

# Grammaticalization of *a*-Derivative Prepositions in English

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Rhee, Seongha. 2002. Grammaticalization of *a*-Derivative Prepositions in English. *The Journal of Linguistic Science* 21, 133-156. This paper examines *a*-derivative prepositions in English from a grammaticalization perspective. It analyzes eleven prepositions that are currently in use, albeit some of them are not frequently used and are presently at the verge of disuse, by means of eight different semantic change mechanisms that have been proposed in grammaticalization studies. It is shown in particular that they are characteristically derived from nominal sources and that there are multiple mechanisms operative in grammaticalization processes. (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

**Key Words:** grammaticalization, *a*-derivative preposition, mechanism, semantic change

## 1. Preliminary

Cross-linguistically prepositions belong to a grammatical category that shows a high level of grammaticality with diverse semantics and functions, and thus have received much scholastic attention both from grammarians and linguists. Belonging to the SVO word order language group, English has the prepositional system contra postpositional system, and there have been numerous prepositions that emerged and disappeared in the history of the English language. This paper examines a subset of the English prepositions, specifically those that were morphologically derived in conjunction with *a*-, which itself was originated from *on* and *an* that were prepositions in OE, signifying 'on, in, unto, into, to'. Among those that fall into this category, only eleven

prepositions are further selected, based on the fact that these are either currently in active use, or were so until recently and in limited uses surviving in certain literary genres. These prepositions are listed in (1) below.

(1) *a*-derived prepositions

| Prepositions | Composition   |
|--------------|---|
| abaft:       | a 'on, at' + b 'about' + æftan 'behind/back'  |
| aslant:      | a 'on, at' + slant 'slant, slope'   |
| athwart:     | a 'on, at' + thwart 'cross'   |
| aboard:      | a 'on, at' + board 'plank, table, shield, ship'   |
| above:       | a 'on, at' + be 'by, near' + ufan 'up, above'   |
| across:      | a 'on, at' + cross 'cross'  |
| around:      | a 'on, at' + round 'round'  |
| about:       | on 'in, on' + be 'by, near' + ut 'out'  |
| against:     | on 'in' + gagn/gegn 'direct, straight' + es 'Genitive' + t<br>'Parasitic' <sup>1)</sup> |
| amid(st):    | on 'in' + middan 'middle (Dative)'  |
| among(st):   | on 'in' + 5emonge 'mingling, assemblage, crowd'   |

One caveat is that despite its surface similarity, preposition *along* does not belong to this category, because its seemingly identical component *a-* is not a derivative of *an/on* but a historical remnant of *and* that meant 'against, facing, in a direction opposite', which was combined with *lang* 'long'.

Despite the shared characteristic in their morphological makeup, *a*-derived prepositions in English do not form a homogeneous category. It is partly due to the fact that generally prepositions are old grams, and have undergone numerous changes individually at different speed. Consequently, the development into prepositions is intricately affected by historical morphosyntactic changes.

However, there are certain characteristics that are shared by these prepositions, or by many adpositions in general across languages, that

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1) For a detailed discussion of semantic changes of *against*, cf. Rhee (in press).

many of them are based on concrete nouns or nominal concepts; and that very often they are cross-categorically used as adverbs.

Since the scope of grammaticalization research encompasses potentially all levels of grammar, grammaticalization of prepositions may be looked at from many different perspectives. Our immediate concern, however, is that they have undergone numerous semantic changes through diverse change mechanisms. This paper focuses on characterizing such diachronic semantic changes from a grammaticalization point of view.

## 2. Mechanisms of Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and so are the change mechanisms involved in it. A notable mechanism operative in syntagm, thus of syntactic change, is reanalysis. In terms of semantic changes, there have been many change mechanisms proposed by grammaticalization scholars, a partial list of which is shown in (2).

