Comparative Analysis of English Prepositions and Armenian Case Endings

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The present paper reveals one of the rather conspicuous differences between the English and Armenian languages, i.e. the role of the prepositions in English and that of the grammatical category of case in Armenian. It's common knowledge that modern languages may have some phonetic, lexical and grammatical similarities regardless of the differences in pronunciation, word building, morphology and syntax. Being the language-representatives of one and the same language family the English and Armenian languages may rather lack common phonetic and lexical features. However, these two languages have got similarities in their grammatical structure.

According to the morphological and typological classification of the languages at issue, as well as relying on the common structural features, the English language is classified in the series of analytic languages. In English such means as word order, stress, intonation, modal words are used mainly as means of expressing grammatical meanings. Whereas the Armenian language belongs to the series of synthetic languages. Inflectional morphology makes it possible to clarify the grammatical meanings expressed in the Armenian language.

The case system is quite developed in Armenian. In the latest works of grammar the synthetic notion and the definition of languages is being criticized on the basis of the fact that the case meaning can't be considered to be similar with the concrete relation and the synthetic function expressed by the case. Each case has got its basic meanings and synthetic functions on which the morphological meaning of the case is based. In the Armenian language it's only the Common (Nominative) Case that opposes to all the other cases in its form: it hasn't got any typical ending and it is considered to be the basic form for the other so-called inflectional cases.

Modern English doesn't have a rich case system. Here the synthetic applications typical of the case meaning are not expressed by means of case endings (inflections) but with the help of modal words (Blokh 1983:65). So prepositions here play the role of the modal words. It is just with the help of prepositions that different grammatical meanings of one and the same word are expressed.

For example:

> *փողոցից – **from** the street*
> *փողոցում – **in** the street*
> *փողոցի – **of** the street, etc.*

If case endings are considered to be morphemes, then prepositions are part of the vocabuary of the language as independent words. Many prepositions, mainly the prepositions of

place are considered to be words with full meanings and they can function as independent members of the sentence. Whereas the case endings lack any lexical meaning of their own. Yet the role of prepositions and case endings in some languages are equal.

Prepositions are wildly used linguistic units in Modern English. Used with the noun or the noun substitute, i.e. with the Pronoun and the Gerund, they express the relation between that same word and another word in the sentence. Other parts of speech which are used as nouns can take prepositions as well (Leech, Svartvik 1983:255).

Combinations of a notional word with a functional word are equivalent to separate words by their nominative function. Since a functional word expresses some abstract relation. Such combinations, as a rule, are quite obviously non-self-dependent: they are artificially isolated from the context.

In terms of their morphological structure prepositions in Modern English are simple (*on, in, at, for, with,* etc.), derivative (*behind, below, across, along*, etc.) and composite (*in front of, by means of, as for,* etc.). They may have a meaning of their own.

For example:

> *Her sister appeared carrying a wine-glass **in** which there was a raw egg,*
> *with a little cherry on it.*
> *Քույրը հայտնվեց գինու բաժակը ձեռքին, որ**ում** չու կար` վրան մի*
> *փոքր բալ:*
> *The path felt springy **beneath** his feet.*
> *Արահետը կարծես փախչում էր նրա ոտքի **տակից**:*
> *He dropped **into** a chair beside his mother.*
> *Նա ընկավ աթոռի **վրա**, մոր կողքին:*

Expanding the cited formative phrases with the corresponding notional words one can obtain notional phrases of contextually self-dependent value. There are prepositions which express concrete meanings: that of place (*on, in, at, out of,* etc.), position (*above, by, over, in front of, under, beneath, behind, below, on top of,* etc.), motion (*towards, into, though, along, away from,* etc.), direction (*up, down, along, across,* etc.) and time (*after, before, during, for, in, on, at,* etc.). There are prepositions expressing different abstract relations (*by, with, for, against, because of, instead of, owing to, according to*, etc). Some prepositions may have a double meaning (Leech, Svartvik 1983:93).

For example:

> *I've been here **for** already two weeks.*
> *Արդեն երկու շաբաթ է ես այստեղ եմ:*
> *He has brought a letter **for** you.*
> *Նա քեզ **համար** նամակ է բերել:*
> *I was punished **for** my little joke.*
> *Ես պատժվեցի իմ փոքրիկ կատակի **պատճառով**:*
> *They went **for** a walk.*
> *Նրանք զբոսանքի գնացին:*

*They sent **for** a doctor.*
Նրանք ուղարկեցին բժշկի հետևից:

As for syntagmatic groupings of functional words, they are essentially analogous to separate functional words and are used as connectors and specifiers of notional elements of various status. Functional phrases of such and like character constitute limited groups supplementing the corresponding subsets of regular one-item functional words, as different from notional phrases which, as free combinations, form essentially open subsets of various semantic destinations.

