

Some Remarks on English Verbs-*in* Constructions

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1. Introduction

One of the most significant benefits from the cognitive study of language is that it can treat not only the primary phase of cognition, which is observed at the early stage of language acquisition, but the essential parts of linguistic art, *i.e.* literary metaphorical expressions; moreover, cognitive study leads to linguistic contrastive studies by taking the viewpoint that linguistic competence is profoundly rooted in human cognitive activities.

Most cognitive studies presuppose that different forms have different meanings. The author thinks that it is a merit of the approach to shed light on the function of one element in an utterance which shows a subtle but significant difference of meaning in the process of cognition.¹⁾

As Quirk et al. (1985: 1152-1168) explains, there is a distinction between the prepositional verbs and the phrasal verbs in constructions with *in*. See the sentences below:

- (1) a. There is all the difference between believing someone and believing *in* them.
- b. Though I do not trust your story at present, sometimes I would simply like to trust *in* the goodness of human nature.
- (2) a. I didn't take *in* what you were saying.
- b. I married in my late teens and was taken *in* by his charm - which soon vanished...

COBUILD explains that "If you believe someone or if you believe what they say or write, you accept that they are telling the truth" and that "If you believe in someone or what they are doing, you have confidence in them and think that they will be successful".²⁾ It is

obvious that *in* of (1a) and (1b) shows not only a referent, but it implies a high degree of estimation. What function of the preposition makes English speakers feel the difference? The author thinks that *in* of (2) in the adverbial usage gives a clue to the answer.

2.

First, the author would like to consider verbal phrases consisting of the following six verbs with the particle: *come*, *get*, *give*, *put*, *take* and *turn*. They are often called “basic verbs.” Obviously there are no strict distinctions between the basic verbs and other verbs. However, we empirically know that these verbs are widely used in ordinary language use, because they carry various meanings according to context, albeit each verb has a certain proper meaning. In other words, these verbs are polysemous in that they concede English speakers metaphoric use like in (2) above. The author takes notice of communicative or intellectual activities meant by the basic verbs with *in*. Although it is thought that the phrasal usage was derived from the prepositional usage, the author believes that an examination of the former leads us to understand the latter.

(3) Reports are just coming *in* of a major oil spillage in the North Sea.

(4) a. Will Labour come *in*?

b. If the Conservatives get *in* they might decide to change it.

c. This election is a chance for the country to put a new government *in*.

(5) a. I had to read the letter twice before I could take it all *in*.

b. The teacher was completely taken *in* by my excuse.

(6) a. Please give *in* your homework on Monday morning.

b. She has put *in* an application to the college.

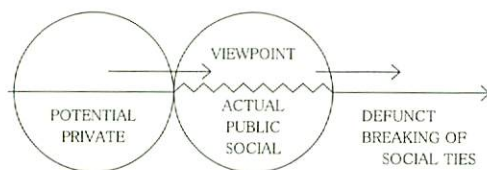
c. I want everybody to turn a report *in* on Zanzibar.

The phrase in (3) means that news or information is received or becomes accessible. The phrases in (4) mean winning in an election. The phrase in (5a) means understanding, while (5b) means deception. The phrases in (6) mean that something is handed to someone who has authority over the speaker or that something is offered for consideration.³⁾

Basic verbs with *out* also indicate communicative or intellectual activities:

- (7) a. After her death it came *out* that she'd lied about her age.
 b. Once the news gets *out* that Armenia is in a very critical situation, I think the world will respond.
 c. He wouldn't give *out* any information.
 d. Word went *out* that a column of tanks was on its way.
 e. I couldn't make it *out* at all.
 f. The French news agency put *out* a statement from the Trade Minister.
 g. It turned *out* that I knew the person who got shot.
 h. There will be a full investigation to work *out* what caused the accident.

Lindner (1981) investigates many expressions using verb-particle constructions with *out* and *up*. She analyses some of the above phrases in terms of “change from hiddenness to accessibility” and in terms of “change from accessibility to inaccessibility”. She draws figures that show viewer-defined regions in the profile of *out* in p.121:



When drawing figures to clarify the movement shown by *in*, it is necessary to think of a path that a verb implies. Lindner (1981: 174) writes, ‘*Come* specifies a path toward the speaker (who is typically identified with the viewer), and *go* specifies a path away.’ The verbs are divided into two groups according to a verbal path, *i.e.* the direction of move related to the speaker; toward the speaker: *come, get, take*; from the speaker: *give, put, turn*.

The figures are drawn here to explain the meanings of the basic verbal phrases with *in*. Figure 1, 2, 3 and 4 correspond to the above examples (3)–(6) respectively:⁴⁾

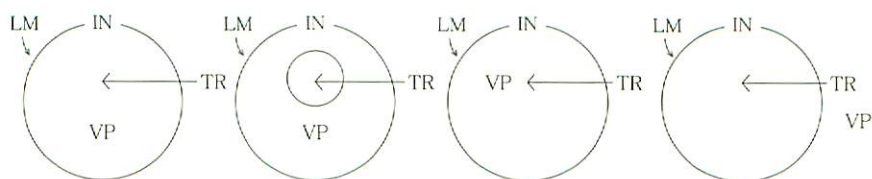


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

The author would like to call the inner area of the figures above ‘*in*-domain’, which illustrates a change of state caused by a verb on a schema. The *in*-domain contrasts clearly with outer area by means of a LM on a given scene.