- (2) a. metaphor (Matisoff 1991, Sweetser 1988, 1990, Bybee et al. 1985, Heine et al. 1991a&b)
- b. metonymy (Traugott & König 1991, Heine et al. 1991a)  
(may subsume 'pragmatic inference' and 'teleological contiguity' (Rhee 1996))
- c. generalization (Bybee 1988, Bybee et al. 1994)
- d. subjectification (Traugott 1980, 1982, 1988, Traugott & König 1991)
- e. IST (image-schema transformation) (Lakoff 1987)
- f. frame-of-focus variation (Rhee 1996, 2000)

A mechanism deserving new attention is of a case where a schematic-transfer occurs, which, however, does not involve metaphorization. This shall receive detailed exposition in §3.3 in conjunction with metaphorical schematic-transfer.

In a list of mechanisms, a caveat to be noted is that these mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, and their division is not sharply delineated. Therefore, a single change may involve multiple mechanisms.

Consequently, in the following analysis some of the change phenomena as an instantiation of certain grammaticalization mechanism may be quite compatibly analyzed as a product of a different mechanism.

### 3. Grammaticalization Paths of *a*-Derived Prepositions

#### 3.1 Reanalysis

As indicated earlier, reanalysis is a mechanism that operates on the syntagmatic axis, whereby a surface manifestation of a syntagmatic string is covertly reconceptualized in terms of its constituency. This initial 'mistake' becomes reinforced through repetition to the point of conventionalization. This type of change is attested in the following examples.

(3) *abaft*:

a (prep. 'on, at') + *baft* / *bæft* / *bi-æften* ('behind, after')  
cf. < OE *be*, *bi* (prep. 'about') + *æftan* ('behind, back')

(4) *above*:

a (prep. 'on, at') + *bufan* ('above, atop')  
cf. < OE *be* (prep. 'by, near, about') + *ufan* ('up, above')

As seen in the above, *abaft* and *above* are products of affixal derivation involving more than one locative prepositional prefixes. For example, before prepositional affix *a-* was affixed to *baft* to form *abaft*, *baft* itself had been a derived form from *be/bi* and *æftan*. Likewise before *above* was formed from *a-* and *bove*(<*bufan*), *bufan* itself had been derived from *be* and *ufan*. Consequently the final result is stacked prepositional affixes. Supposedly, this type of stacking of semantically similar (i.e. locative) prepositions was only possible by the fact that the first product was reconceptualized as having no morpheme boundaries (i.e. in *baft* and *bufan*) as if it is a mono-morphemic word.

#### 3.2 Metaphorical Schematic-Transfer

Metaphor is a semantic mechanism which has been one of the most widely subscribed to by grammaticalization students, even though a question as to its status of being a legitimate mechanism has been raised by others, most notably in Heine and Traugott (1993) and Bybee et al. (1994) *inter alia*. It has been often pointed out that metaphors involve schematic transfer, whereby only the skeletal structure of events or states is utilized whereas the details are ignored. The structural transfers are thought to be typically involving domain changes. It is these domain changes that justify its nomenclature of metaphor, i.e. applying a term in one domain to another. However, as we shall see in the following discussion, there are certain changes that involve schematic transfer which, however, does not involve domain changes. Among the *a*-derivative prepositions, the following examples seem to be unequivocal cases of metaphorical changes.<sup>2)</sup>

- (5) *aslant*: 'across in a slanting direction; athwart'
- a. There is a Willow growes *aslant* a Brooke. (1602 Shaks.)
  - b. To run somewhat *aslant* the ordinary conventionalities of life. (1877 Page)
- |          |   |          |
|----------|---|----------|
| SOURCE   | > | TARGET   |
| physical | > | abstract |

The above example shows that *aslant* in (5a) makes reference to a physical feature, a property associated with its original or early semantics, whereas in (5b) it involves reference to a more abstract world. A similar change is attested with *athwart* as shown in (6).

- (6) *athwart*: 'from side to side of; transversely over; across (of motion); across or transversely to course or direction of (nautically)'

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2) Heine et al. (1991b) show that the cases apparently involving a metaphor may in fact be mediated in the intervening stages by context-induced reinterpretation (CIR), thus motivating the authors to differentiate micro-structure where CIR operates and macro-structure where metaphor operates. However, in absence of detailed historical data that enable us to test this in conjunction with the *a*-derivative prepositions here, we opt for leaving the issue for other research.

