

ABSTRACT

P. Sunarjo: THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE AND TIME IN FIRST SEMESTER ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY

In language learning, students are usually not free from errors as they progress from initial utterances to adult speech patterns (Chastain, 1976, p. 61). This is in line with the theory that language learning is a gradual process in which a learner develops his language competence step-by-step (Krashen and Terrell, 1983 in Alip, 1987). A learner will commit less and less errors as the level of proficiency increases (Nemser, 1974). A learner's grammatical errors decrease as their learning experience increases.

This research concentrated on the students' grammatical development in learning English writing during their study in the first semester of the English Department of Sanata Dharma University. It investigated how students' grammatical errors in the use of prepositions of place and time decrease gradually along with the increase of learning experience.

The methodology employed in the research was an ex-post-facto one because the data were already available which were taken from the subject of "Book Report A". Besides, the independent variable changed naturally without direct manipulation done by the researcher. A sample of twenty nine students was taken from the first semester English Department students of Sanata Dharma University of the academic year 1993/1994. During the research, the students were assigned to read story books, and then they were required to narrate the content of the book they read. The instruments for the data collection were a book report format and the story books read by the

students who were the subjects of the research. The book reports were done every three weeks to enable the researcher to observe their progress.

In the process of analysing the collected data, students' grammatical errors were scored and afterwards the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test was applied to the scores to check the students' development in reducing grammatical errors.

The conclusions of this research are:

For the first semester English Department students of Sanata Dharma University, along with the increase of learning experience,

1. their writing errors in the use of prepositions of place decrease significantly
2. their writing errors in the use of prepositions of place do not decrease significantly

In the discussion of the research findings, it is discussed: the students' strategies in writing, the acquisition of prepositions of place and time, and the sources of errors which cover: (1) interference of the students' first language, (2) over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, (4) incomplete application of rules, and (5) false concepts hypothesised.

Finally, the researcher suggests some treatments of each possible sources of errors. Additionally, the researcher suggests that even in functional writing course, grammar cannot and should not be neglected.