

УДК 811.111'01:81'42

ON THE QUESTION OF TEMPORAL ADVERB-PREPOSITION TRANSPOSITION: SOLVING AMBIGUITY

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню явища транспозиції у межах категорій темпоральних прислівників та прийменників в англійській мові. Встановлено, що, принцип розрізнення прислівників та прийменників шляхом використання останніх тільки з “іменниковою фразою-доповненням” не є дієвим та актуальним. Доведено, що існують передумови для транспозиції ряду лексичних одиниць з ознаками темпоральності з категорії прислівників у категорію прийменників.

Ключові слова: транспозиція, темпоральність, прислівник, прийменник

Статья посвящена исследованию явления транспозиции в рамках категории темпоральных наречий и предлогов в английском языке. Установлено, что принцип разграничения наречий и предлогов путем использования последних с “именной фразой-дополнением” не является действенным и актуальным. Доказано, что существуют предпосылки к транспозиции ряда лексических единиц с признаками темпоральности из категории наречий в категорию предлогов.

Ключевые слова: транспозиция, темпоральность, наречие, предлог

The article focuses on the analysis of temporal adverb-preposition transposition phenomenon in the English language. The principle of differentiation between adverbs and prepositions, according to which, the latter must be used with a “noun phrase complement” has been defined as inefficient and non-topical. It has been proved that there are preconditions for transposition of some temporal lexical units from the adverb category to the category of preposition.

Key words: transposition, temporality, adverb, preposition

One of the key issues in modern linguistics is the problem of communicative nature of the language and semantics of language units. Consequently, the phenomenon of grammatical transposition as means of lexico-grammatical word classes enlarging is put in the forefront.

In modern Anglistics studies adverb as “a word or phrase that modifies the meaning of an adjective, verb or other adverb, expressing manner, place, time or degree” [10]. R. Huddleston, G. K. Pullum and others point out that “class of adverbs has something of the character of a residual or miscellaneous class, a class to which items are assigned that lack the more specific positive properties associated with other primary class” [5, p. 96]. The linguists suggest that “the traditional adverb category has something of the character of a classificatory wastebasket, a dumping ground for words that don't belong to any of the other more clearly defined categories” [4, p. 131]. First of all, it indicates the ambiguous and vague character of adverbs as a category of parts of speech. As all languages undergo evolutionary processes, their categories are constantly enriched with the new words. So, it gives us an opportunity to suppose that the lexico-grammatical class of adverbs can be enlarged with the help of transposition in two ways:

a) traditionally – as a type of lexical derivation when a lexical item is just transposed from one lexical class, i.e. Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb to another [1, p. 278]. It corresponds to the conventional definition of an adverb and describes a generally accepted way of the adverbs formation;

b) miscellaneous – if the word is obviously not a noun, verb, adjective or conjunction, it is usually ascribed to put the adverb category.

The subject matter of the paper underlies the fact that very often there are no grounds to refer certain lexical unit to the adverb category when it does not conform to the adverb's definition and does not meet its requirements. Among the lexico-

grammatical classes that are most frequently merged with the adverbs is the category of prepositions. The correlation of prepositions and adverbs is based on linguistic anthropocentrism, cognitive and communicative aspects of language. **The topicality of the paper** is explained by the fact that in current linguistics still there is no unified word class classification as well as grounded researches concerning the differentiation between adverbs and other word classes, in particular prepositions, their merging and distinguishing. Defining the demarcation line between adverbs and prepositions will give an opportunity to reconsider the traditional conception of prepositions as a word class, to enlarge it with the help of lexical units that now are treated as adverbs.

The category of time is principal and common for both prepositions and adverbs and therefore is one of the cornerstones of their overlapping, that is why the prepositions and adverbs of temporality form **the object of the research**. The data of the research are selected from the text fragments, representing various discourse registers in the BNC [9].

In linguistics, preposition “is a word that indicates a relation between the noun or pronoun it governs and another word, which may be a verb, an adjective or another noun or pronoun” [2, p. 355]. This definition imposes a fundamental restriction on lexical units which can be assigned as prepositions, namely the presence of the noun phrases as complements. Thus, “in general, words are traditionally analyzed as prepositions only if they have complements in the form of NPs” [4, p. 127]. The conventional examples of prepositions must be:

- 1) ... *hold the foot between both your hands for **about a minute** or two to soothe it*
- 2) *And judging by the calls we got **after the programme**, there wasn't much time*
- 3) *But you haven't changed **since the day** when I first met you*

About, after, since must be classified as prepositions in traditional grammar as they indicate location relation and moreover they have NPs complements *a minute, the programme, the day* respectively, see e.g. 1-3.

