 correct usage and 31 errors of preposition NEAR/CLOSE. The data shows that the students make 34 correct usage and 32 errors of preposition BEHIND. The data shows that the students make 38 correct usage and 29 errors of preposition IN FRONT OF. In general; the students make 491 of preposition of place. The total correct usage of preposition of place is 269 and the errors are 222. The percentage of the use of correct of preposition of place is 54,79%.

Based on the scores in the previous table, correct and error usage of prepositions of place in speaking performance, it is necessary to apply this chart to show the average percentage on each preposition of place in the following.

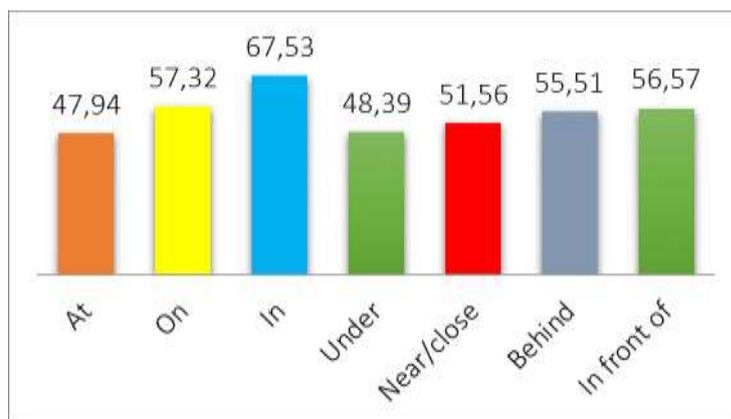


Figure 2. The Percentage on Each Kind of Prepositions of Place

The chart presents the percentage on each kind of prepositions of place in speaking performance. The figure show that there is no significant difference found in each preposition of place. The data show that highest percentage is preposition IN which is 67,53%. Then it is followed by prepositions ON which is 57,32%. The prepositions of BEHIND is 55,51% which is higher than NEAR/CLOSE which is 51,56% but it is lower than preposition IN FRONT OF

which is 56,57%. Preposition UNDER is 48,39% which higher than AT. The lowest percentage is preposition AT which is 47,94. This means that the students failed in using prepositions of UNDER and AT.

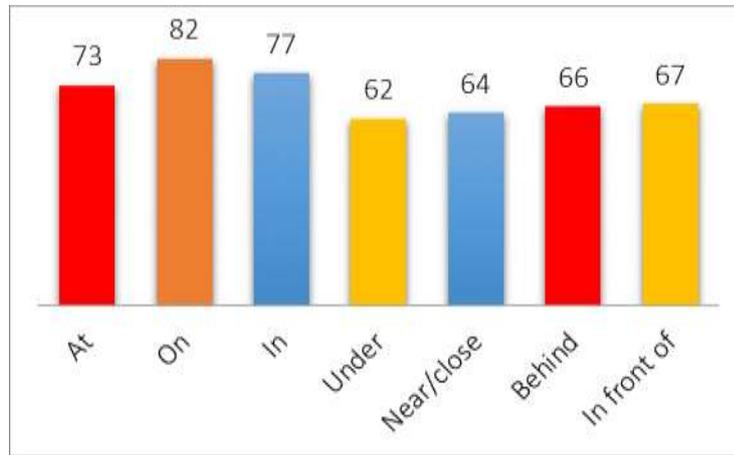


Figure 2. The Total Number Preposition of Place

This chart presents the students' total number on each kind of preposition of place that they use in their speaking performance. The chart show that the preposition ON is the highest number which is 82. Then it is followed by preposition IN which is 77. The preposition AT makes 73 numbers which is higher than preposition IN FRONT OF which is 67 numbers. While the prepositions NEAR/CLOSE is 64 which is lower than preposition IN FRONT OF but it is higher that preposition UNDER. So the lowest is preposition UNDER which is 62.

Table 2. The Scores on Prepositions of Place in Speaking Performance

No	Correct	Wrong	Total	Score	Level of Ability
1	13	9	22	59,09	Poor
2	12	11	23	52,17	Poor
3	16	7	23	69,56	Enough
4	7	15	22	31,81	Very Poor
5	10	10	20	50	Poor
6	9	11	20	45	Very Poor

7	13	12	25	52	Poor
8	9	7	16	56,25	Poor
9	8	9	17	42,1	Very Poor
10	11	10	21	53,38	Poor
11	10	11	21	47,61	Very Poor
12	8	10	18	44,44	Very Poor
13	12	8	20	60	Enough
14	11	10	21	52,38	Poor
15	12	8	20	60	Enough
16	9	10	19	47,37	Very Poor
17	16	8	24	75	Good
18	9	9	18	50	Poor
19	9	8	17	52,94	Poor
20	17	4	21	80,95	Very Good
21	12	9	21	57,14	Poor
22	17	6	23	73,91	Good
23	10	10	20	50	Poor
24	9	10	19	47,37	Very Poor
Σ	269	222	491	54,60	Poor

The table presents the student individual score in using preposition of place in speaking performance. There were 24 students do the test on speaking performance; 5 students passed in the test and 19 students failed in the test. The scores show that the highest score is 80,95 and the lowest score is 31. The students' average score is 54,60 and the level of ability is categorized as poor.

