

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces to the general outlines of the research which consist of background, research questions, purposes and significances the study, rationale, research methodology, instruments, and data analysis.

### **A. Background**

The error analysis is very significant to predict the difficulties in learning a foreign language and give a hint about learners' competence and lack. Nowadays, researchers, especially in ELT field, are keen on the error analysis of students. Many foreign language-learnings studies have tended to concentrate on analysis learner's errors (Al-Bayati, 2013). Error analysis popularity can be caused by its usefulness as a procedure to assess the language produced by the learners. It is essential since the occurrence of learners' errors and difficulties is purely a part of language learning process. According to Özışık (2014), errors are unavoidable "in the process of learning English as a foreign language, it is inevitable for students to make errors when they produce the target language." (p. 60) One of the common errors which is mostly committed by EFL learners is preposition usage. For example, Abushihab (2014) found that preposition errors accounted for 28% of all the grammatical errors made by EFL students, Lasaten (2014) found errors in prepositions are considered common linguistic errors committed by the students, indicating the students' poor knowledge on the use of prepositions, and Musatafa, Mulya, and Syamsul (2016)

found that one of the dominant types of error in the linguistic category taxonomy was prepositions (30%).

Prepositions are one of grammatical aspects that makes EFL students difficulties to use them. For example, using English prepositions is challenging for Serbian learners and also for other English learners (Đorđević, 2013). Several ideas are put forward for why prepositions cause problems. First, English has many prepositions. Since students need to spend more time to learn the usage of the large number of prepositions, prepositions errors due to the incomplete learning of the rules (Musatafa et al., 2016). Second, preposition usage is different in between English and students' native language. English prepositions have different functions from native language prepositions and vice versa and it is not easy for students to use them correctly (Abushihab, 2014). Phuket and Othman (2015) stated that the same prepositions could have a different meaning in one language to another. Epelde (2015) mentioned that students "have to know if an in the particular construction a preposition is needed" (p. 22). He also added that finding the correct prepositions might be complicated for students since prepositions differ a lot in every language. Abushihab (2014) proposed an example case that English prepositions are used separately from other words, whilst Turkish prepositions are attached to words used as suffixes; there is no surprise that students commit such errors. Second, the prepositions usage makes a confusion because the same prepositions can be used in different contexts and for several functions, and convey different meanings as well. Đorđević (2013) stated that prepositions perform a number of complex syntactic and semantic roles. He also gave an example that

some prepositions are polysemous words but are not closely related. (e.g. *She was running on the path by (near) the river/ It will be done by (before) Saturday*). Other causes in preposition errors are the interference of native and target language and lack of practice. Whilst specifically in the case of Indonesian EFL students, the dominant cause of prepositions errors is the influence of native language (Indonesian). A study by Anjayani and Suprpto (2016) revealed that dominant cause of prepositions errors is interlingual transfer. He also showed some examples, such as (1) Sragen is village from my mother. (2) We until Selekt park at 15.00 am.

Many studies have been conducted to examine the preposition errors committed by students. Recent studies have been done in Malaysia, Iraq, Algeria, Serbia, Iran, Vietnam, Turkey, India, Pakistan, and Sudan (Khotaba, 2013; Al-Bayati, 2013; Mimoune, 2013; Đorđević, 2013; Yousefi, Soori, & Janfaza, 2014; Trang, 2014; Özişik, 2014; Saravanan, 2014; Saeed, Hussain, & Fatima, 2015; Hassan, 2016). In Indonesia, one of the recent studies that have been conducted to analyse preposition errors is a study by Surya (2015). He analysed the errors of Indonesian prepositions in headline news from a newspaper in Jogjakarta. Other studies are conducted by Anjayani and Suprpto (2016) and Khurriyati (2013) focusing on English preposition errors committed by Indonesian students in secondary level. It can be assumed that study of English preposition errors is still limited in Indonesia, especially ELT class at tertiary level. It is also suggested a need to take into consideration that the participants are prospective English teachers which will teach prepositions in the future still commit preposition errors.

The phenomenon of preposition errors is evident in the research site as identified in the students' lecture notes and exercise. For example, they wrote the following findings:

- 1) *There were no taxis, so we had to walk **to** home.* (Error in the use of 'to' instead of no preposition)
- 2) *What time do you usually get **to** home?* (Error in the use of 'to' instead of no preposition)
- 3) *We arrived **at** home very late.* (Error in the use of 'at' instead of no preposition)
- 4) *The Prophet Muhammad was born **at** Mecca.* (Error is the use of preposition 'at' instead of 'in')

rather than they wrote:

- 1) *There were no taxis, so we had to walk home.*
- 2) *What time do you usually get home?*
- 3) *We arrived home very late.*
- 4) *The Prophet Muhammad was born **in** Mecca.*

It is interesting to know further about the phenomenon of English prepositional errors committed by EFL students at tertiary level, especially the students of English Education Department. Thus, this research focus in investigating 'The Students' Errors in the Use of Prepositions in their Writing Projects'.

## **B. Research Questions**

1. What are the types of preposition errors frequently committed by students of English Education Department in their writing projects?
2. What are the sources of preposition errors committed by the students in their writing projects?
3. What are the students' problems in using prepositions perceived by the students?

## **C. Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To describe the types of preposition errors frequently committed by students of English Education Department.
2. To identify the sources of preposition errors committed by the students.
3. To find out the students' problems in using prepositions perceived by the students.

## **D. Significances of the Study**

Theoretically, this study is expected to describe the students' knowledge and understanding of prepositions. It can help to find out the knowledge and teaching the students have been receiving. It also can predict students' difficulties.

Practically, this study is expected to give feedback to both teachers and students. It can encourage students' comprehension and confidence in dealing with prepositions in proper ways and raise students' awareness towards preposition

errors. It can serve teachers as an investigation tool for the teaching materials and teaching techniques and can be used to identify prepositions materials that have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

### **E. Rationale**

An error is common and cannot be separated from foreign language teaching. To language students, committing error is a part of learning the process and discovering the linguistic rules. There are two major aspects that affect the students to commit errors. These aspects are native language interference and the difficulty of the target language (Kaweera, 2013). In understanding the error and its aspect, the teacher should conduct an error analysis.

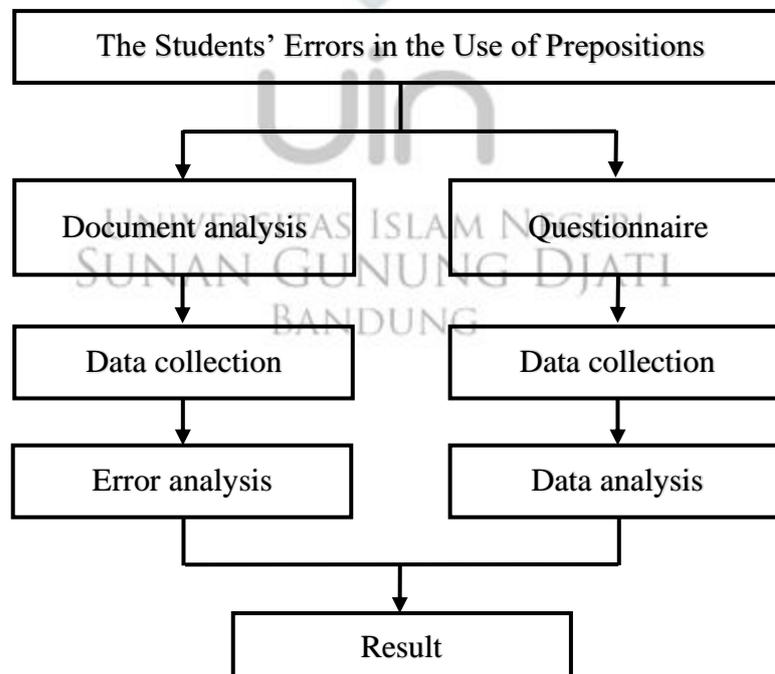
Error analysis is beneficial for both EFL students' and teachers. Hasyim (2002) stated error analysis could reveal in what aspect of grammar the students' have difficulties in and evaluate the teachers' success in teaching. Moreover, error analysis promotes the understanding about all necessary information relevant to how well the language teaching and learning. As stated by Nafsi (2016), error analysis is a process of identifying and classifying the students' errors in order to get information about their knowledge development in the target language and to know whether the teachers' method of teaching is effective or not.

