INVESTIGATING MOTHER TONGUE EFFECT IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS BY INDONESIAN-SPEAKING LEARNERS

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Abstract
English prepositions are problematic for non-native speakers. The debate on whether prepositions should be memorized as divergent cases or introduced in the teaching process by revealing their manifold senses as a network of related meanings is more likely to be resolved by adhering to the latter, occasionally referred to as the motivating polysemy method. The article investigated the source of the problems that Indonesia-speaking learners face when using English prepositions. Twenty-three students participated in this study. The participants were third-year English–major students writing for a professional context class of Madura University (UNIRA) in the academic year 2020 – 2021. The participants were supposed to answer a multiple-choice test designed for this purpose. The test was made up of 15 questions. Findings indicated that UNIRA learners of English meet considerable problems in employing English prepositions. The study suggested that the Indonesian language as a mother tongue interferes with using English prepositions by Indonesian-speaking learners and brings about numerous difficulties in English prepositions.

Keywords: English prepositions, language transfer, second language learning

Introduction
Learning a new language is a long-period process and it necessitates years of ceaseless practice. Learners of English are continuously uncovered to new subjects. One of the most problematic students in second or foreign language learning is applying the appropriate preposition. As affirmed by Vannestål (2015) that a particular word category that is considered notoriously problematic to acquire from any new language is prepositions. Indonesian learners of English undeniably strive for the acquisition of prepositions, though Indonesian grammatical construction may have several grammatical resemblances with English structure. It is admitted that at least ten percent of highest 100 most frequent words used in English sentences contain prepositions (Xiao et al., 2018) then no doubt, there is a great number of prepositions in the English language, and a number of them have a
myriad number of meanings and uses. Prepositions also can heighten the problems of forming a cohesive description of the meaning of prepositions due to their highly polysemous meanings (Schneider et al., 2016). More to the point, the process of learning prepositions gets complicated most notably for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) because they encounter challenges in grasping the manifold meanings and dissimilar contextual applications. Those who experience the most complicated in learning and employing prepositions suitably are individuals who are not native speakers of the language. It is more likely owing to the distinctions between English and their mother tongue. Accordingly, EFL Learners have many difficulties when employing English prepositions, regardless of their mother tongue. Prior research literature shows that difficulties persist for learners whose mother tongue is Chinese (Yuan, 2014), German (Rankin & Schiftner, 2011), Norwegian (Nacey & Graedler, 2015), and Thai (Ruangjaroon, 2014). Indonesian seems to be no exception. Wijaya and Ong’s study (2018) revealed that Indonesian learners of English are not able to acquire prepositions that are not in their mother tongue which becomes a big problem for native speakers of Indonesian as their corresponding preposition is simply one word, i.e. di. However, there is a small amount of research on the mother tongue effect in the acquisition of English prepositions, with some investigations focusing on students in Madura, Part of East Java-Indonesia.

Prepositions in English, also called particles, are a never-ending problem for Indonesian learners of English. Indeed, they are notoriously difficult and do not cease to lead to perplexity and uncertainty for Indonesian learners even at a fairly advanced level of learning. The reasons behind the phenomenon are multifarious. Firstly, the meanings an English preposition has are diverse, and unpredictable and seem to be determined by the linguistic context in which the prepositions come about. The English language contains over 100 prepositions, and words that link nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence. English prepositions are tricky since they are utilized in a choice of situations and can show not only time and place, manner, purpose, state, and agent but also condition. Even worse, occasionally they can be utilized interchangeably, as in “sit in that chair, sit on that chair”, however, there are rules regarding how they are utilized. Secondly, divergent prepositions employed with the same lexical word have divergent and quite often confusing meanings, such as look at, look on, look up, look into, look for, look after, etc. Thirdly, distinct word class of the same lexeme requires distinct prepositions. For instance, they sympathize with her, they feel a lot of sympathy for her, and they are sympathetic to her problem. Fourthly, numerous prepositions have abstract senses that are not provable and cannot be learned by association with a defined part of speech. For instance beyond which can have meaning: a. Further away (e.g: Their dwelling is just beyond the bridge). b. Outside or a stated limit (e.g: They did so well - beyond all their expectations). c. Not understand (e.g: They are afraid physics is completely beyond me). Lastly, in English preposition learning, it is acknowledged that those who teach prepositions, even as likely speakers of English, are not able to offer a logical explanation for the occurrence of such prepositions or a conceptual guide of their uses. It is essential to comprehend that learners of English will never master English prepositions through the use of logic. It is because languages do not have abundant logic. The linguistic phenomenon, inherent to humans, has the same features, as in complex, irregular, puzzling, and
constant evolution. Besides, a language structure is so complex and abstract to be categorized a summarized in just a set of conventions.

