

## Frequency of the Use of Prepositions in Shakespeare's Hamlet and As You like it

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### Introduction

Frequency is the number of occurrences of a repeating event per unit time. It also referred to as temporal frequency which emphasizes the contrast to spatial frequency and angular frequency. The period is the duration of time of one cycle in a repeating event, so the period is the reciprocal of the frequency (Wikipedia, 2016).

A preposition is a word used to establish relationships between nouns, between nouns and verbs and between different parts of a sentence. Prepositions usually have spatial or temporal meanings (e.g. beneath, between, in front of, before, after, during, etc). Prepositions are invariable, that is, they have one form with the exception of a few that contract with definite articles (Encyclopedia, 2016).

Prepositions are words, usually small, that typically indicate information about direction, location or time. There is only a small number of prepositions in English. (Huddlestone and Pulsum: 2005)

It is necessary to distinguish and exclude simple sequences of verb and preposition. For almost any verb can be followed by a prepositional phrase. One can work, sit, sleep, live, die, etc in a house, under a tree or on a beach, (Palmer: 1989)

Perhaps, the most important way in which words differ, however, is the frequency with which they occur. It is important because frequency determines which words a learner is likely to encounter and how often they are encountered. (Milton: 2009).

### Section one: Prepositions



## 1.1 Prepositions in English

Prepositions are traditionally defined as words or group of words that are used with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, location, or time. Functionally, a preposition is a word that typically combines with a noun phrase to form a phrase which usually expresses a modification or predication (The preposition “on” in “The keys are on the table” shows location. The preposition “in” in “The movie starts in one hour” shows time). Prepositions are used to link between entities usually nouns or pronouns showing various types of relations including spatial and temporal. Collins( 2000) defines prepositions as “class of words that are typically placed before nouns, pronouns or substantives to form phrases with adverbial, nominal, or adjectival function, and that typically express a spatial temporal or other relationships. ( Collins English Dictionary: 2003).

Eckersley and Eckersley (1980:277) define prepositions as “ words used with nouns or nouns equivalents to show the relation in which these nouns stand to some other word in the sentence” . Thus in the sentence: The horse is in the stable , the preposition in expresses the relation between horse and stable . They say that the preposition and the noun together make a ‘ cause phrase’. Quirk and Greenbaun (1988:143-147) state that a preposition expresses a relation between two entities , displaying various types of relational meaning where place and time are prominent and easy to identify. In synchrony with Eckersley, They say that other relationships such as “ instrument” and “ cause” can also be recognized. Noel (1997: 223-4) from s syntactic function sees the preposition as the head of the prepositional phrase .So in the phrase beside the stream , beside is the head and the stream functions as complement to the head. He (Ibid) envisages prepositions as” generally short words that express relations, often locational relations in space or time”.

Hunter College Reading/Writing Center provides the following definition: “A preposition may be defined as connecting word showing the relation of a noun or a noun substitute to some other word in the sentence (the squirrel in the tree; the preposition in shows the relationship between the squirrel and the tree.). Over ninety percent of preposition usage involves these nine prepositions: with, at, by, to, in, for, from, of, on” ([www.WebMaster](http://www.WebMaster)).

We may come up with a thought that prepositions commonly convey the following relationships: agency (by); comparison (like, as . . . as); direction (to, toward, through); place (at, by, on); possession (of); purpose (for); source (from, out of); and time (at, before, on).

Such various functions of prepositions are grammatically, stylistically and semantically employed in literary texts. In drama , prepositions use is manipulated to serve the stylistic objectives of the playwright. Prepositions are often placed after their objects. In some cases the preposition may be considered as a separable part of a compound transitive verb. Thus in Shakespeare's The Tempest Act 1 , prepositions are transposed for emphatic forms where best suited for this emphatic place at the end of the sentence; and therefore, we read:

“For my good will is to't,  
And yours it is against.

The use of prepositions after the relative, which is now somewhat avoided, but is very common is also common in Shakespeare, and is evidently better adapted to the metre than the modern idiom, as far as regards the longer forms. "Upon which" is not so easily metricized “Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon’ ( [www.african-americanshakes.org/](http://www.african-americanshakes.org/)

## 1.2 –Functions of Prepositions

Rebecca (2012) edited that Kosur explains the ten prototypical functions of prepositions and prepositional phrases in English grammar and includes examples to illustrate the use of Prepositions and prepositional phrases perform many functions within sentences. The function of a word is "what the word does." For example, the function of the adjective pink in the pink rose is to modify or describe the noun rose. What the adjective does then is to describe the noun. Or, the adjective pink functions to describe the color of the rose. He states ten main functions of prepositions and prepositional phrases.

1. Head of preposition phrase
2. Noun phrase modifier
3. Noun phrase complement
4. Adjective phrase modifier
5. Adjective phrase complement
6. Verb phrase modifier
7. Verb phrase complement
8. Adjunct
9. Adverbial
10. Particle

These functions are discussed in the following sections.