In a paper by Richards, he provided an error analysis from sample typical errors from six general linguistic categories. One of them is errors in the use of preposition (Witton-Davies, 2004). Similar to Richards, as cited by Darus and Subramaniam (2009), Peng stated that one of the several general types of recurrent

errors is an incorrect use of prepositions. It had been shown that preposition error had arisen in error analysis field since Error Analysis began to “augment Contrastive Analysis (CA) by the early of the 1970s” (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 37).

In this research, the error analysis is adjusted in the use of prepositions by EFL students. Prepositions are classified as “a closed class of items, connecting units in a sentence and specifying a relationship between them” (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990, p. 188). Prepositions are divided into 6 major divisions. Divisions of prepositions, according to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990), are space, time, cause and purpose, from means to stimulus, accompaniment, and concession and other relations.

The scheme of this study is represented as follows:



*Figure 1.1 Framework of the Study*

A document analysis and questionnaire are used to gain the information in this study. A document analysis is based on the students' project. Meanwhile, the questionnaire is conducted to the students to find out the students' problems in using and learning prepositions. The result of the students' work is specially analysed with the steps of Error Analysis (EA) proposed by Corder in 1974 (as cited by Ellis, 2003). The procedures are: the data are collected from the result of the students' project; the errors are identified, described, and explained. On the other hand, the result of the questionnaire is analysed and interpreted based on six steps suggested by Creswell (2012). Those steps are gathering the data to prepare and organise for data analysis, reading through the database, coding to build descriptions and themes, representing the data, interpreting the findings, and the last, validating the accuracy of findings. The findings are expected to answer the research questions mentioned previously about the students' types and sources of errors and problem in using prepositions.

#### **F. Limitation of the Study**

To avoid misunderstanding, this study was limited into the following problems:

1. The data were only collected from students of English Education Department class B and C.
2. The analysis was only focused on the low achiever students.

## **G. Research Methodology**

### *1. Research Design*

In order to make the error analysis clearer, qualitative research method was chosen. Qualitative research is a method concerned with the quality of information to gain an understanding of reasons and motivations and employ what people experience, feel, and think (MacDonald & Headlam, 2009). In error analysis, the qualitative research method is appropriate to explore the types of errors and develop an understanding the sources of such errors.

This proposed study is a case study. As suggested by Creswell (2012), a case study is an in-depth exploration based on extensive data collection of a restricted system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals). The reasons for case study selection were based on the objective and scope. The objective of this study is to explore and investigate the phenomenon of preposition errors through in-depth examination. Its scope is a specific context of a small geographical site and a limited number of students as the participants, as explained in the subsection below.

### *2. Research Site*

The setting for the present study is State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati (UIN) Bandung. It is chosen because this study needs to be conducted at tertiary level. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative researcher intentionally or purposefully selects sites to best understand the

phenomenon. Thus, UIN Bandung is selected due to reach the best understanding in prepositions error phenomenon at tertiary level.

### *3. Participants*

Students of English Education Department are the subjects of this study. They are in the second semester, in which they have learnt Basic Grammar before in the first semester and studying Paragraph Writing in the current semester. It attempts to find the data about the errors of prepositions use. In order to learn or understand the central phenomenon, purposeful sampling is selected. Purposeful sampling is the research term used for qualitative sampling (Creswell, 2012). The selection of second-semester students of English Education Department can help to understand the phenomenon of prepositions error at tertiary level. 24 second-semester students were selected due to the preposition errors found in their writing and their will to fill questionnaires. The task was a recount text with the topic 'My Unforgettable Moment'. Every student wrote 1 – 2 paragraphs on average.

### **H. Data Collecting Techniques**

Two kinds of data collecting techniques were used to gain the data. They were document analysis and questionnaire. The document analysis was chosen to analyse the students' prepositions errors and the source of students' preposition errors. Meanwhile, the questionnaire was utilised to know about the students' problems when using prepositions.

