

Omissibility of a Preposition in the Omission of a Prepositional Object in English Prepositional Phrases*

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Jeong, In-Sik. 2011. Omissibility of a Preposition in the Omission of a Prepositional Object in English Prepositional Phrases. *Linguistic Research* 28(1), 53-73. When a prepositional object is contextually recoverable and omitted in structures such as a prepositional particle plus its object, the omissibility of its preceding particle is closely bound up both with its meaning and its double status as an overlapping category for adverb and preposition. Some particles which denote place or direction can be used both prepositionally and adverbially depending on the presence or absence of their objects. These types of particles should not be omitted when their object is removed, performing their meaning in combination with a verb. In addition, such particles do not allow their object to be the subject of a passive. On the contrary, other particles are used only prepositionally. These types of particles should be omitted when their object is contextually recoverable and removed, because they cannot stand alone as prepositions. The understanding of the omitted preposition and prepositional object is retrieved from the context. (Seoul Digital University)

Key Words deletion, omission, particle, preposition, passive, prepositional object

1. Introduction

Since its introduction by Katz & Postal (1964), the omission of a noun phrase has been discussed a lot not only as an object of a transitive verb but also as an object of a preposition, as illustrated in (1) and (2):

(1) When he woke up he could not **eat** or **drink**.

* I would like to express my deep thanks to two anonymous reviewers of this paper for their valuable comments and suggestions. I am also grateful to Nancy Hewitt for the improvement of this paper.

- (2) a. Two hands are faster than one. Besides, there is nothing wrong with asking for help. If **you don't ask**, how will others know you need help? You will be surprised at the positive response you will get. (Alok Jain (2008). *Create Your Own Time: How to Work 48 Hours in a Day*. p. 50)
- b. ... * If **you don't ask for**, how will others know you need help? ...
- c. ... If **you don't ask for help**, how will others know you need help? ...

In (1), the objects of the verbs *eat* and *drink* are omitted. In the example (2a), where the noun phrase *help* is omitted, the preposition *for* is also removed, maintaining grammaticality. By putting the missing words into (2a), we can have (2c). However, the example (2b) is not permitted grammatically, where only the object *help* is omitted with the preposition *for* left behind. This might show that when an object preceded by a preposition is omitted, the preposition also needs to be omitted. However, this is not always the case, as shown in (3):

- (3) a. I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but **then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit**. (Steve Jobs' Commencement Speech at Stanford University. June 12, 2005)
- b. I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but **then stayed around Reed College as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit**.
- c. [#] I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but **then stayed as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit**.¹

If we compare the (2a) and (3a) bold-faced clauses where only the objects are omitted, in terms of their grammaticality, we can find out an interesting fact. The former clause needs to have the particle² *for* omitted when the object *help* is

¹ In this paper, the sharp # indicates that the clause or sentence is not felicitous because its intended meaning is distorted by omission. The asterisk* indicates that the clause or sentence is not grammatical. The markings in bold face type are mine for expository convenience.

² According to Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985), the term *particle* is a word that does not belong to one of the main classes of words, is invariable in form, and typically has grammatical or

omitted. Otherwise, it results in its ungrammaticality. On the other hand, the latter clause needs to leave the particle *around* behind after the omission of the object, which can result in its grammaticality and felicity. The comparison shows the difference of grammaticality with regard to the presence of a particle. This difference, specifically the omissibility of a particle, has been paid little attention to until now.

In this paper, I will discuss the omissibility of a particle when the object of the particle is omitted not only in multi-word verb³ constructions such as prepositional verbs, but also in prepositional phrases preceded by a noun, an adjective and an adverb. I will propose that its omissibility is closely related both to its double status as an overlapping category for adverb and preposition and to its meaning.

The application of omission in this study is limited to prepositional objects which are recoverable from the context. Related data are provided mainly on the level of discourse. This study is conducted on the basis of a data-oriented approach rather than of a particular theory.

I am sure that this paper will help English users, especially both teachers and students of English, not to make mistakes and at least to reduce mistakes, in the omission of a preposition when its recoverable object is removed.

