



Enhanced extensive reading in EFL classroom: An investigation of its effect on learners' incidental preposition acquisition

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of enhanced extensive reading on the incidental acquisition of prepositions "in," "on," and "at" related to time and place among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Ten senior students from the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera participated in a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The pretest assessed preposition proficiency, followed by a two-week extensive reading intervention, resulting in a significant improvement in post-test scores, as evidenced by a paired t-test ($p = .000$). Utilizing Google Forms for standardized data collection, the study incorporated multiple-choice and fixing incorrect prepositions sections, revealing a notable mean score increase from 59.5 to 69 post-intervention. Effect sizes, calculated with Cohen's D, indicated a small effect (0.15) in the multiple-choice section and a substantial effect (0.78) in fixing incorrect prepositions. Participants' positive perception of extensive reading aligns with literature emphasizing the benefits of repeated exposure to prepositions in texts. Acknowledging limitations such as a small sample size and limited reading materials, the study recommends future research to enhance study design and diversify participants. Common mistakes in preposition usage, including challenges in time-specific contexts and confusion between "in," "on," and "at," were analyzed, emphasizing the importance of targeted instruction. In conclusion, combining incidental learning through enhanced extensive reading with targeted instruction proves effective in improving EFL learners' incidental acquisition of English prepositions, offering valuable insights for educators to address specific challenges in preposition usage.

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INTRODUCTION

Language comprehension is a fundamental ability that enables individuals to articulate their desires, opinions, and aspirations. A key aspect of this linguistic skill is the ability to seamlessly combine words, which is crucial for language acquisition. For foreign language learners, grasping the rules and conventions of the language becomes imperative (Borro, 2021). In this context, English stands out as one of the most essential languages to acquire, emphasizing its global significance. The role of grammar cannot be understated in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), as it is indispensable for constructing accurate and meaningful sentences. Research, such as that by (Bilgin & Bingol, 2022), underscores the distinctiveness between learning words in one's first language (L1) and a foreign language (EFL). Students engaged in EFL education must delve into various aspects of English grammar, including subject-verb agreement, parts of speech, and prepositions (Yousif, et al., 2020).

Among the components of grammar, prepositions play a substantial role in everyday communication. Mastery of prepositions is crucial for learners to effectively convey and express their intentions. Linguists examine prepositions from diverse perspectives, considering them as a vital link within a sentence that connects a noun or pronoun to another word, indicating the relational aspect between them (Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019). As an integral component of the English language, a thorough understanding of prepositions is essential for acquiring language skills. Prepositions are utilized to signify relationships between nouns, pronouns, and other words. Without a solid grasp of prepositions, EFL learners may encounter challenges in communicating effectively in English, leading to mistakes that impact their overall proficiency. The significance of proper preposition use is highlighted by (S. Zaabalawi, 2021), emphasizing its crucial role in preventing confusion or ambiguity in meaning. This underscores the importance of employing correct prepositions, particularly in academic or formal contexts, during both written and spoken communication (Mark & Bollen, 2019).

Despite the importance of prepositions in effective language use, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students encounter difficulties in mastering prepositions, prepositional phrases, and the proper integration of prepositions with verbs, nouns, and adjectives. The challenges faced by English Foreign Language (EFL) learners in this regard include understanding the nuanced meanings and diverse applications of prepositions, committing to memory the appropriate prepositions for different contexts, and discerning between similar prepositions, such as "in," "on," and "at." These complexities contribute to the struggle of EFL learners as they navigate the intricacies of preposition usage (Yuying, 2021). Moreover, the absence of a preposition system in some languages compared to English poses an additional hurdle for EFL students. This linguistic difference can lead to interference from the learner's first language (L1), causing confusion and making the acquisition of preposition knowledge more arduous (Yamashita, 2008). The interference from L1 introduces a layer of complexity as EFL learners may find it challenging to distinguish the nuances of preposition usage in English due to the influence of their native language. In essence, the combination of inherent difficulties in understanding prepositions and the potential interference from the learner's L1 compounds the challenges faced by EFL students in acquiring proficiency in this crucial aspect of English grammar (Sanjaya & Bram, 2021).