At the same time the units *about, after, since* in the examples 4-6 are no longer assigned to prepositions, as they do not meet the “NPC” requirement:

- 4) ...*we were still in bed but **about four hours** sleep just **about***
- 5) ... *but it re-forms itself immediately **after and begins** again*
- 6) **Since then** *Sotheby's business has spread into less traditional auction house areas, including real estate*

In example 4 *about* has the so-called null complement, in 5 – *after* is used with a coordinating conjunction as its complement, in 6 – an adverb functions as a complement for preposition *since*. So, due to the absence of the NP complement, traditional grammar treats these lexical units not as prepositions but as adverbs. The difference between temporal prepositions *about, after, since* in instances 1-3 and 4-6 lies exclusively in a matter of a complement.

As a result it causes complications in the subsequent word class division as the class of adverbs contains essentially and syntactically different words united only by temporal characteristics. *About, after, since* as well as other similar lexical units are labeled as adverbs since they do not take NP complements, though “nowhere else in the grammar is a part-of-speech distinction based purely on a difference of this kind” [4, p. 129].

The aim of the paper is to reconsider the lines between the lexico-grammatical classes of temporal adverbs and prepositions. Proving the fact that some lexical units have been mistakenly transposed to the adverb category and reconsidering their place among the lexico-grammatical word classes will result into the extension of the preposition category.

In grammar studies, a lexico-grammatical category of prepositions belongs to the closed word class as it is not a subject to transposition processes, therefore its quantity is limited to “about a hundred prepositions in current use” [4, p. 127]. J. Essberger enumerates the list of 150 prepositions stating that it “is comprehensive at the time of writing, and represents all the prepositions currently found in a good English dictionary such as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*” [3, p. 6]. Hence, on the

grounds of 150 prepositions and data from the English dictionaries, 38 one-word and 4 complex prepositions (total 42) indicating temporal relations have been selected, see Table 1.

Table 1

Temporal Prepositions in English

One-word temporal prepositions					Complex temporal prepositions
*about	Beyond	In	Pending	Towards	Ahead of
*after	By	*inside	per	Under	Close to
Against	Circa	Into	*round	Until	Up to
*around	*down	*near	*since	Upon	Up until
At	During	Of	through	With	
*before	Following	*on	*throughout	Within	
*behind	For	*over	Till		
*between	From	Past	To		

Table 1 represents the list of temporal prepositions in English selected on the basis of their lexical meanings – one way or other indicating temporal relations. One-word temporal prepositions, marked in table 1 with a * sign, are treated both as prepositions and adverbs. Correspondingly, to solve this ambiguity between prepositions and adverbs, these lexical units must undergo a thorough research. Other units, like **from**, are pure prepositions and are exclusively used to denote period of time or date, when we speak of them in the frames of temporal relations.

The presence of NP complement is the crucial point that makes delimitation of adverbs and prepositions and the primary task of the investigation is to prove that there are no justifications to state that prepositions must take NP complements. To prove this all ambiguous lexical units from Table 1 will be analyzed in combination with various types of complements. Every example with a null complement will be reconstructed to make a “traditional” frame *Prep. + Noun Phrase complement* and the meanings of the original and reconstructed units will be compared and relevant conclusions will be drawn.

The main types of complements are:

- Noun Phrase complement (NPC) – is a complement consisting of a noun phrase;

- Clausal complement (CC) – is a complement consisting of any other phrase or clause etc., except a noun phrase. P. Suppes points out that clausal complements as well as other phrases, for instance, adjective phrases, and null complements are very rare in the language [8, p. 3];

- Null complement (NC) – is also called “pragmatically controlled zero anaphora”, “understood argument”, “linguistically unrealized argument” and can be omitted, yet the sentence is well-formed and the meaning effect is as if a complement were present” [6, p. 1]. In other words the null complement “can function as a variable bound by a higher quantifier” [6, p. 7] and should not refer to some particular entity made it salient. Thus, there is no detriment to the sentence meaning which is reproducible from the context.

In our paper we will prove that lexical units denoting temporal relations can take all types of complements and must be regarded as temporal prepositions, but by no means as adverbs. Let’s consider the following lexical units:

About

7) *The analysis ... will be meaningful only in **about ten years** ...*

8) *Well, I said, it was **about so long** ...*

Example 7 provides a conventional example of *Prep + NPC*, where the NC is represented by a noun and a numeral, in 8 – by an adverbial phrase that belongs to clausal complements. Though, it should be mentioned that the constructions *Prep + CC* is rarely used and *Prep + NC* has not been registered. It gives us an opportunity to say that *about* must be treated as a conventional preposition of time.

