



## English Prepositions As Function Words Are Not As Easy For Language Learners As Normally Supposed To Be

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Prepositions as function words and single monomorphemic words are the most basic words of the human language, especially in the context of maintaining daily life. They are probably the first lexes/words entered to the human's linguistic repertoire, as their requirements in the language are so essential. Prepositions shows various relationships between lexes or phrases in sentences. Among these relationships time, points, position, direction and various degrees of mental or emotional attitudes seem to be significant. The purpose of the research is try to reveal what kind of challenges English prepositions have for the learners and also to confirm if they are as difficult as some linguists have stated before. Another purpose is to find out which features are more difficult among all their entity properties. The results of this study disclose that English prepositions possess very complex structures, different meanings and an associating duty of various types of part of speeches. In particular, those that construct the phrasal verbs require great effort for learning due to the loss of the meaning (sometimes partially, sometimes completely) they undergo. It has been understood that their properties such as steadily changing meaning and function make them quite difficult elements for learners of English.

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## İşlev Kelimeleri Olarak İngilizce Edatlar Dil Öğrenenler İçin Normalde Zannedildiği Kadar Kolay Değildir

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İşlev kelimeleri ve tekil biçimbirimli kelimeler olarak edatlar, özellikle günlük hayatın sürdürülmesi bağlamında insan dilinin en temel kelimeleridir. Dildeki gereksinimleri çok önemli olduğundan, muhtemelen insanın dil bilimsel söz varlığına giren ilk sözlüklerdir. Edatlar, cümlelerdeki sözlükler veya öbekler arasındaki çeşitli ilişkileri gösterir. Bu

**Anahatar Kelimeler:**

İngilizce Edatlar, İngilizce Dil Bilgisi, İşlevsel Sözcükler, Yabancı Dil, Sözdizimi.

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ilişkiler arasında zaman, nokta, konum, yön ve zihinsel veya duygusal tutumların çeşitli dereceleri önemli görünmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, İngilizce edatların öğrenciler için ne gibi zorlukları olduğunu ortaya çıkarmak ve ayrıca bazı dilbilimcilerin daha önce belirttiği gibi zor olup olmadıklarını doğrulamaktır. Diğer bir amaç, tüm varlık özellikleri arasında hangi özelliklerin daha zor olduğunu bulmaktır. Literatür taraması yapılarak gerekli bilgilere ulaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, İngilizce edatların çok karmaşık yapıları, farklı anlamlara ve çeşitli kelime türlerini ilişkilendirme görevine sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle öbeksal fiilleri oluşturanlar, geçirdikleri anlam kaybından dolayı (bazen kısmen, bazen tamamen) öğrenenler için büyük çaba gerektirirler. Sürekli değişen anlam ve işlev gibi özellikleri, onları İngilizce öğrenenler için oldukça zor unsurlar haline getirdikleri anlaşılmaktadır.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

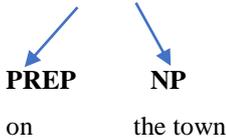
We use conjunctions to bond clause levels, however prepositions to bond the words or phrases. Prepositions<sup>1</sup>, which are the subject of the present study, do not belong to the content words; they belong to the functional words i.e. they have closed class word.

Recall that content words or **contentives** have fundamental expressive content. On the other hands function words, Radfold prefers to say '**functors**'(Radfold, 2005, 40), assist principally to convey information about the grammatical function of specific types of statement within the sentence e.g. facts about grammatical properties for instance person, number, gender, case etcetera. To clarify this it is better to give an example: The word '**tree**' is a content word on the fact that it gives us some information about an entry; n.b. when we hear this word we think of/imagine an object in our mind.

The functional words are different than content words in that they gives us no information about the world we live in, nor let they us imagine any objects as we read or hear them; e.g. the words '**for**' by itself states nothing until it is used with other words or group of words inside the sentence. At the same time, they give no sense when we read or hear them. They remind us nothing. Therefore, they are function words i.e. they function only with the instrument of other lexes, phrases or grammatical categories.