2. Omissibility of a Particle in the Omission of Its Following Object

2.1 Previous Studies of the Omission of Objects

Katz & Postal (1964) made the earliest discussion of NP deletion in the generativist tradition. The authors proposed a deletion rule under which to delete either the word *something* or the word *it* as quoted below:

pragmatic meaning. The usage of the term varies. According to some authorities, particles include the articles, most prepositions and conjunctions, and some interjections and adverbs. In this paper, the term will be used restrictively as a preposition and an adverb, which will be referred to as a prepositional particle and an adverbial particle, respectively.

³ The term *multi-word verb* is brought from Quirk, et al (1985), consisting of combinations such as *call up*, *look for*, *get away with*, *blame for*, etc.

- (4) a. John is reading. ((51) p. 81)
 b. John is reading *it* or *something*.

Their discussion was focused on the theoretical need that seeming intransitive verbs should have an object capable of satisfying a selectional restriction, as in transitive verbs, for the semantic interpretation at deep structure.

Fraser & Ross (1970) suggested a rule called ‘unspecified NP deletion’ in order to account for the omission of NPs which represent the complement of a verb in underlying structures. However, they pointed out that the rule did not apply to idiomatic expressions such as *thought up*, *drink down*, etc. Unlike Fraser & Ross, Mittwoch (1971) argued that the failure of this deletion rule was not due to idioms but due to certain verb-particle combinations, suggesting a rule of ‘definite NP deletion’ as a way of accounting for omission in the combinations.

Fillmore (1986) focused his discussion on the omission of the objects that can be immediately retrieved from the context. He stated that the conditions for the omission are restricted to a particular lexical item or grammatical construction. For an account of a lexically defined item, he takes the verb *win* with different senses for an example. One sense of the verb permits expressions like:

- (5) He won the election / the race / the game. ((17) p. 100)

In (5), the objects of the verb represent a category of a contest. Another sense permits expressions like:

- (6) He won the first prize / the race / the gold medal / the blue ribbon.
 ((18) p. 100)

In (6), the objects of the verb represent a category of a prize. The verb *win* can stand alone without object as in the following:

- (7) He won. ((19) p. 100)

The interpretation of (7) allows (5), but not (6). Only in one of these senses can the contextually given direct object be omitted. It reveals that the omission of an

object depends on lexically restricted senses, which will be respected and followed in this paper.

With regard to a grammatical construction, the author showed 11 patterns with the omission of elements recoverable from the context⁴, but did not discuss them in detail because he focused on whether the omission of NPs is definite or indefinite and whether it is possible or not. Particularly interesting to me about these patterns are grammatical patterns concerning a preposition: (i) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Intransitive Verbs, (ii) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Transitive Verbs, (iii) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Adjectives, and (iv) Prepositional Complements of Nouns. In the following, I will explore the omissibility of a preposition, one pattern by one, when a prepositional object is omitted.

2.2 Omission from Verbs

A preposition connects two units in a sentence, of which one is a prepositional object and the other is a verb phrase, an adjective / adverbial phrase or a noun

⁴ The 11 patterns run as follows:

- i) Lexical NP Direct Objects
: as with such verbs as *eat*, *drink*, *win*, etc
- ii) Indicative THAT-clause Direct Objects
: as with such verbs as *know*, *notice*, etc
- iii) Subjunctive THAT-clause Direct Objects
: as with such verbs as *insist*, etc.
- iv) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Intransitive Verbs
: as with such verbs as *arrive*, *apply*, *approve*, etc.
- v) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Transitive Verbs
: as with such verbs as *blame*, *contribute*, etc.
- vi) Prepositional Phrase Complements of Adjectives
: as with such adjectives as *similar*, *different*, *applicable*, *relevant*, etc.
- vii) Marked Infinitive Phrase Complements of Verbs
: as with such verbs as *force*, *begin*, *try*, etc.
- viii) Bare Infinitive Phrase Complements of Verbs
: as with such verbs as *make*, *let*, etc.
- ix) Marked Infinitive Phrase Complements of Adjectives
: as with such adjectives as *eager*, *ready*, etc
- x) Complex Adjectival Complements
: as with *too*-*+*-adjective, etc.
- xi) Prepositional Complements of Nouns
: as with the *of* complement of *copy*.

phrase. Here in section 2.2. I will first explore a combination of a verb plus a prepositional phrase and next in section 2.3., a combination of other syntactic categories plus a prepositional phrase.

