

September 29, 2003

CLASS 14: PREPOSITIONS AND PARTICLES

NB: This handout was not handed out in class in time, but might be helpful for the final.

OBJECTS/COMPLEMENTS VS. ADVERBIALS/MODIFIERS

We saw that **obligatory elements** in VP have to be **distinguished from optional** ones.

• **object of a verb / complement to V**

- obligatory (part of V's argument structure)
- always close to verb: adjacent to/sister of V
- strict order relation between V and object(s)
- verb forms with direct & indirect object: V'
- [VP ... [V' V (DO) (IO)] ...]
- the lowest constituent of VP must be one V'
- lowest V': V plus its arguments (transitivity!)
- *often*: direct object = NP, indirect object = PP
- ex: *sleep*, *kick* NP, *give* NP_{DO} PP_{IO}/NP_{IO} NP_{DO}

• **adverbial to a verb / modifier of V'**

- purely optional, can always be left out
- need not be close, separated by object(s)
- flexible order if on the same side of V
- any adverbial modifier: adjoined to V'
- '...' = potential adverbial, left or right
- flat: [VP (ADV_s) V' (ADV_s)]
- articulated: one V' per ADV plus lowest
- adverbials can be any of: AdvP, PP, NP
- ex.: *carefully*, *in the bed*, *last class*

PREPOSITIONAL VERBS/PREPOSITIONS VS. PHRASAL VERBS/PARTICLES

We also saw that what look like identical categories (prepositions) must be distinguished.

• **preposition with an NP object: V+PP**

- PP or NP can be preposed
- PP or NP can be coordinated
- often P can be replaced by other P
- independent: learn V and which P(s) it selects
- Lexicon: V, P → [V' V [PP P NP]]
- ex.: *refer to*, *apply for*, *argue about*

• **phrasal verb with NP object: V+NP**

- only NP can be preposed (→ no PP!)
- only NP can be coordinated (→ no PP!)
- P cannot be replaced: it's a particle!
- particles must be learned: phrasal verb
- Lexicon: V+Part → [V' [V V Part] NP]
- ex: *call up*, *switch on/off*, *hand in*

Further readings:

Radford (1988: 133ff.) contains valuable discussion on the distinction between prepositions and particles.

Readings for next class:

📖 van Gelderen 2002: Ch. 6 (pp. 97-111)