Indonesian learners of English undergo difficulties with the use of appropriate prepositions because a number of them do not exist in their mother tongue, which is Indonesia. There are scores of reasons for the inappropriate of prepositions, one of which is the absence of practice of them in the curriculum. Besides, the preposition in the Indonesian language has a different system from the English preposition. In Indonesian, to state precise position or time, users of the Indonesian language may choose *di which is equal to *in, *on, and *at in English. Examples of *di use in Indonesia language: *Mereka duduk *di kursi berlengan (in English: they sit *in an armchair), *Mereka tinggal *di jalan Pangeranan (in English: They live *on Pangeranan street), *Mereka bertemu *di tempat kerja (in English: They met *at work).

In short, one Indonesian preposition such as *di stands for more than one English preposition: *in, *on, and *at. Unlike the structure, Indonesian and English prepositions are divergent to some extent. In the Indonesian language, there is no rule for employing the preposition of time, such as *pada. They can be employed to mention year (e.g: *pada tahun 2009), month (e.g: *pada bulan Agustus), and day (e.g: *pada hari Senin). In brief, the preposition of time *pada in Indonesia can be used freely whether it indicates the year, month, or day. However, prepositions of time in English such as *in, *on, and *at which express a distinct range of time concepts (Quirk et al, 1985) are different from the use of Indonesian prepositions. Preposition *in indicates longer time associated with year or month (e.g: In England, it frequently snows *in December). The proposition *on shows for a shorter time as a day or week (e.g: Few shops do not open *on Sundays.). Whilst the preposition suggests a shorter time than a day or hour (e.g: His last class ends *at 10 o'clock). Prepositions *in, *on, and *at can’t be used freely. For example *in can’t be used to mention day *in *Friday or to mention hour *in 2 o’clock. They have rules for their usage. Besides, in English, one preposition may comprise various meanings but in Indonesian language, one preposition may comprise one meaning. It seems that such situations are perplexing for Indonesia learners of English and due to their various meanings, they can trigger off myriad troubles for learners of English (AlQbailat, Al-Momani, & Almahameed, 2016; Özbay & Bozkurt, 2017) and it is even regarded as the most challenging factor in learning English language (Gvarishvil, 2012). With these considerations in mind, this study aims at identifying the source of the difficulty that Indonesian learners of English undergo in learning prepositions.

**Literature review and previous research**

**Prepositions**

Prepositions in English have a wide assortment of senses and functions, and it is not straightforward to define what prepositions are. Numerous researchers and scholars acknowledge that prepositional sense is rather hard to define, much trickier than the sense of lexical words. It is due to the abstract relational nature of prepositions. As maintained by Talmy (2000), their meaning signifies a skeletal conceptual small-scale version. Hence, it is not astonishing that abstract prepositional meaning has been argued for quite a few periods; over many years, manifold models of prepositional semantics have been proposed (e.g Tabakowska 2010). On the other hand, prepositions in English can be seen from a syntactic-semantic perspective and cognitive-semantic viewpoint (Cuyckens & Radden,
2002). In the syntactic-semantic perspective, prepositions can be defined by their function as the head of prepositional phrases. In the cognitive-semantic perspective viewpoint, the polysemy (various meanings) of prepositions is clarified as a network of meanings. When describing various meanings of prepositions, the meanings are grasped as derived from one another, yielding distinct sub-networks linked in one network, which is put in order around the central senses. In general, the central meanings are regarded as more concrete and can give rise to more abstract senses (Tyler, 2012).

