

ABSTRACT

A preposition exists almost in every English sentence. However, the students do not know all the possible meanings of a preposition. Sometimes this makes them difficult to grasp the meaning of a sentence well. Basing on this situation, the writer focused her research on the difficulty levels of the meanings of prepositions *at*, *by*, and *with* as perceived by semester six students of English Department of IKIP Sanata Dharma in the academic year 1990/1991.

Basing on the topic above, the writer formulated four objectives of this research. The first to the third objectives were to find out whether or not prepositions *at*, *by* and *with* had the same levels of difficulty in their possible meanings respectively. The fourth was whether prepositions *at*, *by*, and *with* had the same levels of difficulty.

Basing on the problem formulation and the objectives above, the writer formulated four hypotheses. The first three hypotheses were that each of the prepositions *at*, *by* and *with* did not have the same levels of difficulty in their possible meanings. The fourth was prepositions *at*, *by*, and *with* did not have the same levels of difficulty.

By using the Chi Square Test, all the hypotheses were verified. Each of the prepositions *at*, *by*, and *with* did not have the same levels of difficulty in their possible meanings and the three prepositions did not have the same levels of difficulty.

The difficulty order of the meanings of preposition *at* from the easiest to the most difficult one was meaning 8 : price, amount, number, 6 : direction, 5 : manner in which a thing is done, 1 : expresses exactness of time or place, 9 : in many adverbial phrases to denote relations in space, time, manner, condition, position, 2 : position

in which anything remains or stands, point reached, 7 : origin, source, from, 4 : state or condition, and 3 : mode of occupation, concerned with, engaged in. For preposition *by*, the difficulty order of its meanings from the easiest to the most difficult one was meaning 1 : near, close to, at hand and 3 : time, 7 : in accordance with, in agreement with, 4 : agency, instrumentality, means, 2 : direction, position, 8 : according to measurement, number, or quantity, 5 : mode, manner, or method of an action or process, and 6 : through the help or by the authority. The difficulty order of the meanings of preposition *with* from the easiest to the most difficult one was meaning 7 : manner, to the accompaniment of, 2 : in the company of, reciprocity of action and 8 : cause, on account of, instrument, by means of, 3 : association in aims and interests, 5 : contrast, comparison and 11 : separation, disagreement, 4 : agreement in, or harmony of opinion, ideals, etc., 1 : opposition and 9 : union of time or action, 12 : in spite of, notwithstanding, 6 : quality or possession, 13 : indicating the object of an action or a state, etc., and 10 : in proportion to, in the same degree as, in the same direction as. For the three prepositions, the difficulty order from the easiest to the most difficult one was preposition *at*, then preposition *with*, and the last was preposition *by*.