Based on the test scores, the level students' ability in the test, it is necessary to apply these scores into the level of ability which is presented in the following chart.

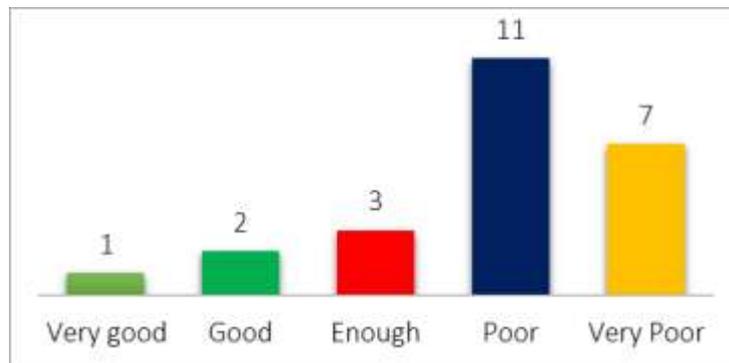


Figure 3. Distribution of Students' Level of Ability

This chart presents the distribution of the students' level of ability based on five categories of scoring namely 80-100 is categorized as very good; 70-79 is good, 60-69 is enough, 50-59 is poor and 0-49 is very poor and the passing grade is 60. The data showed that one student was categorized as very good; two students were categorized as good; three students were categorized as enough; eleven students were categorized poor and seven students were categorized as very poor. The category which got more frequency of the students was poor category and the least was very good category.

Regarding to the data in the previous part; it is important to present and to describe some of the data referring to the students' errors in using preposition of place in speaking performance.

a. On

Script : Hmmm.... the book is *in* the table

Correct : Hmmm.... the book is *on* the table

Script : There is my cup and it is *above* the cupboard. Next....

Correct : There is my cup and it *on* the cupboard. Next....

b. At

Script : My bag.... my bag is hanging *in* the door.

Correct : My bag.... my bag is hanging *at* the door.

Script : Merry is sitting *in* the back.

Correct : Merry is sitting **at** the back.

c. In

Script : Aaaaa... The rubbish box is **at** the corner behind the class.

Correct : Aaaaa... The rubbish box is **in** the corner behind the class.

d. Under

Script : O yaa..... the dictionary is **below** the table.

Correct : O yaa..... the dictionary is **under** the table

e. Near/Close

Script : My hand phone is **in front of** the dictionary

Correct : My hand phone is **near** the dictionary

Script : My pen is **behind** my book

Correct : My pen is **closed to** my book

f. Behind

Script : Hmmm... the bag is **on** the door.

Correct : Hmmm... the bag is **behind** the door.

g. In front of

Script : Look.... I am standing **opposite** my friends.

Correct : Look.... I am standing **in front of** my friends.

The data on the students' errors in using preposition of place in speaking performance presented in the previous part showed the students still have problems in using preposition of place. They did not recognize how to use each kind of prepositions of place. This is due the direct translation of their local language or perhaps the Indonesian language. E.g. in data (a) **in** the table (*di meja*) is incorrect so it must be **on** the table; the same case as in data (b) **in** the door (*di pintu*) is wrong; therefore it must be **at** the door. Data (c) **at** the corner behind the class (*di sudut*) is incorrect; so the correct is **in** the corner (in the room). In data (d) the student directly translated the word **below** as *di bawah*; **below** the table (*di bawah meja*) so it is wrong; the correct is **under** the table. Data (g) **opposite** my friends (*di depan teman-temanku*) is wrong and the correct is **in front of** my friends. In general, the students still have problems to place the correct preposition of place in good sentence. This is due to the numerous

preposition of place with different functions. For other reason is because the students interfaced of their mother language. Saravanan (2015) in his research found that the students are lack of understanding the usage and the inability to use an appropriate preposition to produce meaningful sentences. The errors committed by the students were related to syntax and semantics due to the lack of knowledge and practice in English.

Conclusion

The results of the research showed that there were 24 students do the test on speaking performance; 5 students passed in the test and 19 students failed in the test. The scores show that the highest score was 80,95 and the lowest score was 31. For each kind of preposition; the highest percentage was IN which was 67,53%. Then it is followed by ON which was 57,32%. The preposition BEHIND was 55,51% which was higher than NEAR/CLOSE which was 51,56% but it is lower than IN FRONT OF which was 56,57%. The preposition UNDER was 48,39% which is higher than AT. The lowest percentage is preposition AT which was 47,94%. In other hand; students were able to used preposition IN. Furthermore; the total correct usage of preposition of place was 269 and the errors were 222. The percentage of the use of correct of preposition of place was 54,79%. The findings showed that one student was categorized as very good; two students were categorized as good; three students were categorized as enough; eleven students were categorized poor and seven students were categorized as very poor. The students' average score was 54,60. The students' level of ability was categorized as poor. The result of the research showed that the students failed in using preposition of place in speaking performance.

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