



## Word grammar and dependent prepositions

Write these words on the board: **from – in – with**. Ask students what part of speech they are. Ask them what the function of prepositions is. The OLD AE definition of preposition may help here: 'a word or group of words such as *in, from, to, out of* and *on behalf of*, used before a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or method.'

Ask students to read the four example sentences on the worksheet. What is the function of the prepositions here? What determines the choice of preposition? These prepositions are not chiefly about place, position, time or method. Their purpose is to link a word/phrase (verb, noun phrase or adjective) to a following noun phrase. The choice of preposition usually depends on the preceding word (*emerge, factor, comparable*) although sometimes it is governed by the word/phrase that follows (*in difficulty*).

Look with the students at the two sample entries on the worksheet, at how dependent prepositions are highlighted in the dictionary entries. Point out that grammatical structures with verbs are highlighted in the same way. You could ask students to look at the dictionary pages with these two entries on (pp. 270-271) – or any other 2-page spread that you choose – and see how many of these dependent prepositions/grammatical structures they can find. Some possible prompt questions:

- What prepositions can be used with **emigrate**?
- What prepositions can be used with **empathy**?
- What structure, including a preposition, is typical of **embody**?

- 1 a** to

**b** between

**c** to

**d** in

**e** across or over (there is no real difference in meaning in this context)

**f** for, in favour of or against – it depends on whether you agree or disagree with the proposition

- 2** This exercise is slightly more challenging. It moves beyond simple *dependent prepositions* to look more generally at the grammatical patterns which follow particular verbs, sometimes referred to as *complementation patterns*. It also requires students to take a simple statement or question and use an additional verb to report it from a particular point of view. Ask students what they think the effect is of altering the sentences in this way.

Example: *He emphasized that migrant workers have long played a key role in the economy.*

In the example sentence, the statement becomes part of someone else's argument that is being reported.

**a acknowledge** The vast majority of this research has been conducted in the USA.

- *The authors acknowledge that/It must/should be acknowledged that the vast majority of this research ...*

Grammar pattern: *acknowledge* + that ...

The use of the verb 'acknowledge' here is a way of conceding a limitation of the research – that most of it has been conducted in one country only.

**b evaluate** How effective is this strategy in reducing costs?

- *We need to evaluate how effective this strategy is in reducing costs.*

Grammar pattern: *evaluate* + how ...

Direct questions are not always appropriate in academic writing. Use of a verb like 'evaluate' can turn a direct question into a reported question. Point out the change of word order from 'how effective is this strategy?' to 'how effective this strategy is'.

**c debate** Is globalization a new type of social change?

- *We can/It is possible to debate whether globalization is a new type of social change.*

Grammar pattern: *debate* + wh-...

This is the same kind of transformation as in sentence b.

**d serve** Later studies only confirm these findings.

- *Later studies serve only to confirm these findings.*

Grammar pattern: *serve* + to do sth

There is not such a change in stance in this example. The really significant word here is 'only', already included in the sentence. However, amending 'only' to 'serve only to' makes the sentence more idiomatic and stresses further the point that there is nothing new or contradictory in the later studies.

**e justify** The police used force to suppress the demonstration.

- *The police justified using force to suppress the demonstration.*

Grammar pattern: *justify* + doing sth

This really does change the meaning of the sentence, from a statement about the actions of the police, to what the police said about their actions.

**3** Ask students to read the text first without looking in the dictionary and then ask some general comprehension questions:

- What do the cities and regions mentioned have in common?
- What do they lack?
- How do you think they might differ from the 'major global cities'?

Answers to this last question given in the source include:

- Much smaller population size
- Jobs are dominated by service/entertainment jobs
- Few international corporations

Next, ask students to identify all the prepositions, before working out what governs the choice of each preposition. In the text below, *italic* shows the ordinary use of a preposition before a noun to show place, position, time, etc. (in this case they are all place, and all the

same preposition – *in*). **Bold** shows dependent prepositions: these can be found in bold in the dictionary at the following entries/senses:

**lacking 1**

**successful 1**

**market<sup>2</sup>**

**develop 1**

**number<sup>1</sup> 1**

**differ 1**

**way 1**

The underlined preposition is one that forms part of a fixed idiomatic expression, in that, to be found in the entry for **in<sup>1</sup>** in the idioms section.

Some cities and regions lacking **in** historical importance have been successful **in** marketing themselves **as** tourist cities. Examples include Atlantic City *in* the United States, the Sunshine Coast *in* Australia, and Cancún *in* Mexico. These cities have developed **into** tourist meccas\* that are global in that they attract large numbers **of** international visitors, but they differ **from** the major global cities **in** several important ways.

