

THE ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS OF VERTICALLY RELATIVE POSITION  
AND  
THE PROBLEMS IN LEARNING THEM

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		v
CHAPTER		
I. INTRODUCTION		1
II. ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS OF VERTICALLY RELATIVE POSITION		8
II. 1. What A Preposition Is		8
II. 2. What Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position Are		10
II. 3. The Forms of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		11
II. 4. The Positions of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		12
II. 5. The Functions of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		15
II. 6. The Meanings of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		16
II. 7. The Modification of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		27
II. 8. The Syntactical Functions of Prepositional Phrase with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		28
II. 9. The Positions of Prepositional Phrases with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position		30
III. ERROR ANALYSIS		33

III. 1. The Source of Data	33
III. 2. The Means of Getting the Data	34
III. 3. The Standard for Evaluating the Data	35
III. 4. The Results of the Data Observation	37
III. 4. 1. The Achievement of Each Group in Each Test	38
III. 4. 2. Individual Achievement	39
III. 4. 3. The Students' Familiarity with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	45
III. 4. 4. The Types of Error and Their Percentages	46
III. 4. 4. 1. The Types of Error and Their Percentages Gained Using the Dictionaries and Grammar Books-Based Standard	47
III. 4. 4. 2. The Types of Error and Their Percentages Gained Using the Natives'-Based Standard	49
III. 5. The Sources of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	50
III. 5. 1. The Nature of the Target Language as the Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	50
III. 5. 1. 1. A Large Number of English Synonyms with Subtle Difference in Meaning	51
III. 5. 1. 2. The Identical Forms Shared by English Prepositions, Adverbials and Prefixes	52
III. 5. 2. The Interference from The Mother Tongue as the Other Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	53
III. 5. 2. 1. Indonesian Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	54

III. 5. 2. 2. The Difference between Indonesian and English Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	57
III. 5. 3. The Present Teaching as the Other Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position	59
IV. SUGGESTION	62
V. CONCLUSION	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
APPENDIX	

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult problems an English-learning student faces is the understanding of the usage of English prepositions. As some grammarians comment on the prepositions:

'Among those who teach or learn the English language, prepositions have earned a reputation for difficulty if not a downright unpredictability' (Pittman, 1966).1)

'As any English teacher well knows, our prepositions are a particularly troublesome lot to the non-native speakers of English' (MacCarthy, 1972).2)

From her experience as an English teacher, the writer finds that most of her students indeed face the same problem in learning prepositions. The type of English preposition the writer wants to highlight here is that expressing a relative position in a vertical direction, which for the sake of ease, will further be called prepositions of vertically relative position. Those included in this type are above, over, on (the) top of, below, under, beneath and underneath.

#### Background

English prepositions of vertically relative position can be classified into two groups of synonym, i. e. one with the central meaning 'higher than' and the other 'lower than'. The first includes above, over and on (the)

top of, while the second below, under, beneath and underneath. The prepositions of the same group of synonym have subtle difference in meaning. For example:

The window is over the table

The picture is above the table

The preposition 'over' in the first sentence implies that the window is vertically above the table, but 'above' in the second may or may not imply vertically.

The writer notices that such a small difference described above makes her students confused in using the prepositions. This fact seems to be in line with what Muhammad Raji Zughouli states in his article 'Teaching English Prepositions':

'Sometimes the difference in meaning is so subtle that it becomes difficult for the students to distinguish among the shades of meaning indicated by different prepositions in different context'.3)

The fact supported by Zughouli's statement above leads the writer to a question: Are the English prepositions of vertically relative position really difficult for Indonesian students to learn? This question then encourages her further to make, as the topic of this thesis, an analysis on the problems that the students find in learning the prepositions.

#### Aim

This thesis is aimed to find out what kinds of



difficulties Indonesian students possibly find in learning prepositions of vertically relative position, and what causes may account for the difficulties. Based on the findings, it will then propose a way of teaching the prepositions to improve their present teaching.

### Scope

In this thesis the writer will first describe the English prepositions of vertically relative position. The description will then be followed by the presentation of the results of the analysis on the errors made by the students. Based on the results, the writer will discuss the possible sources of difficulty in learning the prepositions. Finally, the writer will talk about a way of teaching them which, hopefully, will be able to help the English teachers to improve their teaching.

### Methodology

The writer first composed three kinds of tests, namely completion, translation and sentence-production tests. These tests were given to the first semester students of S1, D2 and D3 programs of English Department of IKIP Sanata Dharma in order to get the data necessary for the analysis.

Before giving the tests to the students, the writer gave the completion and translation tests to some native

speakers. The answers given by the natives were used as one of the standards for evaluating the students' answers in the two tests. Another standard which was used for evaluating all the three tests is English dictionaries and grammar books.

After giving the tests to the students and getting the necessary data, the writer began evaluating the students' answers by using the two standards. She separated the correct items from the erroneous ones. Then the number of occurrence of each preposition in the correct items was counted in order to know the students' familiarity with the prepositions. The percentages of the correct items of each group in each test were also counted. In this way, the writer could gain the group achievement. Afterwards, she counted the individual percentages of correct items in each test in order to know the students' individual achievement. The results of the counting are presented in two separate columns according to the standard used.

In the next step, the writer analyzed the erroneous items to find out what types of error the students made in using the prepositions. She also counted the percentage of each type of error. The results were then put into two tables according to the standard used.

Finally, based on the results, the writer will try to find out the sources of difficulty the students found in learning the prepositions.

## Organization

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents the background, aim, scope, methodology, organization, theoretical framework and basis of judgement of this thesis.

The second chapter talks about the description of English prepositions of vertically relative position. The description is made based on the references listed in the Bibliography.

The third chapter gives necessary explanation on the source of data, the means of data, and the standards for evaluating the students' answers. These will then be followed by the presentation of the students' achievement, both in group and as individuals, the students' familiarity with the prepositions, the types of error and their percentages and the possible sources of difficulty in learning the prepositions.

The fourth chapter discusses a way of teaching the prepositions which is expected to be able to improve the present teaching of the prepositions.

The fifth chapter presents the conclusion the writer can draw from what has been discussed.

## Theoretical Framework

The theory used in this thesis is error analysis. Error analysis systematically describes and explains

errors made by the learner of a foreign language. It gives us evidence of his competence in the language. We also gain valuable information concerning the learner's difficulties at different stages. Such information is important for the planning of courses and the construction of teaching materials.

As S. Pit Corder states in his book 'Introducing Applied Linguistics':

'Errors provide feedback, they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learnt or taught and need further attention. They enable him to decide whether he can move to the next item on the syllabus or whether he must devote more time to the item he has been working on. This is the day-to-day value of errors. But in terms of broader planning and with a new group of learners they provide information for designing a remedial syllabus or a program of reteaching'.4)

From Corder's statement above, it is clear that errors made by the students should not be viewed as problems. They serve as the feedback the teacher needs in measuring the effectiveness of his teaching which will further be valuable for making a remedy.

Thus, the errors the students make in using prepositions, in this case those expressing a relative position in a vertical direction, should not be regarded as something unvaluable and therefore should be avoided. Making errors is an inevitable part of learning.5) The errors the students make can be analyzed to find out what difficulties they find in learning the prepositions. This

will then enable the teacher to predict the possible causes of the difficulties and to design a remedial program to overcome them.

#### Basis of Judgement

The judgment the writer made on the correctness of the usage of the prepositions in her analysis is mainly based on the description presented in Chapter II by reason of the fact that grammar plays an important rule in the teaching of English in Indonesia.

#### References:

- 1) quoted from the article 'Teaching English Prepositions' written by Muhammad Raji Zughouli, Forum, Volume XVII. Number 3, July 1979. p. 24.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Ibid, p. 25.
- 4) S. Pit Corder, Introducing Applied Linguistics, England: Penguin Book Ltd., 1973, p.265.
- 5) Heidi Dulay, et. al., Language Two, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p.138

## CHAPTER II

### ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS OF VERTICALLY RELATIVE POSITION

#### II. 1. What A Preposition Is

There have already been many grammarians who provide the definitions of a preposition. Their definitions are too numerous to be presented here. Therefore, the writer will quote just some of them. These definitions will then serve as the base of the writer's own definition that will be presented at the end of this part.

The first definition that we are going to have here is that of W. Stanard Allan. Allan in his book 'Living English Structure' says:

'Prepositions usually come before the words they control. They indicate various relationships between words and phrases, and the most usual being those of time and space (position, direction, etc.) and mental or emotional attitudes. They can also come after the words they govern, notably in questions and relative clauses:

- What can I cut the bread with?
- This is the book I was telling you about.'1)

The definition above does not clearly describe what a preposition is because in the definition Allan concerns himself with the position and the function of a preposition only:

- position: prepositions usually come before the words they control, and they can also come after the words they govern, notably in questions and relative clauses.

