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**English Prepositions:
A Non-Specific Contrastive
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Most English today is used in communication not involving native speakers. This English is learned as a foreign language, but it differs significantly from Standard English in many areas, including prepositions. This paper is a step towards an incipient theory of prepositions as used by non-native speakers of English. The approach used is non-specific contrastive analysis, which is a methodology interested in predicting areas where learning English would prove difficult for speakers of any language. In this paper, existing research on the topic is surveyed and evaluated. The paper shows why a semasiological organization of prepositions is not an appropriate method of organization for a sublanguage, which English as an auxiliary language certainly is. A brief overview of the history of non-specific contrastive analysis of English is given, including but not limited to Charles Ogden's *Basic English* and the latest program, English as a Lingua Franca. The paper makes use of the findings of cognitive linguistics, especially the prototype theory and proto scenes, to create a better theoretical outline than the ones reviewed. A theoretical approach based on cognition and the onomasiological method of organization is put forth. The paper finishes with a discussion of several possible objections to the proposed methodology, as well as a critique of the misguided fusion of politics and linguistics typical of some proponents of non-specific contrastive analysis.

KEYWORDS

prepositions, non-specific contrastive analysis, proto scene, cognition, prototype

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses non-specific contrastive analysis of the system of prepositions in English. Even though commitment to research on prepositions is relatively uncommon even in mainstream linguistics, let alone in applied linguistics of auxiliary languages, this is neither the first nor the only foray into the area. However, a disclaimer must be put in place: there has been no theorisation of prepositions in English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth: ELF) – instead, the same procedure has been applied to prepositions as to verbs and nouns when they are treated as a part of ELF vocabulary. As shown below, applying standard corpus analysis of actual ELF texts¹ to prepositions leaves us with a skewed perception of them and even more unhelpful pedagogical methods. The analysis in this paper should therefore be regarded as a careful experiment whose aim is to provide a better, more effective and more realistic conceptualisation of prepositions in non-specific contrastive analysis. The paper places a lot of focus on ELF, but other instances of non-specific contrastive analysis are not disregarded. It begins by explicating what is being researched. Next, there is a brief but important overview of the history of non-specific contrastive analysis and how it relates to the contemporary view of prepositions within this paradigm. The overview is followed by a discussion of the existing proposals, and the paper provides a solution which should help conceptualise prepositions within ELF in a better and more pedagogically appropriate way.

2. OBJECTS OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Non-specific contrastive analysis (henceforth: NSCA) is a method within linguistics which, very basically, contrasts a specific language with all other languages in the world. Because this is practically impossible to do, the contrasted (i.e. all the languages in the world except the benchmark) is an abstraction of what linguists know about as many languages as possible. Conversely, the benchmark (i.e. that which is being contrasted with the abstraction) is a concrete, existing language. Obviously, in this case, the benchmark is English.

All research taken into account by this paper has some applicative motivation behind it. That is, aside from the theoretical side of NSCA, every author has an idea about how the results of his/her research should be used to help people learn the language. From this point of view, NSCA

¹ The term "texts" will be used throughout the paper for all bits of language performance, regardless of their being spoken or written.

does not differ dramatically from the more common "specific" contrastive analysis. What is special about NSCA is that its aim is to predict areas where speakers of *any* language in the world would have problems when learning English and provide a universal simplification of English with the view to rendering the learning process easier for them. Because this process strives for *universal* simplification – which differs from the sum-total of all specific simplifications (the result of a hypothetical specific contrastive analysis of English and every world language) – an abstraction must be used. The results of NSCA and different instances of specific contrastive analysis are then obviously also different. This will become important later in the discussion.

The question that quickly arises is "Why does NSCA of English exist?" There is no NSCA of Hungarian or Quechua. Is the number of speakers the factor? The answer seems to be no, since no NSCA of Mandarin exists either. The reason for NSCA of English is the fact that English has been widely used throughout the world as the language of communication between non-native speakers when they come into contact. The latest programme of NSCA, which is ELF, considers as its object of interest precisely the interactions between non-native speakers of English. Additionally, there are specific areas of communication where English is very widely used. David Graddol's (1997; 2006) research is especially interesting in this respect. In his first monograph on the topic, Graddol (1997) claims that the spreading use of English, coupled with globalisation and the spread of the Internet, would eradicate a large number of world languages since the benefits of using English would outweigh the benefits of using one's mother tongue. Nine years later, Graddol (2006) revises this position and realises that language use is not motivated purely by economic reasons, and this realisation, supplemented with new data, concedes that English is mainly used when speakers don't share a native tongue but need to communicate. It is still dominant in commerce, although its influence has been diminishing in favour of Mandarin and other languages (Graddol 2006). It is also still the dominant language of the content on the Internet (i.e. when users mainly decode a foreign language), where there seems to be no inclinations towards change, and the language of communication (i.e. when the users both encode and decode a foreign language), where the use of other languages, especially Chinese and, lately, Russian has been gaining ground (Graddol 2006; see also Internet World Stats n.d., "Internet World Users by Language").

Evident from Graddol's (2006) research is also the fact that different native speaker standards of English have ceased to be the most relevant factor in teaching English as a foreign language. While the goal used to be (and still remains, especially in Europe) to teach children to use English native-speaker-like, this goal was very rarely achieved. Instead, "English

is no longer being learned as a foreign language, [which was done] in recognition of the hegemonic power of the native speakers" (Graddol 2006, 19). This means that it is becoming less and less relevant to be able to speak, write, read and listen like the British or the Americans, but rather to be able to encode and decode in such a manner that everyone else can understand you. Native speakers are, according to Graddol, not given a privileged position in this system.

If English, as Graddol says, does not replace mother tongues, what, then, is its role in communication between non-native speakers? Sinclair (1996) describes a mode of communication corresponding well with such use, and calls it a 'sublanguage'. The idea is that speakers of a certain language voluntarily impose restrictions on the use of this language. They do so in order to achieve a better communicative effect than they could with the use unrestricted. Even though it seems paradoxical at first to limit the potential of a language to refer to meaningful concepts in order to communicate with more success, this is not inhibitory to communication. It is widely known that misuse of some characteristics of languages, such as clitics and redundancy, is perceived as a mistake even though renditions of those characteristics contribute nothing essentially new to the interchange. Since a misplaced clitic or a mismatched inflectional morpheme breaches language rules and therefore makes communication more difficult, this same communication would flow more easily if both interlocutors negotiated a code without clitics and redundancy – the speaker would not preoccupy themselves with encoding them and the addressee would not misinterpret the mistakes. We should therefore see a sublanguage with all of its restrictions as a method of communication "cleansed" of a large number of potential inhibitors to understanding. What is more, a sublanguage is not similar to any creole in that it replaces the language of communication that had been in place prior to its emergence. Instead, it always remains an ancillary mode of communication which is made use of only whenever it is necessary. English as a sublanguage is then used only when the two (or more) people involved in communication fail to communicate with their mother tongues or other modes of communication².

Finally, before outlining the history of NSCA of English, a quick word on the manner of its organisation is due. Sinclair (1996) also claims that no sublanguage is left free to develop on its own as it would become incomprehensible too quickly. How do authors address this? Graddol (1997, 63) calls for an "ethical framework" to help guide the polycentric

² To clarify: gesticulation, mimic, or even a language lexically closer to both interlocutors' mother tongues could be a more appropriate mode of communication.

map of English sublanguages, but he also places focus on non-native speakers as language creators, as can be seen above. Sinclair (1996) is more straightforward – for him, every sublanguage needs a central authority to prevent linguistic change from occurring too quickly for the users to follow. Since the ELF project (the contemporary authority) is using an abstraction which they themselves produce, they certainly need to take the onomasiological method into consideration. When it comes to prepositions, favouring the semasiological approach yields unconvincing and specific (as opposed to non-specific) results with very limited applicability that are sometimes in conflict with another person's research. I will return to this in section 4.

3. HISTORY OF THE NON-SPECIFIC CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF PREPOSITIONS

The first person to inquire into English as an auxiliary language was Charles Ogden in his 1930 work *Basic English*. Within his paradigm, prepositions are also given a significant amount of attention and a specific role (they are referred to as "directives" due to their function). Ogden predicted that 850 English words would suffice for basic communication while 2000 would suffice for proficiency. It is the 850 words that this paper focuses on. They are supposed to suffice for all practical purposes, which means that most salient categories in the speakers' outside world should all be nameable with this group of words. One of the more radical means Ogden used to trim the word list down to 850 was to drop the 'verb' category entirely, substituting verbs with 'operators'. Those are words used to describe operations, which are interactions between things (concrete, uncomplicated, stable objects). Unfortunately, Ogden is very vague when it comes to operators. He is more interested in the functional aspect than the theoretical aspect, which is why it is necessary to re-create certain thought processes he might have gone through.

