

# Postpositions take centre stage: What can we learn about Afrikaans postpositions from descriptions in Dutch and English?

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## Abstract

Lexical units that are identical in form and that are traditionally referred to as either adpositions, adverbs, or particles (based on their morphosyntactic properties), can also be grouped together (based on semantic properties) under the term P-items (see for example Fontaine 2017). Although it is for most linguistic endeavours sufficient to refer to these items as P-items, it is desirable and sometimes even essential in some usage contexts to be able to determine in which one of the subcategories such lexical items should be categorised. In general Afrikaans and Dutch, for example, a lexical item that functions as a verb particle would in some syntactic contexts be written conjunctively with the verb but in other syntactic contexts not, while this is never the case for an identical form of that lexical item functioning as a postposition. Like in Afrikaans and Dutch, the distinction between different P-items is also not always straightforward in English. This article explores different strategies to

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distinguish between P-items in these three languages and proposes a set of questions as a strategy to identify postpositions in a more systematic way.

**Keywords:** Afrikaans, adposition, adverb, closely related languages, Dutch, English, particle (PTCL), P-item, postposition (POSTP), verb particle (PTCL.V)

## Opsomming

Agtersetsels in die kollig: Wat kan Nederlands en Engels ons leer van agtersetsels in Afrikaans?

Leksikale eenhede wat vormlik identies is en waarna tradisioneel verwys word as setsels, bywoorde en partikels (op grond van hul morfosintaktiese eienskappe), kan ook saam gegroepeer word (op grond van semantiese eienskappe) onder die term P-items (kyk bv. Fontaine 2017). Alhoewel dit vir die meeste linguistiese ondersoeke voldoende is om na P-items te verwys, is dit egter in sommige gebruikskontekste wenslik, en soms selfs noodsaaklik om te bepaal in watter een van die subkategorieë 'n leksikale item gekategoriseer word. In algemene Afrikaans en Nederlands, byvoorbeeld, word 'n leksikale item wat as 'n werkwoordpartikel optree in sommige sintaktiese kontekste vas aan die werkwoord geskryf en in ander nie, terwyl dit nooit die geval is met 'n identiese vorm van die leksikale item wat optree as 'n agtersetsel nie. Net soos in Afrikaans en Nederlands, is die onderskeid tussen verskillende P-items ook nie so eenvoudig in Engels nie. Hierdie artikel ondersoek verskillende strategieë om tussen P-items in hierdie drie tale te onderskei en bied 'n stel vrae as strategie aan om agtersetsels op 'n meer sistematiese wyse te identifiseer.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Afrikaans, agtersetsel (POSTP), bywoord, Engels, nabyverwante tale, Nederlands, partikel (PTCL), P-item, setsel, werkwoordpartikel (PTCL.V)

## 1 Introduction

It is difficult to distinguish between Afrikaans adpositions, adverbs, and verb particles, and therefore a clear set of guiding principles is needed for indisputable categorisation – especially to distinguish between an Afrikaans verb particle (PTCL.V) and postposition (POSTP). These lexical units, which are traditionally (and based on their morphosyntactic properties) referred to as adpositions, adverbs and verb particles, can be formally identical and can be grouped together (based on semantic properties) under the umbrella term P-items (see for example Fontaine 2017). In some usage contexts, however, it is desirable, and sometimes even essential, to be able to determine in which one of the subcategories a lexical item should be categorised. For example, given the fact that a PTCL.V in general Afrikaans should be written conjunctively with the verb in some contexts (as in 1), while an adposition in the same contexts should not be attached to the verb, it is important for an Afrikaans text editor to be able to distinguish between different P-items: to mark *in geloop* as an error in 2, but accept it as correct in 3.

- 1 *’n Paar matrieks kom ook ingeloop, elkeen met iets in bont papier*  
 a few matrices come also in.walk.PST each.one with something in colourful paper  
*toegedraai ...<sup>1</sup>* (in = PTCL.V)  
 wrap.PST  
 'A few matrices came walking in, each with something wrapped in colourful paper.'
- 2 *?’n Paar matrieks kom ook in geloop, elkeen met iets in bont papier*  
 a few matrices come also in walk.PST each.one with something in colourful paper  
*toegedraai ...<sup>2</sup>* (in = PTCL.V)  
 wrap.PST  
 'A few matrices came walking in, each with something wrapped in colourful paper.'
- 3 *’n Man het haar aan die hand gevat en die veld in geloop.* (in = POSTP)  
 a man have.AUX her by the hand take.PST and the field in walk.PST  
 'A man took her by the and walked into the field.'

In many cases, it is still difficult to determine to which part-of-speech category a P-item belongs. This is especially true in cases where the P-item occurs in the predicate after a noun phrase (NP) where it can be either a PTCL.V (i.e., a phrasal verb) or a POSTP. In 4, for example, it is unproblematic to categorise *in*<sub>1</sub> as a preposition, since *die wêreld* is clearly the prepositional complement. However, *in*<sub>2</sub> can be regarded as a particle of the verb *inloop*, or as a POSTP, in which case *in...in* should be categorised as a circumposition (CIRCP). It is also possible to rewrite the sentence in 4 as 5, and because *in*<sub>2</sub> can be separated from *in*<sub>1</sub> *die wêreld*, it would be more correct to categorise *in*<sub>2</sub> as a PTCL.V, rather than as part of a CIRCP. The *in* in 6 can similarly be categorised either as a PTCL.V or as a POSTP. Given the fact that it occurs in the same syntactic position as *in*<sub>2</sub> in 4, one could argue that *in* in 6 is also a PTCL.V. If that is the case, *die hut* should be considered the object of *inloop*. But *in* in 6 can also be viewed as a POSTP where the adpositional phrase *die hut in* functions as adjunct of the sentence.