After

9) *In the more recent squad of 35 the figure was up to four **after Sale's David Baldwin** had been brought in as cover for Dooley*

10) *We can walk home **after***

11) *But there's the travelling to get to the one the night **after and seeing a different one every middle of the week.***

Sentence 9 presents a traditional model *Prep + NPC*, which is common for the preposition *after*. In sentence 10 *after* is used with a null complement, and 11 – with a clausal complement, represented by a coordinating conjunction. The example of a sentence with a null complement can be reconstructed into a traditional sentence with a noun phrase as a complement:

10.1) *We can walk home **after** [+ the dinner]*

Such reconstruction is possible but unnecessary as the meaning can usually be understood from the context.

Around

12) *The prepatent period is **around 11 weeks***

Preposition *around* must be treated a genuine preposition as it is exclusively used with a noun phrase complement, see: e.g. 12. The examples of *around* with other complements have not been registered in the BNC.

Before

13) *In the moment **before they returned**, Nicholas spoke*

14) *The funeral had in fact been held only the day **before***

15) *The Deputy Under Secretary had known **heat before, but that was in the dim and dark ages when he had been young and ambitious ...***

Preposition *before* is equally used in each model, like *Prep + NPC* in 13, *Prep + CC*, in 15, where the clause complement is represented by a coordinating conjunction *but*, *Prep + NC*, as in 14, where *before* is the last word of the sentence. If necessary, example 14 can be reconstructed into a traditional model, e.g. 14.1

14.1) *The funeral had in fact been held only the day **before** [+ her arrival]*

The reconstruction in 14.1 completely changes the meaning of the sentence, as the event took place not “yesterday”, but after the arrival which might occur at any time. It again testifies that the noun phrase is not an essential element but an optional one which is used when it is necessary to specify information.

Behind

16) *You needn't be a 'saint' to face it, just brave enough to leave **behind 'all our yesterdays'***

17) *... that there is no future for me in the world I left **behind so long ago***

18) *... she completed the event in 2.23.87 with Gail Hamilton of Ards a massive five-and-a-half seconds **behind***

In general the research shows that *behind* is more frequently used in locative meaning than in temporal sense. It also describes that all types of constructions are rather rare in language, see: *Prep + NPC* in 16, *Prep + CC* in 17, *Prep + NC* in 18.

18.1) *... she completed the event in 2.23.87 with Gail Hamilton of Ards a massive five-and-a-half seconds **behind** [+ the previous result]*

The NPC in 18.1 provides no new information, as it is clear from the sentence “whose result was behind” and that is why it was omitted by the author.

Between

The results of the analysis give an opportunity to speak about the existence of the *Prep + NPC* and *Prep + NC* structures as several of them have been fixed during the research of the BNC data, though they are not frequent.

19) *During the year under review, and **between the year end and 17 March 1993...***

20) *... which cover a four-and-a-half year period **between 1985 and 1988***

21) *We are planning a major project ... over the weekends of June 12 – 13th and June 19 – 20th, with possibly some mid-week work in **between.***

The reconstruction can be carried out to show that *between* functions either with or without an NPC, see 21.1

21.1) *We are planning a major project ... over the weekends of June 12 – 13th and June 19 – 20th, with possibly some mid-week work in **between** [+ these dates]*

As an NPC does not extend the meaning of the sentence, i.e. does not give any additional important information, the author decided to omit it.

Down

As a preposition of time, *down* has been observed only in a traditional construction *Prep + NPC*, see 22, i.e. it is used only with a noun complement as a traditional preposition.

22) ... *correspondence has been a significant means of direction **down the years***

Inside

Preposition *inside* is characterized by peculiar existence of the subsidiary preposition of which is an integral part of *Prep + CC* construction, which is not a frequent one if we speak of *inside* as a temporal preposition, see 23. The construction *Prep + NPC*, see 24, is more frequently used, according to the BNC data; while the construction *Prep + NC* has not been fixed at all.

23) *The statues **inside of 1715–21** are all by M. B. Braun; ...*

24) *Core's victory provided his manager Phil Martin with his second British champion **inside a week** ...*

As *inside* in its temporal meaning is usually found in traditional *Prep + NPC* construction and can be thought of as a genuine preposition.

Near

Near is found in all constructions what indicates its versatility, see 25 for *Prep + NPC*, 26 for *Prep + NC* and 27 for *Prep + CC* construction.