English prepositions may combine with a certain noun, verb, and adjective in what is named preposition combinations (PCs). This is in line with Robinson’s opinion (2009) that numerous English prepositions that follow nouns, verbs, and adjectives become unpredictable, causing their employment extremely idiomatic. According to the number of words, English prepositions embrace two sorts: simple prepositions or single-word prepositions and complex or multi-word prepositions. Simple prepositions (SPs) consist of merely a single word, for instance with, about, to, on, in, for, of, by, and so on. Whilst complex prepositions (CPs) are composed of more than one (written) word, for instance with regard to, on behalf of, according to, etc (Ballard, 2013). Several studies show that certain idiomatic multi-word expressions with complex prepositions are acquired as memorized chunks and not subjected to processing at the time of production (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012; Wray, 2008). They are typically introduced in EFL textbooks as different lexical units to be learned as ready-made phrases (e.g. Wildman & Hudson, 2015). Complex prepositions are deemed as a content word or an open class, denoting that they possess no limited number since new combinations can be found and combined into the language (Macková, 2012). In addition, preposition placement in English has two: preposition stranding and preposition pied piping (Günther, 2021). PPP is prepositions that are placed at the initial position of the clause for example: with whom did you go? or about what are they talking?. Whilst preposition stranding is the preposition is left behind (stranded) in a relative clause or a question, as in the man who I talked to, or Whom did you speak to?. Both PS and PPP occur chiefly in the construction of WH ‘interrogatives’ and relative clauses. This paper will not explore PS and PPP further and will use and refer to these phrases in the same manner as the research literature.

**Language Transfer**

When it comes to research in most cases, there is adequate evidence that shows that transfer poses a significant factor in second language acquisition (Bestgen et al., 2012). A tangible learning complexity for EFL learners is that the mother tongue or L1 has an influence when acquiring the target language (TL) or second language (L2). Another phenomenon greatly dealt with that influence is the name “transfer”, which is regarded as the same as language transfer, interference, also recognized as a mother tongue (MT) interference and linguistic interference. Linguistic interference is associated with the relations that exist between language structures and forms in two divergent languages.

Conceptual transfer, on the other hand, is considered as the influence of language-interceded conceptual classifications on the language use of an L2 (Nghi, 2020). Phonetical transfer (Chávez-Peón et al., 2012), morphological transfer (Sagarra & Ellis, 2013), syntactical transfer (Biria & Ameri-Golestan, 2010),
semantic and pragmatic transfer (Bu, 2011), and sociolinguistic transfer (Meyerhoff, 2009) are a number of the subsphere of linguistic transfer investigation that has been studied. These findings strengthened Oldin's hypothesis that transfer can come about in every part of linguistic subsystems. Several current studies on conceptual transfer (CT) investigated the differences and similarities in conceptual representations that appertained to linguistic subcategories of the source and receiver languages, such as the use of English vocabulary (Phúc et al., 2018; Zhang & Luo, 2017), concepts (Odlin, 2005), EFL writing (Omar, 2018), number cases (Charters et al., 2012), and language aptitude and age (Bagherian, 2012). This indicates that CT is regarded as a hypothesis that MT transfer in an individual’s use of particular TL items stems from their conceptual command and thinking patterns (Jarvis, 2007).

It is essential to underline that the transfer can be positive or negative. Positive transfer refers to the use of the mother tongue in an L2 context when the resulting L2 structure is correct and negative transfer can be defined as the use of the mother tongue in an L2 context resulting in a non-target-like L2 structure (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In other words, similarities between the learner’s MT and TL cause positive transfer, whereas distinctions between the two languages lead to negative transfer. Relatively speaking, the negative transfer is simple to be determined since it is likened to the occurrence of errors and in turn, hinders acquiring L2. On the contrary, positive transfer facilitates the acquisition of L2 forms (Talebi, 2014). Numerous researchers admitted transfer from MT is a significant factor influencing the acquisition of L2 structures (Phoocharoensil, 2013). This premise was advocated by Gass and Selinker (1992) who mention that language transfer is absolutely an actual and central phenomenon that must be considered in any account of the L2 acquisition process. This shows that a few L2 studies aim at providing an adequate account for the acquisition of L2 needs to investigate the effects resulting from MT.

Previous Study

Studies regarding the complexity of learning and acquiring English prepositions by non-native speakers of English are varied and become a controversial issue.