For example:

*No one could account **for** his objection to our plan.*
*Ոչ ոք չէր կարող ակնկալել, որ նա մեր ծրագրին **դեմ** կլինի:*
*He should be ashamed **of** himself.*
Նա պետք է որ ամաչի իր արածից:
*You shouldn't rely **on** him.*
*Չպետք է հույս դնես նրա **վրա:***
*Who is going to look **after** your children while you are away?*
Ո՞վ է խնամելու երեխաներիդ, մինչ դու այսրեղ չես:
*I've been dependent **on** both of you so long.*
Ես երկար ժամանակ ձեր երկուսից էլ կախված եմ եղել:

The use of prepositions is determined by different factors. Sometimes it may be quite free depending on the meaning that is meant by the speaker. In many cases the choice of the preposition is determined by the main word with which it is used. In other cases the choice of the preposition depends on the noun that follows it:

For example:

*Who was the first to speak **at** the meeting?*
Ո՞վ պետք է առաջինը խոսեր ժողովին:
*He went there **on** business.*
Նա գործով գնաց այնտեղ:
*He is now **on** a concert tour **in** Europe.*
Նա հիմա համերգային հյուրախաղերի է Եվրոպայում:
*I'm planning to finish it **in** February.*
Ես պլանավորում եմ ավարտել դա փետրվարին:

Prepositions, like all the other functional words re-interpreted by syntactic approach, also reveal some important traits that remained undiscovered in earlier descriptions. Functional words, considered by their role in the structure of the sentence, are proved to be exposers of various syntactic categories, i.e. they render structural meanings referring to phrases and sentences in constructional forms similar to derivational (word-building) and relational (grammatical) morphemes in the composition of separate words.

The corresponding meanings of the English prepositions have their equivalent forms in Armenian. Those meanings are expressed by the case category in Armenian. Case is the immanent morphological category of the noun manifested in the forms of noun declension and showing the relations of the nounal referent to other objects and phenomena. Thus, the case form of the noun, or contractedly its "case" (in the narrow sense of the word), is a morphological-declensional form.

In modern English there are many prepositions denoting time relationships or duration. The equivalent meanings in Armenian are expressed by the Dative case:

> Դասերն սկսվում են ժամը իննի**ն**:
> *Classes begin **at** 9 o'clock.*
> Երևանը գեղեցիկ է կեսգիշերի**ն**:
> *Yerevan is beautiful **at** midnight.*

but: Նա ամուսնացավ տասնյոթ տարեկան հասակ**ում**:
> *She got married **at** the age of 17.*

As is evident from the above examples the Armenian case ending -*ին/ում* corresponds to the preposition of time *at* in English. The English preposition *from* has got the equivalent meaning of the Armenian case endings -*ից*/*ուց* . The corresponding meaning of the preposition *by* is expressed by the case endings -*ով/յամբ* in the examples below:

> *Most people work **from** 9 to 5.*
> Շատ մարդիկ աշխատում են ինն**ից** մինչև հինգը:
> *They flew **from** Paris to Rome.*
> Նրանք Փարիզ**ից** թռան Հռոմ:
> *I translated the article **from** Russian into English.*
> Ես թարգմանեցի հոդվածը ռուսերեն**ից** անգլերեն:
> *He likes to travel **by** car.*
> Նա սիրում է երթևեկել ավտոմեքենա**յով**:

Generally in both languages prepositions are considered to be functional parts of speech. These are words that play the role of interpositional elements, determining the relations of notional words to one another.

Thus, according to the comparison of the case meanings in Armenian and the corresponding meanings of prepositions in English, it can be mentioned that there is a certain kind of correspondence between them which can bring to the creation of several useful grammar rules which may be observed by translators. It will naturally make things easier for them while doing translations from Armenian into English or vice versa.

References:

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Անգլերենի նախդիրների և հայերենի հոլովական վերջավորությունների համեմատական վերլուծություն

Սույն հոդվածում համեմատվում են անգլերենի նախդիրները և հայերենի հոլովական վերջավորությունները, բերվում են օրինակներ, որոնց հիման վրա ներկայացվում է հայերենի տարբեր հոլովների և անգլերենի տարբեր նախդիրների համապատասխանությունը: Պետք է նշել, որ հոդվածի թեման շարունակելի է և ենթակա է հետագա ուսումնասիրության, քանի որ ակնկալվում է, որ հոդվածում շոշափվող թեման բավականին օգտակար նյութ կարող է ծառայել անգլերենի նախդիրների և հայերենի հոլովական վերջավորությունների համապատասխանունն ուսումնասիրելու համար: Նման ուսումնասիրությունները կարող են հանգեցնել թերականական կոնկրետ կանոնների ստեղծմանը, որը բնականաբար դյուրին կդարձնի թարգմանչական աշխատանքը հայերենից անգլերեն և անգլերենից հայերեն: