

# Identifying the Prepositions Used by the EFL Students in Descriptive Text

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**Abstract.** Determining the types of prepositions that EFL students use when writing descriptive texts is the aim of this study. For this study, a descriptive qualitative research design was adopted. The students' writing provided the data that was gathered. The study's subjects were the sixty-six first-graders in UNIKA Santu Paulus Ruteng's English Language Education Program. In collecting the data, the researchers had a lot of things. First, selecting the titles which were given to the students. After that, students had to write a description text based on the titles given. Then, the researchers required to identify the types of prepositions found in the texts. The result of this study revealed that there were 249 trends of preposition of time (51,4%), 132 trends of preposition of place (76,8%), 8 trends of preposition of direction (6,04%). Based on the result of the research above, the researcher concluded that, the students used preposition of place (76,8%) dominantly compared to other types prepositions. The researcher came to the conclusion that students utilized place prepositions (76,8%) more frequently than other types of prepositions based on the findings of the aforementioned study. Prepositions were used by the EFL students as they were composing descriptive texts.

**Keywords:** descriptive text; types; prepositions; EFL students

## 1. Introduction

One of the abilities that students in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to learn is writing. One of the productive skills is writing, where students are encouraged to use their own language to demonstrate their communication proficiency.[1]–[3]. As a result, the students are free to express their opinions in writing, whether it be in a text, a letter, a message, or an invitation[4]–[7], [8]. Furthermore, writing is an activity that involves both the act of writing and the finished product. [7], [9]–[13]. Writing is both a process and a product combined. The act of assembling ideas is referred to as the process. In the meantime, as per [8], [14], and [15], the term "process" describes how the act of composition changes over a number of stages, including idea discovery, process, and message. As a result, the work emphasizes the outcome of the students' compositional act. an alternative to seeing writing as a method and final product. Writing is also seen as a process that produces results that are influenced by grammar, vocabulary, structure, writing style, and content [16]. For this reason, in order to write well in a writing assignment, students must take into account the writing components.

Writing is also a difficult endeavor that requires a wide range of mental processes to be implemented in a coordinated manner. Writing is the physical process of committing words or ideas to some medium, be it an e-mail message entered into a computer or hieroglyphics

connected onto parchment, as explained by [5,], [14], [17], and [18]. Writing, then, is the physical act of a writer producing an idea and then expressing or exploring it in a written text. While [1], [19] claim that writing is a process and that the limitations of genres frequently have a significant impact on what we write. Based on the mentioned definitions Writing is the process of producing language that originates in our thoughts.

When creating a document, one of the most crucial things to keep in mind is how prepositions are used. Prepositions are words that go with nouns in sentences to indicate location, timing, and other links between objects and actions. Because they come before noun phrases and form a prepositional phrase when combined, prepositions are words that are employed to signal the coming of a noun. He continued by saying that prepositions join nouns and can be positioned either before or after nouns. They do this by connecting the noun phrase object to other words or phrases in a sentence by adding details supplied by adverbs (place, time, or manner). As a result, the usage of each preposition depends on the content of the sentences. Because a preposition is typically preceded by a noun phrase, prepositions are linking words that introduce prepositional phrases. Prepositions are therefore also thought of as linking words that join noun phrases to other structures. Preposition of time, preposition of location, and preposition of direction are the three different categories of prepositions.

However, it's not easy to differentiate the types of preposition used in writing text. The students may use some types of prepositions, but they are still confused to make a difference between one type of preposition to the other types. The students are still difficult in using prepositions correctly. This kind of problems is also experienced by the EFL students especially the first grade students who are taking writing class. They find it hard to put the right preposition especially in writing the text in question. Descriptive texts are the types of writing texts that the students need to master. Writing that tries to provide the reader a clear picture or a comprehensive, multisensory experience is known as descriptive text. A clear and creative representation of a person, location, object, event, or concept is the main objective of descriptive writing. This genre frequently uses sensory imagery, rich details, and figurative language to evoke a mental picture in the reader [20], [21]. In schools, descriptive texts are essentially taught and declare that a descriptive writing is one that gives a detailed description of a specific person, place, or object. Students typically utilized time, place, and direction prepositions in their writing when expressing ideas in in their texts.

Prepositions are the most crucial skill that students should have when writing descriptive texts. As such, there have been some research studies conducted in the field. For example, the study conducted by [22] who found the kinds of prepositions which were used in the students descriptive text were simple prepositions, compound prepositions, participial prepositions, and phrasal preposition. Then, the most dominant prepositions is simple prepositions which had 88.30% . The similar findings was also discovered in another study by [23], who revealed that the prepositions of location, time, and directions were the types of prepositions that were exposed. Meanwhile, the prepositional functions that were found in this movie were the function as the head of prepositional phrases, noun phrase, noun phrase complement, and the function as particle.

Having known all the previous researchers have conducted several studies about the types and functions of prepositions in movies and a newspaper, the researchers realized that there hasn't been a study about identifying the types of prepositions in students' descriptive writing. Meanwhile, prepositions are important to be learnt in order to help learner to connect the certain words in the sentence. Therefore, the researcher is interested in knowing the types of prepositions utilized by students in their writing. In this research, the researcher is interested in

doing research because the writer sees that phenomena of using prepositions is often found on text especially in descriptive text.

## **2. Method**

This study belongs to descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive research, according to [24], is used to gather data about the phenomena that occur across time. In this instance, the phenomena concerns prepositional tendencies among first-graders, and the drafting of descriptive texts was the main focus of this descriptive qualitative study. Participants in this study were first-graders enrolled in Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng's English Language Education program for the 2022–2023 academic year. Furthermore, the researcher selected 22 students from grade A, 22 students from grade B, and 22 students from grade C. Thus, there were 66 students involved in total. Because only the students in this class responded to the research on WhatsApp and because they had learnt about descriptive texts, the researcher selected the grades A, B, and C. Ultimately, the researcher decided to focus this study on the grade A, B, and C students. Then, the instrument for this research is the researcher herself. Beside that, the experts theory is also utilized the types and the trends of prepositions from the students' text. Then, the data collection is determining the topic for descriptive text that was used for data analysis. Second, the researcher offered the topic such as Maudy Ayunda, Jokowi, Kelimutu Lake, Komodo Island, Rana Mese Lake, and Wae Rebo. The next step is, the researcher explained to the participants about the regulation of writing descriptive text. The descriptive text consists of 3 and 4 paragraphs. Then, the students were requested to write descriptive text. Third, the researcher read and analyzed the trends of prepositions in their writing. The researcher took certain actions to analyze the data. The data were first arranged and ready for analysis by the researcher. Students' written work was included in this. Next, the investigator went over every piece of information. The researcher went over every descriptive text in order to identify the prepositions that they employed in their text. Thirdly, the researcher tallied prepositions that the students utilized within their written work. Fourth, the percentage trends of prepositions used by first-grade children in descriptive text were computed by the researcher. The researcher examined prepositional trends using [25] after the writer identified the prepositions in the text.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

The descriptive qualitative data used in the study were written in descriptive texts by first-graders in the Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng English Program in the year of 2022–2023. The study's data comprised the descriptive writing of 66 EFL students in different grades. Due to they had studied descriptive texts, the first-graders were selected. The results of the 66 students' descriptive text writing have been gathered for the study's data analysis. Twenty-two students wrote about descriptive texts of people, while forty-four students wrote about descriptive texts of places. the data collecting was completed On May 4, 2022,

This section displays the students' descriptive text writing assignments. Prepositions of time, place, and direction are the three categories of prepositions that can be found in students' text. Table 1 results of analysis of student assignments.

