

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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PREPOSITIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE SENTENCE

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Abstract

This article describes “A phrasal verb is a combination of a verb and one or more prepositions plus possible other words in addition. The article presents theoretical ideas in this regard and proves them with examples.

Keywords Isolation; terminologies; translation; grammatical form; modification; circumstance adverbials.

INTRODUCTION

A preposition may also occur in isolation in another type of use. When a preposition lacks an adjacent complement or prepositional object, it is considered stranded. A stranded preposition is easily visible in a sentence that ends in a preposition; however, the location is relevant to the context. The following example from Biber et al. (1999) highlights the stranded preposition in with underlined text. “What more could a child ask for” (p. 105). Although prepositions can connect with complements in three different ways, stranded propositions are also present in academic writing.

The role of particle in prepositional constructions is the second term defined in this section. In order to define a particle, related terms must be identified to show why particle fits best for this study. Occurrences of the analyzed words in and on do not function only as prepositions. In and on appear in combinations of verbs and prepositions as well. Biber et al. (1999) addresses this alternative function by stating, “verb + preposition combinations such as confide in [and] rely on... are usually regarded as forming a multi-word unit and are called prepositional verbs” (p.

74). On the same page of the book, the authors add that prepositions can also be referred to as ‘particles’ when they are part of prepositional verbs. To clarify why the term particle is applied to the verb plus preposition combination, it is necessary to include related terminologies not directly relevant to this study. Four terms to address include the distinctions among phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, phrasal-prepositional verbs, and other multi-word verb constructions. According to Biber et al. (1999), these four multi-word combinations function like single verbs. The authors present clear distinctions through individual examples and in how they identify each combination. Table 1.1, displays the kind of multi-word combination, the names for these combinations, and examples from Biber et al. (1999, pp. 403-406).

Table 1.1. Multi-Word Combinations of Lexical Verbs

Multi-word combination	Name of combination	Examples
verb + adverbial particle	phrasal verb	fall in; put on
verb + preposition	prepositional verb	use in; be based on
verb + particle + preposition	phrasal-prepositional verb	be laid out in; go on to
verb + noun phrase (+ preposition)	other multi-word verb	make a bet on
verb + prepositional phrase	other multi-word verb	bear in mind

Source: Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999).

Longman grammar of spoken and written English. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Table 1.1 categorizes the four types of combinations of lexical verbs where the words in and on can occur. The first combination is identified as a phrasal verb. Adding a verb to an adverbial particle yields a phrasal verb, according to Biber et al. (1999). The authors expand this definition by stating that adverbial particles like in and on usually help extend meanings. This is present in the examples, fall in and put on. For a complete understanding, the following sentence from the samples for this study includes the phrasal verb put on. "In this revised program, lots of effort was put on the preprocessor modification, such as structural assembly and mesh generator" (MICUSP, 2011, keyword search of "on"). The phrasal verb happened in the past tense in the example. Therefore, the underlined text was put on includes more than the base form of put on. Before I connect meaning to function of the phrasal verb in the example, another definition of the combination

is mentioned. "A phrasal verb is a combination of a verb and one or more prepositions plus possible other words in addition. A key feature of a phrasal verb is that the whole combination of words should function as a lexical unit that has its own meaning" (Lindstromberg, 2010, p. 21). Lindstromberg's (2010) definition confirms that the multi-word combination of was put on functions as a lexical unit meaning that the object of the action the preprocessor modification received much effort from the missing agent. Thus, the agent applied much effort to modifying the preprocessor. The second combination is listed as a prepositional verb. Prepositional verbs attach a preposition to a verb, and passive verbs commonly occur in this construction (Biber et al. (1999). The following example used in this study obtained from MICUSP (2011) illustrates the underlined prepositional verb be based on where the passive voice is present. "This decision is based on the discrepancy

of the two reports" (keyword search of "on"). Biber et al. (1999) discuss how prepositional verbs occur more frequently in comparison to phrasal verbs. This is particularly evident in their findings from corpus research. Two separate tables display the frequency of prepositional verbs for academic register at 4,200 occurrences per 1 million words versus 800 occurrences per 1 million words for phrasal verbs.

The third combination connects the two previous forms together and is called a phrasal-prepositional verb. Phrasal-prepositional verbs combine a verb with an adverbial particle to a preposition (Biber et al., 1999). The next sentence presents an example from MICUSP (2011) where the phrasal-prepositional verb be laid out in is highlighted with underlined text. "They are laid out in a manner that allows for easy co-ordination and integration among the subsections within the same department" (keyword search of "in"). Phrasal-prepositional verbs infrequently occur based on the findings from Biber et al. (1999) that show only 50 occurrences per 1 million words for academic register. Both phrasal verbs and phrasal-prepositional verbs are rare in the academic register (Biber et al., 1999). The fourth categorization includes two main types listed as other multi-word combinations. One contains the sequence of a verb and a noun phrase with an optional preposition. This sequence is underlined in an academic example from Biber et al. (1999). "How can she make a bet on an unpublished author?" (p. 428). As the underlined text highlights, the preposition on is included in this example. Another main type of multi-word combination for this category connects a verb with a prepositional phrase. The following example from Biber et al. (1999) shows this combination with underlined text. "I also have to bear in mind the interests of my wife and family" (p. 427). Because the other multi-word combinations rarely occur in the academic register, the first three terms (phrasal verbs,

prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs) will be analyzed in greater detail in this study.

The last classification utilized in this study groups the remaining uses. This all-inclusive group does not define the specific parts of speech, because the first two classifications (preposition and particle) contain the majority of uses for in and on. Research has classified other uses into further categories such as circumstance adverbials. The adverbial in the following example from Biber et al. (1999) appears to imitate the function of a prepositional phrase, yet the researchers have classified the function as a circumstance adverbial. The academic example sentence, "Writers on style have differed a great deal in their understanding of the subject" (p. 763), highlights the phrase with underlined text. Due to the limited occurrences of other uses such as circumstance adverbials, the current study lacks further distinction beyond the inclusive name of other uses. One benefit from using a classification that groups all other uses together is that this study guides the reader to the two most common types of uses for the words in and on.

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