It is not clear how operators differ from verbs in conceptualisation. Ogden simply claims that there are "objects which we wish to talk about, the operations which we perform on them and the directions in which we operate" (Ogden 1930, Introductory) and that the operators combined with directives describe all of those. He most likely created a rather arbitrary list of basic relations between things and concluded that 18 operators is all a speaker needs. These operators do in fact describe relations by combining with the directives. Whenever an operator-directive combination is not followed by an object, the meaning of the directive is adverbial. When the combination *is* followed by an object, the meaning of the combination is the combination of the meaning of the operator and the directive. Amazingly, Ogden pointed to conceptual blending half a century before it

was described in cognitive linguistics. Here are some of his examples:

- (1) Thoughts come into mind.
- (2) Come to tea. (for: *Have some tea.*)
- (3) Get at the details. (for: *Tell me the details.*)
- (4) Get ready at six. (for: *Be ready by six.*)

Here, the two operators are “come” and “get”, the first one describing the movement towards the speaker of the utterance and the second one describing a transition of state. To understand why certain directives are used with the operators to create meaningful utterances, one must actually know (not necessarily consciously) a significant number of typical metaphors in English. For thoughts to come *into* mind, one must be aware of the conduit metaphor (Radden 2008) combining the IDEAS ARE CONTENT and THOUGHTS ARE CONTAINERS metaphors. When one “comes to” tea, the tea is in the proximity of this person and the two interact (the person drinks the tea). Since “drink” is not among the operators, the proximity and relevance are combined in the PROXIMAL IS SAME metaphor, and the speaker can then interact with what is similar to their own body. The process is tedious to describe, but the metaphors are actually easy to grasp. The idea conveyed by the operator and the idea conveyed by the directive are blended, and the blend is understood by everyone. To understand these and other basic processes, Ogden claims people need only 18 operators and 20 directives. This, of course, means that every directive has a “root definition” (Ogden 1930, *Grammatical Principles*) or a core meaning it typically invokes in the speaker's mind. This will become crucial in the following chapter.

Much of Ogden's work is very insightful and still relevant today. Still, there remain several insurmountable problems with his theory. Aside from the vagueness which forces the reader into creativity, Ogden also distanced himself from idiomatic use. Phrases such as ‘fictional extensions’ describing any deviation from the ‘root definition’ (the core meaning) are perhaps indicative of his low opinion on non-transparent language. However, 88 years on, the fact that many idioms and set phrases make use of prepositions and that certain verbs collocate with certain prepositions cannot be overlooked. This paper proposes a division of prepositional meaning into three levels³. The first level is the dictionary

³ Originally, the idea for this division was passed to the author of this paper by Dušan Gabrovšek, PhD, Full Professor, during office hours

level, where prepositions are described as relations between a trajector and a landmark. This is also the standard form of a dictionary definition of a preposition: it is a lexicalisation of a certain relation between a static and immutable landmark and a less rigidly positioned trajector. The third level is the idiomatic level. Here, the meanings of prepositions are usually disregarded and preference is given to whole phraseological units as lexical items. The meaning of those is typically non-transparent or unidentifiable when compared to the dictionary-level meaning. The second level is the “middle ground” between the two extremes, and also the level of collocations. The meaning of the preposition here is neither completely opaque nor completely transparent. When conceptualising the meaning of the preposition, a sublanguage creator like Ogden should keep in mind all three levels and decide how to approach them. As evidence, the reader is invited to compare:

- (5) Donna sits by the lake.
- (6) She takes Donald by the hand.
- (7) The two don't play by the book.

Focus on the meaning of the preposition “by” in all three examples. In (5), its dictionary-level meaning related to proximity and circumstances comes to the fore. On the other hand, “by” in (7) cannot be analysed in the same manner. With a very liberal stretch of imagination, it is possible to connect proximity as the root meaning of “by” with the meaning of the idiom (“according to the rules”) by utilizing the PROXIMAL IS SAME metaphor, connecting sameness and relevance, and paraphrasing the metaphor as “what is in the book is relevant to me”. The book itself must be analysed in terms of metaphor, and the conduit metaphor must be taken into account again, before a clear-cut map of thought is laid before the navigator. This process includes a suspiciously complex system of metaphors for such a common idiom, but our knowledge is “procedural rather than declarative” (Langacker 2006, 44). Perhaps such a process was once in place, but when we use this metaphor, we do not go through this process again and again. Hence, the meaning of “by” is in fact not connected to the dictionary-level meaning here, not even via metaphor. Conversely, the “by” in (6) is still connected with proximity and circumstance – although the circumstance is closer to “instrument” than to “location”, like in (5) – but not as clearly as the dictionary-level meaning.

Ogden is by no means the only researcher of NSCA who omits the second and third levels of prepositional meaning, but there is plenty one can learn from his work. This overview will continue with the most contemporary project that involves NSCA of English, the ELF. ELF

researchers tend to compile their own corpora of actual ELF performance and draw conclusions based on the accumulated data. Unfortunately, the research seldom focuses specifically on prepositions. Still, the methodologies used by Önen (2015) and Kirsimäe (2017) will be adequate to provide some insight.

Önen (2015) compiled a spoken corpus of 54 different speech events between non-native speakers, namely exchange students at Istanbul University. She was after mistakes in the use of prepositions, and her findings can be divided into three categories. The first category can be called "grammatical mistakes" and it includes the uses of prepositions against collocational preferences of other words, as well as mistaken attribution of meaning to a preposition (e.g. using "above" instead of "over" when the trajector touches the landmark). The second category is more interesting. Önen herself names it "extending the use" and sometimes "overgeneralization". When confronted with two nearly synonymous options, one of which collocates with a preposition while the other does not, non-native speakers sometimes "extend" the collocation and behave as if the other synonym collocates with the preposition in question as well. Hence, because "having problems with sth" and "having difficulties with sth" are synonymous, as are "having problems *with* sth" and having problems *about* sth" too, the speakers in Önen's experiment sometimes used "having difficulties *about* sth". The final type of mistake is simply omitting the prepositions where the native speakers would typically use one (Önen 2015).

Kirsimäe (2017) comes up with the same groupings of mistakes in her sample of only nine texts, which are, however, comparable to Önen's sample in total length. She describes a lack of consistency in ELF users' use of the language as well.

Both Önen and Kirsimäe in fact come up with comparable tendencies of mistake-making in ELF use. The question everyone has to ask themselves now is: according to whom are these mistakes in fact mistakes? Evidently, they are mistakes in the eyes of both researchers because they themselves have been educated in English as a foreign language and both speak it flawlessly. If ELF is to be free of the influence of native-speaker English as the standard, then these deviations, especially patterns of deviations, should not be treated as mistakes but as trend-setting in ELF. It is hardly surprising that the two 'Englishes' would be driven apart through use over time.

However, there is a far more important problem concerning the methodology of this research. Önen claims to be working with a group of people containing speakers of twenty-four different mother tongues, seven of which are not Indo-European, and, curiously, of those seven,

three are listed as Cantonese, Chinese, and Mandarin. This is far from a representative sample. Kirsimäe is even less helpful in this respect, since her corpus includes only texts by native speakers of Estonian. Looking back at Section 2, it has already been explained why NSCA has to contrast a language and an abstraction. Taking into account twenty-five (or perhaps fewer) languages and claiming this to be an adequate sample for non-specific contrastive analysis is fruitless labour. People are right to claim that the emperor has no clothes on when a collection of specific languages are being used as *non-specific* anything. This conceptual problem was most likely formed out of necessity to create concepts based on actual use – on the persistent ideal of semasiology in dictionary making. Contrarily, as Sinclair (1996) and Ogden's story of relative success testify, it is vital to remain onomasiological when creating concepts for a sublanguage. Thus, the following discussion will build on cognitive linguistics and different aspects of what has been described above, and different papers that have already combined preposition use, language learning and cognitive linguistics. The final goal is formulating an incipient theoretical structure of preposition conceptualization in NSCA.

4. COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND PREPOSITION ACQUISITION

As far as native-speaker English is concerned, there are numerous reputable studies investigating the meanings of prepositions (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 1993; Lindstromberg 1996; Tyler and Evans 2003). Keeping in mind that prepositions are lexicalisations of different relationships between a trajector and a landmark, it seems wise to examine the possible relationships and compare the preposition-relationship pairs in order to see which preposition relates to, i.e. means, which relationship. Now, it is obvious that prepositions do not obtain their meanings from either the external world (there is no "thing" which a preposition would refer to) or the linguistic system (like anaphors do; they do not take up the meaning of a word that does refer to a "thing"). Instead, it is precisely the arrangement of "things" that gives prepositions their meaning. However, one finds oneself in an awkward position in cases when, on the one hand, two prepositions name the same arrangement of "things", as in

- (8) John pushed the stick towards Sonia.
- (9) John brought a stick for Sonia.
- (10) John gave the stick to Sonia.

or, what is even more common, when the same preposition, sometimes as part of a compound, describes seemingly unconnected arrangements:

- (11) The painting was hung over the fireplace.
- (12) John spilt milk all over the floor.
- (13) Jenna is an overachiever.

Authors such as Lindstromberg (1996), Lakoff (1987), and Johnson (1987) have all realized that there is an underlying schema to all prepositional meanings. There is a specific arrangement of the trajector and the landmark, something that will be referred to in this paper as a "proto scene" (Bratož 2014, after Lakoff 1987). Examples of those would be the "support schema" and the "containment schema". In the former, the trajector is stationary on a (usually two-dimensional) landmark which offers support to it. The most typical arrangement would include a smaller trajector on a larger, two-dimensional landmark, like "a vase on a table", but the support is more crucial than the size or the dimensionality. Therefore, an elephant may balance *on* a bike because the bike offers support, even though it is smaller and not a two-dimensional surface. Similarly, the containment schema is primarily about containment: here, the (usually three-dimensional) landmark prevents the escape of a trajector. Typically, a smaller trajector is located completely inside a bigger, three-dimensional space, as in "an apple in the basket", but one may still have a cigarette in one's mouth, even though it is never the whole cigarette, just the filter. The key feature here is that the landmark (the mouth) prevents the trajector from escaping.

Following Swanepoel (1998), all uses of a preposition require the knowledge of the schema this preposition is based on (Fillmore 1994). Since the preposition used to describe the containment schema is "in", every use of "in" therefore requires the knowledge of this schema, namely the notion of "containment" and its typical ancillaries "bigger landmark" and "three-dimensionality". Swanepoel also describes how the proto scenes are created and represented in the linguistic system: it is not merely so that children parrot their parents in describing arrangements resembling the proto scenes with the prepositions they hear being used. Instead, they see the arrangement itself in a basic form, and memorise the concept of the scene. These scenes are always spatial in nature because people have organs for the sensory perception of space, but not for other domains. In people's cognition, only spatial arrangement exists. However, on the linguistic-conceptual level, metaphorical extensions into other domains (primarily time, but also state, manner, circumstance, cause, reason, etc.) can be made. Lindstromberg (1996) describes one such process when he unveils the origin of the preposition "for": from a purely spatial arrangement, which is cognate to modern-day "before", new meanings of the preposition have been created through metaphor. "For"

primarily used to denote the trajector leaving its owner as a gift as it was placed in front of the recipient. This is the proto scene of "for". From that, meanings such as representation, intended destination, support, attitude etc. (Lindstromberg 1996) have developed.

Another important aspect of proto scenes and prepositions is the concept of prototypicality. Bratož (2014), following Geeraerts (2006), explains that certain uses of a particular preposition are more closely aligned with the proto scene than others. This has already been hinted at in this paper when it was claimed that "an apple in the basket" is more similar to the proto scene of containment than "a cigarette in her mouth". The ideal arrangement of the trajector and the landmark which is completely congruent with the proto scene is called the prototype. Those actual arrangements of a trajector and a landmark which are closer to the proto scene are more prototypical while those less so are less prototypical. Without going into too much detail, the boundaries between belonging and not belonging to a particular proto scene are not strictly defined, or are fuzzy. Fuzzy boundaries and non-sufficient belonging can cause confusion when it comes to the use of prepositions, but overall, learners most likely achieve better results at preposition use when they have been exposed to schema theory and prototype theory (with appropriate simplifications).