- function: they indicate various relationships between words and phrases, at the most usual being those of time and space (position, direction, etc.) and mental or emotional attitudes.

J. B. Heaton in his book 'Prepositions and Adverbial Particles' quoted by Isaias Futwembun in his thesis 'A Study of English Prepositions and Some Suggestions for Their Teaching to The Indonesian Learners of English' offers a clearer definition:

'A preposition is a word which shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence. Prepositions are usually placed before the noun or pronoun which they govern.' 2)

Though Heaton's is clearer than Allan's, it does not suit the real forms of prepositions because prepositions may consist of more than one word. Besides, they show a relationship broader than that between a noun or pronoun and another word of a sentence, that is, a relationship between a noun phrase or a clause and another part of or the whole of the sentence. Moreover, prepositions may be placed not only before the noun or pronoun they govern but also after them in such constructions as WH-clauses, relative clauses, WH-questions, exclamations, passives, infinitive clauses, and ing-clauses.

Another definition that the writer will quote here is that of Randolph Quirk, et. al. In their book 'A Grammar of Contemporary English' they say:

'Most of common English prepositions such as in, at, for are simple, i. e. consist of one word. Other prepositions consisting of more than one word are called complex.'3)

They also say

'In most terms, a preposition expresses the relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement.'4)

and

'Of the various types of the relational meaning those of time and place are the most prominent and easy to identify. Other relationships such as instrument and cause may also be recognize although it is difficult to describe prepositional meanings systematically in terms of such labels.'5)

also

'Normally a preposition must be followed by its complement, but there are some circumstances in which this does not happen, because the complement has to take first position in the clause, or absent through ellipsis: WH-questions, exclamations, passives, infinitive clauses and ing-clauses.'6)

What Quirk and his friends say above has shown clearly what a preposition is.

In the attempt to present a more united but simpler definition, the writer suggests the following:

'A preposition, in its simple or complex form, is a word or words which express various relationships such as time, place, instrument and cause, between its complement (a pronoun, noun, noun phrase, or clause) and another part or the whole of the sentence by being placed either before or after its complement.'

## II. 2. What Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position Are



Before going further, it would be better for us to know what the words making up the phrase 'vertically relative position' mean. According to A. S. Hornby in 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English' the word 'position' means 'place where something or somebody is or stands, especially in relation to others'.7) He also states that 'relative' means 'comparative which further implies the need of the existence of two objects or more'.8) Concerning the word 'vertical', he says that it means 'at a right angle to the earth's surface or to another line or plane'.9)

Based on the meanings of the words and the definition stated in II. 1., the writer now proposes the following:

'Prepositions of vertically relative position are words which, in their simple and complex forms, occur either before or after their complements, and show a vertical positional relationship between two objects, i.e. one being that represented by the prepositional complement which is supposed to be of some height and the other being another part of the sentence whose position is compared to the position of the prepositional complement'.

## II. 3. The Forms of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

Concerning the forms of prepositions, Randolph Quirk et. al. state that there are two groups of forms into which prepositions can be classified, namely simple and

complex forms.10) The classification into these forms is made on the basis of the number of words making up the prepositions. The prepositions consisting of one word are put into the simple form, while those comprising more than one word are classified into the complex. In the case of prepositions of vertically relative position, those included in the simple form are above, over, beneath, under, underneath and below, and that belonging to the complex is on (the) top of.

#### II. 4. The Positions of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

It is clear from their name that prepositions normally come before their complements. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, however, there are some cases where they may be placed after their complements. In relation to the prepositions in question, such a placement can occur in relative clauses in informal conversation. Let us see the examples below:

The tree which we played under yesterday has been cut down.

The boy kicked the box which his cat was sleeping on the top of.

In the first sentence, the preposition 'under' in the relative clause 'which we played under yesterday' is put after its complement, the relative pronoun 'which', because the complement must take the first position in the

clause. For the same reason, the preposition on the top of in the second sentence comes after its complement 'which'. This placement of preposition may also occur in WH-clauses as shown by the following sentences:

What country the jet-fighter is now flying above cannot be detected.

Nobody knew which tree the old man had buried his money beneath.

The WH-clauses in the sentences above are 'What country the jet-fighter is now flying above' and 'which tree the old man had buried his money beneath'. Since the prepositional complements 'What country' in the former clause and 'which tree' in the latter must be put at the beginning of the clauses, the prepositions 'above' and 'beneath' are placed at the end of the clauses.

In WH-questions the prepositions may also be treated in the same way as those in the cases just described above. This can be seen in the examples below:

Whose face did you spread my handkerchief over?

Whom do you think you are above?

The complement of the preposition 'over' in the first sentence is 'Whose face', and that of 'above' in the second is 'Whom'. Another case where the prepositions can be placed after their complements is when they are used in exclamations. Notice the following sentences:

What a strong pressure he is under!

What a large landscape the mountain is towering over!

Here, the complements in the exclamation above are 'What a strong pressure' for the preposition 'under' and 'What a large landscape' for the preposition 'over'. The next examples show another construction where the placement of preposition occurs.

England was reigned over by Queen Victoria in the 19th century.

The Republic of Fiji was ruled over by military force last year.

The preposition 'over' in the passive constructions above comes after its complements 'England' in the first sentence and 'The Republic of Fiji' in the second for the same reason as what has been stated before. Beside the cases above, there is still another case where this prepositional position occurs, namely when the prepositions are used in infinitive clauses. The sentences are the representative examples of this case.

That bridge is dangerous to hide beneath.

Tables are fun for children to crawl under.

The complement for the preposition 'beneath' in the first sentence is 'That bridge', while that for 'under' in the second is 'tables'. As in other constructions previously described, the prepositions here are put after their

complements since the complements must take the first position in the sentences.

## II. 5. The Functions of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

A preposition of vertically relative position relates its complement to another part of the sentence in terms of position in a vertical direction. The prepositional complement can take the form of a noun, noun phrase, pronoun or clause, and the part of the sentence it is related to can be in the form of a noun, noun phrase, pronoun, clause, verb or adjective. The example below shows how the prepositions function to relate the possible forms of the prepositional complements to those of another part of the sentence.

Bridges over big rivers are more difficult to build than those over small rivers.

In this sentence the prepositional complements 'big rivers' in 'over big rivers' and 'small rivers' in 'over small rivers' take the same form, i. e. a noun phrase, and the first complement is related to a noun 'bridges', while the second to a pronoun 'those'. The following examples show the further function of the prepositions.

She is looking at the thick rug under John.

The boy let his dog sleep beneath a tree.

In the first sentence the prepositional complement 'John'

is a noun, while the part of the sentence the preposition 'under' relates it to is a noun phrase, i. e. 'the thick rug'. In the second sentence the prepositional complement takes the form of a noun phrase 'the tree' and is related to the verb 'sleep'. Now let us notice the sentences below:

She told me the problem and I was really enthusiastic over it.

Does she have to value what you say above what others say?

The prepositional complement in the first sentence is a pronoun, namely 'it', while the part of the sentence the preposition 'over' relates it to is an adjective 'enthusiastic'. The second example shows other possible forms of the prepositional complement and the part of the sentence it is related to. In the sentence both are clauses.

## II. 6. The Meanings of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

There are two kinds of prepositional meaning that we are going to talk about in this part, namely literal and figurative meanings. The references of the meanings used here are Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Webster's Illustrated Dictionary, Usage and Abusage, Modern English Grammar, Standard Handbook of Synonyms, Antonyms and Prepositions, and Standard

Handbook of Prepositions, Conjunctions, Relative Pronouns  
and Adverbs.

The first preposition, the meanings of which we are going to deal with is above. The literal meaning of this preposition is 'higher than the object of reference'. Notice the example below:

There is a hill above the valley.

Bob put his bookcase above John's table.

The preposition 'above' in the first example denotes that the hill is located somewhere around the plane higher than the valley, and that in the second denotes that Bob's bookcase is located somewhere in the space higher than the table. Beside the literal meaning, above may also express a figurative meaning 'higher in rank than' as in

The rank of ambassador is above that of minister. 11)

A general is above a colonel.

Another figurative meaning above shows is 'greater in measurement of quality or quantity than'. The examples below show this meaning:

Yanto's competence is above the average.

The ship weighs above ten tons.

By having the preposition 'above', the first sentence wants to tell us that Yanto's competence is greater than the common standard of competence, while the second tells

that the weight of the ship is greater than ten tons.  
Above may also indicate the sense of 'out of the reach of  
(because too good, too great)' as in

His conduct has always been above suspicion.

His work is above all praise.