3.

Related to a change of state, the verb-adverb construction is supposed to consist of a part meaning ‘an action’ and one showing ‘the result’; in other words, the verbs express ‘what to do’ or ‘what the subject does’ while the adverb indicates ‘how to be’ or ‘how the object becomes’. As Quirk et al. (1985: 417) points out, the resultative effect of an adverb resembles the causative construction, which is interpreted to bring about a change of aspect caused by the action that the subject has taken.⁵⁾ In this case, the complement refers to the resultant aspect that the object receives:

- (8) He pushed the window *open/out*. [‘He caused the window to be open/out by pushing it.’]

Similarly, it is thought that the adverbial *in* also shows the resultant aspect. As seen in the schemas above, an adverbial *in* implies that a trajector results in being within the *in*-domain through a process that the verb causes. In other words, a change of aspect is caused by the movement of the entity into the *in*-domain. The change of aspect implies specification in the conditions where the object is influenced by the verb.

In addition, although Quirk et al. (1985: 1155) explains that some phrasal verbs do not have alternative forms regarding word order between the object and the adverb, the construction of this kind can be analysed on the principle of ‘iconic cohesion,’ *i.e.* a phenomenon that word order arises according to the order of events occurring. For example, (8) describes that ‘He pushed the window and then the window opened’. The sentence suggests that ‘the window’ was shut before the action began. This is also the case with the particle *in*. Lakoff(1987: 277) says, “there is a correlation in our experience, between a structure in the purpose domain and a structure in the domain of movement”, and he describes the three stages:

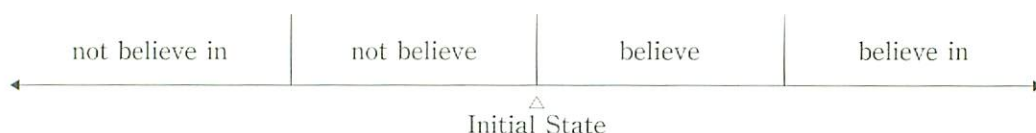
Initial State = Location A (starting point)

Final (Desired) State = Location B (end point)

Action Sequence = Movement from A to B (motion along path)

Although a verbs-*in* construction shows only Final (Desired) State and Action Sequence, it is thought that the speaker must understand Initial State implicitly. This is similar to that movement is visually perceived by a difference of the present position and the past position, although the viewer sees the present position only.

The prepositional *in* is also supposed to share the feature of a change of state, for example ‘to believe in someone or something’ suggests that the speaker did not have confidence in the entity and nor think that it would have been successful at a certain point before the point of the utterance. This is because it is impossible that someone innately ‘believes in someone else or something’, and it is presupposed that there is degree of belief on an incremental scale, *i.e.* that ‘to believe in someone or something’ understands that the speaker believes them or it and in addition it is true at any moment.



Therefore, such mental activity as belief in someone or something presumes the point where the activity occurs and the part where the activity has not yet occurred on the scale; the former shows a change of state. An activity to the right of the scale implicates activities to the left (A similar analogy might be made with *disbelief* and *distrust*). Thus, there is contrast between an implicit initial state and an explicit final state, which is associated with a concept of a progressive intensity.

The author thinks that while the adverbial *in* has a dynamic feature, which shows the result of a motion that a verb brings about, the prepositional *in* has a static feature, which is typically seen in such example as *in a room*. However, the prepositional *in* as in (1a) and (1b) is thought to be different from the typical usage to some extent, because it is used in the particular collocation with a verb *believe* or *trust*. As seen above, the change of aspect implies specification in the conditions where the object receives the influence by the verb. This aspectual meaning of the adverbial *in* is originally derived from the usage of the prepositional *in*, for example *in appearance*, *in practice*, *in theory* and *in this sense of the word*. This is limitation on incidental conditions or methods when an action shown by a verb is proceeding.⁶⁾

4.

It is thought that the limitative function of the prepositional *in* is distinctly shown in terms of a prototypical figure of the particle. It is quite simple to show the prototypical meaning of *in* using a figure. In a given region, a line is drawn to divide an inner area and an outer area. See Lindner(1981: 139). According to Clark(1972: 433-435), children understand the function of *in* as a relationship between a thing and a container in the early stage. The author thinks that in the process of language acquisition the speaker learns to shift the external relationship to the internal relationship. In other words, children realise that an abstract valuational relationship can be expressed with a metaphor of a concrete spatial relationship as a part of their linguistic knowledge.