Prepositions are petite words that states connections containing space, time, and degree. They express spatial relationship (700.000 inhabitants live **in** Batman); time (She will meet me **at** 5 p.m.); degree (This bag weighs **about** 2 kilos). It is known that prepositions lead prepositional phrases, which characteristically encompass a noun phrase. The tree below provides examples of the mentioned case i.e. prepositions build up PP (Teschner and Evans, 2007).

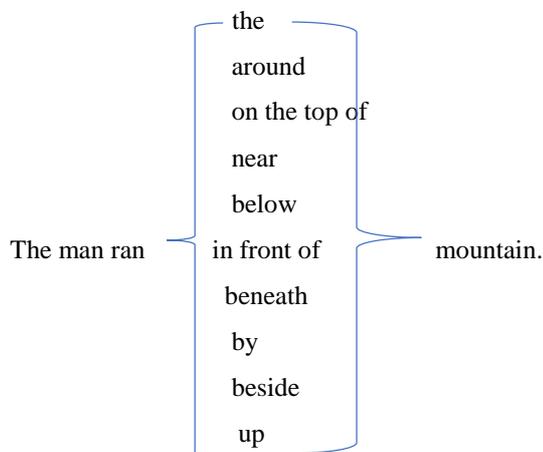
### PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE (PP)



<sup>1</sup> It is know that prepositions are collectively known as **adpositions** (using the Latin prefix 'ad-' means "to").

in the taxi  
 over the hill  
 up the house's garden path

Apart from the tree just given, let us see how many typical prepositions can appear in front of one noun (NP+V+PP).



We should keep in mind that prepositions in English are full of pitfalls. The language learners get often confused with them during their utilization. For example, in many cases the preposition 'in' and 'at' can be used interchangeably. In such cases, something else or meaning may be intended. This means that when 'in the hotel' is used, e.g. 'Snack Bar Memo is in the hotel', a certain point of the hotel is intended. 'At the hotel' is expected to be used when the hotel is on/next to the land or somewhere like that or when a more general meaning is wanted to be expressed.

One of the important function the English prepositions fulfill is so called phrasal verbs, which is sometimes named as Two-Word Verbs, Prepositional Verbs or Particle Verbs. There a lot of Germanic languages such as German, English, Danish...ect. that have these categories. The problem in phrasal verb is that the meaning sometimes is obvious and sometimes not. See the sentences in the following.

- (1)The boy looked up to see the bird on the tree.
- (2)Look me up when you come to Batman next week.

In the example (1) the meaning of the main verb 'look' is there, but of the second verb is not there i.e. it is used with other meaning ('to visit somebody').

The main question of this research is to find out if the English prepositions are as easy as generally thought by reviewing written literature; in order words they are, from time to time, underestimated and supposed to be straightforward grammatical units. The second target is to try to confirm whether this linguistic unit structurally induce learning challenges as some scholars have found before (e.g. Özbay and Bozkurt, 2017; Sultan, 2014; et al.). Additionally, contributing to the literature is another purpose.

Our working hypothesis is that in contrary to the fact that the prepositions are generally regarded the easiest lexical category by the learners of second or foreign language they are not so easy to be acquired or learned. At the beginning of our study, we did not know that this subject has been figured

out so much and they gained so much attention among the scholars. Moreover, incremental studies exist within the context of the English prepositions.

First, a literature review about preposition will be carried out, then the importance of prepositions for the human language will follow. Later, definitions, types, classifications of preposition will be given. Following that, the sections such as prepositions used with other part of speeches, prepositions in phrase structure forms, prepositions semantically used in abstract, preposition stranding, the limitation of the study, discussion and conclusion, references will be handled.

## 2. THE LITERATURE REVIEW OF ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS

We found out that there have been many linguistic studies on whether prepositions cause difficulties in language learning. Quite a lot of linguists report that English prepositions induce many difficulties for learners of English as a second or foreign language (Saravanan, 2015; Sultan, 2014; Özbay and Bozkurt, 2017; Heydari and Bagheri, 2012). On the other hand, some researchers even reflect that the preposition in English are the most challenging factor in learning (Gvarishvil, 2012). Some other scholars the problems of the prepositions with respect to the cross linguistic influences (Demiral and Kaya<sup>2</sup>, 2016; Lowie and Verspoor, 2004; Nghi et. al., 2021)

Likewise, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) state that English as second/foreign language teachers-as-a-group have feeling for that the English prepositions, following the linguistic unit ‘articles’, come as the second most difficult part of grammar for the students they teach. Both asserts that a cause, among other reasons, for this is that it is possible to encounter them in the use of some world languages that an inflection, a noun or an article in the place of a preposition, can carry the information to be hinted in the context. The English prepositions possessing many meanings and many functions should also be counted as one of the challenges, they informed.