- **Heads of Prepositional Phrases**

Prepositions first function as the heads of prepositional phrases. The head of a phrase is the defining word type of that phrase. For example, the heads of noun phrases are nouns, and the heads of verb phrases are verbs. Examples of prepositional phrases include in the oven and during the storm. The heads of those prepositional phrases are the prepositions in and during. The functions of the prepositions in and during are therefore the heads of prepositional phrases.(ibid)

**Modifiers of Phrases**

Prepositional phrases secondly function as modifiers and complements of noun phrases, adjective phrases, and verb phrases. Words and phrases that function as modifiers modify or define other words and phrases. For example, the prepositional phrase with blonde hair modifies or describes the noun phrase the little girl in the phrase the little girl with blonde hair by describing what color hair the little girl has. Prepositional phrases also function as modifiers of adjective phrases as in on the walls in The paint was green on the walls or near the bathtub as in The floor was wet near the bathtub. Prepositional phrases likewise function as modifiers of verb phrases as in during the wedding in The woman cried during the wedding or after dinner as in The couple danced after dinner.(ibid)

**Complements of Phrases**

Words and phrases that function as complements act to complete the meaning of other words and phrases. The main difference between modifiers and complements is that modifiers are optional and can be replaced by any number of other prepositional phrases while complements are often required. For example, the prepositional phrase of books functions as a complement in the sentence Librarians are fond of books. The prepositional phrase of books is a complement because the adjective fond requires a prepositional phrase to complete its meaning. Therefore, one can say Librarians are fond of books but not just \*Librarians are fond. Prepositional phrases also function as **complements of verb phrases** as in on her babysitter as in The woman relies on her babysitter and as complements of noun phrases as in of the book as in He is the writer of the book.

**Adjuncts and Adverbials**

Prepositional phrases also function as adjuncts and adverbials in sentences. Adjuncts frame an entire sentence and are optional. For example, the prepositional phrase In my opinion in In my opinion, grammar is interesting functions as an adjunct because In my opinion frames the entire sentence grammar is interesting as being my opinion. Adverbials are similar to adjuncts because adverbials also provide additional information about an entire sentence and are optional. Adverbials, however, express information such as time, place, manner, condition, reason, or purpose of an entire sentence. For example, the prepositional phrase in

the backyard provides information about the place where the children played in the sentence The children played in the backyard. Adjuncts and adverbials are both optional because their addition and removal does not change the meaning of the main sentence.

#### Particles

Finally, prepositions function as particles in **phrasal verbs**. Phrasal verbs are verbs that consist of a verb and one or more prepositions. Examples of phrasal verbs include wake up meaning "to awake," pass out meaning "to faint," and look up meaning "to consult." The function of the preposition in a phrasal verb is called a particle.

Section Two: Frequency:

### 2.1-Frequency in English:

Frequency is the number of occurrences of a repeating event per unit time. It also referred to as temporal frequency, which emphasizes the contrast to spatial frequency and angular frequency. The period is the duration of time of one cycle in a repeating event, so the period is the reciprocal of the frequency. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>)

### 2.2-Understanding Shakespeare's words Frequency

In an attempt to understand Shakespeare's words we may learn about a character's progression through a play by looking at how their word frequency changes. As we could group all "light" and "dark" words together, and then look at Romeo and Juliet. Or Macbeth. Then, we might start to see patterns. Or what if we could select out and compare usage of "you" versus "thou" in certain interactions between characters. This might be a very important key to the words and frequencies and relationships. We may explore that one can investigate Shakespeare's usage over time, and see how his own vocabulary expanded. So, we think it to be valid, though, we would really need to know when he wrote everything.

When we look at Antony's, the word cloud is so strikingly different that it starts to bring up a lot of questions about rhetorical style, repetition, and key words in political speeches.

Section Three :Experimentation:

### 3.1-Thesis Statement

The use of prepositions in Shakespeare account for stylistic features in terms of utilizing such grammatical devices into the relational functions of the play for expressing the ideas in cohesive and yet emphatic mode.

### **3.2-The Aim of the Study**

This study aims at exploring the frequency of the use of prepositions in two Shakespearean plays. It attempts to give a systematic account of Shakespeare's use of prepositions.

### **3.3- The Significance of the Study**

The current paper significance makes it useful for both researchers and students who are interested in linguistic stylistic studies as it may provide a comprehensive statistical analysis of the frequency of the use of prepositions in Shakespearean literature. The findings of the study may be benefited for pedagogical purposes. The study can be a milestone for full-length linguistic description in terms of use of prepositions in other literary genre.

### **3.4- The Scope of the Study**

This paper will be confined to stylistic text analysis of the frequency of the use of prepositions in two Shakespearean plays ; namely, Act one of both As You Like It and Hamlet

### **3.5- The Procedures of the Study**

To materialize the theoretical description for a concrete analysis, we will adopt the following procedures(1) listing the prepositions which are cited in both plays,(2)adopting a text analysis model to account for the frequency of the prepositions.(3) working out statistical tables to display the various prepositions used in the plays, and (4) providing conclusions based on the analysis.