Johnson (1987: 21) discusses the metaphoric image that a body is a container. The author thinks that the metaphor is useful when we think about the usage of *in*. We have seen that the basic verbs have their own paths in relation to the speaker; more precisely the path is drawn related to the position of a viewpoint,⁷⁾ which can be related to a part of the speaker's body. A body as a container has the function of selection, that is to say, a boundary (*e.g.* skin or other sensory organs) works as a filter. A filter selects an entity coming from the outside according to some criterion; the entrance through a filter is thought to be an active movement and the activeness is transferred to a certain value through the projection of a valuational relationship mentioned above.⁸⁾ Typical cases are such adverbial phrases as *come in*, *get in* and *put in*, because an election is obviously selection and a win in an election means arrival at power, which seems to be concentrated in a more limited region.⁹⁾ In particular, entrance into a body is thought to become possible with the intention of the speaker. Therefore such phrase as *take in* means the active intake of information, or a compulsion to make someone believe the assumed information.¹⁰⁾

In a certain cognitive expression, a viewpoint is fixed, while changes are thought to occur in its surrounding regions. We are familiar with such an expression as 'The runway was approaching', while the same scene can be described as 'We are approaching the runway'. See Honda (1997: 10). The difference of the sentences depends on the viewpoint; while the latter is the objective statement, the former is the subjective representation where a viewpoint is fixed. A viewpoint of the speaker holds temporal and spatial consistency, *i.e.* identity.¹¹⁾ Identity is held by thinking the same entity through time and space.¹²⁾

The author thinks that embodiment is the entity which occupies a certain time and

space, and that a concept of embodiment is required in order to project the essential meaning of *in* on an abstract valuational relationship through mapping. ‘To believe in someone or something’ is distinct from ‘to believe someone or something’ in the meaning that the latter implies a belief of only a utterance in a given occasion, while the former means a belief in such a continuous entity as personality, value, divinity and so forth. This view is thought to involve an immobile body or immobility of embodiment. The *in*-domain is recognised as the semantic core in a temporal flow or a spatial extent.

As seen before, the basic usage of *in* is learnt at a comparatively early stage among spatial prepositions. The preposition of this kind is connected with such a verb meaning a mental activity as *believe* through the metaphor of a body as a container, and therefore it is expanded to share an abstract meaning. This is because the metaphorical understanding plays an important part in human cognitive processes through language.

5. Conclusive remark

As the prototypical figure of *in* shows, the fundamental function of the preposition is to define a particular limited region out of other regions by laying a LM. Considering the function in the figure-ground organization, specification by the *in*-domain causes a shift of other information into the background, and there occurs a shift of a particular entity into focus as a figure. This phenomenon is called perspectivization; the prepositional *in* makes the figure stand out by contrast with the ground.

The author believes that the paper has briefly shown that the metaphorical interpretation is beneficial to understanding of the grammatical usage.

NOTES

- 1) The author has done a study on the usages of prepositional phrases with *of* and *about* after several verbs meaning perceptions and linguistic activities. See Yamazaki (1994).
- 2) See COBUILD (1995: 141-142).
- 3) More specific phrase of this meaning is *send in*.
- 4) VP stands for a viewpoint, TR stands for a trajectory, and LM stands for a landmark.
- 5) See Nishimura (1997: 5).
- 6) In contrast, *out* is thought to mean generalization.
- 7) Existential ‘there’ coming from deictic ‘there’ provides the speaker with a space to be conscious of existence of referent. See Yamanashi (1995: 190).
- 8) ‘It comes/turns out that ...’ is paraphrased to ‘We are led to know that ...’, therefore

the movement of coming out of the *in*-domain is thought to be passive to some extent.

- 9) See Figure 2, where a small circle represents 'power', while the *in*-domain represents a society in which an election takes place. Figures 2 and 4 both represent *put in*. However, one figure is opposite to the other in terms of a path of a TR and the VP. As seen before, the path of *put* is thought to be drawn from the speaker. Regarding Figure 2, the author thinks that the speaker's attention is placed on the TR's path entering the small circle for the meaning of *put in*; this is a part leaving from the VP. This view explains the main difference between *put in* and the other two phrases in (4). *Come in* and *get in* are intransitive phrases and there is less involvement of the VP with the path of a TR. In these cases, cognition is thought to occur to the whole schema of Figure 2.
- 10) It is obvious that *take in* of (5b) does not mean the entrance of something into the speaker's body, but the author thinks that deception is understood in a meaning that someone is put under the control of the speaker by providing the assumed information.
- 11) The analogy with the *in*-domain and the metaphor of a body leads us to think that each body selects external stimuli in order to regulate life. Immunity, for instance, is a proper example of the metaphor of a body as a container which has a selective function, because immunity is based on the systemic ability to make a distinction between its own and foreign proteins. In other words, the immune system operates due to identification through time and space.
- 12) Just like the visual perception of movement mentioned before, identity is understood through identification of the present entity and the past entity, although we normally recognise only the present ourselves.

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