

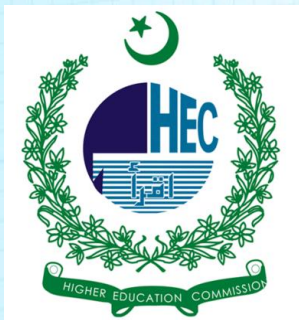
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**A CORPUS BASED STUDY ON PREPOSITIONS STRANDING IN
PAKISTANI ENGLISH**



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Abstract

Prepositions stranding is a syntactic phenomenon in which a preposition is moved at the end of the sentences, away from its object. It is a unique feature of English Grammar. In this corpus-based theory driven study, the researcher will explore frequency of preposition stranding in Pakistani English Newspapers. For this purpose, the researcher will choose 5 articles from the 4 renowned Pakistani English Newspapers The Dawn, The Nation, The News and Tribune. Using data, from the Newspapers, the researcher will focus on 10 primary prepositions of, in, to, for, with, on, by, at, from and into most commonly used in English. The findings figure out that Preposition Stranding (PS) is more frequent in spoken than written in Pakistani English. Moreover, dialectical variation is also responsible in prepositions stranding, and prepositions like with, for, and to are mostly likely to be stranded. Syntactic factors like verb- preposition combinations and object animacy also influence prepositions stranding significantly. BNC highlights frequency to align with conversational immediacy. Google provides various strands with “Wh” words with high frequency and multiple examples are vivid e.g Whom are you talking to? The utilization of Antconc shows that prepositions stranding in Pakistani English is not as common as in contemporary English usage but the usage is increasing in spoken frequently. These findings contribute to the understanding of syntactic variation and change, providing insights into the interplay between grammar, pragmatics, and register. Implications for English language teaching suggest a focus on the communicative functions of PS, while the study also opens avenues for further research on cross-linguistic patterns and diachronic shifts in PS usage.

Keywords: Preposition Stranding, Corpus-Based Study, Pakistani English, Pakistani Newspapers, AntConc, BNC

Introduction

Prepositions Stranding (PS) is a separation of the preposition from its object during movement. It is a syntactic phenomenon. We can see such examples most commonly in Wh-Questions constructions like “What are you looking for” and “Who are you talking to” and sometimes in declarative sentences like “This is what I’m talking

about” and in passives “This is the book that was written about”. Moreover, relative clauses “The person I spoke with is here”. In pied-piping the preposition remains stick to its object like “To whom are you talking”. Preposition stranding is particularly characteristic of English and this feature has become a focal point of inquiry in syntax. It provides valuable insights into language structures, evolution and usage in Pakistani English.

PS is a marker of conversational immediacy and informality. The prominence of it in Pakistani English is contrastive in many other languages like German and Urdu where preposition cannot be stranded. Such linguistic peculiarity encompasses significant questions about its syntactic constraints, origins, and contextual and social factors influencing its use. Moreover, the interplay between pied-piping and PS reflects broader trends in Pakistani English, marking unmarked word orders in English grammar. The newspaper articles will show the frequency of PS in Pakistani English and will mark the inadequacy of prescriptive rule, where a sentence cannot end at a preposition.

Despite its widespread use in contemporary English, PS remains a controversial subject in prescriptive grammar. Traditional norms often stigmatize PS as informal or improper, favoring pied-piping in formal contexts. However, corpus-based research indicates that PS is pervasive in natural language use, especially in informal registers and certain varieties of English, such as Pakistani English. The tension between prescriptive and descriptive perspectives underscores the importance of understanding PS within its functional and contextual dimensions.

This study employs a corpus-based approach to analyze the frequency, distribution, and contextual factors influencing PS. Using data from 4 renowned newspaper, 20 articles, such as the British National Corpus (BNC)), the research focuses on three **primary objectives**:

1. To explore the frequency of PS in Pakistani English for syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic constraints on PS usage.
2. To examine variation in PS across Pakistani English.
3. To assess the implications of PS for theories of syntax, language change, and language teachings.

By addressing these objectives, this study aims to contribute to the broader

understanding of syntactic variation and change in English. Furthermore, it seeks to bridge the gap between linguistic theory and practical applications, particularly in teaching English as a second language (ESL) and in understanding cross-linguistic patterns.

Background of Research

This study of PS in Pakistani English is subfield of linguistics that focuses how a syntactic feature, commonly found in standard English is also used in variety of English written in Pakistan. In this feature, the preposition is placed at the end of the sentence, because of the movement, leaving object on its original position in the sentence. Mostly it occurs in interrogative, relatives and phrasal verbs, with its object preceding it in the sentence. In Pakistani English, this phenomenon presents an interesting case for investigation by wake of influence of cultural factors and local languages.