In fact, Bratož (2014) tested this method on 87 students and those exposed to the method described above performed better at encoding prepositions when learning English as a foreign language (Bratož 2014). Swanepoel (1998) also laments the lack of observance of cognitive linguistics, this time in lexicography. Their findings are in stark contrast with Paul Brians' (2009) in his *Common Errors in English Use*, where he claims in the paragraph titled "prepositions (wrong)" that users having problems acquiring prepositional meanings should immerse themselves in "good English" to remedy the issue (Brians 2009, 142). This is at best unhelpful and at worst reactionary to the idea that English does not belong to its native speakers.

The way forward for NSCA of prepositions seems to lie in the cognitive approach to language. This approach allows for a theoretically sound conceptualisation of the meaning of prepositions, which in turn allows the ELF project to be onomasiological without inhibiting the creative potential of non-native speakers. Additionally, it must not be forgotten that the main goal of ELF is still universal simplification of English so that non-native speakers may communicate easily and successfully.

To be able to teach the meanings of prepositions, then, the ELF project should, in my view, research the potential of very basic proto

schemes almost everyone in the world faces in their everyday life. Notions such as “support”, “containment”, “scattered” etc. seem ubiquitous, hence in need of a name. After these proto scenes are enumerated, they should be drawn in their spatial form so that the learners may see the arrangements in their most accessible forms. After that, the method may start to vary, depending on the preposition. Guidelines should be made to show the learners how less prototypical arrangements still resemble the proto scheme in various attributes. Especially important in this respect are the metaphorical extensions into abstract domains. Because of their identifiable ties to the proto scene of “from” (roughly described as a zero-dimensional ablative relation between the trajector and the landmark), strings such as “taking an apple from the table” (dictionary level), “working from 8 AM” (middle level, extension into the temporal domain), “speaking from experience” (middle level, extension into the circumstance domain) and “taking candy from a baby” (idiomatic level) may become more accessible to learners and possibly spontaneously standardised, while “in the picture” will either be freely interchangeable with “on the picture”, or the latter will prevail, simply because the presence of a character in art is metaphorically more difficult to access than the slight extension from the “support” proto scene.

5. DISCUSSION

Several questions need addressing before the conclusion. While the answers may prove to be obvious to some, there is a case to be made about the connection between understanding the idea of NSCA and predictable protests an inattentive reader might voice. One could, for example, have doubts about the benefits of proto scenes that linguists would create anew. Why not simply use the image schemata on which English native speakers' use of prepositions is based? After all, the native speakers of English are humans, sharing the same universal cognitive processes with other humans, and one could expect the proto scheme of the preposition “in” to be the same with all humans and all languages. This is, perhaps self-evidently, against the fundamental premise of NSCA. Although the brains of native speakers of English are not biologically different from the brains of native speakers of other languages, at least when it comes to the language-processing part (Jackendoff 1995), this does not mean that everybody conceptualises everything the same way. As implied above, cognition is based on bodily experiences (Johnson 1987). People most certainly do experience the world differently, especially in terms of categorisation. For European readers, the prototypical fruit would most likely resemble an apple, but this will not be the case for a person from Central America, where apples are not indigenous. Similarly, it is unreasonable to expect ubiquitous cognitive schemata. Some may

very well be, like the aforementioned support schema and containment schema (simply because support and containment are very basic notions) or the UP IS MORE metaphor, which is based on pouring liquids in containers, where more liquid results in higher levels of surface, hence MORE meaning UP. But this only means that some of the work to be carried out by ELF will be easier. The workload, on the other hand, must stay the same. Because the topic is *non-specific* contrastive analysis, self-evidence is to be consistently questioned.

Another possible afterthought for teachers concerns the collocation method by Bratož (2014). Since the first results were encouraging, should teachers then pursue the path of “proper” English instead of ELF? After all, what is considered “correct” for children is adjusted for the duration of their education every year, and universal simplification is not wholly incompatible with this idea. The complete answer to this challenge lies outside the field of NSCA, and this is not the place for an epistemological debate, but suffice it to say that awareness of existing (however limited) collocational patterns of native-speaker English does not facilitate easier communication between non-native speakers in the same way that an approach which moves the burden of language innovation from native speakers to non-native speakers does. Furthermore, collocations can be tricky. As Önen (2015) has shown, false analogy is a significantly productive process in non-native-speaker English. It is not unreasonable to expect extensions of collocability to near-synonyms if learning strings of words by heart is all that is expected from a learner. It is difficult to see how Bratož’s approach is more favourable than NSCA, however idealistic the latter may be.