- 4 *Ons pad loop in<sub>1</sub> die wêreld in<sub>2</sub>.*  
 our road walk in the world in  
 'Our road leads into the world.'
- 5 *In<sub>1</sub> die wêreld loop hy in<sub>2</sub>.*  
 in the world walk he in  
 'Into the world he walks.'
- 6 *Hy loop die hut in ...*  
 he walk the hut in  
 'He walks into the hut.'

The problems surrounding the sub-categorisation of P-items are not unique in Afrikaans, as is evidenced by existing literature that deals with P-items in other languages. In this contribution, we will attempt to shed light on the problems surrounding the subcategorisation of P-items by briefly reporting on existing literature in Afrikaans (§ 2) and two closely related languages,

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Afrikaans examples are taken from Viva's Korpusportaal: Omvattend (VivA 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted example.

namely Dutch (§ 3) and English (§ 4). In each section, we will focus on issues concerning the distinction between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs, and what Afrikaans can possibly gain from these distinctions. After investigating these issues and distinctions, we put forward a set of guidelines (derived from the literature) and determine their applicability and usefulness in identifying POSTPs in Afrikaans. Finally, we offer some thoughts on further research.

## 2 Postpositions in Afrikaans

De Villiers (1975:151-160) argues that Afrikaans "prepositions" can be used before or after their complements. First, he addresses cases where prepositions occur after the prepositional complement and are thus categorised as POSTPs. The first kind of POSTP he lists is prepositions in infinitive constructions (illustrated in 7). In this example, the prepositional complement, *'n huis*, is separated from the preposition *in*. The second kind of POSTP he mentions is prepositions in pronominal adverbs (illustrated in 8).

7 *Ons het ook 'n huis om in te bly ...*  
we have.AUX also a house to in PTCL.INF stay  
'We also have a house to stay in ...'

8 *Nou moet ek oefen om daarin te stap.*  
now must I practice to there.in PTCL.INF walk  
'Now I must practice to walk in that.'

Formally, pronominal adverbs are always compounds consisting of *daar-*, *waar-*, and *hier-*, followed by an adposition. However, pronominal adverbs can also be split. When this happens, the adposition occurs before its complement (see for example 9 where it is separated)<sup>3</sup>. In instances where the pronominal adverb is split, two constructions are possible. If the first constituent of the pronominal adverb is *daar* or *hier*, the adpositional complement will be *dit*. If the first constituent of the pronominal adverb is *waar*, the adpositional complement will be *wat*. In split pronominal adverbs, the adposition and its complement are sometimes separated by other words, as in 10, where *wat* and *in* (*waarin*) are separated from each other (Kotzé and Breed 2020b).

9 *... ek [um] het baie meer vertroue in dit.*  
... I [um] have very more trust in it  
'... I, uhm, have more trust in it.'

10 *Hoe vêr vir dit wat jy in glo?*  
how far for it what you in believe  
'How far for what you believe in?'

As an example of a preposition that occurs before the prepositional complement, De Villiers (1975) lists, inter alia, prepositions in elliptical constructions. An example can be found in 11,

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<sup>3</sup> This morphological construction is unique in Afrikaans, because the constituents exchange places (phrase = *in dit*, compound = *daarin*) and also have different parts of speech (phrase = preposition + pronoun, compound = adverb + postposition).

where the prepositional phrase is used without a prepositional complement such as *die vertrek*. Kotzé and Breed (2020b) refer to prepositions such as these as intransitive prepositions. They further distinguish between intransitive clauses with an external argument as in 11, where *kaste* is the external argument (i.e., the thing that is *in*), and those without an external argument as in 12. The latter are also called verb particles (Kotzé and Breed 2020b). Verb particles "are selected by the verb" (Kotzé and Breed 2020b) and although they also have independent meanings, the meaning of the PTCL.V is often dependent on that of the verb (see also Van Huyssteen et al. 2022).

- 11 ... *daar is 'n vertrek met kaste in waar almal se klere gebêre word.*  
 ... there is a room with cupboards in where everyone PTCL.POSS clothes  
 store.PASS become.AUX  
 '... there is a room with closets where everyone's clothes are stored.'
- 12 *Ons pas in by wat gereël is.*  
 we fit in at what arrange.PASS is.AUX  
 'We fall in with what is arranged.'

After a discussion of Afrikaans directional postpositions, Ponelis (1968:69) identifies the problem that we are investigating, namely the "homonymy" that exists between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs (compare the discussion in § 1 and examples 4 to 6). He proposes an easy test to distinguish PTCL.Vs from adpositions: No passive can be formed from constructions with a noun phrase (NP) and an adposition, while constructions with a PTCL.V can be passivated. He presents 13 and 14 as proof.

- 13 a. *Ek beveel dit aan.* (=PTCL.V)<sup>4</sup>  
 I recommend it on  
 'I recommend it.'
- b. *Dit word deur my aanbeveel.*  
 it becomes.AUX through me recommend.PASS  
 'It is recommended by me.'
- 14 a. *Ons vlug die veld in.* (=POSTP)  
 we flee the field in  
 'We flee into the field.'
- b. *\*Die veld word deur ons in gevlug.*  
 the field becomes.AUX through us in flee.PASS  
 '\*The field are fled in by us.'