Preposition Stranding in Standard English

In standard English, PS is widely accepted in informal written and spoken forms. Here are a few common examples:

- Questions: “What are you looking for?”
- Relative Clauses: “This is the book I was talking about.”
- Phrasal Verbs: “He was diving into the water.”

In these cases, we can see that preposition is stranded at the end of the sentence or clause, leaving object earlier in the sentence.

Preposition Stranding in Pakistani English

Preposition stranding is observed in informal speech. Its frequency and contexts in which it occurs are not well-documented. This is an interesting case to study as it reveals how Pakistani English deviates both from local language norms and standard English.

Existing Research

The studies of preposition stranding in Pakistani English are scarce. Most Pakistani English researches have focused on phonology, code-switching and vocabulary, but preposition stranding has not been thoroughly analyzed, leaving an important gap for this study.

Research Questions

- i. How frequent is preposition stranding in Pakistani English?
- ii. What prepositions are commonly or most often stranded in Pakistani English?
- iii. What factors effect the use of preposition stranding, the style of newspaper or subject domains of articles?
- iv. Does Prescriptive rule hinder preposition stranding in Pakistani English?

Research Objectives

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Scope and Limitation of the Research

- Existing research will focus only 20 articles from 4 renowned newspapers, a large-scale corpus preposition stranding study lacks.
- Few studies focus on how prepositions stranding with similar register in typologically different languages.
- Additional research is required to trace historical evolution of prepositions stranding in English.

Literature Review

Preposition stranding is when a preposition is separated from its object and placed at the end of the sentence because of movement in interrogative, relative clauses and phrasal verbs. It has been extensively studied across linguistics subfields. The following review will synthesize the previous key findings and theoretical perspectives to contextualize the present research.

Syntactic Theories on Preposition Stranding

Generative Grammar

Early accounts within transformational grammar (Chomsky, 1977) explain PS through movement rules, where the object of the preposition moves to a clause-initial position in wh-questions, relative clauses, or passives. PS is often contrasted with pied-piping constructions, where the preposition and its object move together (e.g., "To whom are you talking?").

Constraints on PS: Ross's (1967) "island constraints" argue that PS is syntactically restricted by bounding conditions, making it ungrammatical in some embedded structures.

Cross-linguistic variation: PS is typologically rare, with English being a notable exception. Other languages, such as French and German, prohibit PS, reflecting its dependency on specific syntactic properties like preposition phrase placement and movement constraints.

Usage-Based Approaches

Cognitive and functional linguists (e.g., Goldberg, 1995; Bybee, 2006) argue that PS emerges from language usage patterns and processing ease. Speakers prefer PS in informal settings due to its alignment with communicative efficiency and natural word order.

Sociolinguistic and Dialectal Perspectives

Register Variation

Biber et al. (1999) demonstrate that PS is strongly associated with spoken English and informal registers. Pied-piping, on the other hand, is characteristic of formal and written contexts. The preference for PS in conversation reflects its role in colloquial and rapid speech.

- Studies like McCloskey (1996) suggest that the informality of PS aligns with conversational immediacy and reduced processing demands.

Dialectal Variation

Studies comparing American and British English (e.g., Hoffmann, 2011) highlight differences in PS frequency. American English shows a stronger preference for PS, particularly in casual conversation, whereas British English retains pied-piping more often in formal registers. Regional varieties, such as Irish English, also exhibit unique patterns of PS usage.

Prepositional Patterns and Semantic Constraints

Lexical and Collocational Preferences

Corpus-based studies (e.g., Mukherjee & Hoffmann, 2006) identify that high-frequency prepositions like "with," "to," and "about" are more likely to be stranded, reflecting their frequent use in conversational contexts.

Semantic roles: Prepositions denoting abstract relations (e.g., "about" in "What are you talking about?") are stranded more often than those denoting spatial or physical relations.

Syntactic Dependencies

Verb-preposition collocations significantly influence PS (Culicover & Jackendoff, 2005). Certain verbs (e.g., "talk to," "deal with") inherently favor PS, as the preposition is tightly bound to the verb in meaning and usage.

Historical and Diachronic Perspectives

Development of PS in English

Historical linguists (e.g., Mustanoja, 1960) trace PS to Old and Middle English, when prepositions were less grammatically rigid. The rise of PS coincided with the simplification of English syntax and a shift toward analytic structures.

- Studies like van Gelderen (2004) argue that PS increased due to contact with Scandinavian languages, which favored stranded prepositions.

Decline of Pied-Piping

Diachronic data (Tagliamonte & Smith, 2005) suggest a decline in pied-piping over time, particularly in informal speech. This reflects broader trends in English toward greater syntactic flexibility and conversational efficiency.

