

Simple Prepositional Phrases in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

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Abstrak

Skripsi ini berjudul "Frasa Preposisional Sederhana di The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan fungsi sintaksis dan menganalisa makna preposisi sederhana dari frasa preposisional sederhana in, on, dan at yang diikuti oleh penentu (determiner) "the".

COCA digunakan sebagai sumber data pada <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>, terutama teks fiksi untuk membatasi dan menganalisis data secara tepat. metode dokumentasi diterapkan dalam melakukan penelitian ini seperti, membuat akun mengakses website, mengetik rumus untuk mencari preposisi pada kolom pencarian, memilih jenis teks, memilih frekuensi data, dan memasukkan data kedalam Microsoft Word pada program komputer.

Data yang telah terkumpul dianalisa secara deskriptif dan kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori utama dari Quirk, dkk. Selain itu, ada teori pendukung yang diusulkan oleh Hewings. Fungsi sintaksis dan makna frase preposisional sederhana In, On, dan At ditentukan dengan menggunakan teori utama Quirk, dkk.

Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa frasa preposisional sederhana In, On, dan At mana diikuti oleh penentu "the" paling sering terjadi berfungsi sebagai kata keterangan, terutama adjunct. Namun, frasa preposisi sederhana "At" paling sering terjadi sebagai komplementasi dari kata kerja dan kata sifat. Selain itu, makna preposisi sederhana dianalisa dalam hal hubungan spasial, waktu, penyebab atau spektrum tujuan, dan sarana atau spektrum agentif. Dalam hal ini, frasa preposisional sederhana In, On, dan At paling sering digunakan untuk menunjukkan tempat dan waktu dalam kalimat.

Kata kunci: preposisi, corpus, fungsi, dan makna

1. Background of the Study

There are some lexical items that can be classified based on some categories in English, such as noun, verb, adjective, preposition, etc. A preposition is one of

the sentence elements which functions to indicate certain relation among other words in one sentence and makes the sentence complete and understandable. The prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a prepositional complement which functions to indicate time, position, space, location, etc. There are simple and complex prepositions. Simple prepositions only consist of one word. The prepositional phrase is referred to as preposition followed by a prepositional complement.

According to Quirk, *et al* (1985:673), a preposition emphasizes the relation between two entities, one being represented by the prepositional complement. In this case, time and place are easier to be identified, however in terms of labels; preposition in systematic meaning is difficult to be described. Quirk, *et al* (1985:659) state that there are several points of similarity between prepositions and other word classes and constructions in English grammar, in particular conjunctions and adverbs, as well as participles and adjectives. Both prepositions and conjunctions have a relating or connecting function. For instance, the use of “when” and “of” in *the day when she arrived* and *the day of her arrival*, the use of “when” in the first sentence is functioning as a conjunction, however, the use of “of” in the second sentence is functioning as the preposition. In certain cases, the same items can function both as prepositions and conjunctions, e.g. after, as, before, since, and until. The criterion between the two-word classes can be distinguished by the phrases which follow them.

The use of prepositions is very high either in spoken and written to make the sentence complete. Preposition has very crucial and distinct rule in English grammar. People cannot speak or write in English properly without prepositions which make sentences related to each other and more understandable. The analysis is exemplified to find the syntactic functions and meaning of simple prepositional phrases with *on*, *in*, and *at*. These prepositions are highly used both in spoken and written. The reason for choosing corpus texts as the object of analysis is that they usually consist of thousands or millions of words and are not made up of the linguist’s or a native speaker’s invented examples but on authentic or naturally

occurring spoken and written language. Corpus linguistics purposes that reliable language analysis is more feasible with corpora collected in the field, natural contexts, and minimal experimental-interference. “The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)” is the largest freely-available corpus of English and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. It contains more than 520 million words of text (20 million words each year 1990-2015) and it is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts.

2. Problems of the Study

Based on the background, the problems of this study can be formulated as follows:

1. What syntactic functions of simple prepositional phrases are found in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)?
2. What meanings do simple prepositional phrases express in the structures?

3. Aims of the Study

Based on the formulation of problems above, this study is investigated in order to meet the following purposes:

1. To identify and describe the syntactic functions of simple prepositional phrases found in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
2. To analyze the expressed meanings of simple prepositional phrases in the structures.

4. Research Method

The data were taken from The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) on <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>. It was chosen as a data source because it is the largest freely-available corpus of English, and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. It is probably the most widely-used corpus of English

which contains more than 520 million words of text (20 million words each year 1990-2015) and it is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. The corpus is concerned with actual language use so that it can show the authentic or naturally occurring use of simple prepositional phrases with *in*, *on*, and *at* both in spoken and written language.

Documentation method was applied in conducting this study such as, creating an account to log in to the website, typing the patterns of prepositions on searching column, choosing the type of text, choosing the data frequency, and inputting the data into microsoft word in a computer program. The data of this study were descriptively and qualitatively analyzed based on the main theory of Quirk, et.al. The syntactic functions and aspect of meanings of simple prepositional phrases with *in*, *on*, and *at* were analyzed qualitatively.

5. Findings and Discussions

There are three syntactic functions of simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* followed by determiner “the” found in COCA; they are post modifier in a noun phrase, adverbial, and complementation.

a. Post Modifier in a Noun phrase

Types of noun that follow the simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* to be simple prepositional phrases as postmodifier in the sentences can be various such as concrete noun of place, concrete noun of thing, countable common noun of thing, collective noun, concrete noun of part of body, abstract noun, and proper noun of time.