2.2.1 Intransitive Verbs plus Prepositional Phrases

An intransitive verb may take a prepositional phrase for conveying its complete meaning often in a sentence, as exemplified in:

- (8) a. He has lived in his uncle's
- b. He looked after his friend's children.
- c. My car rolled down the hill.

As is often the case with omission, a prepositional phrase or a prepositional object may be omitted when omission is grammatically permitted and when the missing part is contextually recoverable. Consider the following:

- (9) a. I'm not suggesting that we have to watch the news constantly, but **by reading, listening, and talking, we keep abreast of what is happening.**
(Richard Templar (2006). *The Rules for Life: Your Personal Code for Living a Better, Happier, More Successful Life.* p. 18)
- b. ... but **by reading the news, listening to the news, and talking about the news, we keep up with what's happening.**
- c. ... *but **by reading, listening to, and talking about, we keep up with what's happening.**
- (10) a. As he was passing through that country, he decided he should go and visit his friend the king. So **he went around**, but there was another king in power. (Michael Ambatchew (Translator). *Ethiopian Folktales (Everything Passes)*)
- b. ... So **he went around that country**, but there was another king in power.
- c. ...[#]So **he went**, but there was another king in power.

The bold-faced part, where both the prepositional particles and their objects are omitted in (9a), is grammatical, while the bold-faced part in (9c) is not grammatical

because it has only the objects omitted, leaving the particles *to* and *about* behind. A requirement for omission is that a sentence should remain grammatical although some parts of it are missing when they can be retrieved. The reason for the ungrammaticality of the part in (9c) is that the prepositional particles stand alone without their objects. The particles *to* and *about* here are prepositions which should be followed by their objects.⁵

In (10c), the clause *he went* has the particle *around* and its object *that country* omitted, resulting in semantic infelicity. When we insert the missing words, it is ambiguous, according to what particle is assumed to be omitted. The missing object *that country* can be precisely recoverable but the particle may be inferable as *to*, *from*, *into*, *around*, *off*, *away from*, etc. The resulting clause may distort its intended meaning. Another requirement for omission is that the meaning of a sentence not be changed when we insert the missing words. Therefore, we need to leave the particle *around* behind to avoid the change of the intended meaning.

We could, at this point, raise a problem – why the omission of the particle brings about ambiguity only in (10c), not (9a)? The answer is simple. When we insert the missing words in (9a), what can be placed between the verb *listen* and the noun phrase *the news* is only the particle *to*, and what can be placed between the verb *talk* and the noun phrase *the news* is the particle *about*, *of*, or *on*, three of which have the same sense and do not cause a difference and an ambiguity in meaning. On the contrary, when we insert the missing words in (10c), one of the particles *to*, *from*, *into*, *around*, *off*, *away from*, etc., may be put between the verb *go*

⁵ A preposition is followed by its object. However, it does not always come before its object. In some kinds of English sentences, it can come at the end of the clause without coming before its object, as illustrated:

- i) Questions beginning with *Wh*-words:
 - What are you looking for?
- ii) Relative clauses:
 - This is the house which he lives in.
- iii) Passive clauses:
 - Jim was laughed at.
- iv) Infinitive clauses:
 - He has nothing to complain about.
- v) Tough movement:
 - She is hard to work with.
- vi) Topicalization:
 - A. Our ancestors we are proud of.

and the object *that country*, resulting in a difference and an ambiguity in meaning when the missing elements are filled.

What we should note here is the difference of meaning between prepositions which are omitted and not. Prepositions left behind as in (10a) denote place or direction whereas prepositions omitted as in (9a) carry other meanings than place or direction. This is supported later in (12a), (17a), (18a) and (25a).