Given the intricate nature of English prepositions, various methods and techniques have been employed in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to facilitate their acquisition. One crucial methodology that has gained prominence is incidental learning. Incidental learning has garnered significant interest in English as a Second Language (L2) research, owing to its potential positive impact on learners (Mahardika & Bram, 2022). The concept emphasizes the idea that "learning from context" plays a crucial role in the comprehension process, and the notion that natural understanding, as facilitated by incidental learning, is an effective way to teach (Sok, 2014). Incidental learning, in essence, refers to a type of learning that occurs without deliberate instruction or conscious effort. It involves the acquisition of knowledge or expertise that is not the primary focus of the learners' attention but is rather gained as a secondary outcome of engaging in other activities (Kusumastuti, 2019). In the context of language acquisition, incidental learning can occur when learners encounter new

words, phrases, or grammatical structures during their reading, listening, or communicative activities in the target language.

For instance, in the process of recreational reading, learners may incidentally assimilate new vocabulary, enhancing their lexical knowledge. Similarly, engaging in discourse with proficient speakers may lead to the internalization of new grammar structures (Damayanti & Sundari, 2022). The incidental learning approach recognizes that language learners can acquire language skills organically as they immerse themselves in various language activities. Moreover, through incidental learning, learners may also develop a better understanding of the overall structure and organization of written texts in the target language. This methodology capitalizes on the natural and contextual exposure to language elements, aligning with the idea that learners can absorb linguistic nuances more effectively when learning occurs in a meaningful and authentic context (Boakye, 2017).

The method of incidental learning finds frequent application in the realm of reading, particularly through the implementation of extensive reading programs. Extensive Reading (ER) stands out as an effective approach for enhancing learners' comprehension in the target language, as asserted by (Aka, 2020). ER involves immersing oneself in a substantial volume of authentic reading materials for the sheer enjoyment and personal interest it brings, unencumbered by comprehension evaluations or formal assessments. Day & Bamford (2002) as cited in (Azkia, et al., 2021) also suggests that extensive reading is activity involves reading a huge amount of material with a view to understand the meaning of what is being read instead of focusing on the grammatical aspects.

In the context of English language learning, ER is a pedagogical strategy that encourages self-directed reading at a flexible pace, with the primary emphasis on enjoyment rather than the deliberate acquisition of specific language features or skills. Within the framework of ER, learners have the opportunity to engage with novels and various authentic texts (Alwreikat & Yunus, 2020). This encompasses encountering lexical items, grammatical constructions, and discourse conventions in real-life contexts. The absence of strict evaluation criteria allows learners to explore and appreciate the language at their own pace, fostering a more relaxed and enjoyable learning experience. Through the act of reading, students naturally absorb and internalize language elements, contributing to an improved understanding of the overall structure and organization of written texts in the target language (Alwan, et al., 2020). Incidental learning that occurs during extensive reading promotes language acquisition through exposure to diverse linguistic patterns, ultimately facilitating a more holistic and intuitive grasp of the language (Al-Jarf, 2022).

Studies focused on grammar comprehension through incidental learning have demonstrated that learners can acquire knowledge without relying on strict and binding rules, as highlighted by research conducted by (Denhovska et al., 2016). This research suggests that learners have the capacity to grasp grammatical concepts organically and intuitively, without the need for rigid guidelines. In the context of language learning, particularly in English as a foreign language, prior research has emphasized improved instruction in Extensive Reading (ER) as a successful approach for fostering various facets of English acquisition (Zainol Abidin et al., 2012.). Extensive Reading (ER), characterized by engaging with authentic texts for enjoyment and personal interest,

allows learners to encounter grammar, vocabulary, and language structures in context. By promoting a more relaxed and immersive learning experience, Extensive Reading (ER) aligns with the principles of incidental learning, where learners acquire language knowledge indirectly through exposure rather than explicit instruction (Krashen, 2008). The findings from these studies underscore the importance of creating conducive environments for learners to engage with language naturally, allowing them to internalize grammar concepts without being constrained by formal rules. Incidental learning, as observed in Extensive Reading (ER) programs, provides a valuable avenue for learners to acquire a deeper understanding of grammar and language structures while enjoying the process of reading.

The research conducted by Song & Sardegna (2014) delves into the impact of extensive reading activities on students' acquisition of English prepositions. The study involved two groups: the Regular Instruction (RI) group, which only received regular instruction at school, and the Enhanced Extensive Reading Instruction (EERI) group, which participated in enhanced extensive reading sessions in addition to regular instruction. The findings indicated that the EERI group demonstrated significant improvement across all sections of the test (Grabe William & Stoller, 2011). In contrast, the RI group showed significant improvement only in the first section of the test. This suggests that the inclusion of enhanced extensive reading sessions positively influenced students' proficiency in English prepositions compared to relying solely on regular instruction.