At the same time, Erdem (2019) states in his study as well, that even the English teachers in a foreign language situation avoid employing English prepositions, which, they think, may lead them to the probable errors. We have even seen that the English Prepositions have been subject to scientific researches among the scholars not only in the world but also in Turkey (Erdem, 2009; Tomakin 2017; Akkök, 2009).

Erdem (2019) scrutinized the frequency of use of prepositions between native speakers of English and Turkish teachers of English in his work, performing an elicitation task with recording the oral production of the informants with 11 participants; Turkish Teachers of English and native speakers of English. A significant difference between the two groups regarding frequency of use of prepositions and use of various verbs was found in his work. He reported that, some variables, such as frequency,

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<sup>2</sup> The work of them aims to study the functional values of common prepositions in French (à, de, en, sur, par, dans, pour, avec) and their equivalents in Turkish that has “postpositions”; -(y)E, - DE, DEn, üzerinde, tarafından, içinde, için ile). They employed a comparative table on which they were able to compare the numerical results. From that table, although the prepositions and the postpositions contain the same meaning on the lexical basis when they are used in the sentence, they found, according to the results that they obtained, that they have, for the most of them different functional values from each other and sometimes common functional values.

similarity, explicit instruction and meaningful activities might have tended to effect the acquisition of English prepositions.

Tomakin (2017) suggests this: It is better to teach them covertly i.e. to bring them together with some Turkish words which are similar in form (for example; to teach the English preposition 'for' , better to present a Turkish word like 'format') so that acquisition of English preposition can be realized successfully and rapidly as wanted. He says that quite a lot of words in Turkish exist that can be used in this method.

Akkök (2009) also analyzed phrasal actions, stated that they pose difficulties for learners of English as a foreign language, and offered options and suggestions to combat the difficulties that may be experienced in learning. Next, we are going to look at how crucial the prepositions are for the natural languages.

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPOSITION FOR THE HUMAN LANGUAGE

Prepositions build up a closed class of lexical elements and it is impossible for them to be generated productively from lexes of other categories. The prepositions are very important for the human language. They help us fulfill the daily duties/works. They instrumentalize the World we live in, at the same time they assist that our perception realize logically/philosophically. Because of the fact that they belong to the essence of the daily life language, they are probably one of the early-appeared elements in the human languages i.e. in the linguistic repertoire of human being.

With respect to the typological point, the prepositions are structured in three types: those standing in front of the nouns, those standing after the nouns n.b. these are also classified as postpositions. The third types, which are called circum-positions, consist of two parts; one comes in front of the noun and another comes after the noun. In Turkish, prepositions come after the noun: Çantada (**in** the bag). Here, the preposition "**-da**" comes after the noun. That is a postposition because of its post modification. In English, the preposition '**in**' comes before the noun, as in the example of '**in** the bag'. That is a preposition because of its premodification. It is said that most of the world's languages fall into these two groups. There are also some languages that have the "circum-positions", such as "**von** mir **aus**" in German<sup>3</sup>. In other words, there are some prepositions that can be called a bunch of two words positioning both in front and behind noun or noun phrase.

When foreign language learners use wrong prepositions at the time they speak the target language, it can lead to the misunderstandings and even offensive expressions. (For example, 'going to the toilet' in German and English is different; the German version is different from the English version; 'auf die Toilette gehen: to go to the toilet; auf der Toilette sein: to be in the toilet'; and there is also 'zur Toilette bringen': bring to the toilette. Some German speakers learning English may get confused because of this difference. Someone can even feel offensive when using these different usages of prepositions. Sometimes we can not find an equivalent preposition from one language to the

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<sup>3</sup> Such kinds does not exist in English language except '**from** now **on**'.

another language. Because every preposition do not exist in every language e.g. the German preposition ‘um’ exists neither in English not in Turkish as in the sense used in the sentences below (‘um’ gives the meaning ‘difference’).