### *1. Document Analysis*

Documents can be one of the valuable sources to gain information in qualitative research. According to Corbin and Strauss, document analysis is a procedure for examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and developing knowledge (as cited in Bowen, 2009). The documents which were used in this study were students' writing. The students' work gave the description of their prepositional usage. This source provided information to understand the preposition errors and sources of the errors in the study.

### *2. Questionnaire*

The questionnaire was administered to the students whose writing contained preposition errors. Creswell (2012) identified questionnaire as a data collecting approach that the participants choose the answers the questions and return the questionnaire. The questions asked were about the phenomenon of difficulties and problems in learning English prepositions.

Type of questionnaire items that was used in this present study is open-ended questions. Cohen, Manion, and Marrison (2005) stated that open-ended questions allow participants to write a free answer in their own language, to explain and qualify their answer and avoid the restriction of pre-set choices of the answers. The open-ended questionnaires tried to reveal about what students' problems in using prepositions. To assure the validity of the questionnaire, it was finalised based on experts' comments of the field and edited based on comments and responses of

students in the same grade as the participants of the target population during research pilot.

## **I. Data Analysis**

This study used qualitative research which was generally associated with data in the form of words and to gain an understanding of a central phenomenon. To analyse the data from document analysis, Error Analysis procedure was used since it was utilised to analyse errors and sources of the errors. Meanwhile, the data from the questionnaire were analysed based on steps of analysing and interpreting qualitative.

### *1. Document Analysis*

There are five steps suggested by Corder (1974) in Error Analysis (EA) research (as cited in Ellis, 2003). The procedure for analysing learner errors includes collection, identification, description, explanation, and evaluation. However, according to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2009), many studies do not include the fifth step because evaluation of errors has been handled as a separate issue, with its own methods of investigation. As a result, this present study only included four steps of error analysis which are explained below:

#### *a. Collection of a sample of learner language*

A sample of learner language is what data of language produced by the participants used for EA and how to collect them. The samples of learner language which is used in EA include data collected from the learners who do the same kind of task. The data collected in this study were a specific

sample which involved one sample of language use produced by a limited number of language learners. This matched with the nature of this study as a case study that involved a limited number of participants and explores a phenomenon.

b. Identification of errors

After the data collected, then the errors should be identified. The identification of errors was meant to determine a part of participants' work that deviated from English preposition rules. Reading through all the data was done to recognise an error.

c. Description of errors

In this case, the errors were classified according to a specific category. This category was type of error. The errors were classified from coding the data. The output from this step answered the first research question.

d. Explanation of errors

Explanation of errors was determining why the error made in trying to understand the processes of learning. The preposition errors found were classified based on the sources of the errors. The output from this step answered the second research question.

## 2. *Questionnaire*

The data from the questionnaire were analysed based on steps of analysing and interpreting qualitative data suggested by Creswell (2012). This

procedure answered the third research questions. The procedure includes steps as follows:

a. Prepare and organise the data for analysis

To work with the result of the questionnaire, the materials should be accessible. This work consisted of gathering and organising the questionnaire forms and making sure all forms of data safely saved and copied.

b. Explore and code the data

To study the data, reading whole data was done. The main analysis of questionnaire materials was marking the data through coding. Coding is the process of organizing the responses into appropriate categories which help in interpreting the responses (Mackey & Gass, 2012). It involves examining, and marking the database.

c. Coding to build description and themes

Series and patterns connections among the categories within those codes and connections between the various categories that may be called themes were searched. Descriptions and themes that have developed from the codes were presented.

d. Represent and report qualitative findings

Findings were represented in tables and reported in a narrative discussion about the participant experiences and comments.

e. Interpret the findings

Personal views, comparisons between the findings and literature, and suggestions for limitations and future research were interpreted based on what had been learned from this study.

f. Validate the accuracy of the findings

To validate the accuracy of the findings, validation that was employed was triangulation. One of the triangulations was used in this study, i.e. reinforcing evidence from different techniques of data collection (Creswell, 2012). Beside as a source of information in error analysis, document analysis was also used to confirm the finding of questionnaires.