The first sentence with the preposition 'above' means  
'nobody suspects his behaviour because it is too good to  
be suspected' and the second means 'his work is too  
great that it is out of the reach of all praise'. Another  
figurative meaning above indicates is 'too proud, too  
good, etc. for' as in

He is above meanness and deceit. 12)

If you want to learn, you must not be above asking  
questions. 13)

With 'above' the first sentence means 'He does not show  
meanness or practice deceit' and the second means 'You  
must not be too proud to ask questions'. Beside the  
meanings previously described, above also denotes  
'beyond' as in

Herry is a clever student. He is also very diligent.

Above all those things, Herry is very helpful

and 'more than' as in

A soldier should value honour above life.

The second preposition we are going to talk about is



over . This preposition applies to that which is on a level, directly and vertically, higher than the object of reference. The examples below show this meaning:

I hang the lamp over the statue.

The clock is over the guitar.

These examples tell us that the lamp and the clock are respectively located vertically and directly above the statue and the guitar. Over also indicates the meaning of 'covering contact, partly or completely' as in

There is a rug lying over the sofa.

The rug in the sentence above may either partly or completely cover the sofa. In the following example, the meaning of over is 'in every part of (especially when preceded by all)':

Snow is falling over the North of England

He spilt the milk over his coat. 14)

Over may also means 'using or by means of' as shown by the example below.

I do not want to say it over the telephone

Besides, the preposition denotes 'greater than' as in

He spoke for over an hour.

He is over fifty.

The first sentence means 'He spoke more than an hour' and the second 'His age is more than fifty'. The other meanings the preposition has are 'higher in rank than' as in

Mr. Moore is over me in the office

which means 'Mr. Moore is my chief', and 'connected with' as in

I have some difficulties over my income tax

which means that the difficulties I have are in connection with my income tax. Over also denotes the general sense of 'across', that is, 'on the other side of', 'to the other side of', and 'through any part of the length of', as shown by the following examples:

He lived over the mountain

He jumped over the walls

The plane fled over the plain

The first sentence means that 'He lived on the other side of the mountain', the second 'He jumped to the other side of the wall', and the third 'The plane fled from end to end of the plain'.

In relation to the meanings of the two prepositions just talked about, there are some important differences between them that we should know. The two prepositions differ literally in that over implies vertically, while above may or may not.<sup>15)</sup> Thus, the entire second story of

a building is above, but only a small part of it is directly over, one who stands on the ground floor. In addition, the two prepositions are different in that over can also mean 'touching' or 'covering', while above cannot have this meaning. Notice the following sentences:

She put the rug over the sofa

She put the rug above the sofa

In the first sentence the rug may either partly or completely cover the sofa. The rug in the second sentence, however, does not touch the sofa as it is put somewhere, on the place higher than the sofa. Then concerning the figurative meanings above and over agree in the idea of superiority but differ in the immediacy of reference. For example, the rank of an ambassador is above that of minister but the Iran ambassador is not over the Iraq minister. The Iran ambassador stands in the latter relation to his subordinates only. Beside the difference described above, the two prepositions also differ in the idea of 'more than'. Here, above indicates only level, while over implies an evaluation of the level (:'whole', 'as much as').<sup>16)</sup> The following sentences are the examples of the difference:

These arrangements are different when the guests are above 500.

He is considerably over 172 cm in height.

Now we come to the meanings of the third preposition on (the) top of. The literal meaning of this preposition is 'over, resting on' as shown in

Put the red book on the top of the others.

The bag is on the top of the big box.

The only figurative meaning of over is 'in addition to':

He borrowed Rp. 50,000 from me for the journey and then, on top of that, asked me if he could borrow my car.

The sentence means that in addition to borrowing the money he asked me if he could borrow my car.

In their literal meaning over and on(the)top of may differ in that over can be used to express both, contiguous and non-contiguous relation, while on(the)top of cannot. The latter expresses a contiguous relation only. Take the sentences below as the examples:

The lamp is hanging over the box.

The glass is on the top of the box.

From the picture above, it is clear that the lamp does not touch the box but the glass does.

The next preposition, the meaning of which we are going to discuss, is below. This preposition applies to that which is anywhere in a plane lower than the object

of reference. For example:

Parts of Holland are below sea-level.17)

The sentence means that parts of Holland lie on a level lower than sea-level. Below also denotes 'lower in measurement of quantity or quality than' as in

Your work is below the average

There is nothing below Rp. 500 in this shop.

The first sentence means 'Your work is lower than the common standard of work', and the second 'there is nothing costing lower than Rp. 500 in this shop'. Another meaning below has is 'lower in rank, class than' as shown in

The rank of sergeant is below that of major.

He hated people who were below him.

With 'below', the first sentence means that the rank of sergeant is lower than that of major, while the second 'He hated people from the class lower than his'. Below may also denotes the sense of 'unbefitting or lowering to'. See the examples below

He thought it below his dignity to answer rude remarks.

The sentence means that answering rude remarks lowers his dignity. Beside the meanings described above, the preposition denotes 'deeper than' as in

Language has to be studied below the surface.

This sentence means that we study language not only to be able to use it in communication but also to know further the process of producing it in our minds. Another meaning below has is 'to the lower level than' which is usually used with verbs of movement as in

Don't go below the deck!

which means 'You may go anywhere but the place lower than the deck'.

The next preposition is under. This preposition applies to that which is in a position, vertically and directly, lower than the object of reference.

Sue lives on the floor under mine.

The sentence wants to tell us that Sue lives on the floor directly and vertically below the floor where I live. Under also denotes 'at a place lower than' but with the sense of 'covering either partly or wholly' as in

Under the veil was a lovely face

which means that the face is covered by the veil. Another meaning of the preposition is 'lower in measurement than'. The example below shows this.

The ship weighs under 100 tons.

Now notice the following:

The major ordered the captain under him to help me.

'Under' in this example indicates 'lower in rank' with the sense of subordination. Thus, the captain in the sentence is the major's subordinate. Another meaning of under is 'subjected to' as in

He is the chief of an office under the government.

Like above and over, below and under have some differences concerning their literal and figurative meanings. Literally, below and under differ in that under implies vertically, while below may or may not. So, the whole visible landscape, for example, is below but only a small portion of it under, an observer in a balloon.<sup>18)</sup> Beside the difference described above, they have another difference: under sometimes implies actual covering but below does not. For example:

Parts of Holland are below sea-level.

They are standing under the tree.

In their figurative senses, below and under agree in expressing inferiority but differ in the immediacy of the relation expressed; thus, one officer may be below another in rank, without being under him in immediate subordination.<sup>19)</sup> Similarly, in reference to deficiency below is commonly used in general, while under in more specific, relation as in

A paper under ten pages is below the standard.

Another preposition the meanings of which we are going to talk about is beneath. This preposition denotes the sense of 'under or surmounted by'. For example,

They sleep beneath the same roof  
which means

They sleep under the same roof

and

The boat lay beneath the tall cliff  
which means

The boat was surmounted by the tall cliff.

Beneath also denotes subjection as in

We shall do well beneath his guiding hands.

and 'lower in quality, dignity, etc. than' which is now usually replaced by below, as shown by the following examples:

My performance is beneath hers  
meaning that mine is inferior to hers.

I don't like mixing with people beneath me  
meaning that I do not like mixing with people who are from the class lower than mine.

Beneath also indicates 'undeserving of, lowering to' as in

Nothing is beneath the notice of a businessman  
meaning that nothing is undeserving of a businessman's notice.



She married beneath her  
meaning that the marriage brought her into a lower social  
class.

In the literal sense, beneath is more or less the  
equivalent of both below and under (in some senses), but  
especially of under. However, below and under now tend to  
replace the other synonymous prepositions. The only senses  
in which beneath is preferred are those denoting  
subjection and 'undeserving of, lowering to'.20)

The last preposition we now talk about is underneath.  
This preposition refers to the idea of close under, so as  
to be hidden or covered, as in

There are mines underneath the town.

He swept the dirt underneath the rug.

Underneath generally expresses a contiguous relation.21)  
It is virtually and practically equivalent to under.  
Without the association of 'hidden' or 'covered', it is  
not frequent to use underneath. This preposition is rarely  
used in a metaphorical sense and even then keeping the  
local and literal meaning prominent. 22) For example:

He staggered underneath a burden.

## II. 7. The Modification of Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

The prepositions are subject to modification.  
Therefore, they may be preceded by intensifiers as shown

by the following sentences:

Now their footsteps could be heard directly above my head.

His bedroom in the apartment is exactly under mine.

## II. 8. The Syntactical Functions of Prepositional Phrases with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

There are some syntactical functions the prepositional phrases have. Firstly, they may function as postmodifiers in noun phrase. For example:

The children under the tree are my cousins

He swept the dust underneath the rug

The prepositional phrase 'under the tree' in the first sentence modifies the noun 'The children' in the noun phrase 'The children under the tree', while 'underneath the rug' modifies 'the dust' in the noun phrase 'the dust underneath the rug'. Secondly, the prepositional phrases function as verb complements. In this function, the preposition is required before a noun can follow the verb of the sentence. Notice the examples below:

Queen Victoria reigned over England in the 19th century

He ruled over his people with an iron hand

Mary is under the tree

Besides, the prepositional phrases may act as the

complements of adjectives, as in

My sister is enthusiastic over my problem

He is busy over his work

and as adjuncts as shown by the following examples:

I met him under the bridge.