**Table 1.** Summary of student assignment analysis results

Code	Type of Preposition Time	Place	direction	Frequency	Total
LUN	On	in, above	-	5	5
MMH	on,in,in,at	in, at,in	-	9	9
RUP	On	on,in,in	-	4	4
SET	Since	In	-	2	2
FYT	In	in,in,above	-	4	4
JMD	On	in,in, above	-	4	4
CJN	on,on	in, on,on,on	-	6	6
MBEB	at, in,in,in	in,in,in,in	-	8	8
AD	at,at	in, above	-	4	4
SDR	on,after, for	At	-	4	4
PT	since,since,since,on,on,i n, after	In	-	8	8
MKO	For	in,in,above,above	-	5	5
DUN	since,on,on,on,after	in, at	-	7	7
BRI	For	in, on	-	3	3
JDK	Since	in,near,at	-	4	4
YMN	on,in	in,in,in,in,at, in,at,in	-	10	10
KDI	in,in	in,in,in	-	5	5
AA	In	between,on	-	3	3
AV	In	at, in,in	-	4	4
GY	for, on, in	in, in,above	-	6	6
FER	In	above, in	-	3	3
AAS	In	in, at	-	3	3
VLU	on, on,for,for	In	-	5	5
ESN	In	In	-	2	2
YSA	on, in	In	-	3	3
MIAA	on, on,in	In	-	4	4
OT	On	In	-	2	2
AVS	on, at, in,in	in, on	-	6	6
KVJD	On	in,in	-	3	3
FI	in, on	in, above	-	4	4
FN	in, on,on	above, in	-	5	5
IS	In	At	-	2	2
MFS	on, after, in	in,in	-	5	5
YMS	on, in,in,in,in	in,in	-	7	7
FSY	in,in	in,above,above	-	5	5
HN	-	in,in,in	-	3	3
SM	-	in,in	to,to	4	4
PDS	-	in,above	along,through	4	4
YFE	On	-	-	1	1
LEC	Beside	in,in	-	3	3
VTWM	Between	in,in,in	-	4	4
GGU	-	In	-	1	1
RRS	-	in, above	-	6	6
TTR	in,after,on, since	In	-	10	10
	101(51,4%)	132(76,8%)	8(6,04%)	249	249

The study used Dignen's theory to analyze the data (2007). Prepositions of time, place, and direction are the three different categories of prepositions following Dignen's theory. Prepositions of time, location, and direction are the three different forms of prepositions that can be found in descriptive texts.

The following is an example of each type of preposition that may be found in a descriptive paragraph written by students in Unika Ruteng's first-grade English language program.

### 3.1 Prepositions of time

Time is a preposition that is used to express or denote when something occurs [26]. They claim that the prepositions on, in, at, before, after, until, for, since, during, and by are among the few that can be used as the preposition of time. Based on the data finding, the writer found eight trends of preposition that used by students in their text. Below are the example of the preposition of time used by students in writing descriptive text such as, in, on, at, before, after, for, since, and during.

#### 3.1.1 Preposition In

The preposition "in" is used to discuss broader time spans, such as seasons, months, years, centuries, and other times. It is also used to discuss how long something will take (a few weeks) and specific moments in time.

The examples preposition **in** found on the students text.

*in 2017, Maudy Ayunda won category of best Asian Indonesia artists* (Extracted from student LMD). *The students should use "in" instead of using on in making sentences.*

*in 2017 Jokowi as a member of the Indonesian demostracit* (Extracted from student AV).

The first sentence written by LMD, preposition **in** to indicate times of the year. The second sentence written by AV, preposition **in** to indicate an indefinite and unspecific time of year. All sentences above was used to indicate unspecific time of years which show time.

#### 3.1.2 Preposition On

Prepositions on are used to describe a certain day of the week, week, or month, or a portion of a specific day.

The examples preposition **on** found on the students text.

*Jokowi was born on 21 June 1961 in surakarta* (Extracted from student ELY)

*She was born on 1 July 1986 in Jakarta* (Extracted from student KM)

The first sentence written by ELY, preposition **on** is very particular preposition of time, that is only used with specific date. For instance the student would use **on** to refer to a date on calender. The second sentence written by KM, preposition **on** to indicate a fixed date. All sentences above categories as noun, because after preposition followed by date which show time.

#### 3.1.3 Preposition After

Preposition **after** is used to show that something happens many times or continuously.

The examples preposition **after** found on the students text.

*After graduated, he pursued his proffesion as afurniture enterpreneur* (Extracted from student ELY).

*After graduation, he was practicing his profession as a furniture businessman* (Extracted from student MFS)

The sentences above show time because after preposition followed by a verb, that verb can be in the “ing “form ,or be a conjugated verb with a subject.

### 3.1.4 Preposition Before

The event precedes the time given in the before phrase  
The example preposition **before** found on the students text.

*After that the trip can proceed to Denge village that is the last village **before** trekking for 4 hours to Wae Rebo village* (Extracted from student MVN)

The sentence above written by MVN, preposition before to indicate a prior event/period of time from a point.

### 3.1.5 Preposition Since

The preposition since is used to allude to a past moment. Since can be used as a preposition with a noun phrase, date, year, or time.

The examples preposition **since** found on the students text.

*Jokowi served as the governor of DKI Jakarta **since** 2012 up to 16 october 2014* (Extracted from student MJ)

*His political career begins **since** he joined PDIP* (Extracted from student AV)

The first sentence written by MJ, the used preposition **since** to indicate unspecific time of years which show time. The second sentence written by Av, the preposition **since** to indicate a starting point, after which the action continues.