- a. A locklat bar was drawn athwart the door. (1470. Henry)
  - b. The stars that shoot athwart the night. (1712. Pope)
  - c. A French privateer.. whom he run athawart and sunk him.  
(1693. Luttrell)
- |          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| SOURCE   | > | TARGET     |
| tangible |   | untangible |

In (6a) the preposition *athwart* refers to a direction involving physical and thus tangible object; in (6b) the object (i.e. the night) is less physical and less tangible; and in (6c) the preposition (here *athawart* a variant of *athwart*) is referring to a pure direction, i.e. a boat running in a 90-degree angle toward the flank of another boat, unlike its previous uses that involve physically crossing a referenced object, thus rendering the semantic designation here to be extremely untangible. Further examples are available with *above* as in (7).

(7) *above*: 'earlier than in time; superior to the influence of; out of reach of; over in authority; above (the head of (someone)); higher in rank or position than; over in authority; higher in degree surpassing in quality; surpassing in quality, amount, number, etc.'

- a. Cristes lufe.. lyftes abowne layery lustes and vile couaytes.  
(1340. Hampole)
  - b. I inclose revise of Felix Holt's Address.. The only fear is its being too much above your audience. (1867. Blackwood)
  - c. Men must learne now with pittie to dispence, For Policy sits aboue Conscience. (1607. Shaks.)
  - d. þat is -- loue þi lorde god leuest aboue alle. (1377. Langl.)
  - e. It was neuer Acted: or if it was, not aboue once. (1610. Shak.)
- |         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| SOURCE  | > | TARGET   |
| spatial |   | temporal, quality, authority, etc. (scalar concepts) |

In the above examples, unlike its original senses of physical 'aboveness', the preposition *above* refers to quality (as 'above worldly desires and evil covetousness' in (a)), ability (as 'beyond the audience's

understanding or intellectual capacities' in (b)), authority (as 'on the higher plane than conscience' in (c)), preference (as 'higher in preference in all' in (d)), and amount (as 'more frequently than once' in (e)). All these show metaphorical changes from a domain of physical space into a domain of abstract scalar quality. Likewise *around* exhibits similar changes.

(8) *around*: 'about (of time, amount, etc); about; sometime near'

a. Presuming he was born around three o'clock in the afternoon, he is under Leo and the Sun. (1888. N.Y. Mercury)

b. S. Motor Company shares, which usually sell around \$100 each. (1920. Daily Tel.)

|         |   |                    |
|---------|---|--------------------|
| SOURCE  | > | TARGET             |
| spatial |   | temporal, quantity |

The examples in (8) are instances where preposition *around* is used in temporal concepts (as 'around 3 o'clock' in (a)) or in quantitative concepts (as 'around 100 dollars' in (b)). Now, let us consider *about* with examples in (9).

(9) *about*: '(attributive/practical/abstract connection) appertaining to/ dealing with/ concerning; near in time; near in scale/quantity'

a. His face is the worst thing about him. (1603. Shaks.)

b. This thinge the whiche ye ben aboute. (1385. Chaucer)

c. We haue some secrets to confer about. (1590. Shaks.)

d. Bee you in the Parke about midnight. (1598. Shaks.)

e. He's much about my size and figure. (1768. Goldsm.)

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| SOURCE   | > | TARGET                                   |
| physical |   | abstract (association, approximation...) |

In the examples above, *about* is used to refer to certain connections between two objects, where the nature of the connections is largely abstract, such as attributive quality, association, temporal proximity, qualitative/quantitative approximation, etc. Semantic changes of *against* also shows similar metaphorization.

(10) against: '(obs) drawing towards; near the beginning of; close to'

- a. On a dai, agenes the eue. (1320. Sir Bevis)
- b. The white swan Agens his deth be-gynnyth for to synge.  
(1385. Chaucer)  
SOURCE > TARGET  
spatial temporal

In the examples in (10), preposition *against* is used to refer to temporal concepts, as 'near the evening' in (10a) or 'near death' in (10b). The domain transfer in this semantic change is from space to time. Similarly *amid(st)* exemplifies metaphorical changes as shown in (11).

