

Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

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Abstract

Prepositions and prepositional phrases are essential components of the English language, playing crucial roles in sentence structure, meaning, and communication. Despite their importance, little attention has been given to understanding the functions and uses of prepositions and prepositional phrases in contemporary English language use.

The research aims to provide insights into the complex nature of prepositions and prepositional phrases, their functions in English language use, and their implications for language learners and teachers.

1-1 Introduction

A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, time, place, location spatial relationships, or to introduce an object. Some examples of prepositions are words like in, at, on, of, and, to....

A prepositional phrase is made up of at least a preposition and its object, which can be a noun, pronoun, or a noun phrase. Often the object will have a modifier or modifiers (such as adjectives, noun adjuncts, etc.) that appear between it and the preposition. These specify or describe the object. But, unlike prepositions they do not serve to connect the object grammatically to the rest of the sentence. Examples, on the ground, on the bed, after a brief time.

2-1 Definitions of preposition.

A preposition expresses a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement. Of the various types of relational meanings, those of place and Time are the most prominent and easy to identify. (Randolph Quirk Sidney Greenbaum,1973:143). According to (Yowell Y. Aziz,1989:183) Morphologically two kinds of prepositions are distinguished in English: simple and complex. A simple preposition consists of one word: in, on after, before. Complex prepositions consist of more than one word: apart from, in case of, instead of, in view of.

Prepositions are words that express a relationship between a noun or pronoun (known as the object of the preposition) and another part of the

sentence. Together, these form prepositional phrases, which can function as adjectives or as adverbs in a sentence. Some examples of prepositional phrases are: on the table, in the shed, and across the field. (Peter Herring,2016:14)

Prepositions are always used with nouns or pronouns (pronouns stand for nouns). They show a relationship between the noun or pronoun and some other idea in the sentence. A preposition can be a single word or two or more words. (Mary S. Schatz, 47)

2.2 Types of prepositions

2.3 Prepositions with time:

Prepositions of time explain when something happens. To talk about one point in time, you can use, on, at, or in.

For example:

On is used to describe days:

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
I	will study	on	Monday

Fig (1): Prepositions with time.

At is used with specific times of the day (such as noon, night, midnight, etc).

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
The baby	woke up	at	4:45 PM

Fig (2): Prepositions with time.

In is used to describe the parts of the day, months, years, and seasons:

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
My birthday	is	in	November

Fig (3): Prepositions with time.

You can also use prepositions of time to describe extended periods of time. These prepositions are since, for, before, after. For example: Since describes a specific point in the past until now.

S.	V.	O.	Pp.	Adv.
I	have not seen	him	since	Friday

Fig (4): Prepositions with time.

For is used to describe something that happens over a certain period of time.

S.	V.	O.	Pp.	Adv.
I	am going to	Bagdad	for	three weeks

Fig (5): Prepositions with time.

2.3.1 Prepositions with place:

Prepositions of place describe where something happens. The prepositions you can use are in, at, on, off, by/beside, over, above, and down. For example:

It describes a specific position or state of being inside.

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
It	is raining	in	Mosul

Fig (8): Prepositions with place.

At is used to describe a general area.

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
Sammy	is playing	at	the park

Fig (9): Prepositions with place.

(https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/prepositions/index.html) (Jossey-Bass,2014:34)

3.1 PREPOSITION ERRORS

This preposition error is common among ‘none native ’speakers of English.

1- When you use a ‘motion’ verb, you use the preposition of movement ‘to’. It is correct to say

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
I	went	to	Mosul

Fig (21): preposition error

The only exception to the rule in English is ‘go home’, otherwise it needs the ‘to’ example:

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
she	walks	to	school

Fig (22): preposition error

2-The preposition of movement ‘to’ expresses going from A to B. That is from the departure point to the destination.

Of course, you can use other prepositions of movement depending on what they wish to say example:

S.	V.	Pp.	Adv.
He	runs	along	The road

Fig (23): preposition error

(Jacqueline Melvin ,2014:199)

4.1 The prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase is made up of at least a preposition and its object, which can be a noun, pronoun, or a noun phrase. Often, the object will have a modifier or modifiers (such as adjectives, noun adjuncts, etc.) that appear between it and the preposition. These specify or describe the object, but, unlike prepositions, they do not serve to connect the object grammatically to the rest of the sentence. (Peter Herring, 2016:495).

According to (Mary S. Schatz:55) prepositional phrase starts with a preposition and with an object that is usually a noun or a pronoun. Sometimes the object has modifiers. The prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a prepositional complement, which is characteristically a noun phrase or a wh-clause or V-ing clause. (Randolph Quirk Sidney Greenbaum,1973:143)

4.2 The structure of the prepositional phrase.

The prepositional phrase is a structure with three possible parts:

pre-modifier	preposition	complement
.....	at	the cinema

Fig (30): The structure of the prepositional phrase

pre-modifier	preposition	complement
.....	on	the internet

Fig (31): The structure of the prepositional phrase

pre-modifier	preposition	complement
just	before	breakfast

Fig (32): The structure of the prepositional phrase.

It refers to the element following a preposition as a complement rather than a post-modifier because, unlike a post-modifier, it is not optional.

4.2.1 Functions of prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases have three main functions:

4.2.2 post-modifier of a noun

I	took	Several courses	in	history
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Fig (33): Functions of prepositional phrases

4.2.3 post-modifier of an adjective

I	was	happy	with	my marks	last term
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Fig (34): Functions of prepositional phrases

4.2.4 adverbial

In my opinion,	people	behave	differently	in	crowds
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Fig (35): Functions of prepositional phrases

4.2.5 Two or more prepositional phrases

they may appear independently side by side. Here is a sentence with three prepositional phrases, each functioning as a separate adverbial:

I	read	stories	to the children	at home	in the evening
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Fig (36): Functions of prepositional phrases.

(Gerald Nelson,1999:89)

5.1 Conclusions

In short, prepositions and prepositional phrases are essential components of English grammar that play a vital role in conveying meaning and structure in sentences. Prepositions are words that typically come before a noun, pronoun, or gerund to indicate the relationship between that word and other elements in the sentence. Prepositional phrases are groups of words that consist of a preposition and a noun, pronoun, or gerund that serves as the object of the preposition. Prepositions can indicate various relationships, such as time, location, direction, manner, and more. For example, "in," "on," and "at" are prepositions commonly used to indicate time and location.

Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives or adverbs, providing additional details about nouns or verbs in a sentence. While prepositions and prepositional phrases can be challenging to master for non-native speakers of English, they are crucial for clear and effective communication in the language.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

1. Conduct a corpus linguistics analysis of prepositions and prepositional phrases to explore their frequency, collocational patterns, and usage in different types of text.
2. Compare prepositions and prepositional phrases across different languages to explore similarities and differences in their usage, meaning, and syntax.

3. Conduct a contrastive analysis of prepositions and prepositional phrases in different varieties of English or in English and another language to explore differences in usage and meaning

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Website

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