A similar line of research was pursued by Xenia & Anjani (2022), who explored the effectiveness of combining extensive reading with post-reading activities, such as predicting content, vocabulary work, and discussions, in enhancing students' acquisition of English prepositions "in," "on," and "at." The results of this study revealed a large effect size in each section of the test, with notable effectiveness in the "notice+produce" section, where participants were tasked with identifying incorrect prepositions and correcting them. This study further supports the idea that integrating post-reading activities with extensive reading contributes significantly to the improvement of English preposition skills among learners.

It's worth noting that these studies share a common research approach, combining extensive reading with additional activities. However, the present study, as mentioned, is distinctive in its focus solely on extensive reading activities. The cumulative evidence from these studies underscores the importance of incorporating extensive reading, and in some cases, post-reading activities, as effective strategies for enhancing learners' acquisition of English prepositions.

This study is essential as it seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of incorporating extensive reading within an incidental learning framework to enhance English preposition acquisition among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. By exploring how this instructional approach influences learners' proficiency in prepositions, the research aims to contribute novel information to the existing body of knowledge. Understanding the impact of extensive reading, especially within the context of incidental learning, can offer practical implications for language educators and curriculum developers, potentially optimizing teaching methods and strategies to better cater to the specific needs of EFL learners in improving their grasp of English prepositions. Consequently, this study aimed to investigate the effect of extensive

reading on the students' incidental acquisition of English prepositions *in, on, and at*. This study was made to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant enhancement in the students' incidental acquisition of English prepositions *in, on, and at* after they received extensive reading activities?
2. What makes the EFL students difficult to learn English prepositions *in, on, and at*?
3. How the students' perception of the effect of incidental learning through extensive reading activities on their English preposition acquisition?

METHODS

Participants

The study adopted a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach to investigate the impact of incidental learning on the acquisition of time and place in English prepositions, specifically focusing on "in," "on," and "at." In a pre-experimental design, there is no control group, and participants serve as their own controls. The one-group pretest-posttest design involves assessing the participants' performance before and after the intervention, allowing researchers to observe any changes within the group. The participants in this study were ten senior students, aged 20-22 years, enrolled in the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. All participants were in their final semester and had already completed one semester of an extensive reading course, providing a foundation for their language learning. The selection of participants from a specific academic background and level aims to ensure a homogeneous group, controlling potential variations in language proficiency and exposure to language learning strategies.

The research design involved administering a pretest before the incidental learning intervention and a posttest after its completion. The pretest served as a baseline measure of participants' understanding and use of prepositions related to time and place. The posttest aimed to evaluate any changes or improvements in participants' proficiency in these prepositions following the incidental learning intervention. The focus on time and place prepositions is essential for assessing the targeted aspects of language use and understanding. By utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest design, the study seeks to examine the impact of incidental learning specifically within the identified group of participants. This design allows researchers to assess the effectiveness of the intervention on preposition acquisition among English learners in the context of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. The findings from this approach can provide insights into the potential benefits of incidental learning in improving language skills, particularly in the nuanced use of prepositions related to time and place.

Instruments

The data utilized in this research were extracted from the scores acquired through question items specifically designed to evaluate English prepositions. These data were organized into pretest and posttest assessments, each comprising two distinct sections: a multiple-choice segment and a section focused on correcting improper prepositions. In the multiple-choice section, participants were likely evaluated on their ability to select the appropriate prepositions within given contexts, examining their understanding of preposition usage in different scenarios. On the other hand, the section involving fixing incorrect prepositions aimed to assess participants' proficiency in recognizing and

correcting errors related to preposition usage within short sentences, indicating a more practical application of their knowledge.

Both the pretest and posttest assessments were conducted using Google Forms, indicating the adoption of an online platform for data collection. This method not only ensures efficient and standardized testing but also reflects a contemporary and convenient approach to gathering research data. The utilization of an online platform allows for streamlined administration, facilitating the process of data collection and analysis. Additionally, it underscores the integration of modern technology into the research methodology, aligning with current trends and offering a practical means of conducting assessments in an educational context.