Interestingly enough, we can also find a categorial difference between the particles *to* and *about*⁶ and the particle *around*. Put another way, the former can be used only prepositionally whereas the latter can be used both prepositionally and adverbially. This difference may affect the existence of a particle and be further evidenced by the following:

- (11) a. We're Tuesday people. "Right. Tuesday people. Come to talk, then?" He has grown so weak so fast. "Look at me," he says. **I'm looking**. "You'll come to my grave? To tell me your problems?". (Mitch Albom (2006). *Tuesdays with Morrie: an Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. pp. 169-170)
- b. ... ***I'm looking at**. ...
- c. ... **I'm looking at you**.
- (12) a. It must be some Swede — who could it be? Who would be so cruel? Who had betrayed Ulrika? "Has something come between you?" "Yes, **something came between**." Anger rose within Kristina. (Vilhelm Moberg (1995). *Unto a Good Land*. p. 350)
- b. ...[#] "Yes, **something came**."...
- c. ... "Yes, **something came between us**."...

The particle *at* can be used only prepositionally, not adverbially, in the same way the particles *for*, *to* and *about* in (2) and (9) can. As shown in (11a), the

⁶ Some can say that the particles *to* and *about* are used both prepositionally and adverbially. However, they do not have the same meaning when they are used both prepositionally and adverbially, differently from the particle *around*, as shown below:

- i) a. He came **to** school. (preposition with a sense of 'direction')
 b. He came **to**. (adverb with a sense of 'back into consciousness')

Therefore, they cannot be said to behave in the same meaning prepositionally and adverbially.

particle *at* must be omitted when its object is removed. Strictly speaking, the relevant sentence undergoes the omission of a prepositional phrase. The example (11b) is not permitted. In contrast, the particle *between* in (12) can behave both adverbially and prepositionally. In this case, the omission of a prepositional object requires the omission of a preposition immediately preceding the object. When the prepositional object *us* is omitted, therefore, the expression in (12a) is more felicitous than that in (12b).

An intransitive verb may be followed by a particle plus a preposition when it takes an object. Consider the following:

- (13) a. Purposefully he strode up to the woman with every intention of telling her to leave. She did not even look up at him until he was standing within a couple of feet of her. **Only then did she look up.** (Brian Tracy (2002). *Create Your Own Future: How to Master the 12 Critical Factors of Unlimited Success*. p. 186. John Wiley & Sons Inc.)
- b. ...^{*}**Only then did she look up at.**
- c. ...**Only then did she look up at him.**
- (14) a. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So **I decided to drop out** and trust that it would all work out OK. (Steve Jobs' Commencement Speech at Stanford University. 6/12/2005)
- b. ...^{*}So **I decided to drop out of** and trust that it would all work out OK.
- c. ...So **I decided to drop out of college** and trust that it would all work out OK.

The verb expressions in (13) and (14), *look up at* and *drop out of*, consist of three-word verb and form a verb phrase. When their objects are recoverable from the context and grammatically omissible, the prepositions immediately preceding them should also be removed. Therefore, the expressions in (13a) and (14a) are permitted whereas those in (13b) and (14b) are not.

2.2.2 Transitive Verb Phrases plus Prepositional Phrases

Like an intransitive verb, a transitive verb may also take a prepositional phrase if necessary, as exemplified in:

- (15) a. When a man withdraws into his cave a woman just doesn't understand what is happening. She naturally tries to get him to talk. If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out** and getting him to talk about it. (John Gray (1992). *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. p. 74)
- b. ...*If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out of** and getting him to talk about it.
- c. ... If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out of the cave** and getting him to talk about it.
- (16) a. We owe our national and social stability to them, but **we had never thanked them in public**. (USA Today. 8/4/2007)
- b. *We owe our national and social stability to them, but **we had never thanked them in public for**.
- c. We owe our national and social stability to them, but **we had never thanked them in public for our national and social stability**.
- (17) a. Then I suggested an alternative solution to a problem he was stuck on: "I think it would be easier to play if you put your cards face up on the table, and **we put something between**, so I can't see your cards." (Douglas Davies (2010). *Child Development: A Practitioner's Guide*. p. 394)
- b. ...*if you put your cards face up on the table, and **we put something**, so I can't see your cards.
- c. ...if you put your cards face up on the table, and **we put something between your cards**, so I can't see your cards.
- (18) a. In the wheelchair attack, the man allegedly approached the main checkpoint to the operation command room in the city of Samarra and said he needed to see the commander to ask for help. **Guards pushed him through**. (USA Today. 2/25/2008)
- b. ...***Guards pushed him**.
- c. ... **Guards pushed him through the main checkpoint**.