She hung the lamp above my bookcase.

In addition, the prepositional phrases also function as conjuncts, marking the end of an ascending order or, in other words, they function as climatic additive conjuncts. 23). For example:

- Sugianto is well-known in this city. He has been a member of the city council for many years. Above all, he is a football player of international reputation.
- He borrowed Rp. 50,000 from me for the journey, and then, on the top of it, asked me if he could borrow my car.

The prepositional phrases may also functions as subjects as in

On the top of the mountain is very cold

Under the bed is very dirty

and as prepositional complements as in

The view from above the shore is magnificent

I took the photograph from beneath the rock

## II. 9. The Positions of Prepositional Phrases with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

In most cases, apart from adverbials, the syntactic function of a prepositional phrase virtually determines its position. 24) A phrase postmodifying an element, for example, normally follows it directly. This applies too to the prepositional phrases talked about. For example:

The bookcase under the picture is made of wood

As an adverbial, however, the prepositional phrase is mobile. 25) It means that the prepositional phrase is able to appear in a range of optional positions. As an adjunct, for example, the prepositional phrase may be put either at the end or before the subject. In this case, the most frequent is the end position:

A dog lay fast asleep beneath a tree

though initial position is also common:

Beneath a tree a dog lay fast asleep

As conjuncts, the more common position is before the subject as in

Above all, he swore he didn't steal it

In this position the conjunct is usually separated from what follows by a comma in writing.

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### CHAPTER III

#### ERROR ANALYSIS

As stated in the Introduction, this chapter will first deal with the necessary data for the error analysis of prepositions of vertically relative position. This will then be followed by the analysis of the possible causes of difficulty in learning the prepositions.

#### III. 1. The Source of Data

The necessary data for the error analysis were provided by the first semester students of the English Department of IKIP Sanata Dharma in early September 1987. They are of S1, D2 and D3 programs. The writer hopes they are quite representative to be the source of data about the difficulty in learning the prepositions faced by Indonesian students. This is based on the reason that the students are graduates of many Senior High Schools in Indonesia and are supposed to have learned the prepositions in question.

The following table shows the number of the students who provided the data.

Program	Group	Number of Students
S1	A	47
S1	B	40
D2	-	32
D3	-	47

### III. 2. The Means of Getting the Data

To obtain the data required for her error analysis, the writer used three kinds of test, that is, completion, translation and sentence-production tests. These three tests were given to all the students of the three programs.

The writer chose the tests because she wanted to give the students tests from the less productive to the more productive ones in order to find out how far the students master the prepositions of vertically relative position with and without guidance which is in the form of contexts provided by the writer.

In the completion test, the contexts provided are in the form of pictures and sentences. The writer here gave the meanings of some words considered difficult for the students. In this test the students concerned themselves more with the meanings and the forms of the prepositions as they just needed to fill in the blanks.

In the translation test, however, there is no picture provided. Instead, the writer gave some Indonesian sentences which the students had to change into English. Here, the writer also gave the meanings of some difficult words. They concerned themselves not only with the meanings and the forms, but also with the functions and the positions of the prepositions.

While in the two tests above the writer gave contexts to the students, there is completely no context provided



in the sentence-production test. However, the students here had to pay attention too to the forms, meanings, functions and positions of the prepositions as they did in the translation test. Considering it is still difficult for the students to produce sentences themselves, the writer was still willing to help them whenever they found difficulty in finding the English words for the Indonesian words they wanted to use in their sentences. In this case, the writer's help was limited to separate words only, not to sentences.

As the students may only immitate what is written in the completion and translation tests, the writer gave the students the sentence-production test first. After they had finished doing the tests, the students were then given the other two tests.

The total number of the items of all the tests is 35. This number comprises 14 items for the completion test, 14 items for the translation test and 7 sentences for the sentence-production. In the completion and translation tests, each preposition has to come up twice, while in the sentence-production just one.

The three tests for getting the data can be found in the Appendix at the last pages of this thesis.

### III. 3. The Standard for Evaluating the Data

There are two standards the writer used for evaluating the students' answers. One is the standard which is based on dictionaries and grammar books. This

standard is used to evaluate the students' answers in the three tests. The other standard is the answers given by some native speakers in the completion and translation tests.

The writer here asked eight native speakers to fill in each blank in the completion test with prepositions of vertically relative position as many as possible. She also asked them to check the English sentences she made from the Indonesian sentences in the translation test and to add some more prepositions talked about, which they thought were also appropriate and correct for the contexts given in the sentences.

The eight native speakers involved in the tests are all English teachers. Four of them are the teachers of SELTU (Staff of English Language Teaching Unit) of the University of Gajah Mada. The other four native speakers are the teachers of English Department of IKIP Sanata Dharma.

The writer used the natives'-based standard here because of the reason that the natives' answers concerning the choice of prepositions suited to the contexts given might be different from what is considered correct by grammarians and what is written in dictionaries. Besides, the writer wants to know how the students' achievement is in using the prepositions commonly used by the natives when it is compared to theirs gained using the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard.

Considering that the natives might produce sentences completely different from the students', and hence their answers couldn't be used as a standard, the writer didn't give them the sentence-production test. Thus, the natives'-based standard was used for evaluating the students' answers in the other two tests only.

Since each native-speaker seemed to have their own choices of prepositions in question, the writer then determined that the forms whose frequency of occurrence in an item can reach 75% are regarded as the standard for evaluating the students' answers.

#### III. 4. The Result of the Data Observation

As stated before, the tests given to the students have different levels of productivity. In the completion and translation tests, students are determined to apply their knowledge of prepositions in question to every item according to the contexts given. They have no choice to avoid meeting contexts in which they found difficulty in determining the right prepositions. This makes the possibility of making errors greater. On the other hand, the sentence-production test the students could apply their knowledge of the prepositions to contexts which are easy and obviously correct to them. This decreases the possibility of making errors. Based on this reason, the tests were not be treated the same. Therefore, the data gained from each test will be presented separately.

Since there are two standards used here, however,

there will be two kinds of achievement that will be presented together. To make the presentation clear, the writer will use the sign 'GB' for the achievement gained using the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard and 'NB' for that gained using the natives'-based standard.

### III. 4. 1. The Achievement of Each Group in Each Test

The following tables show how the achievement of each group in each test is.

#### A. Completion Test

Program	Group	Number of Items	Number of Correct Items		Percentage of Correct Items	
			GB	NB	GB	NB
S1	A	658	490	412	75	61.31
S1	B	560	442	404	78.93	72.14
D2	-	448	297	242	66.30	54
D3	-	658	468	394	71.12	59.88

#### B. Translation Test

Program	Group	Number of Items	Number of Correct Items		Percentage of Correct Items	
			GB	NB	GB	NB
S1	A	658	454	404	70	60.12
S1	B	560	337	308	60.18	55
D2	-	448	237	208	52.90	46.43
D3	-	658	395	347	60.03	52.74

### C. Sentence-Production Test

Program	Group	Number of Items	Number of Correct Items	Percentage of Correct Items
S1	A	329	202	61
S1	B	280	217	77.50
D2	-	224	115	51.34
D3	-	329	218	66.26

From the tables above, it can be seen that it is the only the students of S1 who can achieve 75% correct items in the completion test through the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard, while it is only those of S1 group B who can achieve 75% correct items in the sentence-production test. Surprisingly, none can achieve 75% correct items in the completion nor translation tests through the natives'-based standard. From the result, it can be concluded that most of the students do not master prepositions of vertically relative position and that their achievement gained using the natives'-based standard is lower than theirs gained using the other standard.

### III. 4. 2. Individual Achievement

The tables below show more clearly how the students' achievement is in mastering the prepositions talked about individually and in each test. Each table shows the individual achievement of each group.