Nghi, et al. (2021) investigated the factors that may influence the use of English prepositions by native speakers of Vietnamese. Their study, suggested that Vietnamese intra-lingual transfer negatively contributes to the prepositional sense stated by Vietnamese EFL learners. This study also uncovered that Vietnamese transfer negatively affects the use and acquisition of English prepositions and has problems in employing not only simple prepositions but also complex ones.

Another study was carried out by Abdalla (2021). He examined Saudi university students’ difficulties with using correct English prepositions in their writing and communication. Students in this study were students who were registered at the faculty of Sciences and Arts in Almandag. He also examined the deficiencies in the use of prepositions in English based on the student’s results and suggested that Saudi university students underwent difficulties with the correct use of English prepositions followed by particular verbs and in the use of prepositional phrases.
Đorđević (2013) examined typical problems of prepositions in English encountered by Serbian learners. The students are first-year students of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the European University. A grammatical approach was used in error correction in this study. The result revealed that Serbian learners had trouble comprehending how a preposition can be placed at the end of the sentence away from its object, hard to distinguish the difference between prepositions in and at because they were generally translated as one preposition u in Serbian, as well as made errors with temporal prepositions due to the inter-lingual transfer.

In her study, Gvarishvili (2013) examined the extent to which students relied on their mother tongue's prepositional knowledge in acquiring an understanding of prepositional usage in English. The results suggested that Georgian ESL learners made misused prepositions on account of LI negative interference. Besides, the main types of errors regarding prepositions led by the learners' mother tongue interference were: addition, substitution, overgeneralization, and omission.

**Method**

In this study, the method research design used is qualitative. It is classified as qualitative research because it fulfills the criteria of qualitative research as follows: (a) the study contains words as the data, (b) it answers to “what”, “how”, and “why” questions, and (c) the researcher is the key instrument (Silverman, 2014).

Fifty-three students of Madura University (UNIRA) from the English Education Department of FKIP participated in this study. They were registered in the writing for professional context class during the third semester of the academic year 2020 – 2021. The partaking students have ever been studying EFL as a school discipline for 6 years when they were in junior and senior high school. Nonetheless, they also had their education in national schools, in which Indonesian as their mother tongue became the medium of instruction. On the contrary, English is a target language taught as a foreign language in their school. All participants speak more Indonesian as their mother tongue (MT) at their home and with their acquaintances than English.

A multiple-choice test was designed to gather data regarding the problems of acquiring and learning English prepositions by UNIRA students of English. The test comprised fifteen questions. Each of the students was supposed to choose the best possible answer out of the choices from a list with the correct English preposition. The participants were given 30 minutes to answer the test. They were also asked to put Ø (null preposition) to point out that no preposition was required to indicate one of the cases met by UNIRA students of English where one language utilizes a preposition and the other language does not.

**Findings and Discussion**

To analyze the data, the percentage of appropriate and inappropriate usage of prepositions in each sentence was counted. Then, the correct and incorrect usage of prepositions by the students in each sentence was calculated, classified, and then analyzed.

**The sentence in number 1:**

1. The town is rightly famous.............. its beer.
   (a. Along, b. For, c. Among, d. With)
The above-mentioned test in the first sentence suggests that 43% of all UNIRA students selected the answer correctly. Sixteen students with a percentage (30%) preferred choosing the preposition ‘with’ to the correct one that is ‘for’. In English, the probable elucidation for some who answered with ‘with’ is the influence of the Indonesia language as their mother tongue. In Indonesia, the equivalent adjective (terkenal) is accompanied by the preposition dengan (with). It will be …terkenal dengan (…famous with). Accordingly, their mother tongue transfer can lead to the students’ incorrect prepositional usage. Then, for preposition ‘along’, as the inappropriate choice, was chosen by ten students (18%), ‘among’, as the incorrect choice, was answered by four students (7%).