However, Ponelis's test is problematic for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to determine whether the passive form of a sentence is acceptable or not, as its acceptability is based on entrenchment. A sentence like the one in 14b does not appear often in spoken or written Afrikaans and is therefore considered unacceptable by a user. However, it is also

<sup>4</sup> Examples 13 and 14 are taken from Ponelis (1968:69). Examples 15 and 16 are passivations of example 14.

possible that the passive form of a sentence with a PTCL.V rarely occurs and that it will therefore also be considered unacceptable. Poneis (1979:233) includes *aan* as a PTCL.V and gives as example *bied my 'n sitplek aan*. However, there are no hits for *'n sitplek aangebied deur* in KPO (VivA 2021) and therefore it will probably be considered unacceptable by users – regardless of the fact that Poneis (1979) classifies it as a PTCL.V and not a POSTP.

Secondly, the passive form of the sentence depends on the nature of the P-item. If *in* in 14 is considered a POSTP following Poneis (1968:69), then *die veld in* is an adpositional phrase that functions as an adjunct of the sentence. This means that *vlug* in 14a is an intransitive verb, which in turn means that the passive must be formed either with the dummy subject *daar* as in 15, or by placing the full adjunct in front as in 16 (compare Conradie 2020). However, when *in* in 14a is considered as a PTCL.V, *die veld* functions as the object of the transitive verb *invlug*, and then it is possible to passivise the sentence as it is done in 14b. Yet, according to Poneis (1968:69), it is the passive form of the sentence with a PTCL.V that is unacceptable. In our opinion, therefore, there is still no clear way to distinguish between PTCL.Vs and POSTPs.

- 15 ?*Daar word deur ons die veld ingevlug / in gevlug.*  
 there become through us the field in.flee.PASS/ in flee.PASS  
 'There is fled into the field by us.'
- 16 ?*Die veld in word gevlug.*  
 the field in become.AUX flee.PASS  
 'The field is being fled into.'

Unlike De Villiers (1975), Poneis (1968; 1979), and Kotzé and Breed (2020a; 2020b), who all acknowledge that POSTPs do occur in Afrikaans, Van Schoor (1983:44) considers all words after NPs that look like prepositions as adverbs. He gives two reasons for this view.

Firstly, there are words that can appear after NPs that can never be prepositions, for example *af* in 17 and *toe* in 18, and according to Van Schoor (1983:66) these words are therefore always adverbs. However, Kotzé and Breed (2020b) consider *toe* as the postpositional counterpart of the preposition *tot*. In addition to *toe*, they also mention some other POSTPs that differ in form from their prepositional counterparts (*mee* and *met*; *voor* and *vir*). This may seem somewhat strange, since prepositions typically do not undergo change in form (see for example Biber et al. 1999:74). Kotzé and Breed (2020a) mention *heen* as a POSTP in Afrikaans without a prepositional counterpart (see 19 for an example).

- 17 *Die vroue en kinders loop die berg af...*  
 the women and children walk the mountain down  
 'The woman and children walk down the mountain.'
- 18 *Nou moet ek huis toe gaan.*  
 now must I house to go  
 'Now I must go home.'
- 19 *Ons is iewers heen op pad.*  
 we be somewhere to on road  
 'We are on our way somewhere.'

Van Schoor (1983:66) further proposes that constructions such as those in 17 and 18 consist of two adjuncts that appear together, as illustrated in 20 and 21 where the two adjuncts are shown in square brackets. In frequently occurring constructions, the preposition introducing the first adjunct (bold in 20 and 21) is often omitted. What remains are the constructions in 17 and 18 which look like postpositional phrases, but which actually consist of a prepositional phrase (with a lost preposition) and an adverb.

- 20 *Die vroue en kinders loop [van die berg] [af] ...*  
 the women and children walk from the mountain off  
 'The women and children walk down from the mountain.'
- 21 *Nou moet ek [na die huis] [toe] gaan.*  
 now must I to the house to go  
 'Now I must go to the house.'

The second reason he gives, is that there are very few prepositions that can appear in this construction – according to Van Schoor (1983:66), only about 17 out of the more than 90 Afrikaans prepositions. He then laments the fact that the adpositions that do occur in this construction, are the ones that occur with the highest frequency in Afrikaans, and are therefore also the most “recognizable” as adpositions (and this might be why P-items in this construction are often, perhaps mistakenly, categorised as adpositions, and more specifically POSTPs). Other sources agree on this. Ponelis (1979:176) points out that postposition groups are rare and limited, and Kotzé and Breed (2020b) list some prepositions that are frequently used as POSTPs. However, Van Schoor (1983:66) considers the fact that all prepositions cannot be used as POSTPs as a reason to deny the existence of Afrikaans POSTPs.

In other words, apart from the fact that there is no solid and clear way in Afrikaans to determine whether a word is a POSTP or a PTCL.V, there are also some scholars, like Van Schoor (1983) for example, claiming that POSTPs do not exist in Afrikaans.

### 3 Postpositions in Dutch

Dutch grammars distinguish similar adpositional categories as in Afrikaans where POSTPs are typically described as an adposition that follows the adpositional complement (Broekhuis, 2020). In addition to the syntactic position of POSTPs, Broekhuis (2020) also highlights a semantic difference between prepositions and POSTPs. Where prepositions involve space and time relations (22), POSTPs express motion and direction relations (23a and 23b).

- 22 *Du: Jan zwemt **in de sloot**.* (Broekhuis 2020, adapted)  
 Jan swim in the trench  
 'Jan swims in the trench.'
- 23 *Du: a. Jan reed **de sloot in**.* (Broekhuis 2020)  
 Jan drive.PST the trench in  
 'Jan drove into the trench.'
- g*
- b. Jan kletste **de hele voorstelling door**.* (Broekhuis 2020)  
 Jan chat the entire presentation through

'Jan was chattering throughout the complete presentation.'

The uncertainty as to whether a P-item should be classified as a POSTP or as a PTCL.V is – as mentioned – also not limited to Afrikaans and is also mentioned in Dutch grammar literature (compare e.g., Koopman 2000, Van Goethem 2007, Capelle 2015). Beliën (2021) lists, among other things, numerous guidelines that can be used to identify a POSTP.

The first guideline has to do with the fact that a postpositional phrase can only be moved around in a sentence as a unit. When a phrase consisting of a P-item and an NP moves as a unit to, for example, the beginning of the sentence (compare 24a and 24b), the P-item would be a POSTP.

- 24 Du: a. *Ze moesten de straat op.* (Beliën 2021)  
 they must.PST the street up  
 'They had to go out on the street.'
- b. *De straat op moesten ze.* Beliën (2021)  
 the street up must.PST they  
 'Out on the street they had to go.'

The next guideline deals with the fact that adpositional phrases can serve as post-modifiers of NPs. Like a prepositional phrase, a postpositional phrase (in 25) such as *de haven in* can also be used as a postmodifier in a noun phrase where it modifies *de weg*.

- 25 Du: *Gelukkig is [de weg de haven in] ... de enige in Antwerpen waar  
 luckily be the way the harbour in the only in Antwerp where  
 nooit een file staat.  
 never a traffic jam stand  
 'Fortunately, the road into the harbour is the only one in Antwerp where there is never  
 a traffic jam.'*

The third guideline applies to sentences with two P-items that could potentially be PTCL.Vs (for example *weg* and *over* in 26). In such cases, only one of the P-items can end up being a PTCL.V while the other P-item should be regarded as a POSTP. In 26 *weg* is the PTCL.V (the separable verb in question is *wegtrokken*) and *over* is a POSTP.

- 26 Du: *Tijdens de Duitse aanval op de stad trokken zijn ouders met hem weg,  
 during the German attack on the city travel.PST his parents with him away  
 de Oeral over.  
 the Ural over  
 'During the German attack on the city, his parents fled with him, over the Ural  
 mountains.'*

The last guideline has to do with transitivity. In 27a, *uitduwen* may seem to be a particle verb, but a simple sentence may only have one direct object. If *uitduwen* is considered a particle verb, this means that both *de president* and *de zaal* must be direct objects of the verb. Because a transitive verb cannot take two direct objects, it means that *de zaal* would be a complement of the POSTP *uit*. The fact that *de zaal uit* is grouped together as a unit in the passive construction (compare 27b) further supports the postposition status of *uit* (compare the first guideline above).



- 27 Du: a. *Als ze bijna bij het podium zijn, duwen lijfwachten de president*  
 when they almost at the podium be push body.guards the president  
**de zaal uit.**  
 the hall out  
 'As they are almost at the podium, bodyguards push the president out of the hall.'
- b. *De president werd de zaal uit geduwd ...*  
 the president become.AUX the hall out push.PST  
 'The president is pushed out of the hall ...'

Beliën (2021) also offers various counterarguments to motivate that POSTPs should perhaps not be considered as a separate part-of-speech category, but that they should rather be seen as PTCL.Vs. The first argument entails that some P-items in some contexts (for example the infinitive and passive constructions) are written attached to the verb (compare 28). This argument does not really hold water as adpositions are never attached to verbs, and if a P-item does attach to a verb in this way, it cannot be an adposition.

- 28 Du: *Hij kan niet eens zijn eigen kind optillen.*  
 he can not even his own child up.pick  
 'He cannot even pick up his own child.'

The second argument states that the characteristics or syntactic possibilities of POSTPs correspond so strongly to those of PTCL.Vs that the morphosyntactic behaviour of the POSTP looks more like that of a PTCL.V than that of an adposition. For example, it is possible for both POSTPs and PTCL.Vs to be preceded by an adverb, as illustrated in 29 and 30.

- 29 Du: *De supporters kwamen uiteindelijk de grens niet over.* (=POSTP)  
 the supporters come.PST eventually the border not over  
 'Eventually, the supporters couldn't cross the border.'
- 30 Du: *De aanvoerder [...] had zijn tegenstander niet alleen vast, maar tilde hem ook op.* (=PTCL.V)  
 the captain have.AUX his opponent not only firm  
 but pick.up.PST him also up  
 'The captain [...] not only had his opponent in a grip but also lifted him up.'

Furthermore, it is possible to have the nominal adpositional complement of postpositional constructions in sentence initial position, for example *de telefoon* in 31. Much in the same way, the direct object of a separable verb, for example *De Croix de Fer* in 32, can appear in the beginning of the sentence. The complement of an adpositional phrase cannot be placed in this syntactic position.

- 31 Du: *De telefoon nemen we al een tijdje niet meer op.* (=POSTP)  
 the telephone take us already one time.DIM not more up  
 'For a while now already, we do not answer the phone anymore.'

32 Du: **De Croix de Fer** ben ik **opgereden** binnen twee uur,  
the Croix de Fer be I up.ride.PST within two hour  
**ruim op schema om goud te halen.** (=PTCL.V)  
ample on scheme to gold PTCL.INF get  
'I cycled up the Croix de Fer within two hours, well ahead of schedule to win the gold.'

The third argument shows that sentences with POSTPs as well as sentences with PTCL.Vs can be expressed in the passive voice. Poneis' (1968:66) passivation test to distinguish between PTCL.Vs and POSTPs in Afrikaans will therefore also not work in Dutch.

33 Du: Ik reed daar tachtig en werd door iedereen **voorbijgereden.** (PTCL.V)  
I drive.PST there eighty and become.AUX by everyone past.drive.PASS  
'I was driving eighty there and everyone was passing me.'

34 Du: **De container werd opgetild en leeggekieperd.** (POSTP)  
the container become.AUX up.lift.PASS and empty.throw.PASS  
'The container was lifted and emptied.'

In summary, the following criteria, drawn from available information in Dutch reference materials, serve to distinguish POSTPs from PTCL.Vs:

- (i) When a postpositional phrase can be moved around as a unit in the sentence, the P-item can be classified as a POSTP.
- (ii) A P-item can be classified as a POSTP if its postpositional phrase usage extends to functioning as a postmodifier within an NP.
- (iii) In sentences featuring two distinct P-items, one instance may be attributed to a PTCL.V, while the other should be appropriately categorised as a POSTP.
- (iv) In a sentence with a transitive particle verb, there cannot be two direct objects. Therefore, in a sentence where this seems to be the case, the P-item of the separable verb should be regarded as a POSTP and the verb as an adpositional verb.

In conclusion, notwithstanding these criteria, a range of opposing viewpoints has been put forth to justify why these POSTPs might be more suitably categorised as PTCL.Vs, namely:

- (i) Adpositions avoid verb attachment, meaning any P-item that is attached to a verb cannot be an adposition.
- (ii) The morphosyntactic behaviour of POSTPs look more like that of particles than adpositions.
- (iii) Nominal adpositional complements or direct objects of separable verbs can start sentences in postpositional constructions, unlike adpositional phrase complements.

#### 4 Postpositions in English

The P-items in English can be readily described without reference to POSTPs. Biber et al. (1999:74) consider prepositions as links that introduce prepositional phrases and that connect NPs with other sentence structures (Biber et al. 1999:74). They make a further

distinction between unbound (free) and bound prepositions. An example of an unbound preposition can be found in 35.

35 *Late one morning **in** June, **in** the thirty-first year of his life, a message was brought to Michael K as he raked leaves **in** De Waal Park. (FICT)<sup>5</sup>* (Biber et al. 1999:74)

In this example, the meaning of the preposition *in* is not dependent on the meaning of any of the other words in the sentence. Consequently, the preposition *in* in 35 has an independent meaning and is considered unbound. In contrast, bound prepositions depend on the meaning of another word in the sentence (usually a preceding verb). An example of this can be found in 36.

36 *She confided **in** him above all others. (FICT)* (Biber et al. 1999:74)

A similar distinction is made by Huddleston (2002:273) with the terms "unspecified" and "specified" prepositions. Unspecified/unbound prepositions can be replaced with other prepositions depending on the relationship being expressed. However, specified/bound prepositions cannot be replaced with other prepositions as can be observed in 37 where a specific preposition is required by the verb.

Biber et al. (1999:74) consider verb + preposition combinations as in 36 as a type of multi-word verb construction known as prepositional verbs (referred to as adpositional verbs in this paper). They distinguish it from verb + adverbial particle combinations as in , another type of multi-verb construction known as phrasal verbs (referred to as particle verbs in this paper) (Biber et al. 1999:403). Next, they make a distinction between prepositions and "adverbial particles" (Biber et al. 1999:78).

37 *Margotte rarely turned **on** the television set. (FICT)* (Biber et al. 1999:408)

Where prepositions have a special relationship with nouns, particles in turn have a special relationship with verbs and have a core meaning of movement and result. The distinction between adpositional verbs and PTCL.Vs can be made with the help of a particle movement test (Biber et al. 1999:408). While the preposition in a transitive adpositional verb construction cannot be moved to a position after the NP (see 38), the particle in a transitive PTCL.V construction can be moved to the position after the NP (see 39).

38 a. *I've never **thought about** it.*  
b. *\*I've never **thought it about**.*

39 a. *He had **put on** his spectacles. (FICT)*  
b. *He had **put** his spectacles **on**.*

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<sup>5</sup> Example 34 – 39, and 41 and 42 taken from Biber et al. (1999)

Huddleston (2002:273) also defines particles based on syntactic position and points out that particles can stand both between the verb and the object, as in 39a and after the object, as in 39b.

A further complication is the distinction between particles and adverbs. In this regard, Biber et al. (1999:78) offer a few ways in which particles can be distinguished from adverbs. They point out that particles are shorter and less complex than adverbs. The core meaning of particles is also limited, while the meaning of adverbs is more diverse. However, the most important distinction can be made based on syntactic distribution. In 40a we see that the particle can precede a specific NP with the function of object. However, an adverb cannot occupy the same position, as can be observed in 40b.

- 40 a. *It **swallowed up** the two men.* (FICT)  
b. \**It swallowed **completely** the two men.*

Huddleston (2002:281) also considers the fact that particles can precede the object as a distinguishing characteristic of particles. It is, however, the case that the end-weight principle in English in the case of "heavy" noun phrases lifts the restrictions on the position of adverbs, as Huddleston (2002:280) illustrates using the following examples where *down* is a particle (41a) and *downstairs* (41b and 41c) is an adverb.

- 41 a. *She **brought down** the bed.*<sup>6</sup>  
b. \**She **brought downstairs** the bed.*  
c. *She **brought downstairs** the bed that she had recently inherited from her grandmother.*

To distinguish between transitive adpositional verbs and a verb followed by prepositional phrase that fulfils the role of adjunct, Biber et al. (1999:405) suggests creating interrogatives. When an interrogative can be formulated with the words *what* or *who*, as in 42b, the noun phrase that follows the preposition fulfils the role of direct object of the prepositional verb. When an interrogative can be formulated with the words *when* or *where* as in 43b, the preposition forms part of the adjunct and not of the verb.

- 42 a. *The first goal **came from** Tim Cliss.* (NEWS)  
b. ***Who** did the first goal **come from**?*

- 43 a. *Bert had **appeared on** the stairs.* (FICT)  
b. ***Where** had Bert **appeared**?*

Regarding the distinction between verb + particle + object and verb followed by a preposition that fulfils the role of adjunct, Huddleston (2002:281) points out that movement is only possible with the former, and illustrates this with the help of the following examples:

- 44 a. *She **took off** the label.*  
b. *She **took** the label **off**.*

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<sup>6</sup> Example 40, 43 and 44 taken from Huddleston (2002)

- 45 a. *She **jumped off** the wall.*  
b. \**She **jumped** the wall off.*

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Huddleston (2002:280) still considers particles as a type of preposition, namely an intransitive preposition: "The most central particles are prepositions – intransitive prepositions, of course..." Capelle (2004:6-7) points out, however, that the term "intransitive prepositions" is problematic. Particles are intransitive clauses in the sense that objects that follow particles are not controlled by the particles. However, some intransitive prepositions do not behave like standard particles. Furthermore, there are some elements that can be considered particles, but which are not prepositions.

In English there are also prepositions that are "stranded" in clause-final positions, and therefore do not precede their complement, but the complement can be found elsewhere in the construction (Pullum and Huddleston 2002:627) and these stranded prepositions are therefore still seen as prepositions (rather than POSTPs) (see 46).

- 46 *The bed looks as if it had been slept in.*<sup>7</sup>

Since the P-items in English can be easily described without reference to POSTPs, the following criteria, derived from English reference sources, can be used to differentiate various P-items and related constructions:

- (i) **Adpositional verbs vs. particle verbs:** While the preposition in a transitive prepositional verb construction cannot be moved to a position after the noun phrase, it is possible with the particle in a transitive particle verb construction.
- (ii) **Particles vs. adverbs:** Particles are shorter than adverbs, have more limited meaning, and they can precede a specific noun phrase with the function of object, where adverbs are not able to occupy this position.
- (iii) **Transitive adpositional verbs vs. verbs followed by a prepositional phrase (adjunct):** Interrogatives formulated with *what* or *who* are possible in sentences containing a transitive prepositional verb, and ones formulated with *when* or *where* are only possible when the preposition is part of the adjunct.
- (iv) **Verb + particle + object vs. verb + particle (adjunct):** Movement in the sentence is only possible in the case of the former and not the latter.

## 5 Dutch and English strategies applied to Afrikaans data

To devise an effective test for distinguishing among the potential categories of Afrikaans P-items, we have rephrased the strategies used in Dutch and English as questions. This will enable us to ascertain their applicability to Afrikaans. We will evaluate each question individually below by presenting Afrikaans examples containing the relevant P-items. Since the focus of this paper is to find strategies that can be used to distinguish between Afrikaans POSTPs and PTCL.Vs, we will only focus on P-items occurring after an NP. We will

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<sup>7</sup> Example 45 taken from Pullum & Huddleston (2002)

subsequently list each of the formulated questions, followed by a discussion using examples containing relevant Afrikaans P-items to test whether the Dutch and English strategies can be applied to these examples.

### 1. CAN THE P-item MOVE INDEPENDENTLY?

This test is applicable in contexts where it is unclear whether the noun phrase is a complement of the P-item, making the P-item a POSTP, or whether the noun phrase is a direct object of the verb, making the P-item a PTCL.V (see 24 above).

- 47 a. 'n Paar keer klim hy af en **stap die veld in** nadat hy die leisels sekuur aan een van die karwiele vasgemaak het.  
a few times climb he off and walk the field in after he the reins secure on one of the cartwheels tie.PST have.AUX  
'A few times he dismounts and walks into the field after securely tying the reins to one of the cartwheels.'
- b. ?... stap **die veld**, nadat hy die leisels sekuur aan een van die karwiele vasgemaak het, **in**.  
walk the field after he the reins secure on one of the cartwheels tie.PST have.AUX in
- 48 a. Hul moet saam met haar **die veld in stap** – sy met 'n graaf en hul met die pakke vleis.  
they must with with her the field in walk she with a shovel and they with the packet meat  
'They have to walk into the field with her – she with a spade and they with the packs of meat.'
- b. Hul moet **die veld saam met haar in stap** ...<sup>8</sup>  
they must the field with with her in walk  
'They must walk into the field with her.'

The test works very well for 47, where the construction is unconventional when the position of the P-item is changed. However, the test works less optimally, for example 48. Although there is a difference in meaning in 48a and 48b, both of these constructions are, in our view, grammatically conventional and understandable. It is therefore not possible to determine whether *die veld in* 'the field in' is a PP (and *in* 'in' a POSTP), or whether *die veld* 'the field' is an NP<sub>OBJ</sub> (and *in* 'in' a PTCL.V). This test is therefore not a clear-cut way to distinguish between Afrikaans POSTPs and PTCL.Vs.

### 2. IS THE P-item PART OF A PHRASE THAT IS A POST-MODIFIER IN THE NP?

If the answer to this question is yes, then the P-item in question is a POSTP and the phrase that it is part of, is a post-modifier in the NP. The P-item can then not be regarded as a PTCL.V, given that it serves as the head of a PP which post-modifies the NP. In 49, *die ruimte in* 'into

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<sup>8</sup> Example 47b and 48b are modified versions of 47a and 48a, which are examples that were taken from VivA-KPO.

space' is a postmodifier in the NP with head *sprong* 'jump', and in 50, *die Ooskaap in* 'into the Eastern Cape' is a postmodifier in the NP with head *sakereis* 'business trip'. Therefore, the P-items *in* 'in' in both these examples are POSTPs.

- 49 *Mercury Freedom 7 waag met Alan B. Shepard jr. van Amerika 'n geslaagde*  
 Mercury Freedom 7 dare with Alan B. Shepard jr. of America a successful  
**sprong die ruimte in, maar sonder om om die Aarde te wentel.**  
 jump the space in but without to around the Earth PTCL.INF orbit  
 'Mercury Freedom 7 ventures a successful leap into space with Alan B. Shepard jr. of  
 America, without orbiting the Earth.'
- 50 *Na 'n onlangse sakereis die Ooskaap in, het ek huis toe gekom*  
 after a recent business.travel the Eastern Cape in have.AUX I home to come.PST  
**vol beknelling.**  
 full anxiousness  
 'After a recent business trip to the Eastern Cape, I came home feeling overwhelmed.'

If the answer to the question is no, then the status of the P-item is still unclear, and another test must be used to determine the category of the P-item. In 51, the P-item *by* 'at' is not part of a postmodifier in an NP (*'n skaakvergadering by* 'a chess meeting at' is not a postmodifier of *aand* 'evening'), and the test is therefore not applicable. In 52 below, the test is also not applicable, since the P-item *deur* 'through', is also not part of a postmodifier (*die winter deur* 'through the winter' is not a postmodifier of *ouens* 'guys'). These two P-items can therefore be categorised as PTCL.Vs, but can also be POSTPs that are part of a PP that functions as adjunct. Other strategies need to be used to make these distinctions.

- 51 *Ek woon die aand 'n skaakvergadering by, en kom moeg terug by*  
 I live the evening a chess+meeting by and come tired back by  
**die huis.**  
 the house  
 'I attend a chess meeting in the evening and come home tired.'
- 52 *"Hoe kry ons die ouens die winter deur," is van die aangeleenthede*  
 how get we the guys the winter through be of the issues  
**wat bespreek is.**  
 what address.PASS be.AUX  
 "'How do we get the guys through the winter,'" are some of the issues which was discussed.'

This test works well to identify a POSTP that functions as the head of a post-modifying PP. It does however not help to distinguish between all POSTPs and PTCL.Vs in Afrikaans.

### 3. IS THERE ALREADY A PTCL.V IN THE SENTENCE?

This test will be applicable in Afrikaans sentences containing more than one P-item, where one is a clear PTCL.V in the sentence. If this is the case, all other P-items in the sentence must be adpositions. In 53, *uit* 'out' is clearly a PTCL.V because it lacks any complement and it is not an adverb, as it cannot be replaced by any other adverb. Since *uit* 'out' is therefore already a PTCL.V in the sentence, the other P-item *in* 'in' must be a POSTP. As illustrated here, this test is very useful for identifying POSTP's in Afrikaans sentences containing more than one P-item.

53 *Sy wip by die deur uit die tuin in agter haar broer aan.*<sup>9</sup>  
she jump by the door out the garden in behind her brother on  
'She jumps out the door into the garden, following her brother.'

4. DOES REGARDING THE P-item AS A PTCL.V RESULT IN THE TRANSITIVE VERB HAVING TWO OBJECTS?

A transitive verb cannot take two direct objects. In 52, for instance, *deur* 'through' cannot be categorised as a PTCL.V, as that would mean that both *die ouens* 'the guys' and *die winter* 'the winter' are direct objects of the transitive verb *deurkry* 'get through'. Instead, *deur* 'through' should be classified as a POSTP within the adverbial adpositional phrase that describes the duration of the state denoted by the verb.

As illustrated here, this test is very useful for identifying POSTPs in Afrikaans sentences containing a transitive verb.

5. CAN THE P-item BE MOVED TO A POSITION IN FRONT OF THE NP<sub>OBJ</sub>?

This test is used to identify PTCL.Vs in English, and more specifically to distinguish them from the adpositions of prepositional verbs. An English PTCL.V can occur in two positions, viz. before and after the object NP, while the adposition that is part of a prepositional verb cannot be moved to a position after the NP (see 47 and 48 above).

54 a. "*Spoeg uit die kougom,*" sê Lisa met haar kwaai stem.<sup>10</sup>  
spit out the chewing gum say Lisa with her stern voice  
'"Spit out the gum," said Lisa in her angry voice.'

b. *Spoeg die kougom uit op pad uit.*  
spit the gum ou on way out  
'Spit the gum out on the way out.'

55 a. *Bobby van Jaarsveld tree op voor 'n volgepakte saal.*  
Bobby van Jaarsveld perform on before a full+packed hall  
'Bobby van Jaarsveld performs in front of a packed hall.'

b. *Bobby van Jaarsveld tree voor 'n volgepakte saal op.*<sup>11</sup>  
Bobby van Jaarsveld perform before a full+packed hall on  
'Bobby van Jaarsveld performs in front of a packed hall.'

We do not consider this test suitable for identifying PTCL.Vs in Afrikaans, as Afrikaans speakers (while grammatically feasible) do not commonly place a PTCL.V before the noun phrase. We were unable to locate any examples of a PTCL.V positioned after the noun phrase in VivA-KPO. Only a limited number of examples were found on the internet (refer to examples

<sup>9</sup> Example 52 was adapted –original sentence from VivA-KPO: *Sy gooi die tafellaken wat sy en Ousus besig was om op te vou, teen Ousus aan en wip by die deur uit die tuin in agter haar broer aan.*

<sup>10</sup> Example 54 taken from Google.

<sup>11</sup> Example 55b is an adapted version of 55a.



54a and 54b). However, what does happen in Afrikaans is that the PTCL.V can be positioned both before and after an adverbial prepositional phrase (see 55a and 55b). The potential positions of a P-item in relation to an adverbial PP might therefore be a more successful means of distinguishing a PTCL.V from a POSTP. Further research is required to ascertain the applicability of this modified test to Afrikaans data.

6. DOES THE P-item HAVE LIMITED MEANING, A SHORTER FORM AND CAN IT PRECEDE THE NP<sub>OBJ</sub>?

In English it is possible to distinguish between particles and adverbs by observing their form, their meaning and their syntactic position (see 40 and 41 above). However, this test is not suitable for Afrikaans, given that identical Afrikaans P-items can be used as PTCL.Vs, adpositions and adverbs. Also – as shown in the discussion of test 5 above – a PTCL.V very rarely precedes the NP<sub>OBJ</sub> in Afrikaans.

7. IS THE INTERROGATIVE THAT CAN BE FORMED OUT OF THE SENTENCE CONTAINING THE P-item, FORMED WITH WHAT/WHO OR WITH WHEN/WHERE?

In English, one can differentiate between a preposition that constitutes a part of a prepositional verb and a preposition that constitutes a part of an adjunct by constructing an interrogative sentence. If the interrogative can be phrased using 'what' or 'who,' the preposition is part of a prepositional verb. If the interrogative can be phrased using 'when' or 'where,' the preposition is part of an adjunct (refer to 42 and 43).

However, considering the objective of this paper to distinguish between PTCL.Vs, adpositions, and adverbs, this test is not pertinent to the scope of this paper.

8. CAN THE P-item PRECEDING A NP BE MOVED TO A POSITION AFTER THE NP?

In English it is possible for a PTCL.V to move to a position after an NP, while it is not possible for an adposition to move to a position after the NP (see 47 and 48 for examples).

As stated above, the PTCL.V does not frequently occur before an NP<sub>OBJ</sub> in Afrikaans, and therefore this test is not usable on Afrikaans data.

## 6 In conclusion

Although it is unproblematic for most linguists not to make any distinction between different P-items, in some user contexts it is necessary to be able to make a distinction. In this contribution, we specifically focused on the issues surrounding the distinction between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs in Afrikaans, English and Dutch. In § 2, the focus is on Afrikaans, and it appears that there is no clear way to distinguish between Afrikaans POSTPs and PTCL.Vs in the current literature. It is also not clear from existing literature whether POSTPs should at all be recognised in Afrikaans. In § 3, the focus is on Dutch literature, and there too it appears that the existence of Dutch POSTPs is not a foregone conclusion, and that there are linguists who believe that everything that is currently categorised as POSTPs should be categorised as

PTCL.Vs. § 4 summarises information on English P-items presented in the standard grammars of English.

In § 3 and 4, several tests for distinguishing between different P-items in Dutch and English are presented. The possibility of adapting these tests to aid in the subcategorisation of Afrikaans P-items is explored in § 5, where each test is formulated as a question and then applied to Afrikaans data. The first test can distinguish between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs, but the distinction is not clear-cut in specific example sentences. Consequently, it does not provide a clear-cut strategy to distinguish between different P-items. The second test is useful to identify POSTP's in a very specific context (namely where the POSTP is part of a PP that functions as a postmodifier in an NP). The third test is very useful for distinguishing between PTCL.Vs and POSTPs in sentences containing more than one relevant P-item. Test four is very useful in distinguishing between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs in sentences containing a transitive verb. Tests 6, 7 and 8 are not useful to distinguish between POSTPs and PTCL.Vs and more research is necessary to determine whether a modified version test 5 can be used to sub-categorise Afrikaans P-items.

In our opinion, it would also make sense to follow a language-comparative approach in the description of the P-item subcategories. It already appears in this contribution that this issue is a contentious one in Afrikaans and Dutch, and it is possibly also the case in other closely related languages. P-items also show semantic and syntactic similarities across languages, and it would therefore also be beneficial to study this phenomenon language-comparatively.

## 7 Recognition

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## 8 Author contribution

All six authors are part of a virtual construction grammar working group and thus constantly work together in equal parts to create intellectual property. For this article, Suléne Pilon wrote most of the text of the article; Lande Botha and Maristi Partridge wrote about adpositions and particles in English; Adri Breed and Anneke Butler wrote about postpositions in Dutch; Monique Rabé summarised the strategies in both the English and Dutch reference works to be applied to Afrikaans data; and Gerhard B van Huyssteen conceptualised the article structure. All authors participated equally in discussions about the conceptual framework, research design and data analyses.

## **9 Declaration of interests**

The authors declare that: (1) they are familiar with the content of the article and agree with it; (2) the article is their original intellectual property, without any plagiarism; (3) the manuscript was not submitted simultaneously to different journals for selection; and (4) there is no conflict of interest – including financial interest – to declare. All the authors give permission for the article to be published in the conference proceedings of the 4th International Afrikaans Grammar Workshop.

It is stated here that, in consultation with the North-West University, it has been decided that an independent project website for the above project be set up and maintained, in order to operationalise the research in the best possible way. This website, vloek.co.za, was developed and is owned by Viridevert NPC (2016/411799/08), a non-profit company registered with SARS as an educational public benefit organisation (PBO) with tax exemption (a so-called "section 18A-approved organisation") and its own bank account at FNB. Gerhard B van Huyssteen is one of the directors of the company.

## **10 Ethics clearance**

This contribution appears under the auspices of a project whose overall ethics clearance was registered with North-West University's Language Matters Ethics Committee on 21 May 2019; the registration number is NWU-00632-19-A7..

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