(5-1) Seething, Logan called a uniformed sergeant **at the station** to trace the number.

(5-2) I'm about to go after the eggplant when a movement **in the woods** catches my eye.

In example (5-1), the simple prepositional phrase is **at the station**. It gives specific information about the noun **sergeant**. The function of simple prepositional phrase “**at the station**” is telling that a uniformed sergeant which is being called by Logan is the one who works at the station.

In example (5-2), the simple prepositional phrase is **in the woods**. It gives specific information about the noun **movement**. The function of the simple prepositional phrase “**in the woods**” as post modifier is telling that the movement is taking place in the woods.

b. Adverbial

Simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* function as the adverbial in sentences can be followed by several kinds of noun after the determiner “the” to be simple prepositional phrases such as abstract noun and concrete noun of place.

(5-3) There isn't anything open around here at a quarter to six **in the morning**, and it's not like he could go home.

(5-4) **In the room**, the air went thick and heavy.

In example (5-3), the prepositional phrase is **in the morning**. It denotes adjunct of time which expresses the time when there is not anything open around a certain of place.

In example (5-4), the prepositional phrase is **in the room**. It denotes adjunct of place which expresses where the condition of the air is changed to be thick and heavy. The meaning of the sentence is constant although the position of the prepositional phrase is changed. It can be placed at the middle after subject (“the air”) or the end of the clause or sentence, without changing the meaning of the sentence.

c. Complementation

Complementation can be divided into complementation of verb and adjective. Simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* functioning as the complementation in sentences can be followed by several kinds of noun after the determiner “the” to be simple prepositional phrases such as concrete noun of place, abstract noun, collective noun, countable common noun of thing, countable common noun of people, concrete noun of part of body, proper noun of name, and uncountable common noun of thing.

(5-5) " Okay, " he said, then nodded **at the men** and came over and got back in the car with us.

(5-6) I thought she'd be happy **at the university** because it isn't like Gold Flume.

In example (5-5), the simple prepositional phrase is the complementation of verb. The prepositional phrase which shows the complementation of verb is **at the men**. It is closely related to the preceded verb, *nodded*.

In example (5-6), the simple prepositional phrase is the complementation of adjective. The prepositional phrase which shows the complementation of adjective is **at the university**. It is closely related to the preceded adjective, *happy*.

There are four meanings of simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* followed by the determiner “the” expressed in COCA; they are simple prepositions denoting spatial relation, simple prepositions denoting time, denoting the cause/purpose spectrum, and denoting the means/agentive spectrum.

a. Simple Prepositions Denoting Spatial Relations

The preposition denoting spatial relation usually realizes adverbial of place. Simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* which denote spatial relation in sentences can be followed by several kinds of noun after the determiner “the” such as concrete noun of place, concrete noun of things, concrete noun of part of body, and proper noun of name.

(5-7) Martins Zelmenis (1965) studied the Latvian language and literature **at the University** of Latvia.

In example (5-7), the prepositional phrase is **at the university**. It expresses the place where Martin Zelmenis studies the Latin language. The preposition *at* denotes dimension type 0 denoting point and including positive position.

b. Simple Prepositions Denoting Time

Prepositions denoting time usually indicate adverbial of time. Simple prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* followed by the determiner “the” to be simple prepositional phrases which indicate adverbial of time in sentences can be followed by abstract noun.

(5-8) Later **in the week** I was after-dinner speaker at the meeting of the alumni association of Montgomery Bell Academy, my old high school.

In sentence (5-8), the prepositional phrase is **in the week**. It expresses when he/she would be a after-dinner speaker at the meeting of the alumni association of Montgomery Bell Academy. Preposition **in** denotes time.

c. The Cause/ Purpose Spectrum

The cause or purpose spectrum, the prepositions express either the material cause or the psychological cause (motive) for a happening. *At*, in combinations such as *aim*, where the prepositional phrase is complementary to the verb can express INTENDED GOAL or TARGET. Countable common noun of things and countable common noun of people mostly follow the simple preposition *at* to denote cause or purpose spectrum.

(5-9) The big man frowned **at the person** in the window.

In example (5-9), the prepositional phrase is **at the person in the window**. It means the person that is being frowned by the big man. The preposition *at* denotes intended target.

d. The Means/Agentive Spectrum

Preposition *at* functions as semi-agent and stimulus. The concrete noun of thing and collective noun of people mostly follow the simple preposition *at*.

(5-10) Roy pauses before leaning into the cruiser and squints up at the bluebird sky.

In example (5-10), the prepositional phrase is **at the bluebird sky**. It means the bluebird sky makes Roy pause and squint up before leaning into the cruiser. The preposition *at* denotes agentive.

6. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis and discussion, the following points can be drawn as conclusion:

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) provides many data containing simple prepositional phrases *in*, *on*, and *at*. The corpus can show the authentic or naturally occurring use of simple prepositional phrases with *on*, *in*, and *at* both in spoken and written language. In this case, the corpus can show the simple prepositional phrases *in*, *on*, and *at* used specifically in fiction texts.

Based on the syntactic functions, simple prepositional phrases *in*, *on* and *at* functioning as adverbial frequently occur, especially adjunct. However, simple prepositional phrase *at* most frequently occurs as the complementation of verb and adjective.

In addition, there are four simple prepositional meanings which can be found in COCA. They are prepositions denoting spatial relation, denoting time, denoting the cause of purpose spectrum, and the means or agentive spectrum. In this case, the prepositions denoting place and time most frequently occur in simple prepositional phrases in sentences.

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