**The sentence in number 2:**
2. The boy cuts the cabbage……….a sharp knife
   (a. By, b. About, c. With, d. At)

The result of the test in the sentence shows that most students answered the question immensely suitably. More precisely, 77% or forty-one students’ answer choices were right. Unfortunately, the rest of them chose the wrong prepositions rather than the correct one ‘with’. 20% of them answered with ‘by’, only one (1%) student answered ‘about’, and no one (0%) selected the preposition ‘at’ as the answer. In English sentences, the preposition ‘by’ is used to show how something is done. It corresponds with ‘dengan (menggunakan)’ in the Indonesian language. In Indonesia, the sentence will be: Anak laki-laki itu memotong kubis dengan (menggunakan) pisau tajam. It seemingly indicates that their mother tongue affected them and they negatively transferred their preposition usage from Indonesia into English.

**The sentence in number 3:**
3. They didn't laugh …… the witticisms in the show.
   (a. For, b. On, c. In, d. At)

Only 9% of 53 students answered correctly in the third sentence. Thirty-four students (64%) chose the first choice ‘for’ and eight (15%) selected the second choice ‘on’ whereas six students (11.3%) selected the third answer ‘in’ rather than the last answer ‘at’. The reason behind the incorrect usage of these three prepositions rather than ‘at’ can be associated with the usage of the corresponding preposition ‘on’ and ‘in’ meaning ‘di’ in the Indonesian language. In this regard, the mother tongue greatly influenced the use of the appropriate preposition.

**The sentence in number four:**
4. Some beautiful birds are hidden………… the trees.
   (a. Among, b. For, c. With, d. Between)

The preposition ‘between’ was more used than ‘among’ as the best answer in the test. Twenty-seven students (51%) answered inappropriately, i.e. selecting ‘between’. Five students (9%) selected the third answer ‘with’ which was an inappropriate choice, one student selected the second answer ‘for’ and twenty
students (37%) chose the correct answer ‘among’. The meaning of prepositions ‘between’ and ‘among’ in Indonesia is immensely similar. They are ‘diantara’. However, their use is different. The preposition ‘between’ usually involves two objects or persons e.g. the town lies halfway between Rome and Florence. In contrast, ‘among’ always involves more than two objects or persons. Being more used, ‘between’ was overgeneralized by the students of this study to convey the sense of ‘among’. Indeed, the students were incapable of distinguishing the usages of ‘between’ and ‘among’ on account of the similarity of their senses.

The sentence in number 5:
5. When did the students finish ……… Learning ?
   (a.From, b.At, c.Ø, d.In)

The aptitude UNIRA students had in grasping grammar knowledge was quite poor. The sentence in the test poses gerund form. The verb ‘finish’ in the sentence does not need any preposition. Only ten students (18%) chose the answer (null preposition) appropriately. Of the rest of the students, twenty-six students (49%) used the first choice ‘from’ as their answer, nine students (16%) chose the second answer ‘at’ and eight students (15%) utilized the last answer ‘in’. Students’ incorrect answer as ‘from’ seems to be traced back to their mother tongue interference. The students used the preposition ‘from’ as their answer choice in this context because it is a literal translation of the Indonesian preposition ‘dari’. Selesai dari belajar is translated into English and becomes finish from learning.

The sentence in number 6:
. ……………the end of the trip, they did not forget to buy souvenir.
   ( a.In, b.On , c.At, d.Ø )

The incorrect preposition ‘in’ was chosen by the students in the sentence amounted to seventeen persons (32%). Fifteen students (28%) would rather choose ‘on’ than another preposition. 24% or thirteen students’ answer choice was ‘at’ which became the best answer of all. In addition, eight students selected the null preposition or Ø. English prepositions ‘in’ and ‘on’ used by the students as their answer choice semantically refer to ‘di’ in Indonesia. Under their sense, UNIRA students were perplexed to determine or choose ‘in’, ‘on’, and ‘in’ as the most corresponding preposition in the test since they equally have the meaning: ‘di’ in Indonesia. Unquestionably, many of them did not answer accordingly.

The sentence in number 7:
7. The whole state is …….. sea-level.
   (a.From, b.In, c.Below, d.Under )

Three students (5%) answered ‘from’ the test incorrectly. Twenty-four students (45%) selected the second choice (‘in’) whereas the other twenty-three students (43%) selected the last choice (‘under’). Nevertheless, only three students (5%) chose the right answer (below). In this sentence, the students replaced the right preposition ‘below’ with the wrong one ‘under’. This incorrectness of their answer could be attributable to the Indonesia transfer. In Indonesia, the preposition
‘dibawah’, when is translated into the English preposition meaning ‘under’, or ‘below’. It is extremely puzzling for them because ‘under’ and ‘below’ semantically possess similar meanings (i.e. ‘di’) in UNIRA students’ mother tongues (i.e. Indonesia language).