25) *Duncan ... spends **near all his time** on the garden when he's not fishing*

26) *This may be especially appropriate if you are planning to become self-employed or if retirement age is drawing **near***

27) *At times it came very **near but, narrowly** and not without some years of ...*

Reconstruction of the sentence with an NC can be provided, see: 26.1:

26.1) *This may be especially appropriate if you are planning to become self-employed or if retirement age is drawing **near [+ you]***

Such reconstruction bears no sense, because it is clear from the context "that the retirement age is drawing near the already mentioned addressee".

On

The temporal preposition *on* must be treated as a traditional one, as it is usually used in a conventional construction *Prep + NPC*, see 28. As for the constructions *Prep + CC* and *Prep + NC* they do not take *on* as a preposition with its own, individual meaning, though *on* can be used in adverbial phrases like: *later on*, *from now on*, *on and off*, where it is used as a part of a phrase, see 29, 30.

28) *Provisional dealings in the shares start at 2.30pm tomorrow, and unconditional dealings **on April 15***

29) *This ordering ensures that standard phenomena are covered first, exceptions and non-grammatical structures **later on***

30) *He had been seeing Molly **on and off** for about six months*

Over

The peculiarity of the temporal preposition *over* in *Prep + CC* construction is that it functions only as a part of a phrasal verb. At the same time it means that *over* is commonly used in a traditional *Prep + NPC* construction, see 32 and sometimes in *Prep + NC*, see 31.

31) *This thing breaks it down by age, we're looking at seventy-fives and **over***

32) *Funds under management rose from J25 to J31 billion **over the year***

It is possible to reconstruct the null complement as in 31.1:

31.1) ... *breaks it down by age, we're looking at seventy-fives and **over [+ it]***

Round

According to the research of the BNC data *round* is rarely used as a preposition of time and is observed in the traditional construction *Prep + NPC*. So, *round* can be treated as a genuine preposition which requires a direct object.

33) *We had rustlers **round a year** or two back*

Since

A peculiar characteristic of *since* as a temporal preposition lies in its frequent usage as a part of *Prep + NC*, see 34, while it is rarely used as a part of *Prep + CC*

construction, see 35 the characteristic which has not been observed among the rest of temporal prepositions under investigation, as the correlation between the construction with null and clause complements is usually equal.

34) ... *in August 1986 and how it has recovered* **since**

35) *She has had no real contact* **since but occasionally rings up Mr Smith** ...

36) *She has always been that way, ever* **since she was a little girl**

The sentence can be easily reconstructed into the traditional one, as in 34.1:

34.1) ... *in August 1986 and how it has recovered* **since** [+ that time]

Throughout

The temporal preposition *throughout* is easily used in any prepositional scheme, like *Prep + NPC*, see 39, *Prep + NC*, see 37 or *Prep + CC*, see 38.

37) *God has been with his people* **throughout**

38) *We laughed and joked* **throughout and won the tournament**

39) *But* **throughout all this teaching, this familiarising and making intelligible** ...

If necessary the null complement in 37 can be transformed into the noun phrase complement as in 37.1:

37.1) *God has been with his people* **throughout** [+ the history of mankind]

It is evident that a noun phrase complement can be different, for instance all the time, but the meaning will remain the same.

Thus, according to the traditional grammar adverbs and prepositions of time are demarcated on the basis of the constraint, that prepositions can take only the noun phrase complement. As a result of the research, we can make a conclusion that among 38 one word temporal prepositions (see Table 1) 14 units overlap with the adverbs in their meaning. Accordingly, these prepositions have been in the focus of the investigation. The study shows that among 14 prepositions, only 3 units (*around, down, round*) take exclusively noun phrases complements and therefore are genuine prepositions according to the current definition. 4 more units (*about, inside, on, over*) usually take noun phrase complements, though some exceptions have been registered. Other 7 prepositions can take both noun phrase complements and clause or null complements, while the lexical meaning effect of the prepositions is the same, notwithstanding the complement they take. It proves that there is no need to transpose these prepositions to the word class of adverbs.

We believe that the best way to set this divergence is to eliminate the constraint of “the noun phrase complement” from the modern definition of a “preposition” as a part of speech. Due to this there will be no ambiguity in drawing the boundaries between prepositions and adverbs; and a large group of words with “different syntactic properties from genuine adverbs” [4, p. 132] will be transposed from the class of adverbs. As to the differences between the types of complements, we assume that a preposition can take a noun phrase as an optional element, which can be easily omitted in stylistic purposes or be used if the situation needs some specification of time, which is not understood from the context.

The subsequent diachronic analysis will help to ascertain the historical preconditions for such usage of complements. The overlapping of meanings of temporal and local prepositions which have the same form must be examined.

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