S1 A Percentage of Correct Items	Completion		Translation		Sentence- Production
	GB	NB	GB	NB	
95-100	-	-	-	-	-
90-94	2	-	2	-	-
85-89	8	-	1	-	5
80-84	-	-	-	-	-
75-79	12	3	14	4	-
70-74	12	9	8	10	-
65-69	-	-	-	-	-
60-64	7	16	9	11	-
55-59	2	8	6	6	14
50-54	2	5	-	6	-
45-49	-	-	-	-	-
40-44	1	4	4	1	7
35-39	-	1	3	4	-
30-34	-	-	-	-	-
25-29	-	-	-	3	3
20-24	1	-	-	1	-
15-19	-	-	-	-	-
10-14	-	1	-	-	2
5-9	-	-	-	-	-
0-4	-	-	-	-	-

S1 B Percentage of Correct Items	Completion		Translation		Sentence- Production
	GB	NB	GB	NB	
95-100	1	1	-	-	5
90-94	4	1	1	1	-
85-89	9	8	-	-	18
80-84	-	-	-	-	-
75-79	14	8	5	2	-
70-74	6	9	5	5	9
65-69	-	-	-	-	-
60-64	5	6	10	4	-
55-59	-	2	9	9	3
50-54	-	4	4	9	-
45-49	-	-	-	-	-
40-44	1	-	2	6	3
35-39	-	1	2	2	-
30-34	-	-	-	-	-
25-29	-	-	1	-	2
20-24	-	-	1	2	2
15-19	-	-	-	-	-
10-14	-	-	-	-	-
5-9	-	-	-	-	-
0-4	-	-	-	-	-

D2 Percentage of Correct Items	Completion		Translation		Sentence- Production
	GB	NB	GB	NB	
95-100	-	-	-	-	-
90-94	-	-	-	-	-
85-89	1	1	1	-	3
80-84	-	-	-	-	-
75-79	6	6	2	-	-
70-74	7	7	7	7	9
65-69	-	-	-	-	-
60-64	8	8	-	2	-
55-59	7	7	5	1	6
50-54	3	3	3	4	-
45-49	-	-	10	3	11
40-44	-	-	3	8	-
35-39	-	-	-	-	-
30-34	-	-	-	5	1
25-29	-	-	1	2	-
20-24	-	-	-	-	-
15-19	-	-	-	-	-
10-14	-	-	-	-	2
5-9	-	-	-	-	-
0-4	-	-	-	-	-



D3 Percentage of Correct Items	Completion		Translation		Sentence- Production
	GB	NB	GB	NB	
95-100	2	-	-	-	4
90-94	-	-	-	-	-
85-89	12	1	3	1	4
80-84	-	-	-	-	-
75-79	5	8	5	2	-
70-74	10	6	7	4	8
65-69	-	-	-	-	-
60-64	7	5	7	8	-
55-59	6	10	9	9	-
50-54	2	10	7	7	-
45-49	-	-	-	-	-
40-44	-	-	-	-	-
35-39	-	-	-	-	-
30-34	3	4	6	7	6
25-29	-	-	1	2	4
20-24	-	-	-	1	-
15-19	-	-	-	-	-
10-14	-	-	-	1	3
5-9	-	-	-	-	-
0-4	-	-	-	-	-

To give a clearer idea of the percentage of the students who managed to achieve 75% correct items in each test, the writer presents the following tables.

### A. Completion Test

Prog.	Group	Numb. of Students	Numb. of Students Who Achieve 75% Correct Items		Percentage	
			GB	NB	GB	NB
S1	A	47	22	3	46.81	6.38
S1	B	40	28	18	70	45
D2	-	32	7	7	21.88	21.88
D3	-	47	19	9	40.43	19.15

### B. Translation Test

Prog.	Group	Numb. of Students	Numb. of Students Who Achieve 75% Correct Items		Percentage	
			GB	NB	GB	NB
S1	A	47	17	5	36.17	10.64
S1	B	40	6	3	15	7.5
D2	-	32	3	-	9.38	0
D3	-	37	8	3	17.02	6.38

### C. Sentence-Production Test

Prog.	Group	Numb. of Students	Numb. of Students Who Achieve 75% Correct Items	Percentage
S1	A	47	5	10.64
S1	B	40	23	57.50
D2	-	32	3	9.38
D3	-	37	8	17.02

Examining the three tables above, it is clear to us that the students find the translation test more difficult

to do than the other two tests. The students' percentage in the translation test evaluated using the natives'-based standard is even much smaller than that in the completion evaluated using the same standard. The students of D3 program, for example, completely fail to achieve 75% correct items in the translation test.

### III. 4. 3. The Students' Familiarity with Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

To find out which one of the prepositions of vertically relative position the students are more familiar with, and otherwise, the writer counted the number of each preposition correctly used and chosen in the three tests. The result of her counting is presented in the table below.

Prepositions	Number of Occurrence		Percentage	
	GB	NB	GB	NB
above	553	546	17.38	19.89
over	319	274	10.03	9.98
on (the) top of	423	420	13.30	15.30
below	429	420	13.45	15.30
under	747	742	23.48	27.03
underneath	240	149	7.55	5.43
beneath	470	194	14.78	7.07

The numbers of occurrence counted through the

dictionaries and grammar books-based standard are obtained from all of the three tests, but those counted through the natives'-based standard are gained from the completion and translation tests only. In spite of the different standards and tests, the results shown by the numbers of occurrence are more or less the same. The students here seem to be most familiar with the prepositions under and above, but they least familiar with underneath. However, the preposition beneath which is the third form the students are familiar with according to the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard turns out to be the second out of the two least familiar prepositions according to the natives'-based standard.

#### III. 4. 4. The Types of Errors and Their Percentages

As there are two standards used here, there will be two kinds of presentation of error type in this part. The first will be the one based on the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard and the second will be that based on the natives'-based standard. The first will present the types of errors got from the completion, translation, and sentence-production tests, while the second is limited to those obtained from the completion and translation tests because it is used only in the two tests as explained in III. 3. Except for the counts, the types of errors gained through the two different standards are more or less similar.

The total number of error obtained here is greater

than the number of erroneous items since there can be more than an error in an erroneous item. Notice the example below:

Bangsawan tua itu membenci orang-orang dari kelas di bawahnya

becomes

The old aristocrat hated people from his underneath class

In the sentence, the students made two types of error, namely the misuse of preposition and the wrong function of preposition. The possible preposition suited to the context represented by the sentence should be either below or beneath as the two prepositions have the meaning of 'lower in rank (out of subordination) than'.

Due to the reason above, 1973 erroneous items counted using the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard have 2132 errors and 1960 erroneous items gained through the natives'-based standard have 2074 errors.

The types and percentages of the errors gained using the two standards are presented separately as shown by the following.

#### III. 4. 4. 1. The Types and Percentages of Error Gained Using the Dictionaries and Grammar Books-Based Standard

Numb.	Types of Error	Total Numb. of Error	Percentage
	Prepositions	1904	89.30
I	Form		
1	misspelling prepositions	56	2.94
2	misordered prepositions	6	0.32
3	uncomplete prepositions	1	0.05
II	Meaning		
1	misuse of preposition	1532	83.09
III	Function		
1	using prepositions in the function of		
	a. an adverb	181	9.51
	b. an adjective	51	2.68
	c. a prefix	19	0.99
	d. a noun	8	0.42
	Prepositional Phrases	129	6.05
I	Form		
1	uncomplete p. complement	2	1.55
2	insertion of unnecessary prepositions to the p.p.		
	a. at	1	0.78
	b. by	2	1.55
	c. in	12	9.30
	d. into	1	0.78
	e. on	8	6.20
	f. of	51	39.53
	g. up	1	0.78
II	Function		
1	prepositional phrases as verb complements		
	a. omission of the verbs complemented	51	39.53
	Using unrequired prep.	4	0.19
	Other errors	95	4.46

I	Not complete answers	25	26.31
II	No answers	70	73.69

III. 4. 4. 2. The Types and Percentages of Error Gained  
Using the Natives'-Based Standard

Numb.	Types of Error	Total Numb. of Error	Percentage
	Prepositions	1979	95.42
I	Form		
1	misspelling prepositions	47	2.38
2	misordered prepositions	6	0.30
3	uncomplete prepositions	1	0.05
II	Meaning		
1	misuse of preposition	1824	92.17
III	Function		
1	using preposition in the function of		
	a. an adverb	57	2.88
	b. an adjective	41	2.07
	c. a noun	3	0.15
	Prepositional Phrases	53	2.80
I	Form		
1	uncomplete prepositional complement	2	3.45
2	insertion of unnecessary prepositions to the p.p.		
	a. at	1	1.72
	b. by	2	3.45
	c. in	7	12.07
	d. on	3	5.17
	e. of	30	51.72
II	Function		
1	prepositional phrases as verb complements		
	a. omission of the verbs complemented	13	22.42

	Using unrequired prep.	1	0.05
	Other errors	36	1.73
I	Not complete answers	11	30.56
II	No answers	25	69.44

### III. 5. The Sources of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

In this part, the writer will talk about the possible sources of difficulty that may account for the errors made by the students in using prepositions in questions. She will base the discussion on the results of the data observation above and her library study and teaching observation. Since the types and percentages of error gained using the two standards are more or less similar, she will discuss the possible sources of difficulty as a whole.

In this discussion, the possible sources of difficulty will be put into three subsections. The first subsection will talk about the nature of the target language as one of the sources of difficulty. The second will put forward the interference of the mother tongue and the third will have the present teaching as the other source of difficulty.

#### III. 5. 1. The Nature of The Target Language as the Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

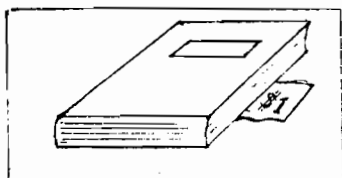




III. 5. 1. 1. A Large Number of English Synonyms with Subtle Differences in Meaning

Both tables in III. 4. 4. show that the types of error 'misuse of prepositions' is the greatest in number. The students seem to find most difficulty in determining the correct prepositions for certain contexts.

English indeed provides us with a large number of words which have small differences in meaning.<sup>1)</sup> When words belong to a group closely associated in meaning, they are called synonyms. Concerning the prepositions in question, there are two groups of synonyms with opposite central meaning. One has 'higher than' as the central meaning while the other has 'lower than'. There are three prepositions that belong to the former: above, over and on (the) top of, and four forms belonging to the latter: under, below, beneath and underneath. It is quite wrong to say that the prepositions of each group mean the same thing. We might, for example, think there is little or no difference between under and below in the literal sense. We could not substitute below for under in the following sentence:



The money is under the book

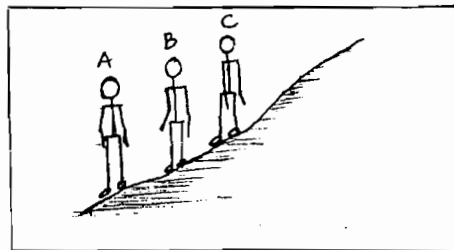
as below doesn't have the sense of 'touching'.

Synonyms indeed are hardly ever identical. They

actually enable us to express small but important differences as the prepositions in question do. However, these small but important differences in meaning which have been described in Chapter II make the students confused. It is difficult for them to differentiate the meaning of one preposition from those of the others. This results in errors like the following:

The money is below the book (See the picture above)

B is standing over A



In the second sentence, the appropriate and correct preposition should be above because over implies vertically while above may or may not. Because of the small difference, however, students tend to make such an error.

The type of error the students made here may be caused not only by the subtle differences in the meanings of the prepositions but also by the interference of the mother tongue and the present teaching as what will be explained respectively in III. 5. 2 and III. 5. 3.

### III. 5. 1. 2. The Identical Forms Shared by English Prepositions, Adverbs and Prefixes

Nearly all the one-word prepositions have

form identical to their prepositional adverbs. From the seven prepositions of vertically relative position, it is only on (the) top of that has a different adverbial form, namely on top. On the other hand, there are two out of the seven prepositions that have form exactly like prefixes, i. e. over and under. As a prefix, over means too much while under means too little. This sameness in form may make the students mix up the prepositions with the adverbs and the prefixes. In spite of the clear instruction given in the tests, they used the prepositions as prefixes and adverbs. They seem to overgeneralize the use of the identical forms. The following sentences are the examples of this type of error made by the students in the sentence-production test.

I think that movie star is overacting

The girl went below

Please, read the sentences above

Though the sentences above are meaningful and grammatically correct, they are wrong as over, below and above here do not function as a preposition.

### III. 5. 2. The Interference from the Mother Tongue as the Other Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

Since Indonesian and English prepositions are

different in some way and Indonesian students are accustomed to thinking in their mother tongue, there will always be the interference from Indonesian when they are learning English prepositions. This interference may cause the students to produce errors in using the prepositions talked about.

Before continuing the discussion on the interference from Indonesian in learning English prepositions of vertically relative position, the writer would like to present a brief description of the Indonesian prepositions showing that position.

### III. 5. 2. 1. Indonesian Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

Unlike English, Indonesian only has two forms which show a relative position in a vertical direction, namely di atas and di bawah. Prof. Drs. M. Ramlan wrote in his book 'Kata Depan atau Preposisi dalam Bahasa Indonesia' that di atas refers to a place higher than an object stated and dibawah a place lower than the object stated.<sup>2)</sup>

(1) Wanita itu meletakkan bebannya di atas kepalanya

(2) Di bawah gambar itu dituliskan: siapa yang mempunyai bunga seperti ini harap mengirimkan tanamanannya kepada kami

The prepositions in their prepositional phrases semantically indicate a relationship between the word or phrase following them and the other word or phrase in the

sentence.3) For example:

(3) Anik membuang kotoran di bawah jendela

(4) Siapapun boleh mengambil minuman segar di atas  
meja

In the first sentence above, the preposition 'di bawah' relates the word following it 'jendela' to the other word in the sentence, i. e. 'kotoran'. In the second sentence, that following the preposition 'di atas' is still a word, i. e. 'meja', but here it is related to a phrase, that is, 'minuman segar'. The next sentences are the examples of the prepositional complements which take the form of a phrase.

(5) Bunga di atas teras rumahku amatlah indah

(6) Sepatu biru di bawah meja belajarnya itu basah

The prepositional complement in the first sentence 'teras rumahku' is related by the preposition 'di atas' to the word 'bunga', while that in the second 'meja belajarnya' is related to the phrase 'sepatu biru' by 'di bawah'.

The prepositional phrases tends to function as an adverb, as in

(7) Pagi-pagi penghuni pulau Wisata bersembahyang Id  
bersama di muka kantor, di atas tikar baru yang  
bersih.

The prepositional phrase 'di atas tikar baru yang bersih'

modification, the verb 'bersembahyang'. Besides functioning as an adverb, the prepositional phrases may also function as an attributive in nominal phrases. Take for the example the sentence below:

(3) Sepatu di bawah meja itu milik ayahku

'di bawah meja itu' as the prepositional complement in the sentence above functions as an attributive for the noun 'sepatu' in the nominal phrase 'sepatu di bawah meja itu'

In the case of meaning, the two prepositions can also be used to express figurative senses. 4) Di atas, for example, may indicate the meaning of 'lebih dari' as in

Harga buku itu di atas seribu rupiah

(Harga buku itu lebih dari seribu rupiah)

and 'lain dari itu' as shown in

Anto seorang murid yang rajin. Ia juga anak terpandai di kelasnya. Di atas semua itu, ia seorang anak yang pengasih

(Selain rajin dan terpandai di kelasnya, Anto adalah seorang anak yang pengasih)

In contrast with the preposition di atas, di bawah expresses 'kurang dari'. For example,

Berat badan Yanto diperkirakan di bawah 55 kg

(Berat badan Yanto diperkirakan kurang dari 55 kg)

la berusaha mendapatkan tas itu dengan harga di bawah dua ribu rupiah

(I berusaha mendapatkan tas itu dengan harga kurang dari dua ribu rupiah)

The preposition di bawah may also express the meaning of 'diperintah, dipimpin oleh' as in

Angkatan Perang Ratu Adil di bawah pimpinan Westerling menyerang Bandung pada tahun 1950

(Angkatan Perang Ratu Adil di pimpin oleh Westerling menyerang Bandung pada tahun 1950)

Besides, di bawah may also denote the meaning 'belum dewasa' as shown in

Mereka yang masih di bawah umur dilarang menonton drama itu

(Mereka yang masih belum dewasa dilarang menonton drama itu)

and 'orang rendahan' as in

Akup tidak mau bergaul dengan orang-orang di bawahnya  
(Akup tidak mau bergaul dengan orang-orang dari kelas yang lebih rendah darinya)

### III. 5. 2. 2. The Difference between Indonesian and English Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position Which Probably Creates Interference Errors

In Indonesian there are only two prepositions that show a relative position in a vertical direction: di atas and di bawah. The two prepositions can be used to express both the contiguous and non-contiguous relations. Notice the following use of the preposition di bawah as the example:

Nina selalu menyimpan uangnya di bawah bantalnya  
Sungai di bawah jembatan itu amat dalam  
Negeri Belanda terletak di bawah permukaan laut

In the first sentence, the preposition 'di bawah' implies that the money touches the pillow. In contrast, 'di bawah' in the second sentence doesn't imply the sense of 'touching' and so does the preposition used in the third sentence.

On the other hand, English has seven prepositions which are divided into two groups of synonym. Unlike Indonesian, however, not all of the synonymous prepositions can be used to express the same context because they have differences, though small, in meaning. As a comparison, the English prepositions expressing the sense of 'lower than' will be used for the contexts represented by the Indonesian sentences above.

Nina always keeps her money under/ beneath/ underneath her pillow  
The river under/ beneath the bridge is very deep  
Holland is below/ beneath sea-level



The differences in the number of preposition and the meanings between Indonesian and English prepositions may make Indonesian students confused. This confusion may lead them to overgeneralize the meanings of the English prepositions. This results in errors like the following:

Nina always keeps her money below her pillow

The river below the bridge is very deep

Holland is under sea-level

Besides the interference from the mother tongue, however, the present teaching may also account for such errors. This will be discussed in the next part.