### 3.1.6 Preposition During

The preposition during is used to describe events that take place inside a specific time frame. The example preposition **during** found on the students text.

***during** her fanatastic career, she took education at Tarakanita Jakarta* (Extracted from student MOWB)

The sentence above to show that something happens within a certain time period.

### 3.1.7 Preposition At

The preposition at is used to describe a point in time such as night, midnight, etc.; brief holiday seasons such as Easter, Christmas, etc.; brief intervals that we consider to be points such as the end of September or the start of the year; mealtimes such as breakfast or lunch; and in the phrase at the moment (now) but if to talk in a moment (in a short period of time). The following examples are from the students' text.

*There is no cellulere coverage in this village, and electricity is only available from 6 to 10 **at** night* (Extracted from student AD)

***At** present, in the habitants are descendants of the 18th generation* (Extracted from student AD).

The first sentence written by AD, the preposition **at** to describe specific times. It might be to describe a particular numerical time on the clock. The second sentence written by AD, preposition **at** to refer to particular and specific events.

### 3.1.8 Preposition for

The preposition for is used to indicate how long something has been going on and to discuss when something is happening.

Examples found from the students text.

*You have to go throught Ruteng city **for** about 4 hours, it is small town in central Manggarai district* (Extracted from student AD).

*She roled in film **for** the first time was on 2001*(Extracted from student MOWB)

In the first sentence that AD wrote, the preposition *for* describes how long something lasts and is used to communicate about when something happens. The preposition in the second sentence, written by MOWB, expresses how long an action or occurrence lasts.

### 3.1.9 Prepositions of place

According to Dignen (2007:151), the preposition "place" is employed to indicate to someone where something or someone happened. According to Dignen, the prepositions *at*, *on*, *in*, *near*, *between*, *above*, *below*, *beneath*, *among*, and *beside* can all be used to talk about location or place. Based on the data finding, the writer found eight trends of preposition that used by students in their text. Below are the example of the preposition of place used by students in writing descriptive text such as, *in*, *on*, *at*, *near*, *between*, *beside*, *among*, and *above*.

#### 3.1.10 Preposition In

When a country's name includes towns, cities, and villages, the preposition "in" is used to indicate. The students' text contains the example preposition.

*Agnes Monica was born in Jakarta* (Extracted from student MBEB).

*The hospital and romance in the white house* (Extracted from student MBRB)

The first sentence written by MBEB, the preposition **in** to show with name of city. The second sentence above, the preposition **in** to indicate a location. Every sentence above falls under this category since the place is indicated by the city that comes after the preposition.

#### 3.1.11 Preposition On

Preposition **on** is used to explain about position touching a flat surface of something. The examples preposition **on** found on the students text.

*when I saw her on TV show* (Extracted from student CJN )

*Agnes Monica has dimples on her cheeks and is then main attraction when she smile* (Extracted from student KM)

The first sentence written by CJN,

The preposition **on** to talk about a position touching a flat surface. The second sentence, the preposition **on** to indicate position, usually indicating that something is on top of something else. All of sentences above is categories noun because after preposition followed by the names of place.

#### 3.1.12 Preposition At

When describing a location as a point as opposed to a region or an event, the preposition *at* is utilized. utilized to further clarify the limited region.

The examples preposition **at** found on the students text.

*after graduating from senior high school she continued her study at Universitas Harapan* (Extracted from student MOWB)

*jokowi applied himself at school* (Extracted from student PA)

The first sentence written by MOWB, the preposition **at** to show location. The second sentence written by PA, the preposition **at** to indicate location

#### 3.1.13 Preposition Above

The aforementioned preposition is used to clarify that something is at a greater level than another. The examples preposition **on** found on the students text.

*rebo is known as the village above the clouds, because its located at an attitude of 1.200 meters above sea* (Extracted from student FSY). *Wae Rebo village is built on*

*Pocoranaka mountain with 1.100 meters **above** sea surface and facing to Hindia ocesion* (Extracted from student MVN)

The students utilized the preposition above in this sentence since it was followed by a noun that indicated a location.

### 3.1.14 Preposition Beside

Preposition **beside** is on one side of a person or things consible by side  
The example preposition **beside** found on the students text.

***beside** having a lake, mount kelimutu also keeps the carm of flora and fauna that are no less interesting* (Extracted from student SN)

The sentence above written by SN, the preposition **beside** followed by noun to show place.