The above examples (15a), (16a), (17a) and (18a) undergo the omission of either the prepositional objects or the prepositional phrases. The presence or absence of the prepositions affects the grammaticality of each sentence. The prepositions in question here are *of*, *for*, *between* and *through*. The former two prepositions are always removed when their objects are omitted. The preposition *of* in (15) may represent a sense of place but is used only prepositionally. The latter two prepositions should be left behind even after their object is removed, as shown in (17a) and (18a).

When an object of a preposition which occurs with an intransitive verb is recoverable from the context and is grammatically omissible, either the preposition alone or the whole prepositional phrase may be omitted. Likewise, it is the same for an object of a preposition which occurs with a transitive verb. Put another way, the omission of a prepositional object requires the omission of a preposition immediately preceding it, when the preposition has other meanings than place or direction. However, when a preposition denotes place or direction and can be used both prepositionally and adverbially in the same meaning of a sentence, a prepositional object alone is omitted with its preposition left behind.

Such phenomena happen not only to a prepositional phrase of an intransitive and a transitive verb but also to a prepositional phrase which occurs with a noun, an adjective and an adverb. It will be explored in the next section.

2.3 Omission from Noun, Adjective and Adverb Phrases

As with verbs, prepositional phrases may be preceded by nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. Such phrases may be interpreted not only as their modifiers but also as their complements. They may be omitted when they are recoverable from the context. Let us consider the following:

- (19) a. For example, a study recommends that babies be moved into their own room by three months of age. “By **six months** a child who regularly sleeps in her parents’ room may become dependent on this arrangement,” reports the study. (Benjamin Spock & Robert Needlman (2004). *Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care*. p. 60)
- b. ... * “By **six months of** a child who regularly sleeps in her parents’ room is likely to become dependent on this arrangement,” reports

the study.

- c. ... "By **six months of age** a child who regularly sleeps in her parents' room is likely to become dependent on this arrangement," reports the study.
- (20) a. I was a very public failure, and I even thought about running away from the valley. But something slowly began to dawn on me - I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected, but I was still **in love**. (Steve Jobs' Commencement Speech at Stanford University. 6/12/2005)
- b. ... *I had been rejected, but I was still **in love with**.
- c. ... I had been rejected, but I was still **in love with what I did**.
- (21) a. A woman has the ability to heal a man of this addiction to success by appreciating the little things he does. But she may not express appreciation if she doesn't understand how important it is to a man. She may let her resentment get **in the way**. (John Gray (1992). *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. p. 213)
- b. ... *She may let her resentment get **in the way of**.
- c. ... She may let her resentment get **in the way of a man**.
- (22) a. "Mitch, you are one of the good ones," he says, admiring the briefcase. Then he hugs me. I feel his thin arms around my back. I am taller than he is, and when he holds me, I feel awkward, older, as if I were the parent and he were the child. He asks if I will stay **in touch**, and without hesitation I say, "Of course." (Mitch Albom (1997). *Tuesdays with Morrie: an Old Man, a Young Man and Life's Greatest Lesson*. p. 4)
- b. ... *He asks if I will stay **in touch with**, and without hesitation I say, "Of course."
- c. ... He asks if I will stay **in touch with him**, and without hesitation I say, "Of course."
- (23) a. McCain faces the bigger challenge. As the Republican nominee, he must answer for what has happened on President Bush's watch and offer a plausible explanation for why his conservative administration would be genuinely different. Obama already is attacking him as ill-equipped to deal with the financial crisis and

has aggressively moved to tie a future McCain administration to a lobbyist-dominated Washington culture. **Obama's challenge is different.** He begins with the reality that Democrats are seen as the party that is more trusted to deal with the economy. (Washington Post. 09/16/2008)