(11) amid(st): 'with (indicating state, condition, actions or events, in relation to the circumstances which surround an action)'

- a. Amid the choice Of all tastes else to please thir appetite. (1667. Milton)
- b. The last voice heard amid the roll of apocalyptic thunders.  
(1871. Macduff)
- c. How wanton sits she amid nature's smiles! (1719. Young Busiris)
- d. The carriage drove off amid the good wishes of the two remaining ladies. (1812. Miss Austen)  
SOURCE > TARGET  
physical abstract (association, centrality)

The examples given above show instances of the uses of preposition *amid(st)*. As shown in other similar cases, the original prepositional use that involved physical domain, i.e. referring to a group of tangible entities, has been shifted here into one that involves abstract entities, such as tastes (as in (a)), thunders (as in (b)), smiles (as in (c)), and wishes (as in (d)). A similar change is illustrated with *among(st)* as in (12).

- (12) among(st): 'during; in course of; during the time that (obs.)'
- a. Among these thinges during these triews the king of sklauonye sente his propre messenger. (1475. Caxton)
  - b. I never went to any place among all my life.. which I had before.. thought of. (1691. Baxter)
  - c. Aman5 þam þe hi ridon. (1075. O.E. Chron.)
- |          |   |                     |
|----------|---|---------------------|
| SOURCE   | > | TARGET              |
| physical |   | abstract (temporal) |

The above examples are of preposition *among(st)*, which quite analogously to the previously discussed *amid(st)*, shows a transfer from a physical domain to an abstract domain. For example, all examples in (12) show a temporal reference of duration, thus rendering the example sentence (12a) into one that means 'while these things were happening', (12b) 'during my lifetime', and (12c) 'during that time'.

From the above discussion we can see that the most common type of metaphorical changes is that of [physical > abstract], as exemplified by [space > time], which is in consonance with numerous observations presented elsewhere in grammaticalization research (cf., for example, Heine et al. 1991a&b).

### 3.3 Non-Metaphorical Schematic-Transfer

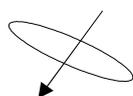
As indicated earlier, schema transfer is considered as typically involving domain changes, and such transfers have been often equated with metaphors. The following examples, however, seem to definitely involve schema transfer, which nevertheless do not seem to change their domains. Let us look at the following examples.

- (13) athwart: 'across in various directions; to and fro over; all over'
- a. The borial blastis.. hed chaissit the fragrant flureise.. far athourt the feildis. (1548. Compl. Scot.)
  - b. Posts went forth athort the whole country. (1662. Baillie Lett.)

The above examples show that preposition *athwart*, which originally

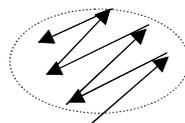
referred to a bisecting direction of a trajector across a landmark, thus typically involving a single movement, has been changed to refer to multiple and diffuse cutting movements, signalling 'across in various directions; to and fro over; all over; etc.' This indicates that the original schema of a single right-angle crossing movement (as in (14a)) has been transferred to movements disregarding its singularity or right-angularity (as in (14b)).

(14) a.



>>>

b.



What is notable here is that the domain where the 'athwart-ness' concept belongs did not change in this type of transfer. Therefore, this is an instance of the schematic transfer that does not accompany domain changes.

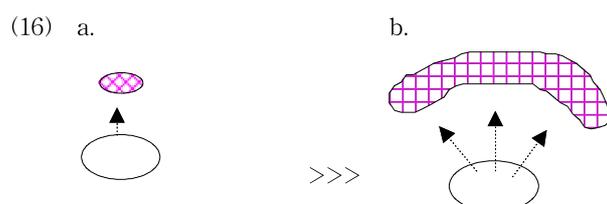
Likewise the following are examples of preposition *above*.

(15) above: 'directly over; vertically up from; on or over the upper surface of; on the top of; relatively over; farther from center of solid body'

- a. He is buuen us and binopen, biforen and bihinden. (1200. Moral Ode)
- b. Ðat place es neghest aboven hel pitte, Bytwen purgatory and itte. (1340. Hampole)
- c. Now by the sky that hangs aboue our heads, I like it well. (1595. Shaks.)
- d. Hell opens, and the heavens in vengeance crack Above his head. (1833. Wordsworth)

The examples given above show the semantic changes of *above*, where the semantic designation was originally about an area 'directly over' which was later extended to the general diffused area vertically up above the referenced object. It can be schematically presented as in

(16) below.