The main challenge to universally accessible English prepositions, however, lies in what Swanepoel (1998) verbalises as the failure of prepositions to overlap in their prototypical senses. This is connected to the question of universal proto scenes: he simply questions the extent to which meaning can be motivated (i.e. how well the speakers are able to draw connections between a proto scene and different arrangements of the trajector and the landmark lexicalized with the same preposition). Going back to examples (5–7), Swanepoel mentions the possibility that no matter how hard linguists try and describe the connections between the proto scene for “by” and its realizations as a preposition with a meaning on all three levels, the speakers will possibly never even passively be able to grasp its concept, let alone actively encode with such a concept in mind. How is it possible to avoid a system which is too complicated for non-linguists to understand, and still preserve motivated meanings on all three levels? For the sake of brevity, it is necessary to be rather opaque here. The preservation of all three levels is crucial. Any other type of theory of prepositions carries the unwelcome potential not to cover all

instances of their use. The key to success lies in the degree of simplicity: regardless of how the final product of contrastive work will ultimately look, it is absolutely necessary that the connection between the proto scene and the preposition is transparent enough that the speaker is able to draw connections between the two. Admittedly, what this boils down to is truly that the system will be simple enough to be usable because we will make it simple enough to be usable. However, it is through practical work alone that the desired level of transparency can be achieved. This is not in conflict with the previous insistence on an abstraction as that which is contrasted to authentic examples, because it is not the case that an abstraction is an immutable artefact. Different instantiations of trajectory-landmark arrangement in proto scenes are all abstractions, and it remains to be seen which one will work the best. For now, one can offer merely predictions. For example, we can suspect that the preposition "since" will become obsolete because it shares its proto scene with "from" (both are ablative and zero-dimensional). However, because "from" pertains to space, the basic domain of which the temporal domain is an extension, it would be much easier for the speakers to use "from" for both space and time since they metaphorically extend locative prepositions to the temporal domain as it is. The testing of hypotheses such as this one will eventually yield a picture of a workable system.

5.1. NON-SPECIFIC CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS – IDEALS VERSUS REALITY

Finally, there is the issue of separating the unstable fusion of linguistics and politics. As far as NSCA is concerned, linguists are working towards the common goal of facilitating effective communication. However, for different reasons more suited to a discussion in a journal of political science, very many authors attribute to this communication some other superior motive, such as increasing the democratic potential or legitimising the use of English as the language of an ex-empire.

How this is manifested differs from one piece of work to another. Ogden (1930) and Graddol (1997) (and to some extent Graddol 2006), for example, claim that English is the most appropriate language for a Lingua Franca for purely linguistic reasons. They independently cite a lack of an elaborate system of noun inflection, an almost complete absence of grammatical gender, a simple typical verbal paradigm, etc. On the other hand, Quirk (1981, 151) first calls international communication "an indisputable desideratum" and then proceeds to describe how self-evidently positive it supposedly is for symbolic and material exchange to spread throughout the world. Communication in English is for him a means to achieve some kind of a beneficial end for humanity. This *self-*

evidence is key here: none of these authors offer any argument as to why this should be so. It seems to be simply an element of common sense to them that the majority of the world speaking English would alleviate an unnamed existing issue. To offer an objection to this peculiar marriage: linguistics and politics seem to have been wedded by a reverend in whom nobody has vested the power to wed. Why would exchange (since communication is a manner of exchange) create a better world? Certainly, subjugated peoples from colonized lands would like to have a say in this. Furthermore, it is significant that the discussion on universal languages began in Britain. Apparently, this was because English speakers were notoriously terrible when it came to learning Latin, which is why they lobbied for another language to be used as a language of international communication (Eco 2003). If this is what Graddol and Ogden had in mind when they wrote "linguistic reasons", they failed to indicate a tongue-in-cheek, to put it mildly.