- (3)a. German : **um** 10% teurer
- b. English : 10% more expensive
- c. Turkish : %10 daha pahalı

On the one hand, there are words that we do not need at all to use, and on the other hand, there are great varieties of words that we need to understand during reading or listening. Of course, at the same time, there are words we have to understand and use. Those who learn English as a foreign language should pay attention to the comprehension events while learning these words, which they undoubtedly have to spend more time and effort on, and they should be very careful in order not to fall into some traps in their conscious or unconscious translations. There are sources, which say that prepositions are considered to be the most commonly happening words in languages that possess them. For instance, one frequency ranking for English word forms instigates as follows (prepositions in bold)<sup>4</sup> : **the, of, and, to, a, in, that, it, is, was, I, for, on, you, ...**

Preposition is sometimes called as adposition and it is said that they are the most recurrent positions, being single mono- morphemic words. As stated by this source (Wordcount, 2022), just mentioned, the most widespread English prepositions are **on, in, to, by, for, with, at, of, from**, as all of which are single-syllable lexes and are not allowed to be broken down into the smaller divisions of meaning. From other hand, with a similar idea, Teschner and Evans (2007) say that the twenty most common English prepositions can be counted as ‘**at, about, above, against, around, before, below, between, by, for, from, in, of, on, over, through, to, toward(s), under, and with**’.

In terms of the importance of preposition in English, this can be summarized: They are very productive/useful elements because they consist of a great part of language production (output as punctuation and prosody) i.e. they come from the fact that they occupy a large place in written and in spoken. According to the McCarthy and O’Dell (1999, 9) there are at least 500 000 words in English, 5000 of which are used by the average native English speaker in his/her everyday speech. 50 of them make up 45% of everything written in English. I believe that a great deal of these are prepositions without which we can not sustain our daily speaking language as a human being. However, large corpus analysis should be made to confirm this belief.

#### **4. THE DEFINITION OF THE PREPOSITION**

It is possible to come across with the miscellaneous definitions of preposition, its numbers and classifications among scholars in literature. For example Greenbaum and Quirk (1990, 188) says that prepositions are a closed class items connecting to two units in a sentence and specifying a relationship between them.

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<sup>4</sup> "Wordcount · Tracking the Way We Use Language". [www.wordcount.org](http://www.wordcount.org)

At the same time, in grammar books it is not so different e.g. according to the dictionary of Cambridge (online): ‘*We commonly use prepositions to show a relationship in space or time or a logical relationship between two or more people, places or things. Prepositions are most commonly followed by a noun phrase or pronoun*’.

Yaş (2020, 95) defines the preposition as ‘*the words that do not have a meaning on their own, but that, among other types of words, especially that help the nouns function or reinforce the meaning.*’ He states that the preposition generally function with respect to space, time, and movement (translation of the citation has been made by the author).

Butterfield (2003, 1283) writes the preposition as ‘*A word or group of words used before a noun or pronoun to relate it grammatically or semantically to some other constituent of a sentence.*’

For more definitions, explanations, and other problems, the book of Huddleston and Pullman (2008) in Chapter 7, which is dedicated the topic ‘Prepositions and Preposition Phrases’ can be consulted.

## **5. THE TYPES OF ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS**

The preposition in English can be subdivided into many ways. Nevertheless, it is better to categorize them according to the function they carry out. In a similar way, Seher (1992) gives the classification of them in accordance with their function in the syntactic structure. Therefore, you see their subdivision below; n.b. each of these can have a lot of meaning in different structures:

### **SPACE**

In, on, at, to, in front of, behind, under, beneath, underneath, between, among, above, over, below, across, opposite, against, near, beside, near, next to, before, after, around, by, in the back of, on the top of.

(4) They live in Adana.

### **TIME**

In, on, at, by, around, about, before, after, during, until

(5) She said she would be back by five.

### **DIRECTION**

To, up, upon, down, into, at, across, through

(6) The cat ran into the room.

### **REASON, PERPOSE**

Due to, of, for

(7) a. Due to the rain the meeting has been postponed.

b. He died of a heart attack.

c. You should consult a doctor for your stomach.

**MANNER**

In, like, with, by

(8) a. I came to work by train.

b. He is acting like a clown.

c. He is writing with a pen (it can have a meaning of ‘instrumental’ as well e.g. he fought with sworn).

d. It is forbidden to go to the school in jeans.

Notice that it is not so easy to classify prepositions in this way. Sometimes prepositions are more complex than they are described in grammar books. The reason is that some can be used for the place but some others can be figuratively determined through ideas of physical space ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preposition\\_and\\_postposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preposition_and_postposition)). Study the proposition of place ‘in’ in the following examples.

(9) She likes being in this room

(10) They will finish the work in the present month

(11) Her life is in danger

(12) She told me this in all seriousness

We are expected to recognise the period time in (10), the danger in (11), the seriousness in (12) and having ability to cover in a kind of three-dimension space analogous to the physical room in (9). That’s because we must start by understanding the ways in which prepositions denote some of basic spatial dimension, as set out in the table 1 (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990, 191) depicted in the following (three different types of distinction).

**Table 1:** Three different types of distinction

Positive		Negative		
Destination	Position	Destination	Position	
<p><i>to</i></p> 	<p><i>at</i></p> 	<p><i>(away) from</i></p> 	<p><i>away from</i></p> 	
<p><i>on (to)</i></p> 	<p><i>on</i></p> 	<p><i>off</i></p> 	<p><i>off</i></p> 	Dimension-type 1 or 2 (line or surface)
<p><i>in (to)</i></p> 	<p><i>in</i></p> 	<p><i>out of</i></p> 	<p><i>out of</i></p> 	Dimension-type 2 or 3 (area or volume)

## 6. PREPOSITIONS USED WITH OTHER PART OF SPEECHES

Sometimes it is impossible to encounter the English preposition on their own; they have some mandatory relationship with other syntactic parts. A few are in the following:

### Prepositions with Adjectives:

- (13) Full/aware of: She is not **aware of** time.
- (14) Similar/due to: This car is not **similar to** the one you bought last year.
- (15) Wrong/familiar with: What is **wrong with** your friend?
- (16) Different/Separate from: Your homework is **different from** mine.

### The Difference between Prepositions and Adverbs:

In order to distinguish between a preposition and an adverb one must see whether an object exist or not. One of the methods to make difference between them is that prepositions must come before the object whereas the adverbs are not used with an object (Buz, 2008, 140).

Analyze the example below:

- (17) You see a building **beyond** Kozluk ('beyond' here functions as a preposition).
- (18) You see a building **beyond** (There is no object, so 'beyond' is an adverb).

The words that are used in this manner are: around, before, behind, below, beneath, beyond, off, on, opposite, outside, over, past, round, through, under, underneath, up, without and so on.

### The Difference between Prepositions and Conjunctions:

There are some words that can be used both as prepositions and as conjunctions. The difference stands in that a preposition come before a noun phrase but conjunction before a clause.

The lexes used frequently in this way are after, as, before, since, until (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/dilbilgisi/ingiliz-dilbilgisi/prepositions>).

- (19) **After** the convention went to the end, I stayed a while in the lobby (conjunction).
- (20) **After** the convention, I stayed a while in the lobby (preposition).

Next, the phrasal verbs will be handled.

## 7. PREPOSITIONS IN PHRASE STRUCTURE FORMS

There are some verbs made of two or three words, which are called phrasal verbs. This types of prepositions are also very important in daily life and in pedagogical contexts as they are very

frequently occurring elements in language. We can define phrasal verbs<sup>5</sup>, in a general sense, as a grammar category, which comprises of the combination of an action along with adverb, one preposition or sometimes more than one prepositions. A similar statement comes from Crystal (2008, 367) who gives it, as *'It is possible to be defined as linguistic units consisting of the combination of a verb with one, sometimes more than one preposition or adverb'*.