Furthermore, preposition *across* shows a similar phenomenon. Let us consider the following examples.

- (17) *across*: 'in a direction forming a cross with; at right angles with; at any angle with; sideways or obliquely against'
- a. When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue, Her bow across her shoulder flung. (1747. Collins)
  - b. A wind very like the March east wind of England, blew across me. (1860. Dickens)

In the above examples, preposition *across*, as is evident from its morphological construct, i.e. a combination of *a-* and *cross*, referred to a 'crossing' movement, either imagined or actual, forming a right angle as two limbs of a traditional cross intersect. However, this schema is transferred to a domain which does not concern such strict angular shapes. For example, *across* in (17b) designates a diagonal suspension of a bow across the shoulder rather than its original perpendicularity; and in (17c) it designates diffused passage of wind 'across' me, which may form irregular angles against perpendicular shape of 'me'. This type of transfer may be schematically represented as in (18).



What is worth noting is that this type of domain-internal schematic transfers may be subsumed under the mechanism 'generalization'. Semantic generalization may occur either within or across domains (for inter-domain changes, cf. Rhee 1996). Therefore, non-metaphorical schematic transfer is a subtype of generalization.

### 3.4 Metonymy

Metonymy has been often invoked to explain certain types of semantic change in grammaticalization. Metonymy is a cognitive strategy representing one thing with another, when these two entities have a relationship based on contiguity. There are several different subtypes of metonymy, but the most important in grammaticalization research is the one that is based on teleological contiguity. Let us look at the following examples of prepositions *athwart*, *aboard*, and *across*.

- (19) *athwart*: 'from side to side of; transversely over; across (of motion); from side to side of... (of position or direction)  
a. Moses then led them.. *athwart* the red sea. (1623. Lisle)  
b. Nor neuer lay his wreathed arms *athwart* His louing bosome.  
(1588. Shaks.)

>> Expressing POSITION/DIRECTION by MOTION

- (20) *aboard*: '(of position) on board of; within boards or sides of; (of motion) on to or into (a ship)'  
a. Is he *aboard* the fleet? (1805. Southey)  
b. *Aboord* my Gally, I inuite you all. (1606. Shaks.)

>> Expressing MOTION by POSITION

- (21) *across*: '(of direction) in a direction forming a cross with; (of motion) from side to side of; quite through; over in any direction except lengthwise'

- a. Faith builds a bridge *across* the gulph of death. (1742. Young)  
b. A footman will run your errand *across* the town. (1866. Martineau)

## >> Expressing MOTION by DIRECTION

As seen in the above examples (19) through (21), the original semantics is conceptually contiguous to the newly extended semantics. For example, *athwart* in (19a) refers to a motion that results in 'athwart-ness'; whereas in (19b) it refers merely to position or direction that somehow suggest 'athwart-ness'. What interests us here is that the concepts 'direction', 'motion', and 'position' are very closely related from the human teleological construal of the world's state of affairs. In other words, if something is in certain direction, it is likely to be viewed as involving a movement; and if something is viewed as in a movement, it is likely to be viewed as one that will result in being located at a certain position.

Likewise, in (20) *aboard* was originally for a position, i.e. being on a boat, which, however, was used for the motion of 'boarding a boat'. Again, the concepts of 'position' and 'motion' are conceptually contiguous. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that English speakers may say 'Out of here!' as a command demanding a motion of '*moving out* of here'. This type of teleological metonymy seems quite prevalent in English.

In a similar fashion, examples in (21) show that a motional concept is expressed by means of a directional concept. This shows that a mere direction may be dynamically viewed as involving a motion.

### 3.5 Generalization

Semantic generalization bears a special significance in grammaticalization, because it is widely accepted that a source lexeme must be sufficiently generalized in terms of its semantic content before it is grammaticalized. The following example of *athwart* shows an instance of semantic generalization.