Eco (2003) compiled an entire history of the endeavours to find a language in which all necessary communication would be carried out with the least difficulty. Before English, there was French, which was considered linguistically the most appropriate language for global communication (Eco 2003). There is also a South American language called *Aymara*, which is renowned for readily accepting concepts into itself (although it lends itself less readily to translation into other languages). According to Eco, it is *Aymara* and not English that is linguistically the most appropriate language for cross-cultural communication (Eco 2003). It should therefore come as no surprise that English is considered to be the "most appropriate language" for NSCA for reasons which are most definitely beyond linguistics. Eco's (2003) conclusion is that German would be enjoying the status English now enjoys from the Netherlands to Hong Kong if the Third Reich had triumphed during World War II. Even though this is probably not entirely accurate, it does have a grain of truth in it, namely that English is the *Lingua Franca* today for political reasons, which does not necessarily relate to its features or how easily it lends itself to non-native speaker's needs. In order to facilitate communication around the world, it is not necessary for any NSCA to legitimize or dismiss English anyway: since non-native speakers of English already use English, it is a worthy objective to help them do so, no matter why this has come to be the case.

6. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this paper was to devise an outline of a theory of prepositions in NSCA. Several different works pertaining to the topic were reviewed and several tenets extracted which are necessary for

such a theory to work. First and foremost, every kind of NSCA with universal simplification in mind should not cause asymmetrical intelligibility among speakers based on their mother tongue. Any conceptualisation which favours native speakers or any other group of speakers is therefore ruled out. Most researchers, including Önen (2015) and Kirsimäe (2017), only researched speakers of specific languages and lumped their results together, which is not a suitable methodology for a truly non-specific contrastive analysis. This issue is simply resolved by using abstractions and an educated onomasiological approach. This paper presents that the best variant for such an approach is the variant based on cognitive linguistics. Since this field has been especially productive when it comes to prepositions, NSCA is entitled to make use of its discoveries. By investigating the nature of concepts such as trajector, landmark, proto scene and prototype, and by understanding the principles of the bodily basis of cognition described in detail by Johnson (1987), this paper concluded that the most useful way of conceptualising a preposition would be to devise universally accessible proto scenes, which are very basic in terms of their gestalts, and use those as concepts to be given a name (the preposition). Such an approach would also be able to provide the potential learners with the ability to connect the core (prototypical) meaning of the preposition with all three levels – dictionary, middle ground, and idiomatic – of prepositional meaning. Since English is idiomatically very rich, and since the reason why English is in fact the Lingua Franca today is its near-ubiquity, the middle ground and the idiomatic level of meaning must not be disregarded since there is no reason for them to vanish and they will persist in communication between non-native speakers for the foreseeable future. Should this fact change eventually, this theory will need adjustments, but for now, a truly useful theory of prepositions should not fail the speakers of ELF when it comes to non-dictionary use. Finally, there remains an accusation that this theory could be ultimately prescriptive, even though ELF is supposed to help non-native speakers to be language creators, which ultimately means that there should be no authority governing the use of language and effectively disqualifies onomasiological approaches. Two counterarguments are offered to this. First, the use of language is never completely free. There is an inevitably limiting social dimension to language, which renders it impossible that a certain person or group is free to bend or police language to its will – the users combat this tendency by simply not complying to the imposed rules. On the other hand, the relative stability of the language system and the fact that meaning is a negotiable quality grounded in bodily experience is not limiting but *liberating* in terms of communication: people can convey anything they want precisely because words mean what they deem them to mean. This ties in with the second counterargument, which is that this theory does not prescribe usage, it prescribes the connection between the concept and the name. The concepts in question are so basic that

every language user in the world already knows them and has a name for them stored in their vocabulary. They already use a name for this concept when using ELF anyway, so the only change to the existing usage would be an improved rate of consistency. To cause every containment to be expressed with "in" and to cause the communicating world to pay more conscious attention to how they use prepositions – this is what this paper strives to help cause. And, all the while, one should remain completely aware of both the fact that easier communication may be correlated with but certainly does not cause amelioration of any sociopolitical problems, and that the decisive factor for the contemporary spread of English is not the number of monosyllabic function words, but the imperialistic tendencies of its speakers during the Early and Late Modern Age.

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