Pedagogical Implications

Teaching PS to Learners

Research on second-language acquisition (SLA) (e.g., Selinker, 1972) highlights difficulties learners face with PS due to transfer effects from their native languages. For instance, learners from Romance or Germanic language backgrounds often overuse pied-piping, as PS is ungrammatical in their L1.

- Effective instruction should focus on the contextual and register-based appropriateness of PS versus pied-piping, as noted by Swan and Smith (2001).

Research Methodology

A Corpus-based study on prepositions strands follows a theory driven methodology involving data collection, analysis and interpretation. Here is the brief description of what it includes in it.

Research Questions

The study aims to figure out the frequency, syntactic structures and contexts in which PS occur. It will figure out how often PS occur in interrogative and relative clauses, challenging prescriptive rule.

Corpus Selection

The researcher has chosen 20 newspaper articles from renowned newspapers in Pakistani English for to reflect the variety the research is interested in. It will explore the hidden PS in Pakistani English through newspapers usually used.

Data Extraction

The researcher will use Antconc, a Corpus tool to search for occurrences of Prepositions e.g “from”, “with” at the end of the clauses or sentences. The research will try to find out stranded prepositions in syntactic structures like relative clauses or questions.

Data Analysis

Quantitative: In this quantitative research, the research will count the frequency of prepositional strands and will perform statistical analysis in Pakistani English Newspapers.

Findings

The research will keep the data collected in mind and will figure out the frequency of data analyzed for each preposition strands from each newspaper separately. This way will help the researcher to get each finding in the perfect way with proper frequency of prepositional strands.

Data Collection

Data collection in Corpus-based study on preposition strands in Pakistani English involves extracting relevant linguistic data from chosen 20 newspaper articles from 4 different newspapers to check the frequency, contexts and syntactic environments where strands usually occur.

The researcher has used Antconc to analyze the data and figure out frequency of prepositional strands in Pakistani English. Here are the details what the researcher has found.

Frequency of Prepositional Strands in Pakistani Newspapers

Sr No.	Prepositions Strands Made with	The News	Dawn	The Nation	Tribune
1	Of	2	0	1	0
2	In	0	1	2	1
3	To	0	0	1	0
4	For	2	3	1	2
5	With	1	1	2	1
6	On	0	1	0	0
7	By	0	1	0	0
8	At	1	0	1	0
9	From	1	2	1	2
10	Into	1	0	1	1

Analysis and Findings

Here are the findings of each prepositional strand made with verb and addition of a preposition with verb. The Antconc has helped in figuring out the number of hits found in 20 articles selected corpora. Here are the findings got from the data collected from the newspapers.

I. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “of” were found 2 times in The News, 0 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 0 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “of” are less in number in Pakistani English.

II. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “in” were found 0 times in The News, 1 time in Dawn, 2 times in The Nation and 1 time in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “in” are less in number in Pakistani English.

III. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “to” were found 0 times in The News, 0 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 0 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “to” are less in number in Pakistani English.

IV. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “for” were found 2 times in The News, 3 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 2 times in Tribune. It

shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “for” are relatively high in number in Pakistani English.

V. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “with” were found 1 times in The News, 1 times in Dawn, 2 time in The Nation and 1 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “with” are less in number in Pakistani English.

VI. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “on” were found 0 times in The News, 1 times in Dawn, 0 time in The Nation and 0 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “on” are less in number in Pakistani English.

VII. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “by” were found 0 times in The News, 1 times in Dawn, 0 time in The Nation and 0 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “by” are less in number in Pakistani English.

VIII. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “at” were found 1 times in The News, 0 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 0 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “at” are less in number in Pakistani English.

IX. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “from” were found 1 times in The News, 2 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 2 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “from” are less in number in Pakistani English.

X. The prepositional strands constructed with preposition “into” were found 1 times in The News, 0 times in Dawn, 1 time in The Nation and 1 times in Tribune. It shows that prepositional strands constructed with preposition “into” are less in number in Pakistani English.

Conclusion

A corpus-based study of prepositional strands in Pakistani English has provided valuable insights into the syntactic and semantic characteristics of Pakistani English. The findings have highlighted how local languages, culture, and historical contexts shape prepositional usage, and how these features distinguish Pakistani English from other varieties. Furthermore, the research could help in language teaching, providing a

more nuanced understanding of the prepositional challenges faced by Pakistani English speakers and guiding more targeted pedagogical strategies.

In addition, the a corpus based study on preposition strands in Pakistani English would contribute to the broader field of World Englishes, documenting the linguistic diversity within the global use of English and adding to the body of knowledge on how English adapts to local contexts and influences.

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