(19) *athwart*: '(catachrestically) through; across'

- a. *Athwart* the terrors that thy vow Has planted round thee, thou appear'st more fair. (1719. Addison)

The example shows that the original semantics of *athwart* that refers to an image schema of crossing action has been changed to something akin to 'distribution', i.e. 'through'.<sup>3)</sup> Considering other similar usages attested elsewhere, the semantic generalization pattern may be represented as in (20).

(20) From CROSSING ACTION to ACTION, PATH, DISTRIBUTION

Prepositions *aboard*, *above*, *about*, and *against* similarly show semantic generalization as exemplified in the following.

(21) *aboard*: 'in or into a train, an aircraft, etc.'<sup>4)</sup>

- a. Mrs. Johnson and I left Washington aboard a Presidential jet. (1972. Johnson)
- b. Why not preserve the fixture used to initially transport the satellite aboard the shuttle? (1985. Aviation Week & Space Technol.)

From BOAT to ALL MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

(22) *above*: 'surpassing in quality, quantity, amount, number...'

- a. God hath anynted the with the oyle of gladnes above they felowes. (1535. Coverdale)
- b. She is not yet in al above xviii. yere. (1509. Hawes)

From EXCELLENCE IN QUALITY to GENERAL GRADABLE CONCEPTS

(23) *about*: '(of position) near; around; (of motion) round'

- a. Abouten Grece there ben many Iles. (1366. Maundev.)
- b. Do my message in preching my woorde about the worlde. (1534. More)

From DIRECTLY NEXT TO OUTER SURFACE to ALL VICINITY

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3) According to OED this semantic designation was a result of catachresis. This erratic change, however, still shows a human cognitive pattern in strategic use of language.

4) Etymologically, *aboard* is derived from OE *bord* which signified a plank, table, etc. and poetically a ship.

- (24) against: '(obs) exposed to light, cold, etc.; (more generally)  
towards the front of, near, adjoining'
- a. As a forme of waxe Resolueth from his figure 'gainst the fire.  
(1595. Shaks.)
  - b. I met him against the pond. (PDE, dial.)  
From TANGIBLE ENTITIES to LESS TANGIBLE ENTITIES  
From OPPOSITION to VICINITY/ASSOCIATION

### 3.6 Subjectification

Subjectification refers to a human tendency whereby people add more subjective viewpoint in interpreting an event or a state. The subjectivity is largely divided into two categories—anthropocentricity and egocentricity. The former attributes 'human' quality to something initially devoid of reference to humans; and the latter attributes the speaker's self-centeredness to something initially devoid of such deictic concepts. The following examples of *against* present cases of semantic change involving subjectification.

- (25) against: '(of time) drawing towards; near the beginning of;  
(preparation) in view of; in preparation for; in time for'
- a. Pat God wil Azeins domesdai. (1350. St. Jerome's)
  - b. When the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, he had built,  
against her arrival, a palace. (1875. Emerson)
  - c. He has a few pounds put by against a 'rainy day.' (Mod.)  
FOREGROUND action with BACKGROUND event re-interpreted  
as preparatory action.

In each of examples in (25) two events are presented in an 'against-relationship', as a typical composition of two-place predicates requiring a trajector and a landmark. What is notable here is that such eventive arrangements, as God's action and the doomsday in (25a), the visit of Queen Sheba and completion of building a palace in (25b), and saving money and coming of a time of financial difficulties, are now re-interpreted—the foreground event as a preparatory action and the

background event as a situation that calls for such preparatory actions. This kind of semantic change is a result of subjectification whereby language users re-interpret a series of events with the knowledge of the world with human propensity of making preparations for events to come. By attributing this quality to events, juxtaposition of two events are now subjectively re-interpreted as preparatory action and a situation requiring it. This is a substantial change in the nature of the relationship between the two events.

Similar subjectification phenomena are also attested in the examples of other prepositions as shown in the following.

(26) athwart: 'into the notice or observation of; across the course of so as to oppose'

- a. Be not proud if that chance to come athwart they seeing side, which meets with the blind side of another. (1642. Fuller)
- b. Ye sweep athwart my gaze. (1817. Coleridge)
- c. If you come a-thwart me, 'ware. (1748. Smollett)  
CROSSING EVENT applied to human visual field.  
CROSSING EVENT re-interpreted as (semi-)intentional action.

