

The Acquisition of English Prepositions in Descriptive Text written by Indonesian EFL Learners (a case study of X- grade students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya in the academic year of 2025)

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The Acquisition of English Prepositions in Descriptive Text written by Indonesian EFL Learners (a case study of X-grade students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya in the academic year of 2025)

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the extent of preposition use in descriptive texts written by ¹⁶English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Indonesia. The method used is descriptive text analysis. Data were collected from 28 EFL students of grade 10 at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya in the academic year of 2025 in the descriptive texts they wrote. The results showed significant variation in the ability to use English prepositions accurately in their descriptive texts. Of the total 419 prepositions used, 369 were used correctly and 50 were used incorrectly. Individual student scores varied between 60 as the lowest score to 100 as the highest score, with ten students achieving perfect accuracy without errors. Meanwhile, several other students still experienced difficulties, indicated by a high number of errors in the use of certain prepositions. The average overall preposition mastery score was 88.52%, indicating that the majority of students had a fairly good understanding, although there were still some confusing preposition forms or certain contexts. This variation is likely influenced by first language (L1) interference, the level of English exposure in the learning environment, and each student's learning habits. These findings confirm that EFL students' mastery of prepositions is at a good level, but there is still a need to improve the quality of input and more targeted practice to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: *Acquisition Preposition, accuracy, descriptive text, EFL.*

INTRODUCTION

Prepositions are an important element in English grammar that serve to indicate relationships between elements in a sentence, particularly in terms of place, time, direction, and other logical relationships. According to (Lindstromberg, 2010), prepositions are not merely grammatical elements, but key components in forming accurate meaning in an utterance. The correct use of prepositions allows speakers or writers to convey information clearly and structured, while incorrect use can lead to ambiguity or even misunderstanding. For example, the difference between the phrases "at the station" and "in the station" describes two semantically different locations the former refers to a point around the station, while the latter indicates being within the station area. The crucial role of prepositions in establishing clarity of meaning is particularly prominent in descriptive texts, which emphasize spatial details, direction, and relationships between objects. In this type of text, prepositions serve to accurately describe an object's position or its relationship to other objects, allowing readers to visualize the description in a concrete and concrete way. The use of prepositions such as "in," "on," or "under," for example, can alter the reader's perception of the situation being described, depending on the context. Inaccurate use of prepositions can lead to vague or even misleading descriptions. Therefore, understanding the function of prepositions in context is crucial for students to write clear and understandable descriptive texts.

In the communication process, both oral and written, prepositions have a strategic role in organizing ideas, showing the relationship between parts of a sentence, and conveying meaning in a

logical sequence. Prepositions are commonly used in English sentence construction and help speakers or writers organize ideas cohesively (Kusumastuti, 2019). In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mastery of prepositions contributes significantly to students' ability to build complex and meaningful speech structures. (Nghi, 2023) states that prepositions function to express important elements such as position, movement, time, and how actions are carried out, all of which are fundamental elements in the construction of meaning in sentences. However, various previous studies have shown that prepositions are also one of the most frequently error-producing aspects of grammar, especially for EFL learners. (Yusof & Alwan, 2019) stated that difficulties in mastering prepositions are caused by the idiomatic nature of prepositions, the lack of direct equivalents in students' native languages, and the complexity of meanings often attached to certain prepositions. This is exacerbated by limited exposure to English in everyday contexts, so students rarely have the opportunity to internalize the use of prepositions naturally. Common problems that often arise include errors of omission, addition, and incorrect choice of prepositions (substitution), both in oral and written communication. Many students understand the meaning of a preposition in isolation, but do not know the appropriate context of use, which ultimately results in a lack of accuracy in writing.

This condition is closely related to the characteristics of EFL learners themselves. According to (Pariyanto & Pradipta, 2020), EFL learners are individuals who learn English in an environment where English is not the primary or everyday language. In a context like Indonesia, students generally only interact with English in the classroom and have very few opportunities to use it in real life. This limitation makes the acquisition of highly contextual prepositions more difficult. It is not surprising that in the writing process, many students experience confusion when having to choose the right preposition to describe time, place, direction, or cause and effect. Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the extent to which EFL students, particularly X-grade students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, master prepositions in writing descriptive texts. This study also attempts to assess the accuracy of preposition use based on semantic categories, such as spatial (space), temporal (time), direction and movement (direction), cause and purpose, manner and instrument, and possession and relationship (possession and relationship). This classification is important to determine which types of prepositions are most frequently used and which are most frequently misused, thus providing a comprehensive picture of prepositional aspects that need more attention in the learning process in secondary schools. In other words, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of grammar learning strategies that are more effective, contextual, and based on students' real difficulties.

Based on the background described above, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. To what extent do X-grade students of SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya master English prepositions in their descriptive text writing?
2. Which categories of English prepositions do X-grade students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya most frequently use and in which categories do they make the most errors in their descriptive text writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

First, the research by (Kusumastuti, 2019) entitled "Construal of English Prepositions in, on, and at" aims to analyze the use of the prepositions "in", "on", and "at" to help Indonesian speakers distinguish and use the three correctly in sentence construction. This research is qualitative and analyzes data in the form of sentences from the Cambridge dictionary, without involving human participants directly. In its analysis, this study uses the Construal theory approach, which views language as a cognitive representation formed in the mind before being spoken, as well as the spatial scene and

landmark approaches that are limited in understanding the spatial relationship between objects and landmarks. Each preposition is explained based on semantic and spatial principles: containing the concept of containment, referring to contact and support Lindstromberg (2010), and used to indicate a specific location point. The findings show that the use of the three prepositions is highly dependent on the speaker's perception of the spatial relationship between objects and landmarks, both physically and conceptually. This research is relevant to your research because it highlights the difficulty of Indonesian speaker in distinguishing "in", "on", and "at", which are all semantically translated as "di". In addition, this study supports the view that the use of appropriate prepositions reflects students' linguistic competence. However, there are several weaknesses, including the limited focus on only three place prepositions and not discussing other functions such as time or direction, and not involving EFL participants directly so that the observations are theoretical and do not show a picture of actual acquisition in English as a foreign language learners.

Second, the study by (Zaabalawi, 2021) in the Arab World English Journal entitled "Mastering Prepositions in English: Explicit versus Implicit Instruction" aims to investigate the effectiveness of explicit teaching through translation in helping Arab learners master English prepositions. Using a quantitative experimental design based on pretest-posttest, this study shows that students who receive explicit instruction and practice in the context of translated texts show improved performance in the use of prepositions. Although it does not explicitly mention the theory, this study is based on the main concepts in **Second Language Acquisition**, especially **the theory of language transfer** **which** explains that differences in the prepositional system between Arabic and English can cause learning difficulties (negative transfer). In addition, the explicit versus implicit teaching approach is at the center of the study, showing its relevance to the debate in SLA about the most effective grammar teaching method. This study also implicitly touches on the idea of translation-based learning which emphasizes learning through meaningful tasks. The main findings confirm the effectiveness of the translation method in improving the use of prepositions in texts, showing that this method can be a promising pedagogical strategy. The relevance of this study lies in the similar focus on EFL learners' difficulties in mastering prepositions, the influence of L1, and the observation of students' writing production. However, this study has several weaknesses, such as the lack of detailed explanation of the experimental design, the lack of supporting statistical data in the abstract, and the absence of exploration of other factors such as learning intensity or language exposure outside the classroom. In addition, because the research context is limited to Arabic learners and translated texts, the generalization of the results to other contexts and text types, such as EFL students from Indonesian backgrounds in free writing, is limited.

Third, a study conducted by (Ding, 2003) in the journal Frontiers in Science and Engineering entitled "**Study of the Effects of Direct Focused Versus Direct Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback on the Accuracy of Prepositions in English Writing of High School Students**" examines **the effectiveness of two types of written feedback** direct focused and direct unfocused on the accuracy of preposition use in high school students' writing with high school students as participants, the number is not stated. This study is **based on the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**, especially **the Input Hypothesis** theory (Krashen, 1985) which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input, and **the Output Hypothesis** (Swain, 1985) which emphasizes **the role of language production in** triggering noticing and deeper linguistic processing. In addition, the concept of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is the main focus, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of direct feedback on certain types of errors (focused) compared to feedback on all types of errors (unfocused). The addition of metalinguistic elements in feedback is also analyzed as a supporting variable. The results of the study, although not described in detail in the abstract, suggest that certain types of feedback can improve the accuracy of preposition use,

depending on the students' proficiency level. Similarities with this study lie in the focus on the accuracy of preposition use in EFL students' writing and the influence of learning strategies on preposition mastery. However, weaknesses of this study include the lack of quantitative information in the abstract, incomplete description of participant characteristics, and minimal exploration of other factors such as language exposure, motivation, or independent learning strategies. This study also focuses on intervention through feedback, without delving deeply into the causes of errors from the perspective of language transfer or the development of students' interlanguage systems.

Finally, a study conducted by (Nghi et al., 2020) aimed to investigate the factors influencing the use of English prepositions by Vietnamese learners as EFL speakers, involving 400 participants consisting of 200 females and 200 males. This study used a quantitative method in the form of a survey with a 100 item weighted questionnaire, and was rooted in the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Language Transfer, especially negative transfer from L1. Although the name of the theorist is not explicitly mentioned, the findings of this study are in line with concepts in SLA that structural differences between L1 and L2 can cause difficulties in the acquisition of grammatical elements such as prepositions. The main findings indicate that mother tongue interference (most likely interlingual) greatly affects the expression of prepositional meaning in English, and other factors such as grammatical ability, rich vocabulary, and reading habits also play an important role in the successful use of prepositions. This study is relevant to your research because it addresses EFL learners' prepositional difficulties and explores factors that support successful acquisition, which can enrich this research. However, it has several weaknesses, such as data collection that only measures perception and declarative knowledge rather than actual production in written contexts, the lack of a classification of frequently misused prepositions, and the ambiguity in the use of the term "intralingual interference" that seems to refer to L1 influence. Furthermore, the study does not include pedagogical solutions or interventions based on outcomes, and it does not delve deeper into the intensity and sources of learning that affect learners' abilities a gap that could be further focused on.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Descriptive Writing

According to (Syahputri & Masita, 2018) who refers to the idea of Descriptive Writing (Oshima and Hongue, 2007), descriptive writing appeals to the sense, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds. A good description is a word picture, the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. A description usually follows a pattern of organization that we call spatial order. Spatial order is the arrangement of things in space. the supporting sentences not only provide details that prove the truth of your topic sentences, but they also make your writing rich and interesting.

English Preposition

English Prepositions are a type of word in a language that functions to link two elements in a sentence, usually between a noun or noun phrase with another element. The relationships formed can include location (spatial), time (temporal), direction, cause and effect relationships, or more abstract relationships. In a cognitive perspective as explained (Lindstromberg, 2010), prepositions are not just grammatical elements, but reflect how speakers interpret and organize their experiences of the physical world and abstract ideas. Although often considered complicated because of their short form and varied meanings, prepositions in English actually have a consistent meaning structure and can be understood

logically when viewed through semantic and cognitive approaches. Most prepositions have a basic or prototype meaning that is spatial in nature for example, “on” describes a position on a surface which then develops into other uses such as stating time “on Monday” or a topic “on a topic” through a process of expanding meaning based on association or metaphor. Based on the book *English Prepositions Explained*, Lindstromberg (2010) does not classify prepositions rigidly into categories such as place prepositions or time prepositions. Instead, he uses a conceptual and semantic approach that emphasizes the mapping of meaning and the use of prepositions in various contexts, both concrete and abstract. One of the main concepts in this approach is that each preposition has a core meaning that is generally spatial and concrete. For example, “in” means ‘being within the boundary’, while “on” means ‘above and touching’. From this core meaning, prepositions experience an expansion of meaning (polysemy) to more abstract contexts, such as time “in the morning”, condition “in trouble”, or topic “on a topic”. This expansion of meaning is systematic and logical, not random, because it follows semantic and metaphorical association.

Although Lindstromberg (2010) did not specifically group prepositions, to facilitate data analysis in this study, prepositions will be grouped based on common semantic functions that are often identified. These categories help identify student usage and errors in prepositions. Here is a brief definition of each category:

a. Directional and Movement

This category includes prepositions that indicate the direction or trajectory of a movement, namely moving from one point to another. According to Lindstromberg (2010), prepositions in this category have a spatial core meaning because they involve elements of movement or changes in position. He also emphasizes the subtle differences between prepositions such as *to* and *towards*, where *to* indicates the final destination of a movement, while *towards* indicates orientation or direction without clarity as to whether the destination is actually achieved. In the student writing data, several examples of the use of directional and movement prepositions were found, such as “to” in “from the garden to their house”, “towards” in “looking towards the girl”, “onto” in “The girl is sitting onto the bench.”, “away” in “They are not too far away from the garden”, “off” in “The boy jumped off the swing and ran towards the tree.”, “around” in “butterfly flying around”, and “through” in “The birds are flying through the sky”.

b. Spatial

This category includes prepositions that express place, static position or location of an object in relation to another object. According to Lindstromberg (2010), prepositions of place have a spatial core meaning that describes a fixed position relationship, such as in indicating “inside” (containment) and on indicating “above the surface” (contact and support). Understanding the subtle differences between prepositions such as *in*, *on*, and *at* is key to using them correctly. In the student writing data, various examples of the use of prepositions of place were found, including “in” in “In the garden there are many flowers.”, “in front of” in “In front of the bench, a brown dog is running.”, “between” in “The brown dog is between the girl and the boy.”, “on” in “On the table, there is a glass of juice and a sandwich.”, “at” in “The children are playing at the park.”, “under” in “The swing is hung under a large tree.”, “beside” in “Beside the tree there is a bicycle.”, “behind” in “Behind the fence of the house there are many fertile trees.”, “near” in “The bicycle is resting near the trunk of the tree.”, “against” in “Leans

against the trunk.", "next to" in "...playing next to the woman...", "over" in "House peeking over the bushes.", "above" in "Birds flying above the trees.", and "below" in "The valley is below the mountain".

c. Temporal

This category shows time relationships, either in the form of a point in time, duration, or period. Many prepositions in this category come from spatial meanings that have expanded their meaning into the temporal realm (Lindstromberg, 2010). Prepositions such as after, since, and until are used to indicate a sequence of time or a range of duration, while in, on, and at more often indicate a specific point in time. In the student writing data, various examples of the use of time prepositions were found, such as "after" in "Very happy after cycling in the morning.", "since" in "My hobby since childhood.", "until" in "Childhood until now.", "in" in "In the afternoon I played on the swing.", "on" in "On Sunday, my sister and I went on vacation.", and "at" in "In the morning at 7 AM".

d. Cause and Purpose

This category includes prepositions that state the reason, cause, or purpose of an action or event. Prepositions in this group function to explain cause and effect relationships, either explicitly or implicitly, in a sentence. Examples of the use of prepositions of cause or purpose in student data such as "for" in the sentence "Some bread for their breakfast," "because of" in the sentence "Because of the big tree, the bench stays cool and shady," and "due to" in the sentence "Due to the sunny weather, the children are playing happily in the garden".

e. Manner and Instrument

Prepositions in this category are used to explain how an action is done (manner) or the tools/means used to do it. The use of this preposition is important because it provides additional information related to the process or implementation of an activity. Examples of the use of prepositions of manner and tool in student data include "by" in the sentence "Played together by riding a bicycle", "with" in the sentence "Playing with the dog", and "without" in the sentence "The sun without umbrella".

f. Possession and Relationship

This category includes prepositions that express ownership, relationships between objects, or affiliations between entities. Prepositions in this group help explain who owns, comes from, or is related to something. Examples of the use of prepositions in this category in student data include "with" in the sentence "A girl with her brother and his dog," "from" in the sentence "Not too far away from the garden," "of" in the sentence "A glass of juice and a sandwich," and "about" in the sentence "All about the garden".

The main function of each preposition is the basis for organising data systematically using this grouping as a functional analysis approach. Indicating place, time, direction, cause and effect, manner, tool, ownership, and so on are some of the ways in which this is done. The aim is to facilitate the identification of learning habits, the measurement of accuracy, and the analysis of errors in the use of prepositions by students. However, it is important to note that, in reality, the boundaries between preposition functions are not always clear. Depending on the context, one preposition can have more than one meaning, and these meanings often overlap. This aligns with Lindstromberg (2010) view that prepositions form a complex, interconnected network of meanings rather than fixed, separate categories.

Therefore, this grouping is not intended to oversimplify, but rather to provide a structured way of understanding the diversity of preposition functions in the context of learning and research.

Second Language Acquisition

- Input Hypothesis Theory

Language acquisition occurs when learners comprehend linguistic input that is slightly more complex than their current level of proficiency, referred to as “i+1” by Krashen (1982). In this case, “i” represents the language competence that the learner already has, while “+1” refers to a new linguistic element that is slightly above that level, but can still be understood through the context provided. This kind of input must be comprehensible so that it can be absorbed unconsciously, rather than through conscious analysis of grammatical rules. In the context of preposition learning, the existence of meaningful and repetitive input is crucial because prepositions cannot be effectively mastered simply through memorization or isolated practice, but rather through exposure to real sentences that can be understood.

- Output Hypothesis Theory

According to (Sun, 2020). Referring to Output Hypothesis opens up space for learners to evaluate the interlanguage system they are building, and accelerates linguistic development through reflective thinking processes. The Output Hypothesis developed by Swain (1985) emphasizes that language production, such as speaking and writing, plays an important role in second language acquisition. Rather than simply being considered the end result of acquisition, output becomes a means for learners to realize deficiencies in their language skills (noticing the gap), test their understanding of the target language form through real production (hypothesis testing), and deepen language processing that contributes to increased accuracy and fluency (metalinguistic reflection). In the context of this study, which examines prepositional errors in EFL students' descriptive writing, the Output Hypothesis becomes very relevant. The prepositional errors found not only indicate limited linguistic competence but also reflect student's exploratory stages in producing language. For example, when students write "He came at the house" instead of "He came to the house", they are trying to activate the rules that they believe are correct in their interlanguage. Such writing activities help learners identify weaknesses and, with appropriate feedback, open up opportunities for improvement and further acquisition. Thus, written output is not only a reflection of current abilities, but also an important tool in the ongoing learning process.

Second Language Writing

Second Language Writing is a complex process undertaken by individuals who write using a language other than their first language. This activity not only requires the ability to construct sentences in a foreign language, but also involves mastery of important aspects such as sentence structure, vocabulary choice, and logical and appropriate arrangement of ideas in the cultural context of the target language. (Hyland, 2003) emphasized that writing in a second language requires an understanding not only of linguistic rules, but also of the academic or professional expectations of the target language environment. L2 writers are required to be able to construct arguments in an orderly manner, adjust their language style, and apply strategies such as hedging, use of citations, and cohesive devices so that their writing can be conveyed effectively. The challenges in L2 writing are even greater when writers have

to deal with language limitations, cross cultural rhetorical differences, and psychological factors such as anxiety or lack of self confidence.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with the main objective of obtaining objective, accurate, and measurable data on student achievement in the use of English prepositions in descriptive writing. Each preposition that appeared in the students' writing was analysed through a process of identification and calculation, then classified based on its accuracy level, namely the total number of uses, correct uses, and incorrect uses. This numerical data was then processed to produce average scores, highest scores, and lowest scores, and presented systematically in tabular form for easier analysis. In line with (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018), the quantitative approach aims to test theories by measuring research variables and systematically analysing numerical data so that the results can be generalised and presented in a structured manner. In this context, the quantitative approach provides a clear and easy to understand picture of the extent to which students are able to use prepositions correctly in their writing.

A quantitative approach with text analysis methods was used in this study to evaluate the accuracy of English preposition use in descriptive writing for X-grade students at SMA 17 Agus 1945 Surabaya. Data were obtained from 28 students selected based on recommendations from their English teachers, who were deemed to have good abilities and learning styles. Each student was asked to write a descriptive text of a maximum of 200 words based on the image discussed previously. Writing took place in the language laboratory on April 10, 2025, without internet access and with the use of mobile phones prohibited to ensure the authenticity of the writing. All collected texts were analyzed to identify all prepositions that appeared, then classified and calculated based on the total number of prepositions used (TPU), the number of correct uses (TCP), and the number of errors (TIP). The results were calculated in the form of individual scores and presented in a table, then analyzed statistically using Microsoft Excel to determine the highest, lowest, and average scores for the accuracy of preposition use across all participants. Furthermore, all prepositions found were grouped into six semantic categories: spatial, temporal, direction and motion, cause and purpose, manner and tool, and possession and relationship. The accuracy level of each category was calculated based on the comparison between the number of correct uses and the total number of prepositions in that category. This analysis provides a measurable quantitative picture of EFL students' mastery of prepositions in the context of descriptive texts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and analysis of research on students' mastery of English prepositions in writing descriptive texts. The analysis includes quantitative data related to the accuracy of preposition use and classification based on their functional categories. The findings are discussed to illustrate the types of prepositions most frequently used, their accuracy levels, and the variation in ability among students, thus providing a comprehensive overview of students' mastery levels and the challenges they face in using prepositions appropriately.

A. Students' Mastery of English Prepositions in Descriptive Text Writing

The study showed that there was a significant variation in the ability of EFL students to use English prepositions accurately in descriptive texts written by 28 grade X students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. Some students showed very good mastery with perfect scores, while others still made several errors in their use. The total number of prepositions used (TPU), the

number of correct ones (TCP), the number of incorrect ones (TIP), and the percentage of accuracy scores of each student were used to measure the assessment of the level of students' ability to apply English prepositions correctly in their writing.

Table 1. Student Score

No.	Participant	TPU	TCP	TIP	SCORE
1.	Student 1	29	21	8	72,41
2.	Student 2	9	9	0	100
3.	Student 3	28	23	5	82,14
4.	Student 4	15	10	5	66,66
5.	Student 5	19	18	1	94,73
6.	Student 6	29	27	2	93,10
7.	Student 7	14	13	1	92,85
8.	Student 8	9	9	0	100
9.	Student 9	12	11	1	91,66
10.	Student 10	16	16	0	100
11.	Student 11	11	10	1	90,90
12.	Student 12	12	12	0	100
13.	Student 13	12	12	0	100
14.	Student 14	5	4	1	80
15.	Student 15	5	3	2	60
16.	Student 16	14	13	1	92,85
17.	Student 17	16	16	0	100
18.	Student 18	9	6	3	66,66
19.	Student 19	22	19	3	86,36
20.	Student 20	7	7	0	100
21.	Student 21	11	11	0	100
22.	Student 22	14	13	1	92,85
23.	Student 23	16	15	1	93,75
24.	Student 24	26	20	6	76,92
25.	Student 25	14	12	2	85,71
26.	Student 26	19	16	3	84,21
27.	Student 27	12	9	3	75
28.	Student 28	14	14	0	100

Table 1 shows the individual score breakdown of 28 students' descriptive writing results. From this data, it can be concluded that most students had a high level of accuracy in their use of prepositions. Ten students namely students 2, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21, and 28 achieved a perfect score of 100%. They used between 7 and 16 prepositions correctly without a single error, reflecting excellent mastery of basic preposition use in descriptive contexts. Furthermore, several students achieved high scores, although not optimal. For example, student 5 scored 94.73 with only one error out of 19 prepositions, and student 6 scored 93.10 out of 29 prepositions with two errors. Students 7, 16, and 22 recorded identical scores of 92.85, each with one error out of 14 uses. Meanwhile, student 23 scored 93.75, and students 9 and 11 scored

91.66 and 90.90, respectively. Despite minor errors, these students' achievements demonstrate a good understanding of preposition usage, although further improvement is needed.

However, several students scored low due to a relatively high number of errors compared to the total number of prepositions used. For example, student 1 only scored 72.41 because he made eight errors out of a total of 29 prepositions. Students 4 and 18 each scored 66.66, with five and three errors, respectively, out of 15 and 9 prepositions. The lowest score was achieved by student 15, who only scored 60 due to two of the five prepositions being used incorrectly. This indicates a gap in understanding and correctly applying the function of prepositions in sentences. Meanwhile, several other students scored in the intermediate category, indicating they were on a fairly good track but still needed improvement. Student 3 scored 82.14 out of 28 prepositions with five errors, student 19 scored 86.36, student 25 scored 85.71, student 26 scored 84.21, student 27 scored 75, and student 24 scored 76.92 out of 26 prepositions with six errors. These scores indicate that students' understanding of prepositions is quite good, but accuracy tends to decrease as the number of prepositions used increases. Overall, these data indicate that the majority of students have adequate ability in using prepositions in descriptive texts. However, the range of scores from 60 to 100 reflects significant differences in ability between individuals, which are likely influenced by various factors such as mother tongue (L1) interference, level of exposure to authentic English, and different learning habits.

Table 2. Overall Success Rate of English Preposition Use in EFL Students' Writing

Category	Total
Total Prepositions Used	419
Total Correct Prepositions	369
Total Incorrect Prepositions	50
Percentage of Correct Usage Overall	88.06%
Percentage of Incorrect Usage Overall	11.94%
Lowest Score	60
Highest Score	100
Average Score of Students' Preposition Usage	88,52

Table 2 shows the overall analysis of 28 EFL students' scores on the descriptive texts they wrote. It shows that of the 419 prepositions used, 369 were used correctly, while the remaining 50 were misused. The overall accuracy rate reached 88.06%, indicating that the majority of students had a fairly good understanding of the use of prepositions in descriptive writing contexts. The average preposition mastery score was 88.52, with the highest score being 100 and the lowest being 60, reflecting variations in the level of mastery between individuals. Although most students performed well, there were still 11.94% errors, indicating that some forms of prepositions or the contexts in which they were used were still confusing for some students. These findings indicate that EFL students' acquisition of English prepositions is at a

good stage, but there is still a need for increased exposure to English in the learning environment and individual learning habits to better understand and apply preposition use.

B. Preposition Categories Most Frequently Used and Most Prone to Errors

To obtain more specific and detailed results regarding EFL students' mastery of prepositions in the descriptive texts they have written, the analysis was continued by classifying prepositions based on their functional categories. According to the classification proposed by Lindstromberg (2010), prepositions can be grouped into several semantic categories such as direction and movement, location (spatial), time (temporal), cause and purpose, possession and relationship, and manner or instrument. This approach allows the analysis to not only assess overall accuracy but also identify the types of prepositions most frequently used and those most frequently causing errors. These categories reflect the conceptual functions of prepositions, where spatial meaning is often the core, which then extends to the realm of time and other abstract meanings. Thus, this category-based analysis provides a more structured understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses in using prepositions, while also reflecting their level of proficiency in various contexts of use.

Table 3. Accuracy Level of Preposition Usage Based on Category

No.	Preposition Category	Total Number of Preposition Uses	Total Occurrences	Number of Incorrect Uses	Number of Correct Uses	Presentation Accuracy
1.	Directional & Movement	26	26	6	20	76.92%
	To		13	1	12	92.31%
	Towards		2	0	2	100%
	Into		0	0	0	0
	Onto		1	1	0	0
	Out (of)		0	0	0	0
	Away		1	0	1	100%
	Off		1	1	0	0
	Past		0	0	0	0
	Around		7	2	5	71.43%
	Through		1	1	0	0
2.	Spatial	269	269	34	235	88.78%
	In		71	10	60	84.51%
	In front of		26	3	23	88.46%
	Between		5	1	4	80%
	On		88	10	78	88.64%
	At		2	2	0	0
	Under		19	1	18	94.74%
	Beside		17	5	12	70.59%
	Behind		25	1	24	96%
	Near		7	0	7	100%
	Against		1	0	1	100%
	Next to		4	0	4	100%
	Over		2	0	2	100%
	Above		2	0	2	100%

Below		1	1	0	0
3. Temporal	27	27	4	23	85.19%
Before		0	0	0	0
After		1	0	1	100%
During		0	0	0	0
Since		1	0	1	100%
Until		1	0	1	100%
In		12	1	11	91.67%
On		5	0	5	100%
At		7	3	4	57.14%
4. Cause & Purpose	8	8	0	8	100%
For		8	0	8	100%
Due to		0	0	0	0
Because of		0	0	0	0
To		0	0	0	0
5. Manner & Instrument	40	40	4	36	90%
By		14	1	13	92.86%
With		25	3	22	88%
Without		1	0	1	100%
6. Possession & Relationship	49	49	2	47	95.92%
To		0	0	0	0
With		20	0	20	100%
From		5	0	5	100%
Of		23	2	21	91.30%
About		1	0	1	100%

Table 3 presents data on the accuracy of preposition use by EFL students based on each category. Each category was analysed in terms of total usage, errors, and correct usage, and then the accuracy percentage was calculated. This analysis aims to evaluate the extent to which students are able to use prepositions appropriately in descriptive writing, while also illustrating the level of students' mastery of each type of preposition in a more systematic manner. Through this mapping, the development of students' understanding of the function and context of preposition usage can be identified.

The analysis results in Table 4 show that students have the best mastery of prepositions in the Cause and Purpose category, as evidenced by the 100% Presentation Accuracy level. Although in this category, the only preposition that appears in the data is "for", which is used 8 times and all of them are correct. The absence of errors in the use of this preposition indicates that students are able to understand and apply it correctly in the context of stating causes or purposes. In fact, the Cause and Purpose category conceptually includes several types of prepositions such as "for," "due to," "because of," and "to," but from all the student writing data, only "for" is actually used. This condition shows that the success of this category actually only represents the mastery of one type of preposition, not all variations of prepositions in the category.

In other words, achieving a 100% accuracy level does not mean that students have mastered all forms of cause and purpose prepositions, but only the most common and familiar forms. The use of "for" itself, although relatively small in number compared to prepositions from other categories, is always correct. This reflects students' tendency to choose simple and familiar prepositional forms when conveying certain intentions. One example is seen in the sentence "The air is warm, very suitable for relaxing," where the preposition "for" is used correctly to express the purpose of the previous condition. This success certainly shows an understanding of the semantic function of "for," but also highlights that other prepositions such as "due to," "because of," or "to" have not been used at all. The absence of these forms likely reflects the learner's limited knowledge or confidence in using more complex grammatical structures. Therefore, although this category appears to be numerically perfect, its assessment still needs to be done proportionally because the success of accuracy only occurs in one preposition form, not all.

The Possession and Relationship category showed a high level of mastery by students, with a presentation accuracy of 95.92%, resulting in only 2 errors out of a total of 49 preposition occurrences. The preposition "with" is the most dominant in this category, used 20 times without a single error, indicating that students have a strong understanding of its use in sentence structures such as with my friend or with a pencil. Similarly, the prepositions "from" example sentence "They are not too far away from the garden." and "about" example sentence "...all about the garden.", which appeared 5 times and 1 time respectively, were all used correctly, reflecting a very good level of mastery of expressions such as different from and talk about. The preposition "of" with 23 occurrences, despite being one of the most frequently used in this category, experienced 2 errors, resulting in an accuracy of 91.30%. Although "of" is frequently used indicating familiarity, the errors that occur may be due to the complexity of its semantic network. Learners may find it challenging to understand the subtle differences in the meaning of "of" when used in various abstract contexts beyond its basic function to express possession. Meanwhile, the preposition "to" is not found to be used in relational or possession contexts.

Students also demonstrate a high level of understanding of prepositions in the manner and instrument categories, with presentation accuracy reaching 90%. Out of 40 prepositions in this category, 36 were used correctly and only four were used incorrectly. This demonstrates the majority of students' ability to understand and apply prepositions to describe the method or instrument of an action a crucial element in descriptive construction, particularly when describing a process or activity. The prepositions "with" and "by" were the most frequent in this category, appearing 25 and 14 times, respectively. "With" example sentence "With the bird flying on air and around of them." showed an accuracy rate of 88% (22 out of 25 uses were correct), while "by" example sentence "...played together by riding a bicycle around the housing complex..." achieved an even higher accuracy of 92.86% (13 out of 14 uses were correct). The high frequency and accuracy of these two prepositions indicates that students are familiar with sentence structures involving expressions of manner or instrument. This implies that the conceptual scheme encoding 'tool' or 'way' through "with" and "by" is clear and stable in learners' minds, facilitating their correct use in descriptives. Although this category involves an

abstract semantic domain, it could be speculated that the connection between a tool or method and an action is perceived as more concrete and intuitive compared to other abstract relations. Additionally, although the preposition "without" only appears once, it is used appropriately, which reinforces the idea that in specific contexts, students can understand the nuances of meaning conveyed by "without" to indicate the absence of a tool or method.

The spatial preposition category the most dominant one used by students in their descriptive writing, with a total of 269 recorded uses. Of these, 235 were used correctly and 34 contained errors, resulting in an accuracy rate of 88.78%. This high frequency reflects that spatial prepositions are the type most familiar to students, most likely because they often appear in various forms of language input such as reading books, films, songs, and daily interactions. Some of the most frequently used spatial prepositions are "on" 88 uses, "in" 71 uses one of the example sentence "the girl in the yard", in front "of" 26 uses, "behind" 25 uses, "under" 19 uses, "beside" 17 uses, and "between" 5 uses example sentence "The brown dog is between the girl and the boy...", all of which function to explain the position or relationship of places in space. In addition, there are also prepositions with lower frequencies but show very good mastery, such as "near", "next to", "above" and "over" 2 uses, and "against", "below", and "at". Some of these prepositions were even used with 100% accuracy, such as near, next to, over, above, and against, indicating that students were able to use more specific forms appropriately. In general, these data indicate that students have had a fairly good mastery of the use of spatial prepositions, especially in descriptive contexts, although there is variation in the level of accuracy between types of prepositions. This high level of success indicates that exposure to common spatial preposition forms has helped students understand and apply them in their writing.

The Temporal category in the table shows a total of 27 uses of time prepositions with an accuracy rate of 85.19%. This shows that most students are able to use time prepositions quite well in their descriptive writing. Of all the prepositions included in this category, the preposition "in" is the most frequently used, which is 12 times with one error, so that its accuracy reaches 91.67% example of the sentence "In the afternoon, I played on the swing behind my sister who was reading a book.". Followed by "at", which appears 7 times, but with the lowest accuracy rate in this category, which is only 57.14% because there are three errors out of seven uses. The difficulty of "at" in this temporal context could be caused by the spatial polysemy of "at" itself, which is then metaphorically extended to the context of time. The "point" meaning of "at" does make it suitable for specific time indicators, but understanding the concept of "point" in the time dimension can be more complicated than it seems. Meanwhile, the preposition "on" is used five times, and all are correct, indicating 100% accuracy. The same is true for "after," "since," example sentence "...my hobby since childhood..." and "until," each of which occurs once and is used correctly. The high accuracy of "on" and "in" temporal may be because their usage learnings for days/dates "on" and broader time periods "in" may be more standardized or explicitly taught, so that learners have a clearer conceptual schema for these metaphorical extensions. Other prepositions, such as 'before' and 'during', do not appear at all in the data, which suggests that students are less familiar with, or confident in using, these forms in

descriptive contexts. Overall, these findings suggest that, while most students have mastered temporal prepositions, those with high semantic flexibility, such as 'at', remain challenging.

The Directional and Movement category showed the lowest level of mastery compared to other preposition categories, with an accuracy rate of 76.92% from a total of 26 uses, which recorded 6 errors. These data indicate that students still have difficulty in understanding and applying prepositions related to direction and movement. The preposition to is the most frequently used in this category, appearing 13 times and only resulting in 1 error, with examples of sentences such as "from the garden to their house" which shows the direction of movement from one location to another. Meanwhile, "towards" and "away" are used with perfect accuracy, such as in the sentences "looking towards the girl" and "They are not too far away from the garden". This shows that although rarely used, some directional prepositions have been well understood. However, more obvious obstacles are seen in conceptually more complex prepositions such as onto, through, and off, all of which are considered incorrect. This shows that the understanding of the differences in meaning and use of prepositions that require a deeper spatial understanding is not yet mature. The preposition around, although used 7 times, only has an accuracy rate of 71.43%, reflecting inconsistency in its application. One example of correct usage is the sentence "The fence goes all around the garden" using "around". In addition, phrases such as "played together by riding a bicycle around the housing complex" show the use of "by" and "around" in the context of movement, which illustrates an understanding of the contextual meaning structure of movement. The difficulty in this category can be caused by several factors. First, the specific demands of each preposition to describe a certain direction or movement; for example, onto implies movement towards a surface, through requires a description of a closed space, and off implies movement from a surface. Second, the level of complexity of the spatial scheme contained in each preposition which requires cognitive abilities to visualize dynamic relationships between objects in space. Third, the low frequency of use of these prepositions in students' daily learning activities can limit their understanding of the variety of meanings they contain. The absence of prepositions such as into, out (of), and past in the data indicates that the variation of forms in this category is still limited and needs to be expanded through context based learning.

The most frequently used prepositions overall in the student data were "on" and "in", with 88 and 71 occurrences in the Spatial category, respectively. The dominance of the use of these two prepositions is understandable considering their crucial function in describing the location or position of objects and characters in descriptive text. This high frequency also indicates students' familiarity with "on" and "in" due to frequent exposure in various learning contexts and daily communication. However, behind the high frequency of use, the accuracy of these two prepositions is not entirely consistent, with each recording 10 errors. This indicates that students still have difficulty adjusting the use of "on" and "in" to the right sentence context, possibly because the meanings of both sometimes overlap and are highly dependent on the construction of the space or object that accompanies them, as well as the differences in spatial concepts with the learners' mother tongue. Therefore, the dominance of the use of "on" and

“in” underlines the importance of strengthening the mastery of meaning and function in depth in teaching prepositions in the classroom, not only based on their frequency.

Overall, students’ preposition mastery level in descriptive writing can be said to be quite good, as indicated by the high level of accuracy in most categories, such as Cause and Purpose, Possession and Relationship, and Manner and Instrument. This reflects EFL students’ ability to understand and use common and familiar prepositions appropriately. However, there are still obvious challenges in certain categories and forms of prepositions, especially those that are rarely used, have complex spatial meanings, or have many equivalents with similar meanings. For example, the Directional and Movement category showed the lowest level of accuracy, with significant errors in prepositions such as “onto”, “through”, and “off”, indicating the need to strengthen the understanding of the concept of movement and direction in space. In addition, as highlighted earlier, the highly used “on” and “in” still showed significant errors due to their wide and varied contexts of use. Therefore, this achievement of accuracy should be assessed not only by the quantity of success, but also by considering the variety of forms and complexity of the preposition’s function in the sentence. In short, EFL students’ preposition mastery level tends to be better in prepositions that have more specific conceptual meanings, prototypes, or more stable learnings of meaning extension. In contrast, difficulties arise with prepositions that are highly polysemous such as the spatial “in” and “on”, that encode complex dynamic spatial schemas directional categories, or that are used so infrequently that their meaning or conceptual networks have not yet been firmly established in the learner’s interlanguage.

The results of this study support Krashen’s hypothesis that the quality and understanding of input are the main keys in language acquisition, prepositions that often appear in clear and consistent contexts will be easier to understand and master, while more complex or less familiar forms require more targeted learning interventions in order to bridge the gap between *i* and *i+1* in the student acquisition process (Krashen, 1982). Categories such as cause and purpose, possession and relationship, and manner and instrument showed the highest level of accuracy, reaching 100%, 95.92%, and 90% respectively. Common and frequently appearing prepositions such as “for”, “with”, “by”, “from”, and “about” were used very well and consistently, reflecting that students had received sufficient and understandable language input regarding these forms, and indicating that these forms were at level *i+1*, that is, slightly above the students’ current competence but still understandable and absorbable. Meanwhile, the Spatial and Temporal categories, although also showing relatively high accuracy (88.78% and 85.19%), still showed some errors, especially in polysemous prepositions such as “in”, “on”, and “at”, which are used very frequently but still contribute to errors due to the possible lack of understanding of the variation of meaning and use in different contexts. This indicates that despite the high frequency of input, the quality of input that is not clear enough or less contextual can hinder perfect acquisition. The Directional and Movement category is the most challenging, with an accuracy of only 76.92% and errors occur mainly in prepositions such as “onto”, “through”, and “off”, all of which are used incorrectly. Some prepositions such as “into”, “past”, and “out of” do not even appear at all, indicating that students may have never or very rarely been exposed to these forms in understandable contexts. This is in line with Krashen’s idea that without sufficient and

comprehensive input, especially for complex or less common structures, acquisition will not occur. Even for frequently used prepositions such as “in” and “on”, 10 errors were found each despite their high level of familiarity, indicating that the quantity of input is not enough, input must be of good quality and at an appropriate level to produce comprehension.

Language production processes, such as writing, not only serve to convey messages, but also become a place for learners to realize deficiencies in their language knowledge system, or known as noticing the gap Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985) to (Sun, 2020). The Cause and Purpose category, the recorded accuracy of 100% seems very ideal, but is only based on one preposition used, namely for. Other prepositions in this category, such as due to, because of, or to, do not appear at all in students' writing. This shows that although students have succeeded in using the forms they have mastered, they have not fully realized the need to explore and test other forms. This indicates that the output process that occurs is still limited to repeating familiar forms, without encouraging learners to produce or improve more complex forms. Likewise, in the Possession and Relationship and Manner and Instrument categories, prepositions such as with, by, and about show high success rates, but this reflects students' comfort with these forms rather than a comprehensive acquisition of the entire category. This perspective is further strengthened when viewed from the Second Language Writing perspective proposed by (Hyland, 2003), highlighting the complex challenges of writing in a second language, including cognitive, rhetorical, and linguistic pressures. Students tend to rely on the most common and easily recognized prepositions such as on, in, and with, which not only frequently appear in everyday language input, but are also considered "safer" to use in writing. The strategy of avoiding more complex prepositional forms such as onto, through, or off, and less common forms such as past, due to, or during, reflects a tendency to reduce cognitive load when writing. This is in line with Hyland's argument that learners often simplify their language in order to maintain clarity of structure and content of the text. As a result, the writing production process is not fully utilized as a tool for language exploration, but only to repeat forms that are already understood. By combining these two theories, it is concluded that the successful use of prepositions in EFL students' writing does indicate a good level of mastery in terms of frequency and accuracy, but on the other hand implies limitations in the variety of forms, linguistic courage, and deep reflection on forms that have not been mastered. Therefore, teaching approaches need to place more emphasis on exploring varied forms and encouraging students to use rare prepositions, so that their output processes become a means of developing more complex interlanguage systems.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicate that X-grade EFL students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya have a fairly good mastery of English prepositions in writing descriptive texts, with an average accuracy of 88.06%. However, student abilities vary, with individual scores ranging from 60% to 100%. The most frequently used preposition categories are spatial prepositions, especially “on” and “in,” which, although familiar, remain a significant source of errors due to their complex meanings. On the other hand, prepositions in the categories of Cause and Purpose, Possession and Relationship, and

Manner and Instrument show the highest levels of accuracy, reflecting students' ease in mastering more common prepositional forms such as "for," "with," and "by." Meanwhile, prepositions in the Directional and Movement category pose the greatest challenge with the lowest success rate (76.92%), particularly for forms such as "onto," "off," and "through," which require a more abstract spatial understanding. These findings support the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which posits that prepositional forms frequently encountered in clear contexts are easier to acquire, while less common or more complex forms require a more targeted learning approach. Furthermore, consistent with the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985) and the Second Language Writing perspective (Hyland, 2003), students appear to prefer forms they have mastered and avoid new forms in their writing, as a strategy to maintain clarity and structure, indicating limitations in exploring a wider range of language forms. Therefore, successful preposition use is determined not only by the amount of input received, but also by the quality of learning, a deeper understanding of meaning, and the courage to use more varied forms. A more meaningful, contextual, and exploratory teaching approach is needed so that students can expand their language skills and develop a more better of interlanguage.

The Acquisition of English Prepositions in Descriptive Text written by Indonesian EFL Learners (a case study of X-grade students at SMA 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya in the academic year of 2025)

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