### 3.1.15 Preposition Between

Preposition between to indicate a separation in relation to objects, people, or time.  
The example preposition **between** found on the students text.

*Kelimutu National Park is the smallest among six national park in the stretch **between** Bali and Nusa Tenggara island* (Extracted from student AA)

In this sentence he used preposition **between** refers to something in the middle of two objects or places.

### 3.1.16 Preposition Near

Preposition **near** is the most general meaning of neighboring a point. The example preposition **near** found on the students text.

*He and his family lived in illegally built shacks **near** the city flood-prone solo river* (Extracted from student PA)

The sentence above, the preposition near talk about being almost in a particular state or condition.

## 3.2 Prepositions of direction

According to Dignen (2007:151), a preposition of direction is a word used to describe where something or someone is supposed to go. Prepositions of movement can take many different forms including to, towards, into, away, over, out of, along, past, through, up, and down. Based on the data finding, the writer found three trends of preposition that used by students in their text. Those were to, along, and to.

### 3.2.1 Preposition to

Prepostion **to** indicates a motion in the direction of a plac. The example preposition **to** found on the students text.

*Visitor who want to go **to** Wae Rebo village Flores must start from Ruteng* (Extracted from student SM)

*If there are no flight **to** Ruteng, you can use the bus or travel from Labuan Bajo* (Extracted from student SM)

The preposition "of" is present in each of the aforementioned sentences to indicate the direction of movement.

### 3.2.2 Preposition Along

Preposition **along** to indicate movement of something or somebody in a certain line.



The example preposition **along** found on the students text.

*The journey from Denge to Wae Rebo, approximately spent as long as 3 hours climbing **along** the area that is passed through unspoiled dense Forest, crossing the river, and tracking the edge of the chifff* (Extracted from student PDS)

The sentence above show movement in aline next to things which are long and narrow.

### 3.2.3 Preposition Through

Preposition through is used to describe the action of passing an enclosed region. To reach this place you hale to pass through the forest before you reach on the top of the mountain (Extracted from student PDS). The sentence above written by PDS, the preposition through to indicate a motion in one side of something.

With respect to the findings, there were 249 trends of preposition on students writing. The trends revealed that of preposition of time covered 51,4% of their writing, the trends of preposition place covered 76,8% and the trends of preposition of direction covered 6,04%. Beside, the findings confirmed that preposition of place was the most frequent that was used by the first grade students of English Language Department students on their text. Such finding was similar with the research conducted by [25] who found the kinds of prepostions in students text. The prepositions were simple prepositions, compound prepostions, participial prepostions, and phrasal preposition. Then, the most dominant prepostions was simple prepostions such as prepositions of time, place, and direction which got 88.30% . Besides, The finding of this study was also consistent with the theory stated by [28] To Eggins, the preposition of place was employed to indicate to a person the location of another person or object. In addition, the prepositions in, on, at, near, under, between, beside, among, above, under, below, and behind can all be used to discuss places. Meanwhile, the preposition "time" was employed to express or indicate when something occurs. According to them, the prepositions on, in, at, before, after, until/till, for, since, during, from... and by are among those that can be used as the preposition of time. It could not be used any of the aforementioned prepositions in the same sentence. Every preposition in an order word had a rule that specifies when it should be used. Furthermore, it was also similar with the study conducted by [22] [26] who found that types of prepositions were the prepositions of the time, prepositions of the place, and prepositions of directions in the texts. It indicated that the findings of the previous studies were in line with the recent study.

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, the types of prepositions found in this research are the preposition of time, place and direction. In addition, the trends of prepositions that were used by students in writing descriptive text were in, on, at, before, after, for, since, and during. Furthermore, trends in preposition of place used by the student in writing descriptive text were in, on, at, near, between, besides, among, and above. Meanwhile, trends in preposition of direction that were used by students in text were to, along, and through. Based on the data, it can be concluded that most of the students require to practice and learn various of prepositions in writing types of texts especially the descriptive text. By mastering and having the knowledge about the types of prepositions, it will be easier for them to use it correctly and won't have a repetitive word while writing. The researchers realized that prepositions play crucial role in developing a good writing for students. Therefore, it is expected that by conducting this research, the educators particularly teachers can provide more exercises dealing with prepositions so that the students have

prominent basic knowledge in the future. It is also suggested that the next researchers can do deep research dealing with it.

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