### III. 5. 3. The Present Teaching as the Other Source of Difficulty in Learning Prepositions of Vertically Relative Position

It has been mentioned in the previous parts that the present teaching may also be one of the causes for the type of error 'misuse of preposition' to come up as the greatest in number. It may also explain the cause of the students' unfamiliarity with certain prepositions, the percentage of which is shown by table III. 4. 3. To give a clearer idea of how it can raise difficulties to the students in learning the prepositions, the writer will try to describe the procedure most English teachers generally follow in teaching the prepositions.

The procedure is generally like the following:

1. The teacher tells the students which prepositions belong to the type he is going to teach.

In this step he may only give the prepositions he knows or which, he thinks, are the most frequently used in communication. The former may cause the students to know certain prepositions but nothing about others which may happen to belong to those frequently used in communication.

2. The teacher then explains to the students the meaning of each preposition.

Here, he may explain, for example, the prepositions over, above and on (the) top of as synonyms with the meaning *di atas* in Indonesian and under, below, beneath and underneath as another group of synonym with the meaning *di bawah*, without giving further explanation on their differences in meaning. This will cause the students to think that the synonymous prepositions are the same in meaning, and so the students may produce the type of error 'misuse of preposition'.

3. The teacher gives some examples of the use of the prepositions in the form of sentences.

In this step he may substitute a certain preposition for another synonymous preposition in a sentence without considering that the preposition may not suit the context represented by the sentence. This encourages the students to think that the synonymous prepositions are the same in meaning.

4. The teacher then gives the students some exercises to practise using the prepositions.

The exercises are generally taken from books written by those who do not have the intuition of a native. As a matter of fact the natives themselves sometimes use their intuition in using the prepositions and, therefore, they use a more limited number of preposition for the same context. (See in the Appendix how the prepositions regarded by the natives as the possible answers for the completion and translation tests are different from those provided by dictionaries and grammar books). As a consequence, the prepositions the students choose to express certain contexts are not the same as those chosen by the natives.

#### References:

- 1) A. G. Mitchell, The Use of English, Sydney: Halstead Press, 1954, p. 15.
- 2) M. Ramlan, Kata Depan atau Preposisi dalam Bahasa Indonesia, Yogyakarta: U. P. Karyono, 1980, p. 67.
- 3) Ibid, pp. 16-17.
- 4) WJS. Poerwadarminta, Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia, Jakarta: PN. Balai Pustaka, 1976, pp. 64 & 100.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUGGESTION

Realizing that Indonesian students still find it difficult to use prepositions of vertically relative position, in this part the writer would like to suggest a way of teaching the prepositions which, hopefully, can help the students in learning the prepositions better.

Before going further, however, it is necessary to note that in the suggested way of teaching the students are determined to be the most active. They must find themselves the principles of description involved. In other words, the writer suggests that the teacher uses the discovery-learning method with inductive approach in the teaching of the prepositions since she believes that the method, when used appropriately, will motivate the students in learning the prepositions and encourage them to be more effective in memorization.

The following is the suggested way of teaching the prepositions.

1. The teacher gives the examples of the use of the prepositions in the form of sentences written on the blackboard. He then demonstrates what is meant by each context represented by the sentences. Take for the example the literal use of under, below, beneath and underneath:

- The teacher writes the following sentences on the blackboard:

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | 1. Those books are <u>under</u> the table.      |
|    | 2. Those books are <u>beneath</u> the table.    |
|    | 3. Those books are <u>underneath</u> the table. |

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 2. | 4. The paper is <u>under</u> the book.      |
|    | 5. The paper is <u>beneath</u> the book.    |
|    | 6. The paper is <u>underneath</u> the book. |

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 3. | 7. This floor is <u>below</u> the table. |
|----|--|

It should be noted that the teacher must use things or sentence-patterns which the students have been familiar with when he is giving examples.

- The teacher then demonstrates the contexts represented by the sentences:

- He puts some books under the table. Pointing at the books, he says the sentences in square 1 at least twice.

- He puts a piece of paper under a book. Pointing at the paper, he says the sentences in square 2 at least twice.

- He points at the entire floor and says the sentences in square 3 at least twice.

2. The teacher puts the students into groups to discuss the meanings of the prepositions used in the sentences in each square, and how the prepositions of a square are different from those of other squares in terms of meaning. Thus, the students are required to find out the usage of

the prepositions from the contexts given.

3. The teacher asks the students to explain the usages of the prepositions they have learnt from the contexts given. Regarding the examples above, the teacher may ask the students the following questions:

- What context the prepositions in square 1 refer to .
- What context the prepositions in square 2 refer to .
- What context the prepositions in square 3 refer to .
- What conclusion they may draw when comparing the usages of the prepositions in square 1 to those in square 2

The students may give the explanation in Indonesian. Whenever necessary, the teacher may also give the students some guidance.

4. Being sure that the students have understood the usages of the prepositions, the teacher gives them some exercises to practise using the prepositions. It would be better if the exercises are taken from books written by native speakers or those who are known to have the sensitivity of a native, because it will make the students familiar with the prepositions which are mostly and commonly used by native speakers. As stated at the end of Chapter III, the natives sometimes use their sensitivity in using the prepositions .

With the same procedure, the demonstration used in step 1 may be substituted by pictures. The pictures should be put beside the sentences representing the same context.

Concerning the material, from what Allen says in his book 'Living English Structure'1)

'The most common English prepositions that should be known by the students are:

about	at	between	from	like
after	before	by	in	near
along	behind	down	in front of	next to
among	beneath	for	into	of

and also

above	below	concerning	inside	outside
across	beside	despite	in spite of	
against	beyond	except	opposite	

we can know that there are five out of the seven prepositions that are most common in use, namely above, over, below, under and beneath. However, from the table in III. 4. 3. it turns out that the students are more familiar with the less commonly-used preposition on (the) top of than with the more common, i. e. over, according to the dictionaries and grammar books-based standard, and over and beneath, according to the natives'-based standard. Indeed, Curriculum 1984 doesn't determine what prepositions, other than at, in and on, should be given to the students. In relation to these and other facts such as the limited available time for teaching prepositions and the many other prepositions that should be taught to the students, the writer would also suggest here that the prepositions taught to the students should be those considered important and most common in use, that is, the five prepositions mentioned above.

Reference:

- 1) W. Stanard Allan, Living English Structure, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1959, pp. 292-308.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The results of the error analysis presented in Chapter III show that, indeed, it is still difficult for the students to master prepositions of vertically relative position, primarily in terms of their meanings. The students have not been able to distinguish between the synonymous prepositions, which one is appropriate and correct for a certain context.

This difficulty may be caused by the subtle differences in the meanings of the English prepositions themselves. Here, Indonesian as the students' mother tongue may also account for the error the students make since the Indonesian prepositions of vertically relative position are simpler than the English. Beside the target language and the mother tongue, however, the present teaching of the prepositions may also cause the students to mix up the usages of the synonymous prepositions. In this case, the three factors are closely interrelated.

In the attempt to reduce the difficulty and to improve the present teaching of the prepositions, the writer suggests a way of teaching them as what has been described in the previous chapter. Considering that there is no teaching technique that can best describe the usages of the prepositions by itself, in her suggestion the writer combines two kinds of teaching technique, i. e. demonstration and comparison or pictures and comparison.



Beside suggesting the way of teaching the prepositions, she also suggests that the prepositions taught in SMAs should be those of importance and common use: above, over, below, under and beneath.

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## APPENDIX

TEST ONE

Put the prepositions of place below into sentences.

above

below

underneath

over

under

on top of

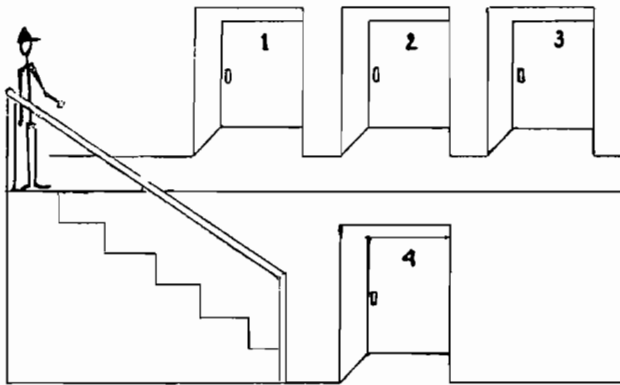
beneath

(make two sentences for each preposition!)

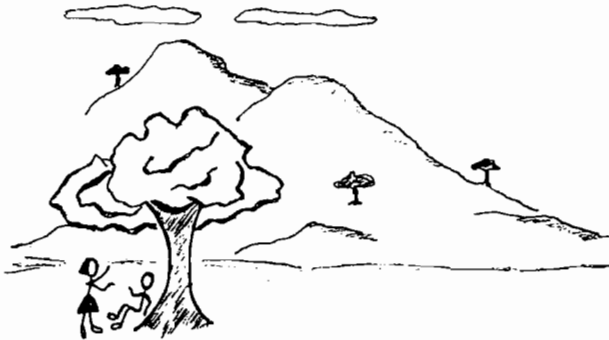
## TEST TWO

Complete the following sentences by using the most appropriate prepositions based on the pictures :

above, over, on top of, below, under, beneath,  
underneath.