- b. ... ***Obama's challenge is different from.**
 - c. ... **Obama's challenge is different from McCain's challenge.**
- (24) a. Based on this kind of score keeping, he believes he will fulfill her best by focusing his time, energy, and attention into doing something large for her. This formula, however, doesn't work because women keep score **differently**. (John Gray (1992). *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. p. 199)
- b. ... ***This formula, however, doesn't work because women keep score differently from.**
 - c. ... This formula, however, doesn't work because women keep score **differently from a man.**

The (a) examples in (19) through (24) undergo the omission of the prepositions and their objects which are preceded by a noun, an adjective and an adverb. As shown in intransitive and transitive verbs, the prepositions should all be omitted when their objects are removed. The reason is that they do not carry the meaning of place or direction. If they are not omitted as in the b examples in (19) through (24), the sentences are not grammatical. Such phenomena are not hard to find, for example, in expressions like *in return (for)*, *in addition (to)*, *in response (to)*, etc; *different(ly)*, *similar(ly)*, *identical(ly)*, *equal(ly)*, etc.

Now let us consider the examples where prepositions should not be omitted when their objects can be retrieved from the context and removed:

- (25) a. It doesn't say you need to fast, just avoid eating in public, i.e. you can eat in your own house and no one will speak to you. It's very provocative to be eating in public when **90% of the people around are refraining from it**, isn't it? (Los Angeles Times Comment. 08/13/2010).
- b. ...[#]It's very provocative to be eating in public when **90% of the**

- people are refraining from it**, isn't it?
- c. ... It's very provocative to be eating in public when **90% of the people around (you) are refraining from it**, isn't it?

The bold-face clause in (25a) does not undergo the omission of the particle *around* though its object is missing, unlike cases mentioned in (19a) through (24a). It is not only grammatical but also semantically identical to that of (25c). However, the bold-faced clause in (25b) is also grammatical but is not semantically identical to that in (25c). The comparison of the bold-faced clauses in (25a) and (25b) shows that the existence of the particle results in the difference of meaning, concerning omission. As mentioned earlier, an omission should not cause the change of meaning and break the grammaticality of a sentence. This is what makes (25a) more acceptable than (25b). The relevant particle carries the meaning of place or direction and can behave both prepositionally and adverbially, unlike the particles *of*, *with* and *from*. It supports what we have insisted on so far. Put another way, when an object of a preposition is recoverable from the context and omitted, its immediately preceding prepositional particle should be either omitted or not. The particles which should not be omitted are characterized both by denoting place or direction and by behaving prepositionally as well as adverbially. Furthermore, the omission of the particles not only causes the ungrammaticality of a sentence but also the change of meaning.

2.4 Omission of Preposition and Passivization

Now I will turn to the relationship between the omission of a preposition and passivization. In the English passive, the object of an active verb becomes the subject of a passive verb, as illustrated below:

- (26) a. They destroyed the house.
 b. The house was destroyed by them.
- (27) a. He borrowed both of these books from the public library.
 b. Both of these books were borrowed from the public library by him.
- (28) a. They lived in Seoul.
 b. *Seoul was lived in by them.

The above examples might lead us to a conclusion that only transitive verbs with an object are used in the passive, whereas verbs which do not take an object, or intransitive verbs, do not have passive forms. However, some intransitive verbs allow passive forms when they are followed by a preposition and an object, as exemplified below:

- (29) a. He was listening to the news.
 b. The news was being listened to by him
 c. He was listening. (a variation of (9a))
- (30) a. I'm looking at you.
 b. You are being looked at by me.
 c. I'm looking. (= (11a))

When a verb is used with a prepositional particle, the combination may be referred to as a prepositional verb. It resembles a transitive verb, in that it takes an object, specifically a prepositional object, and has a passive form, just as a transitive verb does. In (29) and (30) *listen to* and *look at*, respectively, constitute prepositional verbs. Quirk et al (1985: 1164) state that the passive is possible when objects of both transitive verbs and prepositional verbs are treated as affected participants in the clause. In (29) and (30), *the news* and *you* are affected by an agent's action, whether each of them is used as an object of the prepositional verb or as a subject of the passive verb. That is why the passive clause is acceptable.

It should, however, be noted that every combination of a verb followed by a preposition does not form a passive form, as illustrated:

- (31) a. He went around the country.
 b. *The country was gone around by him.
 c. He went around. (= (10a))
- (32) a. Something came between us.
 b. *We were come between by something.
 c. Something came between (= (12a))

Superficially, *go around* and *come between* in (31) and (32) may have the same structure as *listen to* and *look at* in (29) and (30), in that they consist of an

intransitive verb and a preposition. If they were identical syntactically or semantically, the sentences in (31b) and (32b) would be grammatical like those in (29b) and (30b). However, the passive is not acceptable because the prepositional object is not affected by the agent's action but denotes place or direction together with the preposition. Such verb combinations do not belong under a prepositional verb.

In addition, we can find another interesting difference between prepositional verbs and non-prepositional verbs. In prepositional verbs, the omission of a preposition is required when the removal of its object is allowed from the context, as shown in (29c) and (30c). In contrast, non-prepositional verbs do not allow the omission of a preposition although its object is removed from the clause, resulting in the grammaticality of (31c) and (32c).

Our discussion shows that the passivizability of an intransitive verb followed by an object is closely related to the omissibility of a preposition whose object is removed. That is, let us consider a type of an intransitive verb that is used with a preposition and is passivizable, called a prepositional verb. Such type of verbs requires a preposition to be omitted when its object is removed. However, a type of verb, which cannot be passivized in spite of being with a preposition, does not allow the omission of a preposition when its object is omitted from the context.⁷

2.5 A Variation of a Particle

People want to convey their messages as concisely as possible, except in special cases. So they frequently use an omission as a device to avoid redundancy and shorten clauses. However, omissions should not be misused merely as a substitute for economy. They should keep a sentence grammatical as well as keep the meaning of full expression intact. If not, the device should not be used. Consider the following:

- (33) a. Imagine a child, playing on the beach below a cliff. **He finds a cave, and full of excitement, goes in.** Suddenly fear seizes him. In the deep dark of the cave, he cannot see the way ahead. (Gillian Butler & Tony Hope (2007). *Manage Your Mind: the Mental*

⁷ This discussion does not cover all kinds of omission of a preposition dealt with in this paper but is instrumental only in the omission of a preposition following an intransitive verb.

Fitness Guide. p. 209. Oxford University Press.)

- b. ... **He finds a cave, and full of excitement, goes into the cave.**
Suddenly...
- c. ... ^{##}* **He finds a cave, and full of excitement, goes.** Suddenly...
- d. ... ^{*} **He finds a cave, and full of excitement, goes into.** Suddenly...

When we put the missing words into the bold-faced sentence in (33a) for full interpretation, we could get the sentence in (33b). The other way around, when we apply an omission to (33b) to abbreviate the clause, we could get the sentence in (33c), not (33d), on the basis of our proposal, because the omission of a recoverable prepositional object requires the omission of a preposition which does not denote place or direction. However, the sentence is not semantically acceptable although it is grammatically acceptable. The unacceptability comes from the fact that the sentence is not clear and causes ambiguity in which the verb *to go* could represent *to go out*, *to go by*, *to go past*, *to go around*, etc.

Although here we could take (33d) into consideration as an alternative sentence, it results in ungrammaticality, because the preposition *into* cannot stand alone after the removal of its object.

As shown in (33), the bold-faced sentence (33a) is accepted grammatically and semantically as an expression of omission for the sentence in (33b). It does not seem to be against our expectation. Our discussion should lead us to (33c), where the omission of the recoverable prepositional object *the cave* involves the omission of the preposition *into*. Eventually, the right expression is (33a), which we might feel is a cross between *go* in (33c) and *go into* in (33d). That is, it is a solution for maintaining the grammaticality and semantic felicity of the sentence.

We could infer from this fact that some prepositional particles change morphologically and semantically to corresponding adverb particles, for example, the preposition *into* to the adverb *in*, as shown in (33a). This inference seems not to be cogent yet. This type of variation is not found with other prepositions. Rather, we may come to a more reasonable explanation, if we give deep thought to the word formation of the preposition *into* which consists of the prepositional or adverb particle *in* plus the prepositional particle *to* not as a simple preposition but as a complex preposition⁸. The latter particle *to* is omitted with its immediately preceding particle *in* remaining, when its object is removed as in (33a). This may be supported

by the following:

- (34) a. Lucky just laughed and took the board. “Let me show you the way.”
He placed the board on the road, jumped on, and took off like a missile down the steep hill. (Richard Bellingham Edd (2009). *The Fables of Boris: Invitations to Meaningful Conversations*. p. 148)
- b. ... **He placed the board on the road, jumped onto/on to the board**, and took off like a missile down the steep hill.
- c. ... ^{#/*} **He placed the board on the road, jumped**, and took off like a missile down the steep hill.
- d. ... ^{*} **He placed the board on the road, jumped onto/on to**, and took off like a missile down the steep hill.
- (35) a. When a man withdraws into his cave a woman just doesn't understand what is happening. She naturally tries to get him to talk. If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out** and getting him to talk about it. (John Gray (1992). *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. p. 74)
- b. ... If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out of the cave** and getting him to talk about it.
- c. ... ^{#/*} If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him** and getting him to talk about it.
- d. ... ^{*} If there is a problem **she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out of** and getting him to talk about it.
- (36) a. On the 14th and 15th, students from three schools in the surrounding area, Atchuvvely Maha Vidyalayam, Neervely Aththiar school and Sri Somaskanthe College stayed away from school as a protest. **Military officials visited the school and took down the names of those who had stayed away**. (Tamilcanadian. Nov. 17. 1996)
- b. ... **Military officials visited the school and took down the names of**

⁸ Most of such English prepositions as *at*, *on*, *in* and *from* consist of one word. They are referred to as simple prepositions. Other prepositions consist of more than one word and are called complex prepositions. They may be subdivided into two-word sequences and three-word sequences. Quirk et al (1985) states that in two-word sequences the first word is an adverb, adjective or conjunction, and the second word is a simple preposition. Among the examples are *away from*, *close to*, *because of*, etc. In three-word sequences the first word is a preposition, the second is a noun and the third a preposition. Among the examples are *in view of*, *by virtue of*, *on account of*, etc.

those who had stayed away from school.

- c. ... ^{*/}**Military officials visited the school and took down the names of those who had stayed.**
- d. ... ^{*/}**Military officials visited the school and took down the names of those who had stayed away from.**

In (34b), (35b) and (36b), the complex prepositions *on to / onto*, *out of* and *away from* occur with the verb *jump*, *draw* and *stay*, respectively, and their objects are not only recoverable but also omissible from the context, resulting in (34a), (35a) and (36a).⁹ As mentioned above, the omission of those like the preposition *of* in (35b) is possible without special restriction when the object of the preposition is removed. However, the omission of prepositions denoting place or direction is allowed restrictively, only when they are used prepositionally. In this respect, the omission of the prepositions *to* and *from* in (34a) and (36a) is possible, maintaining consistency in our discussion.

3. Concluding Remarks

So far we have discussed an omissibility of a preposition when an object of the preposition can be contextually retrieved and omitted. We have found that its omission is determined by its meaning and its categorial status. Prepositions denoting place or direction should be left behind when their objects are removed. In addition, they should also be able to function both prepositionally and adverbially in the same sense. On the contrary, other prepositions are omitted when their objects are removed. We have also seen that the omission of a preposition is closely related to a passive. Combinations of an intransitive verb plus a preposition often allow the object of a preposition to be the subject of a passive verb. In this case, prepositions which are immediately preceded by a verb should not denote place or direction.

Finally, my proposal for the omission of a preposition in the removal of a

⁹ In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the preposition *onto* written as one word (instead of *on to*) is recorded from the early 18th century and has been widely used ever since, but is still not wholly accepted as part of standard British English (unlike *into*, for example). Many style guides still advise writing it as two words. In spoken English, *onto* is frequently interchangeable only with *on* or *to*.

prepositional object is fulfilled not only in a simple-prepositional phrase but also in a complex-prepositional phrase.

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