Procedures

The first activity was pretest, the participants were asked to fill in the blanks by choosing the accurate prepositions from the administered options in the multiple-choice section. In the second section, fix the incorrect prepositions, the participants were asked to analyze the short sentence, identify the incorrect prepositions in the sentence and correct them. The purpose of having these two parts in the given tests was to have different difficulty levels.

Furthermore, there was a time difference (two weeks) between the pretest and the posttest. The posttest was given two weeks after the articles to read were given. The posttest was followed by a form contained some questions to find out students' perception of the effect of extensive reading activities on their acquisition of English preposition *in*, *on*, and *at*. Form was given after they completed the posttest.

The data of this research were analyzed quantitatively. The data were processed using Microsoft Excel Office. The pretest and posttest data were analyzed using the paired t-test due to the small number of participants. Also, the open-ended questionnaire was analyzed by categorizing the students' responses to the questions.

FINDINGS

After completing the data collection phase, the researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the test results obtained from both the pretest and posttest, each consisting of 20 questions, administered to every student participating in the study. The pretest served as a baseline assessment of the students' proficiency in English prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* before they engaged in extensive reading activities. The initial findings indicated that out of a total of 117 correct answers in the pretest, there was a notable improvement in the posttest, with 137 correct answers. A comparative analysis of the pretest and posttest scores was then performed, revealing descriptive statistics presented in Table 1. Prior to the commencement of extensive reading activities, the mean average of the pretest scores was 59.5. Following a one-week treatment period involving enhanced extensive reading, there was a substantial increase of approximately 14%, as reflected in the posttest mean average reaching 69, with a mean difference of 9.5.

To assess the statistical significance of this improvement, the researcher employed a paired T-test, with the obtained result ($T=1.265$) surpassing the critical t-table value (0.842). This confirmed the statistical significance of the enhanced acquisition of English prepositions "in," "on," and "at" by the students after their participation in the extensive reading activities. These findings suggest a positive impact

of the intervention on the students' understanding and application of prepositions in various contexts, emphasizing the effectiveness of enhanced extensive reading as a pedagogical approach in EFL classrooms.

Table 1. A comparison of the scores from the pretest and the posttest

Pretest Mean (SD)	59.5 (30.350)
Post test Mean (SD)	69 (13.834)
T (post-pre)	1.265
P	.000

Table 1 serves as a comprehensive overview of the scores obtained in both the pretest and posttest phases of the English prepositions assessment. The pretest mean score of 59.5, accompanied by a standard deviation of 30.350, provides a baseline understanding of the initial performance. In contrast, the posttest mean score of 69, with a standard deviation of 13.834, indicates an improvement in scores after the intervention. The T-value of 1.265 and a p-value of .000 signify a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, confirming that the observed improvement is not likely due to random chance.

To further elucidate the practical significance of this improvement, the study incorporates effect size analysis using Cohen's guidelines. Effect size is instrumental in gauging the magnitude of change or difference, contributing valuable insights into the real-world impact of the intervention. Cohen's criteria classify effect sizes as small (0.10), medium (0.30), and large (0.50). The effect size analysis for each section of the test (multiple choice and fixing incorrect prepositions) is presented in Table 2.

This additional layer of information is crucial as it moves beyond mere statistical significance, providing a nuanced understanding of the practical implications of the improvement observed in the students' preposition knowledge. The interpretation of effect sizes aids in discerning whether the observed changes are of substantive importance in the context of the students' overall understanding of English prepositions. Consequently, Table 2 contributes to a more comprehensive and meaningful interpretation of the study's results.

Table 2. A descriptive statistic and effect size of the difference between pretest and posttest scores in each part of the test.

Part of test	Multiple choice	Fix the incorrect prepositions
Pretest Mean	36	23.5
Post test Mean	36.5	32.5
Cohen's D	0.15	0.78

Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the English prepositions assessment, offering a detailed analysis of participants' performance in two specific sections: multiple choice and fixing incorrect prepositions. In the multiple-choice section, participants were required to choose the correct prepositions from provided options. The pretest scores in this section were 70 out of 100 questions, and posttest scores demonstrated improvement, rising to 72 out of 100 questions. Statistical analysis, including the p-value and T-value from Table 1, confirms the significance of this difference. The effect size, measured by Cohen's D, is 0.15, indicating a small yet discernible effect. Although the

effect size may be considered modest, the statistically significant improvement in scores underscores the participants' progress in accurately selecting appropriate prepositions within a multiple-choice context. This detailed breakdown of the multiple-choice section in Table 2 illuminates the nuanced changes in participants' performance, emphasizing that even small effect sizes can be meaningful when they lead to statistically significant improvements. The findings suggest that the enhanced extensive reading intervention had a positive impact on participants' ability to choose the correct prepositions, reinforcing the effectiveness of the instructional approach.