1. Room 2 is ..... room 4.
2. Room 1, 2 and 3 are ..... room 4.
3. The man is standing ..... the stairs.



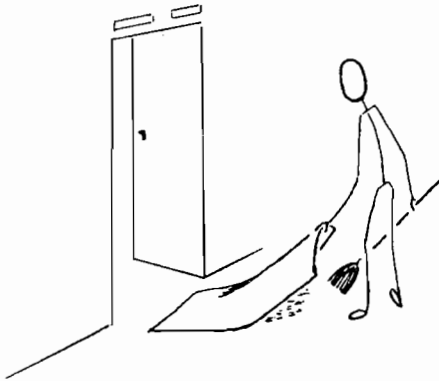
4. The children are playing ..... the tree.
5. The children are now ..... the hills.

Sue



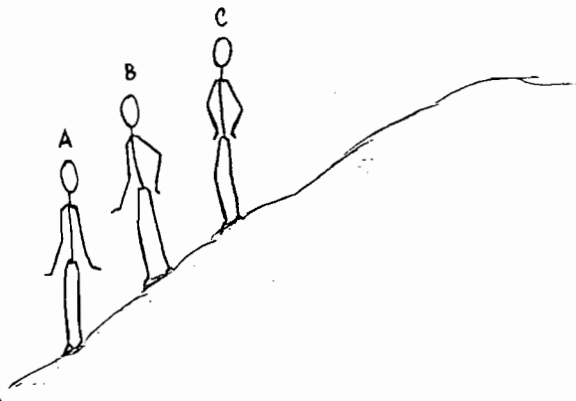
6. Sue is rich but snobbish.  
She doesn't like mixing with people ..... her.

(snobbish = sombong)



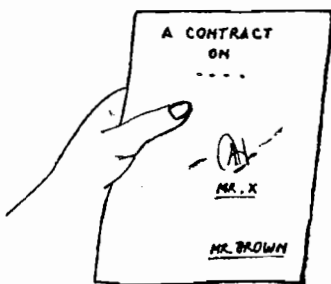
7. I am going to sweep  
up the dust .....  
the mat.

(the mat = keset)



8. B is standing .....  
C.

9. B is standing .....  
A.



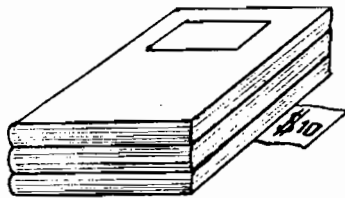
10. "Mr. Brown, would  
you please take  
this contract and  
sign your name ....  
mine?" asks Mr. X.



11. Bob is hanging his  
calendar .....  
the fireplace.



12. There is some  
luggage ..... the  
car.



13. The money is .....  
the books.



14. A lady never does  
things ..... her  
dignity such as  
saying rude words  
and laughing aloud..

(dignity = martabat)

(bastard = haram ja-  
dah)

(beast = bangsat)

### TEST THREE

Translate the following sentences into English by using  
the most appropriate prepositions : above, over, on top  
of, below, under, beneath, underneath.

(The required tenses and difficult words are provided)

1. Nina selalu menyimpan uangnya di bawah bantalnya.  
(bantal = a pillow) (Present Tense)  
(menyimpan = to keep)



2. Pria itu dibawa pergi di bawah penjagaan polisi.  
(membawa pergi= to lead away) (Simple Past Tense)  
(penjagaan polisi= police guard)
3. Ketika saya tiba di rumah, Tono sedang berdiri di atas tangga.  
(tiba= to arrive(at)) (Past Tense)  
(tangga= a ladder)
4. Australia berada di bawah Indonesia di dalam peta.  
(di dalam peta= in the map) (Simple Present Tense)
5. Keluarga paman saya tinggal di lantai di atas saya.  
(lantai= the floor) (Simple Past Tense)  
(tinggal= to live)
6. Pesawat DC-10 akan berada di atas Medan pada pukul 2 siang.  
(pesawat DC-10= the DC-10 aeroplane) (Past Future)  
(pada pukul 2 siang= at 2 p.m.)
7. Sebagai orang kaya, pengusaha itu memandang rendah kepada orang-orang di bawahnya.  
(pengusaha itu= the businessman) (Simple Past Tense)  
(memandang rendah kepada= to look down on)
8. Yanto meletakkan sepotong kertas di bawah gelasnyanya.  
(sepotong kertas= a piece of paper) (Simple Past Tense)
9. Peter sedang memperbaiki cerobong asap di atas rumahnya.  
(memperbaiki= to repair) (Present Continuous Tense)  
(cerobong asap= a chimney)
10. Bangsawan tua itu membenci orang-orang dari kelas di bawahnya. (bangsawan tua itu= the old aristocrat)  
(Simple Past Tense)
11. Sungai di bawah jembatan itu amat dalam.  
(amat dalam= very deep) (Simple Present Tense)
12. Negeri Belanda berada di bawah permukaan laut.  
(negeri Belanda= Holland) (Simple Present Tense)  
(permukaan laut= sea-level)

13. Kemampuan Amir berada di atas rata-rata.  
(rata-rata= the average) (Simple Present Tense)  
(kemampuan Amir= Amir's competence)
14. Pelayan merapikan tapelak di atas meja .  
(merapikan= to make neat) (Simple Past Tense)  
(tapelak= the tablecloth)

## The Answers of The Tests

### COMPLETION TEST

(Dictionaries and Grammar Books-Based Standard)	(Natives'-Based Standard)
1. above; over 2. above 3. on top of 4. under; beneath; below 5. below; beneath; 6. below; beneath 7. under; beneath; underneath 8. below; beneath 9. above 10. below; under; beneath; 11. above; over 12. on top of 13. under; beneath; underneath 14. beneath	1. above; over 2. above 3. on top of 4. under 5. below 6. beneath; below 7. under; underneath 8. below 9. above 10. under; below 11. above; over 12. on top of 13. under; underneath 14. beneath

### TRANSLATION TEST

(Dictionaries and Grammar Books-Based Standard)	(Natives'-Based Standard)
1. under; beneath; underneath 2. under; beneath 3. on top of 4. below 5. above; over 6. above; over 7. beneath; below; under	1. under; beneath; underneath 2. under 3. on top of 4. below 5. above 6. above; over 7. beneath; below; under

8. under; beneath; underneath	8. under; beneath; underneath
9. on top of	9. on top of
10. beneath; below	10. beneath; below
11. beneath; under	11. beneath; under
12. below; beneath	12. below
13. above	13. above
14. over; on top of	14. over; on top of

## THE EXAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF ERRORS

### 1. Misspelling Prepositions

- The book is bellow the desk.
- The children are now underneath the hills.
- B is beneth C.

### 2. Misordered Prepositions

- There is some luggage on of top the car.

### 3. Uncomplete Prepositions

- Peter is repairing the chimney on top  
the house.

### 4. Misuse of Prepositions

- Room 1, 2, and 3 are over room 4.
- The children are now underneath the hills.
- Bob is hanging his calendar on top of the  
fireplace.

### 5. Using Prepositions in the Functions of

- a. an adverb - Translate the English sentences  
below into good Indonesian sentences.

- You can see it above.

- b. an adjective

- The underneath preposition is new for  
us.

- The old aristocrat hated people from  
underneath class.

- c. a prefix - Those countries are underdeveloped.

- I overslept last night.
- d. a noun      - The DC-10 aeroplane would be Medan's  
                    over at 2 p.m.
- We reached on top of Mount Merapi on  
September 14, 1987.

#### 6. Uncomplete Prepositional Complements

- The old aristocrat hated people from  
underneath class.
- The old aristocrat hated people from  
under class.

#### 7. Insertion of Unnecessary Prepositions to Prepositional Phrases:

- a. at            - The book is above at the table.
- b. by           - The man was lead away underneath by  
police guard.
- c. in           - The DC-10 aeroplane would be over in  
Medan at 2 p. m.
- The bird is beneath in the tree.
- d. into          - A cat run into under a table.
- e. on           - The DC-10 aeroplane would be over on  
Medan at 2 p. m.
- f. of           - The ball is under of the net.
- Purwokerto is below of Baturaden.
- g. up           - The wind blows up over the mountain.

#### 8. Omission of the Verbs Complemented

- The book underneath the table.

- The bottle under a chair.

#### 9. Using Unrequired Prepositions

- " Mr. Brown, would you please take this contract and sign your name behind mine?" asked Mr. X.