The sentence in number 8:
8. It is beneficial to get ……. a new occupation.
   (a.In, b.At, c.With, d.Ø )

Twenty-eight students (52%) used the inappropriate preposition ‘in’ in place of the appropriate one, i.e. null preposition or Ø. For the rest of them, five students (9%) used the second choice ‘at’, four students (8%) chose the third answer ‘with’ and sixteen students (30%) utilized the last answer, Ø, which constitutes the best answer. This kind of error made by the students (52%) is named the error of addition. It seemingly indicates that the students were affected by their mother tongue. In Indonesia, the preposition ‘di’ is equivalent to the English ‘in’ used in such contexts. Moreover, under the absence of null prepositions in Indonesian grammar, the students made errors in determining the proper preposition in English. They (52%) added the preposition ‘in’ to fill the gap in the sentence and what they did is not necessarily true. Because the verb ‘get’ in the sentence grammatically does not require any preposition.

The sentence in number 9:
9. Patricia is………….holiday next week.
   (a.On, b.In, c.For, d.With )

Mostly the students were good at grasping the simple preposition in this test. Twenty-six students (49%) appropriately answered the test. The rest of them, twenty-four students a percentage (44%) used the second choice (in) and third answer (for) which were wrong choices. It seemingly shows that the students who put ‘for’ in place of ‘on’ are affected by Indonesia’s interference. Based on the meaning grammatically, the sentence will be Patricia sedang berlibur minggu depan. In this context, the students got problems with the use of the copular verb ‘is’ due to the absence of the kind of the verb in Indonesian construction. They were likely to translate literally from Indonesia (untuk) into English (for). Therefore, when the sentence is translated will be: Patricia untuk berlibur minggu depan.

The sentence in number 10:
10. The man got …………… Bandara airport at 10:00 a.m.
   (a.To, b. Ø, c.At, d.Over )

Ten students (18%) used the preposition ‘at’ as their answer choice in the test and fourteen students (27%) filled the gap with the null preposition although this sentence needs any preposition, viz: ‘to’. This type of error made by the students (27%) is named the error of omission. The quantity of UNIRA students who selected the right preposition ‘to’ was 29 persons (53%). The students chose null prepositions or omitted prepositions because they were affected by their mother tongue (i.e. Indonesian language). ‘To’ means ‘ke’ in the Indonesian language. In
In this sense, the students more selected ‘to’ than another preposition. Besides, in English grammar, the null preposition is available but not in Indonesia. Prepositions in English also frequently can be a phrasal verb as get to but prepositions in Indonesia cannot. Therefore, the students were syntactically not good at understanding prepositional phrases due to the absence of prepositional phrases in Indonesian grammar.

*The sentence in number 11:*
11. Newcomers need knowledge…………. their native language.
   (a.Ø, b.With, c(By, d.Of )

The students, generally speaking, were not able to use the simple preposition ‘of’. Thirty-three students (62%) chose the first answer, i.e. null preposition, or omitted it where it is highly needed to be a right structure grammatically in sentence number 11. The appropriate choice (‘of’) in the test was only selected by eight students (15%) of all. Other students (8%) chose the second answer ‘with’ and 15% selected the third answer ‘by’. The possible elucidation for this omission type of error can be attributable to UNIRA students’ mother tongue. In the sentence, the students omitted the preposition ‘of’ since in the Indonesian language, the use of a null preposition does not exist.

*The sentence in number 12:*
12. They always sleep…………bed at 9.00 p.m.
   (a.In, b.At, c.Over, d.To )

This sentence is quite similar to sentence number nine. The students had good knowledge regarding the simple preposition ‘in’. Mostly the students selected the answer appropriately: ‘in’ and their amount was twenty-three persons (43%). The rest of them amounted to nine students with a percentage (16 %) using the second choice ‘at’, thirteen students (24%) using the third answer ‘over’, and eight students (15%) using the last answer ‘to’ where all of their answer choices were inappropriate preposition. The inappropriateness of their answer in the test affected Indonesia’s interference. In Indonesia, ‘di’ semantically can be used in the English preposition ‘at’. Undeniably, they (16%) made inappropriate answer choices.