Conversely, in the section involving fixing incorrect prepositions within short sentences, the pretest scores were 47 out of 100 questions, indicating a notable challenge in this aspect. However, the posttest scores saw a substantial increase, reaching 65 out of 100 questions. The effect size for this section is larger at 0.78, signifying a substantial effect. This suggests that participants made significant strides in identifying and correcting errors related to preposition usage in sentences.

The combined findings of both sections contribute to an overall statistically significant enhancement in students' acquisition of English prepositions (in, on, and at). The effect sizes provide additional insights into the practical significance of these improvements. The notably larger effect size in the fixing incorrect prepositions section underscores the substantial impact of the intervention in improving participants' abilities to identify and rectify errors in preposition usage within sentences. This nuanced analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the specific areas of improvement within the broader context of English preposition acquisition.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis presented in this explanation reveals a thorough examination of the pretest and posttest results in the study on English prepositions acquisition. Table 1 outlines the key descriptive statistics, showcasing the mean scores and standard deviations for both the pretest and posttest. The observed increase in the posttest mean score from 59.5 to 69, with a corresponding decrease in standard deviation, suggests a substantial improvement in the participants' performance after engaging in extensive reading activities. The statistical analysis, as indicated by the T-value of 1.265 and a p-value of .000, further confirms the significance of the observed improvement. The writer employed a paired T-test, comparing the pretest and posttest scores, and the results demonstrated a statistically significant difference, indicating that the enhancement in English prepositions acquisition is not merely due to chance.

Moving beyond statistical significance, the study includes an analysis of effect sizes in Table 2, using Cohen's D. In the multiple-choice section, the effect size is 0.15, signifying a small but observable effect. This suggests that while the improvement is statistically significant, it might be relatively modest in terms of practical significance. On the other hand, in the section involving fixing incorrect prepositions, the larger effect size of 0.78 indicates a substantial effect. This implies that the intervention had a more pronounced impact on participants' abilities to identify and correct errors in preposition usage within sentences. The detailed breakdown in Table 2 provides valuable insights into specific areas of improvement, offering a nuanced understanding of the participants' progress in different aspects of English preposition acquisition. The overall findings highlight the effectiveness of extensive reading activities in enhancing students'

proficiency in English prepositions, emphasizing both statistical and practical significance. Additionally, the study recognizes its limitations, such as a small sample size and limited reading materials, suggesting avenues for further research and improvements in study design.

The findings obtained from the distribution of questionnaires reveal that the participants possess a general understanding of prepositions in English, particularly the functions of the prepositions in, on, and at. Participants acknowledge that these prepositions are utilized to provide detailed information about both time and place. Despite having a fundamental grasp of the concept of English prepositions, participants still encounter difficulties in their usage. They specifically note challenges in understanding how to employ prepositions, expressing a lack of knowledge in proper grammar usage. Additionally, the participants highlight the significance of vocabulary knowledge, emphasizing the necessity to understand which nouns to connect.

“The main thing is because we do not know how to use prepositions and lack knowledge of good grammar. Besides that, knowing vocabulary is also very decisive because we must know what nouns to connect.”

Students F

Furthermore, one participant underscores the difficulty in learning English prepositions due to the multifaceted functions and meanings they can have in the English language. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that, in the Indonesian language, prepositions like in, on, and at may have more than one meaning. This observation aligns with the research of Anjayani & Suprpto (2016), who assert that learners of a foreign language often struggle with English prepositions due to disparities between the prepositions in their native language and those in English. The challenge lies in the need to acquire new forms and master the usage of all English prepositions, leading to confusion between the rules of their first language and those of English. These insights collectively underscore the nuanced difficulties that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners face in grappling with English prepositions.

The participants in the study express a positive view towards the effectiveness of extensive reading activities in enhancing their acquisition of English prepositions, particularly the prepositions in, on, and at. According to one participant, engaging in extensive reading activities has proven beneficial in improving their understanding of prepositions. Repeatedly reading texts that involve prepositions allows for increased exposure and, consequently, enhances their knowledge about prepositions.