(27) above: 'higher up a slope; nearer the source of river; farther from the sea than'

- a. Behind and above it the vale head rises into grandeur. (1855. Ht. Martineau)  
Re-organizing NATURAL GEOGRAPHY according to human ecological situation as deictic center.

(28) across: '[get] on the wrong side of (slang)'

- a. One was always getting across Denver, but it never came to anything. (1926. D. Sayers)
- b. he's got across that damned Greek. (1960. M. Stewart)  
CROSSING EVENT applied to human emotion.

(29) against: '(from *again*) directly opposite; towards; in regards to; in reception of; in welcome of; toward & into contact with; into direct collision with; in the opposite direction

to the course of anything; counter to (implying adverse motion or effect); opposed in tendency or character; contrary to; not in confirmity with; towards with hostile intent; (generally) in hostility; competing with; in resistance to; in defence or protection from; of mutual opposition; in exchange for; instead of; in the opposite scale; on the other side; as a counter-balance to'

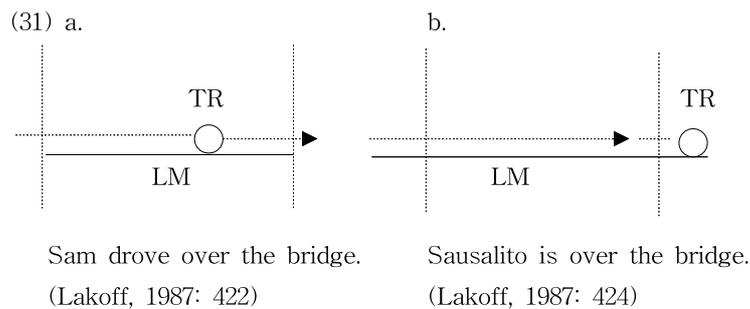
- a. The men sitte upon the bench next the wall and the women againste them on the other side of the table. (1551. Robinson)
  - b. Opene þe žatis ažens me! (1430. Hymns to Virg.
  - c. Remedies ayenst sikenesse. (1477. Earl Rivers)
  - d. That agynste his great loue we be not founde vnkynde. (1534. More's On the Passion)
  - e. A little pain will weigh against a great deal of pleasure. (1722. Wollaston)
- REPETITION re-interpreted as OPPOSITION/DIRECTION.  
 DIRECTION re-interpreted as receptiveness.  
 OPPOSITION re-interpreted as countering.

(30) against: 'in optical contact with something behind'

- a. Far visible Against the clear blue sky. (1805. Southey)
  - b. The pictures stand out better against the dark wall. (1884. Mod.)
- OPPOSING EVENT applied to human visual field.

### 3.7 IST (Image-Schema Transformation)

Image-Schema Transformation refers to a process whereby an image-schema associated with semantics of a certain word is modified and as a result a semantic change occurs. This is an excellent tool of explaining certain meaning relationships in polysemy. This is well exemplified by the following examples from Lakoff (1987).



Likewise, the *a*-derivative prepositions show similar relationships among their senses. The following is a simplified list of semantic characterization of certain senses associated with some of such prepositions.

- (32) a. *athwart*: '(of motion) from side to side of; transversely over; across; ... (of position or direction)'  
b. *aboard*: 'on board of (motion); ... (position); ... (motion/position)'  
c. *across*: 'in a crossing direction (direction); ... (motion); ... (position); ... (distribution)'

In the above, we see that the three prepositions have senses in such domains as motion, position, and direction. As was discussed briefly in §3.4, these semantic domains are conceptually contiguous. This conceptual contiguity is no doubt due to the fact that they are derivable from a single schema, as, for example, shown in (31)—motion in (31a) and position in (31b). For this reason of derivational processes among direction, motion, position, and distribution are all available from a single schema by way of minor modification.

