

VERIFICATION OF A POLYSEMOUS SPATIAL PREPOSITION “ON”

Jumanazarov Samandar Urinovich

Teacher of Foreign Languages Karshi Engineering-Economics Institute

jumanazarovsamandar45@gmail.com

Abstract

The simplest type of spatial expressions containing prepositional phrases in English. One of the main functions for spatial prepositions is to indicate a specific location in a large space, The preposition on describes “support,” “contact,” or “contiguity” relationships that exist between the Figure and the Ground objects. Herskovits categorizes all the examples in into one category, which she calls, “Spatial entity supported by a physical object,” The article presents theoretical ideas in this regard and proves them with examples.

Keywords: Spatial; configurations; support; contact; contiguity; pragmatic tolerance; complicated perceptual; geometric; pragmatic; conventional; non-target; adjacency; usage types.

Introduction

The simplest type of spatial expressions containing prepositional phrases in English generally consists of three elements, one preposition and two nouns. The nouns refer to an object to be located (Figure) and a reference object (Ground); the preposition refers to the spatial relationship between the Figure and the Ground. See the following examples.

- a. a book on the table
- b. a book is on the table.

As in the examples (1), a spatial expression is structured simply using a noun and a prepositional phrase that modifies the preceding noun as shown in (1a). It may also be structured around a copular verb as shown in (1b). There are also spatial expressions that are not composed of three constituents. For instance, an expression ‘The book is nearby’, has only one noun and one preposition instead of two nouns, since the Ground object can be inferred from the context. The environments in which a spatial expression appears are varied, but the most important constituent is the spatial preposition. Prepositions are one of the main linguistic elements that are used to indicate spatial relationships between Figure objects and Ground objects. One of the main functions for spatial prepositions is to indicate a specific location in a large space, for example, the preposition in limits the location of a Figure within a Ground. The preposition on, at, and in are within the top 10 in both the Brown Corpus and the British National Corpus. According to Goethals (2001), frequency is a measure of probability of usefulness and high frequency words constitute a core vocabulary. Besides the rank in the frequency list, the number of senses also affects the selection of the preposition in this study. According to the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (2012), *on* contains twenty-nine



senses as a preposition, among which there are spatial senses as well as temporal senses and others, too. The number of senses is nineteen for the preposition at, seven for in, thirteen for over, and twelve for under. These multiple senses of the prepositions are listed in the dictionary. In the rest of this section, I present various configurations and senses for the spatial preposition on. The preposition on describes “support,” “contact,” or “contiguity” relationships that exist between the Figure and the Ground objects.¹⁾ Most often the Figure is in physical contact with the surface of the Ground. The same preposition can express multiple spatial relations. The examples in (2) describe how Figure objects are placed relative to the surface of the Ground objects. They show a wide variety of contact relations depending on the manner in which the Figures and the Grounds are physically related.

- (2) a. There is a tablecloth on the table. ‘cover’
 b. John put the poster on the wall. ‘attachment’
 c. There are pears on the branch. ‘hanging’
 d. John has a scar on his face. ‘unification’
 e. The picture on the cover of the books is ugly. ‘part of’
 f. The house on the lake is reserved. ‘adjoining’

In (2a), the Figure, a tablecloth, is in contact with the Ground, the table, in the manner of covering it. The Figure, the poster, is in contact with the Ground, the wall, in the manner of attachment to it (2b) and pears are in contact as a manner of hanging from the branch in (2c). The rest of the examples, (2d), (2e) and (2f), express various types of contacts such as unification, being part of, and adjoining, respectively. These diverse meanings demonstrate that Figure objects can be located in different places in relation to the Ground even when the same preposition is used. The regions of the Ground objects can vary. The region of contact with the Figure is the surface of the Ground (2a). The supporting regions of the Ground object can be vertical as in (2b). The region pertaining to the example (2f) is adjacency of the Ground object. The region is a specific part of the Ground and it can vary according to spatial relationships. For instance, the regions can be identified as a surface, an interior, or broad exterior areas of the Ground. The upper surface of the Ground object supports the Figure object against the force of gravity. The various types of contact relations between Figures and Grounds show that a specific Figure can be assigned a different region in relation to a Ground on the basis of context knowledge. The choice among prepositions that describe a particular spatial scene is typically the outcome of the interaction among quite complicated perceptual, geometric, pragmatic and conventional factors. Herskovits provides a detailed explanation of a geometric approach to descriptions of spatial prepositions. She regards various spatial relations as “usage types” of the spatial prepositions, which deviate from an “ideal meaning.”²⁾ An ideal meaning of a preposition describes the most typical situations associated with the preposition and usage types account for situations that deviate from the typical case via “pragmatic tolerance.” Herskovits distinguishes a series of usage types for each preposition and these usage types form one of the foundations of this study. Herskovits categorizes all the examples in (2) into one category, which she calls, “Spatial entity supported by a physical object,” one of



11 use types of on. 3) This study will include identifying various spatial configurations inherent within the spatial expressions that contain the preposition on. When fine-grained specifications within spatial expressions are needed, “Herskovits” listed examples are categorized into more refined groups in order to differentiate the spatial configurations. For example, one seemingly simple relationship like “support” does not fully explain spatial configurations. Due to the force of gravity, objects arranged in the vertical dimension tend to be supported by other objects as in (2).

As mentioned above, most prepositions in English express some sense of spatial location, which is the source of a number of extensions into other abstract non-locative domains through metaphor and metonymy:

(1) I am working hard *on* my English

(2) They are working out *on* it.

Positive, static location as in (1) may be expressed by means of prepositions such as *on*, *in* and *at*, and negative, static location (2) by means of *away*, *off* and *out*. Furthermore, prepositions may express change of location, which involves a source (3) (e.g. *from* and *off*), that is, an initial location, and a goal (4) (e.g. *to*, *on/onto*, *in/into*).

(3) I am heading *on* Heathrow

(4) I went *to* Heathrow.

In analyzing the semantic categories in connection with the first research question, I have included prepositions that express positive and negative static location in one category, whereas source and goal are separate categories. Prepositions that express either time position or duration are included as locational as they are seen as locating events in time. Non-target prepositions that express (static) position is the largest semantic category in the sample and include examples like (5a) below. Prepositions that denote a goal, is the second largest category with examples such as (5a). Source prepositions such as (6a) are relatively infrequent among the non-target prepositions in the corpus:

(5a) When we all, eventually was finished *on* the stage ...

(5b) When we ere all eventually finished *at* stage ...

(6a) When I was going *on* the mall, my moped stopped.

(6b) When I was going *to* the mall, my motorbike stopped.

(7a) I woke up *on* the point of the phone ringing again.

(7b) I woke up *from* the phone ringing again.

In addition to the three locational groups described above, I distinguish four additional categories based on what has been found in the sample. In (7a), non-target *on* expresses cause/reason. I have also included (7) in the same category as it expresses intention, which is seen as a sub-sense of causality (7a) ... *on* the last movie the return of the king they did win 11 Oscars

(7b) ... They won an Oscar for the last movie, the Return of the King

(8a) When we have taken a walk *on* purpose of buying a coke...

(8b) When we have taken a walk *in* order to buy a coke ...

Furthermore, I have included non-target prepositions such as (9a) in a separate category labeled manner:

(9a) He went home *with* the bus.



(9b) He went home on bus

As there are many non-target examples with senses such as about regarding with respect to these have been included in a separate category with examples such as (9a) and (10a):

(9a) I am carrying on a very deep research.

(9b) I am taking on this challenge.

(10a) I think they have kind of a apathetic position to the environment.

(10b) I think they have kind of an apathetic attitude on the environment. Finally, I have included non-target prepositions where I cannot detect any semantic meaning but merely grammatical functions of various kinds in the category grammaticized prepositions. Examples include (11a) and (12a) below:

(11a) ... the adults are more clever to hold the environment clean.

(11b) ... the adults are better on holding the environment clean.

(12a) What a perfect start on a day.

(12b) What a perfect start of the day.

References

1. Jackendoff, R. (1983). Semantics and cognition. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
2. Quirk et al., 1985 A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, London: Longman.
3. Talmy L. (1985). Lexicalization patterns: Semantic structure in lexical forms.
4. S. U. Jumanazarov. (2022). Acquisition of writing in the early stages of learning English
5. Chomskiy, N. 1965 Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
6. Sinha C. & L. A. Thorseng, 1995, 'A Coding System for Spatial Relational Reference', Cognitive Linguistics, 6-2/3, 261-309.
7. Fauconnier, G. 1985 Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
8. R.Kiyamov. Karshi – 2009. Лингвистический анализ предложных сочетаний в современном английском языке.
9. Jumanazarov Samandar Urinovich. (2023). Use of internet resources in the process of learning English as a foreign language.
10. Fauconnier, G. & M. Turner 1994 'Conceptual Projection and Middle Spaces', Report 9401, Department of Cognitive Science, UCSD.
11. Jumanazarov Samandar Urinovich. (2023). General information about prepositions and lexical, syntactic and semantic features of verbs.
12. Fauconnier G. & E. Sweetser (eds.) 1996 Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