### **3.6-Text Analysis**

Text analysis is a research method that requires the researcher to closely analyze the content of communication rather than the structure of the content. A textual analysis is most often used to analyze historical documents and narratives. A textual analysis is valuable in research because it allows researchers to understand meanings and ideas expressed through written words. Unlike most research methods, textual analysis uses the perspective of the writer of a document to interpret the data. This includes taking into account the purpose of the text, the time period in which the text was written and the audience for the text. In addition, the

researcher must choose a specific framework to use to interpret the data. For example, a researcher can interpret text using a positivist framework, which is based on the belief that perceptions are the basis for human knowledge or a constructivist framework, which is the belief that the construction and order of words and language create meanings.

There are many ways to conduct a textual analysis. For example, a researcher can count the number of times certain phrases or words are used in a text, analyze the author's narrative technique or dissect and interpret meanings in a text. ([www.isites.harvard.edu](http://www.isites.harvard.edu)). Here we are going to count the frequency of the use of prepositions in two texts selected from Shakespeare's *As you Like It* and *Hamlet*.

In writing about literature or any specific text, we will strengthen the discussion to offer specific passages from the text as evidence. Rather than simply dropping in quotations and expecting their significance and relevance to the argument to be self-evident; hence, it is recommended to provide sufficient analysis of the passage to demonstrate some new understanding of the text. In this particular type of text analysis, we are not looking at all of the main ideas in a text, or the structure of the text. Instead, we are given a question that has you explore just one or two main ideas, which is here the frequency of the use of prepositions in the text and will explain in detail what the text says about the assigned feature, focusing only on the content of the text. In line with this notion, we selected one act from each play and worked out a text analysis practice applied on a total text of 1531 words in *As You Like It* and 1401 words in *Hamlet*, where the findings of this analysis can be displayed in the following two tables:

Table1: Frequency of the Use of Prepositions in *As You Like It*

#	Preposition	Total No. of Words in Text	Frequency	per 1,000
1	To	1531	34	22.20770645
2	Of	1531	27	17.63553238
3	For	1531	17	11.10385323
4	In	1531	17	11.10385323
5	As	1531	16	10.4506855
6	With	1531	15	9.797517776
7	But	1531	11	7.184846401
8	At	1531	8	5.225342751
9	From	1531	7	4.572175026
10	By	1531	7	4.572175026
11	On	1531	5	3.265839338

12	Against	1531	5	3.265839338
13	Before	1531	4	2.612671375
14	Like	1531	3	1.959503651
15	Till	1531	3	1.959503651
16	Upon	1531	2	1.306335688
17	Besides	1531	2	1.306335688
18	Into	1531	2	1.306335688
19	Behind	1531	1	0.653167844
20	About	1531	1	0.653167844
21	Without	1531	1	0.653167844
22	Within	1531	1	0.653167844
23	Up	1531	1	0.653167844
24	Out of	1531	1	0.653167844
25	Less	1531	1	0.653167844
26	Under	1531	1	0.653167844
27	Given	1531	1	0.653167844
Total Number of Prepositions Used			194	

Table 2: Frequency of Use of Prepositions in Hamlet

#	Preposition	Total No. of words in Text	Frequency	per 1,000
1	To	1401	39	27.83725929
2	Of	1401	33	23.55460358
3	In	1401	24	17.13062096
4	But	1401	17	12.13418961
5	As	1401	14	9.992862701
6	With	1401	12	8.565310478
7	By	1401	9	6.423983097
8	On	1401	7	4.996431351
9	At	1401	6	4.282655239
10	From	1401	4	2.853665499
11	Like	1401	4	2.853665499
12	Within	1401	6	4.282655239
13	Beneath	1401	4	2.853665499

18	About	1401	1	0.713775873
19	Against	1401	1	0.713775873
20	Before	1401	1	0.713775873
21	Between	1401	1	0.713775873
22	Down	1401	1	0.713775873
23	Given	1401	1	0.713775873
14	Into	1401	1	0.713775873
25	Near	1401	1	0.713775873
26	Out of	1401	1	0.713775873
27	Past	1401	1	0.713775873
28	Through	1401	1	0.713775873
29	Till	1401	1	0.713775873
30	Touching	1401	1	0.713775873
31	Without	1401	1	0.713775873
Total Number of Prepositions used in Text			210	

## Conclusions

It can be easily noticed that the total number of prepositions used in As You Like It and Hamlet are 194 and 210 , respectively. The preposition to is prominently used in both plays , where it records 34 and 39 hits in both plays , showing 22.207 and 27.837 per thousand , respectively. In both plays the frequency of the preposition of marks as second level in frequency. On the third level, there is a differing frequency use; where the preposition for hits 17 times in As You Like It , in zooms up 24. Meanwhile, the preposition without registers the lowest occurrence. From the above observations we can come up with the following conclusions:

A. The frequency of the use of prepositions in the these selected Shakespearean plays illustrates a varying co-occurrence usage.

B. Prepositions such as off , about , against , before are used with lowest density in the plays.

C. The analysis can be extended to other grammatical categories , adverbs , adjectives , etc.

D. The findings can be utilized for pedagogical purposes in teaching these two plays.

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