### 3.8 Frame-of-Focus Variation

Frame-of-focus variation refers to a process of modifying the frame size and locus of focus in viewing an image- or event-schema. There is certain commonality between frame-of-focus variation and

image-schema transformation (cf. §3.7) in the sense that both of them refer to image-schemata.<sup>5)</sup> However, frame-of-focus variation is better equipped in analyzing more complicated semantic relationship as, for example, the cases of semantic changes of antonymization (Rhee 2000). It is due to the fact that frame-of-focus allows for variable frame-sizes that warrant telescopic viewing and microscopic viewing of a single schema. Presumably all (or most) cases that are explained by IST are equally compatibly explained by frame-of-focus variation. However, the following examples are more amenable with frame-of-focus variation.

- (33) a. above: 'over; higher than; in addition to'  
b. against: 'directly opposite; towards; near; adjoining'  
c. amid(st): 'in the middle of; between 2 things; surrounded by'  
d. among(st): 'in the mingling of; surrounded by & associated with; surrounded by locally; surrounded by the separate components of; in company with; in class of; as distinguished from; by the joint action of; reciprocal action between members of a group'

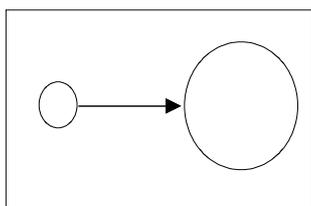
For example, (33d) shows various semantics of preposition *against*. The seemingly complicated semantic relationship among those senses can be straightforwardly explained by means of frame-of-focus variation, as shown below.

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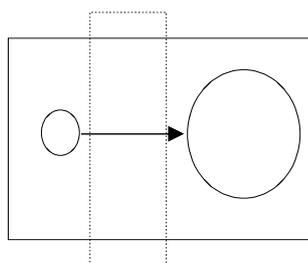
5) An anonymous reviewer points out that frame-of-focus variation also bears resemblance to metonymy in the sense that both can be subsumed under the same cognitive process. The author fully concurs with the point. However, frame-of-focus variation emphasizes certain ways of viewing and interpreting image schema, whereas metonymy does not necessarily do so.

(34)

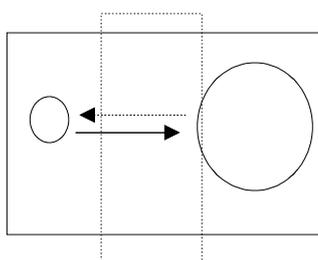
a. Focus-free 'against' schema



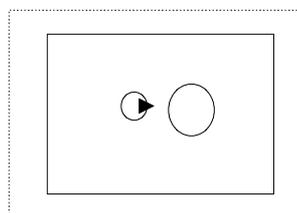
b. Direction focus ('towards')



c. Force-Dynamics focus ('opposite')



d. Telescopic focus ('near, adjoining')



In the above diagrams, (34a) is a focus-free schema of the concept 'against-ness'. This is the neutral basis of all concepts associated with 'A against B'. On the other hand, (34b) is the schema that has the focus frame superimposed on the directionality of the movement of the trajector from the current location of the trajector to the landmark. This schema brings forth the meaning 'towards'. The schema in (34c), the microscopic focus is again on the gap between the two entities. The only difference between (34c) and (34b) is that what comes into focus in (34c) includes the force-dynamics, i.e. the flow of the dynamism from the trajector to the landmark, and of the countering dynamism from the landmark to the trajector. The force may or may not be present in the real world, but what is important is that such is the human conceptualization, i.e. if there is A exerting certain force on B, B is thought, in return, to effect countering force against A. This type of conceptualization may be deep-rooted in the human experience in the

natural environment where action–reaction relationship is a natural law permeated in every aspect of the physical world.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper we looked at the *a*-derivative prepositions in English from a grammaticalization perspective with particular emphasis on their semantic changes that occurred in the history of English. Generally *a*-derived prepositions are based on concrete nouns or nominal concepts. By applying mechanisms of semantic change, we saw that category–internal grammaticalization phenomena, i.e. semantic changes within the prepositional status as a grammatical category, are indeed diverse and that multiple mechanisms are operative in the process. This observed fact renders a further support in previous research to the claim that no single mechanism can satisfactorily explain the genesis of multifarious senses from a single source lexeme.

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- ※ Most examples cited here are from OED, 2nd edition (1991).

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