“Extensive reading activities help me to improve my Acquisition of English prepositions, because if you read repeatedly a text that have relation with preposition it can increase our knowledge about preposition. And usually, text have so many prepositions so we can learn from it.” Student C

The participant notes that texts often contain numerous prepositions, providing ample opportunities for learning. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Song & Sardegna (2014), who assert that extensive reading activities can serve as a valuable choice for language learners, contributing significantly to the improvement of reading skills, vocabulary, and the comprehension of complex grammar. Despite the positive outcomes, the study acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, the sample size is limited to 10 participants from the same university, suggesting a potential lack of diversity in

perspectives. To address this limitation, future studies are recommended to broaden their participant pool by including individuals from various universities, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, the study acknowledges a constraint in the variety of reading materials provided to participants, as only five articles were given. For future research, it is suggested to expand the range of reading materials beyond articles and to increase the quantity, providing a more extensive and diverse set of texts for participants to engage with. These limitations are crucial considerations for the interpretation and generalization of the study's findings, prompting the need for further research to build upon and address these constraints.

After collecting the data, the writer identified the top three mistakes made by the students from each section of the test.

The most mistakes from multiple choice section:

1. I sleep ... night.

In this question, only 40% students choose the correct answer that is *at*, while the 40% students chose *at*, and 20% students chose *on* as the correct answer. The correct preposition is *at* because the sentence mentioned a particular time *at the night*. It is in line with an explanation that preposition *At* in preposition of time is used to describe a more specific time, such as: time of the day and particular time (*at noon, at night, at midnight, at sunrise*), etc.

2. What floor do you live ...?

In this question, only 50% students choose the correct answer *on*, while the 30% students chose *in*, and 20% chose *at* as the correct answer. *On* in preposition of place is used to describe a place that more specific, such as: surfaces, large transportation, specific location, etc. And for this question, the correct preposition is *on* because the sentence describes a specific location.

3. Meet me ... the bus stop.

The correct answer for this question is *At*. *At* in preposition of place is use to describe a specific place, such as: event, location where the event takes places, specific point, etc. And for the sentence above, the correct preposition is *at* because the sentence mentioned a specific poin, that is *at the bus stop*.

The most mistakes from fill in the blank section:

1. Tom's birthday is next week, ... January 14.

For the sentence above the correct answer is *on* because the sentence mentioned the dates. *On* in preposition of time is use to describe a specific time. We use *in* when we describe time in more general, such as days, dates, and feast day. Students that chose the correct answer for this question is only 50%, while 20% students chose *on*, 10% students chose *in*, and 20% did not answer.

2. I like to get up early, ... sunrise, when the birds start to sing.

For the sentence above the correct answer is *at* because the sentence mentioned particular time. It is in line with the explanation that preposition *at* is used for indicating something that very specific instead of the general one. Here, only 30% students that chose the correct answer *at*, otherwise 30% students chose *in*, 20% students chose *at*, and 20% students did not answer.

3. Sharon birthday is ... january.

The correct answer for this question is *in*. *In* in preposition of time is used to describe time in more general, such as: month, year, season, decade, etc. Only 30% students chose the correct answer *in*, otherwise 60% students choose *on*, and 10% students chose *at*.

After collecting the data, the writer identified the top three mistakes made by the students in each section of the test, shedding light on common challenges in understanding English prepositions. In the multiple-choice section, notable errors were observed in sentences like "I sleep ... night," where only 40% of students correctly chose *at* as the preposition indicating a specific time. Another mistake was found in the question "What floor do you live ...?" with 50% of students erroneously selecting *on* instead of the correct preposition. Similarly, in the sentence "Meet me ... the bus stop," 20% of students incorrectly chose *in* instead of the correct preposition *at*, indicating a specific point.

In the fill-in-the-blank section, the analysis revealed challenges in understanding prepositions related to time. For instance, in the sentence "Tom's birthday is next week, ... January 14," only 50% of students correctly used *on* to indicate a specific date. In the sentence "I like to get up early, ... sunrise, when the birds start to sing," 30% of students chose the correct preposition *at* while others selected *in* or failed to answer. Lastly, in the sentence "Sharon's birthday is ... January," only 30% of students correctly used *in* to indicate a month, with others choosing *on* or *at*.