*The sentence in number 13:*
13. All pupils were so exhausted that they wanted to go ………….home soon.
   (a.To, b.In, c.From, d. Ø)

Twenty-seven students (51%) filled the gap with the English preposition ‘to’ even though this sentence no requires any preposition. This kind of error made by them (51%) was named the error of addition. The prepositions ‘in’ and ‘from’ were chosen by sixteen students (29%). On the other hand, only ten students (18%) appropriately selected ‘Ø’ as the best answer in the test. Twenty-seven students did so because based on the Indonesian language semantically, ‘ke’ means ‘to’. The students added ‘to’ after the verb ‘go’ where the verb precisely no needs the addition of a preposition since in Indonesia, the phrase ‘go to home’ would semantically
have meant ‘pulang ke rumah’. Accordingly, the inappropriateness of selecting prepositions occurred on account of their mother tongue interference.

_The sentence in number 14:_
14. They’ve fallen into the habit of getting up late…….Monday mornings.  
(a. For, b. Over, c. In, d. On)

Seventeen students (32%) used the wrong preposition ‘in’ rather than the correct one ‘on’. Sixteen students (30%) chose the most appropriate preposition ‘on’. Whilst the preposition ‘for’ was selected by fifteen students (28%) and the preposition ‘over’ was chosen by five students (9%). The incorrect preposition ‘in’ was chosen by the students (32%) as the preposition ‘in’ semantically refers to ‘di’ in Indonesia. Under its sense, UNIRA students were puzzled to choose the most equivalent preposition in the test since prepositions ‘in’ and ‘on’ equally have meaning: ‘di’ in Indonesia. Unquestionably, they could not answer correctly.

_The sentence in number 15:_
15. The talks are aimed………………finding a solution.  
(a. With, b. To, c. For, d. At)

UNIRA students were not capable of using the simple preposition ‘at’. Fourteen students (27%) chose the first answer, i.e. preposition ‘with’ as the wrong answer. So did nine students (16%) and twenty-six students (49%). They chose the wrong preposition ‘to’ and ‘for’. For the appropriate answer choice: ‘at’ was only selected by four students (8%). The possible elucidation for this problem can be attributable to their students’ mother tongue.

**Summary**
The following table summarizes the results

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<th>The number of questions</th>
<th>Right answers</th>
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Further, the preposition ‘for’ is semantically the same as ‘untuk’ in Indonesia. They translated the meaning of ‘for’ based on their knowledge of their mother tongue. In
Indonesia, it will be bertujuan untuk (in English: aimed for). Additionally, they did not know the rule of ‘at’ use. When it is used with the verb ‘aimed’ to be the phrase ‘aimed at’ meaning ‘to plan’, ‘hope’ or ‘intend to achieve something’.

Conclusion
This study examines the difficulties of acquiring English prepositions made by UNIRA students of English whose mother tongue is Indonesia, it will be bertujuan untuk (in English: aimed for). Additionally, they did not know the rule of ‘at’ use. When it is used with the verb ‘aimed’ to be the phrase ‘aimed at’ meaning ‘to plan’, ‘hope’ or ‘intend to achieve something’.

Conclusion
This study examines the difficulties of acquiring English prepositions made by UNIRA students of English whose mother tongue is Indonesia. The findings of the study suggest that UNIRA students run into a large number of problems with using the right prepositions. The above data show that linguistic interference occurs. Language interference that is directly associated with the problem of literal translation from Indonesia into English poses the core source of the problem. However, when the two languages use divergent prepositions, the students trace back to their Indonesian grammar which leads to negative transfer coming about. Accordingly, when the two languages are semantically resemblances, the Indonesia language is believed as a source of command that enables students to produce inappropriateness of preposition use. For that reason, the students do not sufficiently master prepositions use of the target language. Additionally, they highly depend on their mother tongue, i.e. Indonesian language, to grasp English preposition use.

References