SOURCE: Abrahamson, M. (2004). *Global Cities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

\*There isn't an entry in OLD AE for the word **mecca** (as it isn't common in academic writing). In this sense, it means: 'a place that many people like to visit, especially for a particular reason' (OALD)

## Practice

- 4 Most academic texts will contain examples of dependent prepositions; it may well be the case, as with the *Global Cities* text, that most of the prepositions in the text are of this kind. This exercise encourages students to notice the use of prepositions when they are reading, which is a step towards remembering them and using them correctly when they are writing. For this task, students could find their own texts from their individual disciplines or you could choose sections of texts that you have used in class for students to work on in pairs or groups. They should then report back on their analysis, including which of the dependent prepositions they have found highlighted in **bold** in the dictionary.

## Word grammar and dependent prepositions

Read these example sentences. What part of speech are the words in **bold**? What is their function in the sentence?

Three major themes emerged **from** this research.

Trust is a key factor **in** the success of this approach.

These results are broadly comparable **with** those of other surveys.

The company found itself **in** financial difficulty.

Verbs, nouns and adjectives are often followed by a particular preposition, sometimes called a **dependent preposition**, that links the word to the following phrase. The dictionary shows the prepositions that particular words can be followed by in **bold** before an example sentence. Sometimes this also includes prepositions that come before the word (such as **in difficulty**).

**emerge** **AWL** /i'mɜːdʒ; NAmE i'mɜːrɪdʒ/ verb **1** [I, T] (of facts or ideas) to become known: *Evidence has emerged of extensive labour exploitation in the industry.* ◇ *Latent periods for each symptom varied widely, although certain patterns emerged.* ◇ ~ **from sth** *Three major themes emerged from this research.* ◇ **it emerges that...** *It emerged that there were several kinds of these elements, which decayed at different rates.* **2** [I] to start to exist or appear:

This entry also shows a typical grammatical structure – **it emerges that...**

The dictionary shows you when a verb can be followed by:

- a noun phrase (~ **sth**),
- a clause introduced by *that* (~ **that...**)
- how or what or another wh-word (~ **how/what, etc...**) (as in the entry for **emphasize**),
- an infinitive or '-ing phrase' (~ **to do sth, ~ doing sth**).

**em·pha·size** (BrE also **-ise**) **AWL** /'emfəsaɪz/ verb to give special importance to sth **SYN** STRESS<sup>2</sup> (1): ~ **sth** *All these studies emphasize the importance of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.* ◇ *Recent discussions in the literature emphasize the need for further research.* ◇ ~ **that...** *She emphasizes that smokers use cigarettes to reduce feelings of stress and anxiety.* ◇ ~ **how/what, etc...** *Blenkinsopp emphasizes how language has always been an important ingredient of national identity.* ◇ **it must/should be emphasized that...** *It must be emphasized here that the above definition does not apply to small family farms.*

Nouns and adjectives can also sometimes be followed by one of these phrases or clauses.

**1** Fill the gaps in these sentences. Look at the entries for the **bold** words to help you.

- a It may take people some time to **adjust** \_\_\_\_\_ these changes.
- b There is a sharp **contrast** \_\_\_\_\_ the living standards of the rich and those of the poor.
- c All these findings are highly **relevant** \_\_\_\_\_ this discussion.
- d Salmon farming has been **implicated** \_\_\_\_\_ the decline of wild salmon stocks.
- e The species is found \_\_\_\_\_ a wide **range** of habitats.
- f There are strong **arguments** \_\_\_\_\_ state intervention in the market.

2 Rewrite these sentences, including the verb in **bold**. Think carefully about what follows the verb and check in the dictionary if necessary. Choose an appropriate subject for the reporting verb (*He, We, The authors, etc.*).

a **emphasize** Migrant workers have long played a key role in the economy.  
He emphasized that migrant workers have long played a key role in the economy.

b **acknowledge** The vast majority of this research has been conducted in the USA.  
\_\_\_\_\_

c **evaluate** How effective is this strategy in reducing costs?  
\_\_\_\_\_

d **debate** Is globalization a new type of social change?  
\_\_\_\_\_

e **serve** Later studies only confirm these findings.  
\_\_\_\_\_

f **justify** The police used force to suppress the demonstration.  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 Read this text and identify all the prepositions it contains. What determines the choice of each preposition? Which are dependent prepositions and which word do they depend on? Look up these key words in the dictionary and find where and how the preposition is shown.

Some cities and regions lacking in historical importance have been successful in marketing themselves as tourist cities. Examples include Atlantic City in the United States, the Sunshine Coast in Australia, and Cancún in Mexico. These cities have developed into tourist meccas that are global in that they attract large numbers of international visitors, but they differ from the major global cities in several important ways.

SOURCE: Abrahamson, M. (2004). *Global Cities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

### Practice

4 Find a short text in your own discipline. Identify all the dependent prepositions and remove them. Swap texts with another student and use your dictionary to help you fill in all the missing prepositions.