The study concludes that incidental learning through enhanced extensive reading effectively aids EFL learners in improving their acquisition of English prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at*. The identified mistakes highlight areas where learners commonly face challenges, emphasizing the importance of targeted instruction and practice in these specific prepositions. The study suggests that combining incidental learning with extensive reading activities proves to be an effective strategy for enhancing EFL learners' incidental acquisition of English prepositions.

According to the study by Xenia & Anjani (2022), extensive reading and its subsequent activities have been found to enhance the acquisition of English prepositions among students. The research suggests that these activities provide students with exposure to a substantial amount of easily understandable input, thereby contributing to an increase in their linguistic knowledge. This aligns with the comprehension hypothesis proposed by Krashen et al., (2018), which posits that individuals acquire language components, such as vocabulary and grammar skills, through comprehensible input. Furthermore, Krashen et al., (2018) argue that there is evidence supporting the Compelling Input Hypothesis, citing numerous instances of unexpected language improvement without conscious effort, primarily driven by a strong interest in reading or engaging with films and television programs, as mentioned in Ng et al. (2019).

Celik's study (2017) reveals that extensive reading raises readers' awareness of the fact that the usage of prepositions in English does not always align with their first language. Consequently, learners need to adapt to and learn the usage of prepositions as they exist in the target language. Aka (2020) adds that learners who are consistently exposed to target grammar items may start to notice grammatical rules incidentally. This frequent exposure significantly contributes to their incidental acquisition of grammar. In summary, the findings of these studies indicate that extensive reading, coupled with

post-reading activities, can be an effective strategy for improving students' acquisition of English prepositions by providing them with ample exposure to comprehensible linguistic input.

The insights derived from the distribution of questionnaires provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' knowledge and challenges related to English prepositions, particularly *in*, *on*, and *at*. Despite possessing a general understanding of these prepositions and their functions in providing detailed information about time and place, the participants express difficulties in their usage. Notably, they cite challenges in understanding how to use prepositions correctly, emphasizing the importance of both grammar knowledge and vocabulary. One participant underscores the need-to-know which nouns to connect, highlighting the intricate relationship between prepositions and vocabulary. Moreover, the participants acknowledge the complexities arising from differences in meaning between Indonesian and English prepositions, aligning with existing research that notes such challenges for foreign language learners.

The participants' positive views on the effectiveness of extensive reading activities in improving their preposition acquisition offer valuable insights. Engaging in repeated readings of texts containing prepositions, according to one participant, enhances their understanding. This sentiment aligns with scholarly findings indicating that extensive reading contributes significantly to language learners' reading skills, vocabulary, and grammar comprehension. Despite these positive outcomes, the study recognizes limitations, such as a small sample size and a limited variety of reading materials. These limitations are crucial considerations for interpreting and generalizing the study's findings, prompting recommendations for future research to address these constraints.

The analysis of the top three mistakes made by participants in each section of the test further elucidates common challenges in understanding English prepositions. The participants' errors in the multiple-choice section reveal difficulties in selecting the correct preposition for specific contexts, such as time and location. Similarly, in the fill-in-the-blank section, challenges in using prepositions related to time are evident. The study recognizes these challenges and emphasizes the need for targeted instruction and practice, underlining the potential effectiveness of combining incidental learning with extensive reading activities to enhance learners' acquisition of English prepositions. In summary, the study provides a comprehensive exploration of EFL learners' experiences and challenges with English prepositions, offering valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers. The identified mistakes and positive perceptions regarding extensive reading activities contribute to a nuanced understanding of effective strategies for preposition acquisition.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach to examine the impact of incidental learning on the acquisition of English prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* among ten senior students from the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. Utilizing Google Forms for efficient and standardized testing, the research revealed a statistically significant improvement of approximately 14% in participants' mean scores, from 59.5 in the pretest to 69 in the posttest, following enhanced extensive reading activities. The

paired t-test confirmed this improvement, with Cohen's effect size analysis indicating a small but observable effect in the multiple-choice section and a substantial effect in fixing incorrect prepositions. While acknowledging limitations, such as a small sample size and limited reading material variety, the study concludes that incidental learning through enhanced extensive reading is an effective strategy for improving EFL learners' incidental acquisition of English prepositions. Furthermore, the analysis of participants' mistakes emphasized common challenges in preposition usage, calling for targeted instruction and practice to address specific difficulties. Positive participant perceptions highlighted the importance of repeated exposure to prepositions, reinforcing the study's recommendation for future research with larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability.

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