Let's look at the following examples:

(21) It was when he joined our club that he really **came out of himself**

In the sentence above phrasal verb, meaning to relax and become friendly with other persons and possessing more confidence in himself, consist of three words: 'come' is the verb; 'out' is the adverb; 'of' is preposition<sup>6</sup>. A phrasal verb gives a specific meaning. This meaning is sometimes unclear as given in the example. In this connection Slim (2004) states: *'It may not be possible to work out the meaning from the words within the phrasal verb, because the meaning of the phrasal verb is almost idiomatic'*.

When we review this type of prepositions i.e. phrasal verbs we see that semantic features and semantic extensions become important. The semantic features of phrasal verb will be easy to interpret and understand if the verb of verb phrase holds its lexical meaning and its constituent spatial meaning. We encounter the cases in which constituents that composites the phrasal verb cannot preserve their lexical meanings and start to have a figurative meaning in that it drops their lexical meanings. The most difficulty situation is experienced when both the verbs and constituent of phrasal verb diverge from its lexical meaning.

However, sometimes the components that make up the phrasal verb cannot preserve their lexical meanings and gain a figurative meaning by getting rid of their lexical meanings. If the verb that creates the phrasal verb has moved away from its lexical meaning and its component which is a preposition, indeed, it will be more difficult to interpret the meaning of the phrasal verb.

Examine the following sentences paying attention on how the changes of meaning occur and figure out carefully to see how the actions and their constituents making up these units occur (Akkök, 2009).

(A) Action and constituent can preserve their lexical meaning.

(22) We run up the hill. (run up)

In (22), the constituents both 'run' and 'up' maintain lexically their meaning. In order words, the verb 'to run' is used with the meaning of 'to run'; 'up' with the meaning of 'up'

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<sup>5</sup> Even the books containing only phrasal verbs are available in bookshops. In addition, the well organized and written dictionaries can compromise phrasal verbs at the end of their dictionaries or at the end of entries which possess such phrases.

<sup>6</sup> 'out, in, off....ect. are some named as 'adverbial particles' or only 'particles'.

(B) The word ‘verb’ that indicates movement is eluded from its lexical meaning. Hence, it can be seen that it expresses an abstract, invisible change as shown in the following sentence:

(23) The company ran up the expenses. (to increase, to make greater)

In this example, the verb ‘run’, which means ‘to run’, has been stripped of its lexical meaning. We see another point here that the preposition ‘up’ as a constituent of the phrase verb (used normally in the meaning of ‘up’) has gained new meaning namely ‘to increase’.

(C) There are also the situations in which the verb and the preposition together may have completely moved away from their lexical meaning and gained an idiomatic meaning. It is seen the sentence below:

(24) My girl friend blew up as she saw me sitting in Jill's room. (get angry)

In the example, both ‘blow’ as action ‘to explode’ and the meaning of ‘up’ as a spatial property of verb phrase have retained a completely different meaning i.e. they are stripped of/ got rid of their lexical meanings.

From those examples above, we can make a summary: The situations, where either the verb or both the verb and the preposition slip out of their meanings or lose their meanings, are among the most difficulties ones and they can be mostly experienced in learning the English phrasal verbs.

Furthermore, there is another problem in learning the mentioned linguistic unit. That is the phrasal verbs can have more than one meaning despite to the fact that it consists the identical verb and its component. It should also be noted here that, in addition to the greatest challenges the learners of English as second or foreign language face, one of the other difficulties of English verb phrasal is that some of them are separable some others are inseparables. For example for each cases, let us analyse the phrasal verb ‘put up’.

When we look up it in the dictionaries<sup>7</sup>, we find that this phrasal verb has 24 entries and 15 other words used with: totally 39 usages. The first 7 out of 24 are given, then the number 8 taking out of 15 will be depicted.

**Table 2:** Some uses of phrasal verb ‘put up’ (8 sentences out of 39 entries)

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1. Many people <b>put up</b> messages upon their refrigerator (To hang or mount).
2. That last fighter <b>put up</b> quite a fight (To present, especially in "put up a fight").
3. Please <b>put up</b> your luggage in the overhead bins (To place in a high location).
4. We can <b>put you up</b> for the night (To house, shelter, or take in).
5. Dionysius of Syracuse, in his exile, was made to stand without dore ; he wisely <b>put it up</b> , and laid

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.seslisozluk.net/put%20up-nedir-ne-demek/> (Retrieved: 17.02.2022)

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the fault where it was, on his own pride and scorn, which in his prosperity he had formerly showed others (To endure, put up with).

