

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

9: Prepositions

Key Terms	Optional Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preposition • Postposition • Case • Article • Pronoun • Adverb • Nominative • Accusative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dative • Ablative • Adposition • Anastrophe • Preposition stranding

- Introduction: Prepositions
 - Today we will take a closer look at prepositions
 - We will see how prepositions interact with case
 - We will also look at the different word orders that appear with prepositions
 - We will see how some languages combine prepositions with articles
 - Finally, we will examine how languages differ in their use of prepositions with pronouns
- Prepositions
 - As you may remember, prepositions are words (e.g. *from*, *into*) that express a relationship between a noun and another noun, or between a noun and a verb
 - I saw a picture of John
 - I climbed down the ladder
 - Some words can be used either as prepositions or adverbs
 - When they are adverbs, they are not used with a noun
 - I climbed down

Activity 1:

Take some time to make a list of all the English prepositions that you can find. Remember, prepositions can express relationships in space or in time, as well as other kinds of relationships. If you're not sure about some words, you can check your list with a dictionary afterwards.

Prepositions	
<i>down</i>	
<i>from</i>	
<i>into</i>	

- Prepositions and Case
 - You may remember from before that some words have special forms for different cases (e.g. *I* = nominative, me = accusative)
 - As we saw, case can show whether a word is the subject or object of a verb

- The case of a word can also be determined by prepositions
- You can see the relationship between case and prepositions in English
 - I talked to them
 - ~~I talked to they~~
- Prepositions in English always need to be followed by an accusative form
- They can never be followed by a nominative form
- Languages that have a greater number of cases may use different cases with different prepositions
- The choice of case for a given preposition is often connected to more general properties of the cases
- For example, in German the preposition *zu* 'to' takes the dative case
 - Es ist zu Staube geworden
'It has turned to dust'
- There is also a similar 'to' meaning often present in the use of the dative case with verbs
 - Gib es mir!
'Give it (to) me!'
- Likewise, the German preposition *anstatt* 'instead of' takes the genitive case
 - Sie tranken Wasser anstatt Weines
'They drank water instead of wine'
- This is related to the possessive use of the genitive case
 - an meiner Statt
'in my stead'/'in my place'
- Sometimes a preposition may be used with more than one case, with a difference in meaning
- You can see this in these examples from Latin
 - Cucurri in hortum (accusative)
'I ran into the garden'
 - Cucurri in horto (ablative)
'I ran within the garden'
- As you can see, the first example expresses direction, and the second expresses location
- English used to use cases to make the same distinction, in Anglo-Saxon times (a thousand years ago or more)
 - Ic ran in thone gearde (accusative)
'I ran into the garden'
 - Ic ran in tham gearde (dative)
'I ran within the garden'
- English does not distinguish between the accusative and dative cases anymore
- One way to make the same distinctions is to use specialised prepositions (e.g. into)
- However, you can also use a single preposition with both meanings, and people will use other evidence to guess which is right
 - I ran in the garden
'I ran into/within the garden'
- Another possibility can be seen in the Romance languages (e.g. French, Spanish, Portuguese)
- As you may remember, all these languages descend from Latin
- However, as in English, nouns in these languages no longer have separate forms for different cases such as accusative, dative, and ablative
- In Romance languages such as French, most prepositions can only express location, and not direction
 - Je cours dans le jardin
'I run within the garden'

- To express direction, you need to change the verb
 - J'entre dans le jardin (en courant)
'I enter the garden (running)'
- Different directions need different verbs
 - Je sors du jardin (en courant)
'I exit the garden (running)'
- Prepositions and Word Order
 - The languages that we have seen so far all have prepositions, which come before the noun
 - As you may remember, some languages have postpositions, which come after the noun
 - nihon ni (Japanese)
'in Japan'
 - Türkiye'ye doğru (Turkish)
'towards Turkey'
 - If you want to refer to prepositions and postpositions together, you can call them adpositions
 - Some languages are flexible enough that they can place prepositions either before or after the noun
 - This was the case in Ancient Greek
 - perí tèn gèn
'around the world'
 - tèn gèn péri
'the world around'
 - The first order was the normal one, but the second could be used for special emphasis
 - This sort of variation is called anastrophe
 - In English it is possible to put prepositions after a pronoun in questions and relative clauses
 - What was John looking for?
 - Mary found John's dog, which he was looking for
 - This preposition stranding is not possible in most other languages
 - As you may know, it is not normally done in more formal English
 - For what was John looking?
 - Mary found John's dog, for which he was looking
 - Anastrophe and preposition stranding have the same origin
 - Remember that English and Greek are both Indo-European languages, and go back to what was once a single language
 - There was once a time when the line between prepositions and adverbs was less distinct
 - These words could be placed freely, like adverbs, but relate to a noun, like prepositions
 - Different languages have reduced this flexibility in different ways (e.g. preposition stranding = English, anastrophe = Greek)

Activity 2:

In groups, take some time to think of any other languages that you might know. Do they have prepositions or postpositions? What cases do they assign? Is it possible to say things like *I ran into the garden*? Can the prepositions or postpositions ever be moved (e.g. anastrophe/stranding)?

Language	Pre/Post	Cases	Ran into etc.	Moveable
English	Pre	Accusative	Yes	Yes (stranding)

- Prepositions and Articles
 - In some languages, there are prepositions that contract with articles to form a single word
 - He spoke of the weather
 - Il parlait du temps (French: du = de + le)
 - Er sprach vom Wetter (German: vom = von + dem)
 - Labhair sé faoin aimsir (Irish: faoin = faoi + an)
- Prepositions and Pronouns
 - Some languages even combine prepositions with pronouns
 - This is a common feature of Celtic languages such as Irish and Welsh
 - Labhair sé fúithi (Irish: fúithi = faoi + í)
'He spoke about it'
 - Soniodd amdani (Welsh: amdani = amdan + hi)
 - If the noun is plural (*cats, dogs*), then the determiner will be plural
 - Other languages, such as French and German, do something that may seem similar
 - Cette jaquette appartient à ce livre
'This jacket belongs to this book'
 - Dieser Umschlag gehört zu diesem Buch
 - Elle y appartient
'It belongs to it'
 - Er gehört dazu
 - However, these special words (*y, dazu, etc*) are actually adverbs
 - In French, *y* means 'there'
 - In German, *dazu* is formed from *da* 'there' and *zu* 'to'
(like *thereto* in English)
 - Why do these languages use adverbs instead of a preposition + pronoun?
 - To help clarify gender
 - In French, *lui* can mean either 'him' or 'it'
 - The same is true for *ihm* in German
 - To avoid confusion, speakers of these languages tend to use preposition + pronoun for people and adverbs for things
 - Er gehört zu ihm
'It belongs to him'
 - Er gehört dazu
'It belongs to it'
- Conclusion
 - We have talked about prepositions and their similarity to adverbs
 - We have seen that prepositions can assign one or more cases
 - We have also seen that prepositions (adpositions) can appear before or after nouns
 - In some languages prepositions can be put in more than one place
 - There are languages where prepositions fuse together with articles or even pronouns
 - Some languages substitute adverbs for preposition + pronoun combinations