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6. I think someone **put him up** to it (To cajole or dare to do something).

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7. Be sure to **put up** the tools when you finish (To store away)

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8. I **put up with** a lot of nonsense, but this is too much (put up with to tolerate, suffer through, or allow, especially something annoying).

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Sentences 2,4,5,6,8 give the evidence for how the main verb ‘put’ merged with a preposition building a phrasal verb (in 8 ‘up’ is handled as adverb and with ‘with’ as preposition, we think, in fact, literarily both are prepositions)( <https://www.seslisozluk.net/put%20up-nedir-ne-demek> ) yielding new lexical meanings. Except to this slot, the number 4, 5 and 6 are good examples for the separable phrasal verbs and the others the inseparable ones.

At this point, the question of ‘what percentage of the verb’s or the preposition’s meaning must be lost (not at all, a little, a lot, more, how much?) so that we do not lose the meaning ?, becomes significant. Notice that, sometimes, eliciting the meaning neither from the context nor the usage may be possible as the table shows.

### 8. PREPOSITIONS SEMANTICALLY USED IN ABSTRACT

There are times in which preposition gives not only the concrete but also the abstract meaning. The frequently employed type of the prepositions in this sense is the preposition we need every day; that is the preposition of place. Let us look at the sentence below:

*Beyond the city are farms one of which belongs to uncle Hasan*

*Solving this maths problem is beyond him/his son.*

In the first example, the preposition ‘beyond’ has concrete meaning, having the sense of position or place. But in the second sentence it has an abstract meaning, having the sense of a problem of maths which is too difficult to solve for the boy.

Likewise, the both sentences below have an identical story. In the first sentence the preposition ‘behind’ has been used with the sense of a place/spatial meaning; whereas in the second sentence with an abstract meaning, having the sense of supporting/giving support to him.

(25)The restaurant Mem is **behind** the bank

(26)Everyone is **behind** him, because he is right

Next, the stranding of preposition will be given.

### Preposition Stranding<sup>8</sup>

We know that prepositions in English come before their components but some cases exist that break up this rule. First, let us give some instances then try to analyze them:

(27) We have paid **for** the car / the car has been paid **for**.

(28) It is not worth listening **to** his advice/ his advice is not worth listening **to**.

(29) What is she looking **at**?

(30) Who are we talking **about**?

Taking a glance on all of these sentences it will be seen that all of them ends with a preposition. In number (27) the subject in active construction parallels to the prepositional complement in the active similarity. In (28) the prepositional complement can be mentioned in sentences with infinitive or '-ing clauses.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:189) states that there are situations where deterrment is un compelled depending primarily on stylistic inclinations. They says that deterrment is actually normal if the prepositional complement is an interrogative pronoun giving the following examples:

(31) What are you looking **at**?/Who is she talking **about**?

It is generally accepted that the place of preposition in relative clauses below can be in two positions: informal and formal.

(32) The building that we are standing in front of was designed by Ottomans. (informal)

(33) The building in front of which we are standing was designed by Ottomans. (formal)

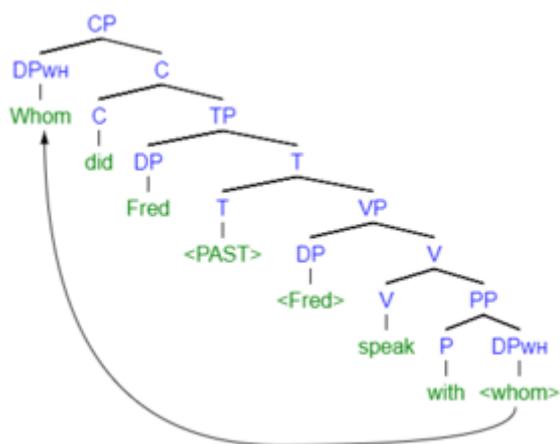
The same view is found in the dictionary book, which is quite comprehensive for the English language, edited by Butterfield (2003, 1283). He expresses that, as the practice of ending a sentence with a preposition (Venice is place I shall like to go **to**) was formerly looked as incorrect, but is now acceptable and is the favored form in many countries.

Again, the preposition stranding can be shown as in the following chart.

**Chart 1:** The preposition stranding (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pied-piping>)

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<sup>8</sup> The word '*stranding*' is to distinguished from '*pied-piping*'. Pied-piping takes places with the condition when the wh-question words brings their encompassing phrase with them to the front of the clause. This phenomenon does not happen with the former one.



In the chart, the stranding of the preposition is seen. It is observable that while the interrogative word ‘*whom*’ is coming to the beginning of the sentence, the preposition ‘*with*’ stays where it is. In other words, the movement of ‘*whom*’ takes place without ‘*with*’.

## 9. THE LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research consists of only collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data regarding the literature review. Different data collection methods can be used to make the study more efficient.

The research has not reached and processed a large amount of data. Working with the larger data in future studies can yield better results. In addition, while studying this grammatical unit, different and various linguistic and social contexts (even, incorporating psychological aspect) need to be gotten involved.

One of the other limitations of the study is that the data has not been elicited from three language skills, namely; listening and reading as perceptive data and speaking as productive data (except writing). It is essential to collect and analyze all types of perceptive or productive data. On the other hand, only one type of English prepositions can be studied, not the whole as made her. We think that, thus, it will be perhaps possible to explore many different problems in detail. Similarly, comparative analyzes with other languages could be made. It should be said that it would also be beneficial if the compilation i.e. the corpus facilities, be taken into account.

## 10. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Prepositions are very frequently used items in spoken and written language. Our cardinal question was to try to find out if the English prepositions are as easy as generally considered. The study has reached the results that in contrary view they are more complex and difficult for language learners. Their difficulties contain the points such as phrasal verbs, preposition stranding, different meaning and functions, constantly alteration with the worldly perception, culture, and cognition. Thus, our working hypothesis has been confirmed.

At the same time, the present study support the view of the previous scholar, that the English prepositions form handicaps for second/foreign language learner of English, as mentioned in literature overview. More explanations and arguments are available in the following.

One of the most difficulty of preposition types is the one containing verb construction. The prepositions in constructing phrasal verbs induces learning difficulties in that either verb or its particle/preposition or both may diverge from their literary meaning. Moreover, the phrasal verbs can possess many meanings. How can the learners of English as second/foreign language overcome such handicap? We argue that it is apparently impossible n.b. learning some grammatical categories in natural languages are always difficult to acquire; furthermore the natural languages have many expectations.

Phrasal verbs is one of the linguistic units required very earlier in English. It needs to be repeated here: The most difficult situations regarding English phrasal verbs is that when the preposition (i.e. particle) loses its meaning and both the verb and the preposition gain a new meaning. To overcome the mentioned challenge, more exposure to the English language's input or a lot of reading and listening practices are required. Lots of exercises can also help the individuals to surmount their learning problems at that point. Nevertheless, the question to what extend it is possible remain unanswered.

Owing to the fact that there are exceptions of English prepositions both in form and meaning (plus, separable and inseparable) such drills can make it possible: to learn the names of the place complements and the relevant vocabulary/or chapter exercise them frequently. They can even be memorized during the learning process. However, memorization should not be preferred. If the language learners are patient, their ears and eyes of them will be able to become accustomed to some prepositions in coruse of time.

More drills through explicit instruction, repetition, and meaningful activities are suggested, because they are important. The teacher or instructors should dwell longer on some challenges and try to solve the mother language interference or negative transfer when emerged. Besides, the frequency for the learners during the language input should be boosted; this may help in mastering their meaning and functions. Additionally, the application of functional approach to the language in written or spoken corpora is recommended be taken into consideration.

In sum, the results show that reaching the proficiency in English prepositions, even at an advanced level, is quite difficult. Because their multiple meanings and functions make them one of the most difficulty linguistic units in learning English as Second or Foreign Language.

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