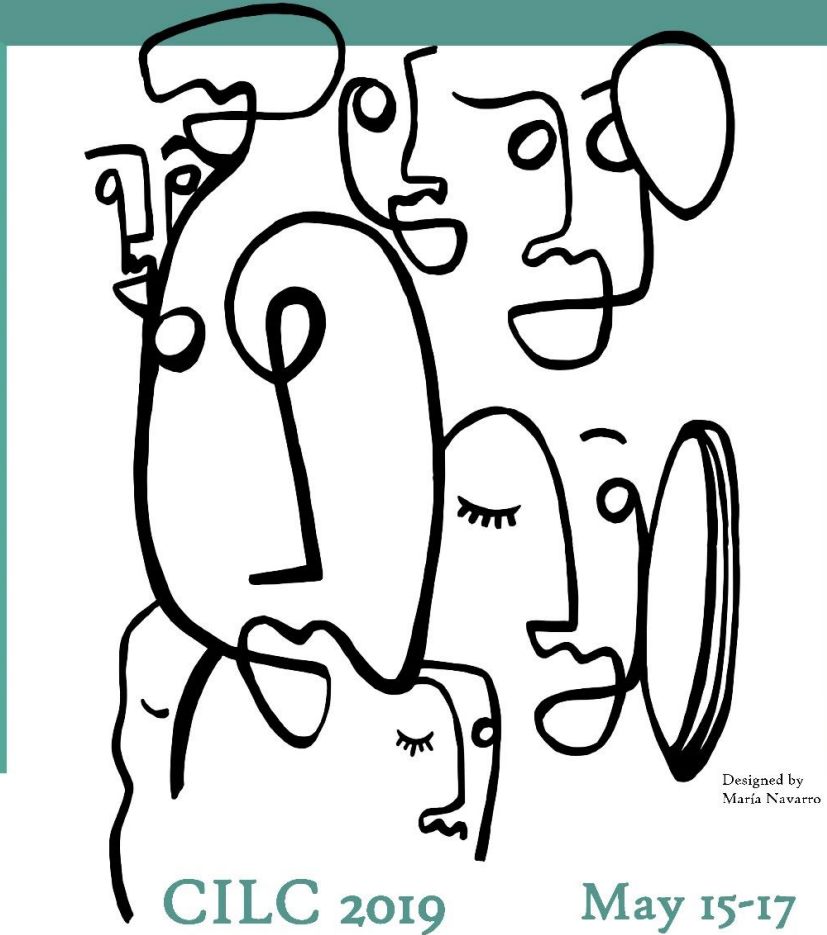


# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

## XI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CORPUS LINGUISTICS



Designed by  
María Navarro

CILC 2019

May 15-17



## **SPECIAL THEME: CORPUS APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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*In the course of March 2019, authors were given the opportunity to edit their abstracts themselves. Yet, the end result may still not be fully satisfactory in all cases. This collection of abstracts represents the state of affairs on 1 April 2019. Later cancellations may be responsible for the presence of abstracts that do not correspond to anything in the final programme launched on the website on 13 May 2019.*

*The abstracts have been listed alphabetically in accordance with the lastname of the first author.*

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## CONTENT

PLENARY LECTURES .....	8
Nuria Lorenzo-Dus.....	8
Tony McEnery.....	9
Alan Partington .....	9
Maite Taboada.....	10
PRESENTATIONS.....	11
Ana Albalat-Mascarell .....	11
Marta Albelda Marco .....	12
James Algie .....	15
Ángela Almela <sup>a</sup> ; Gema Alcaraz-Mármol <sup>b</sup> ; Jéscica López- Hernández <sup>c</sup> .....	16
Nouf Alotaibi.....	18
Carolina P. Amador-Moreno.....	20
Patrizia Anesa <sup>a</sup> ; Ismael Arinas Pellón <sup>b</sup> ;	21
Asuman Aşık <sup>a</sup> .....	22
Ekaterina Baeva <sup>a</sup> .....	24
Azucena Barahona Mora.....	26
Kate Barber .....	28
Leyre Barrios <sup>a</sup> , Ana Fernández <sup>b</sup> , Gloria Vázquez <sup>a</sup> .....	30
Anabella Barsaglini-Castro .....	32
Leanne Victoria Bartley .....	34
Leanne Victoria Bartley; Eva Gomez-Jimenez.....	35
Luciana Beatriz Bastos Ávila.....	38
Bernhard Bauer .....	40
Nadia Belkacem .....	41
José Vicente Benavent Cháfer.....	47
Cristina Blanco García .....	49
Patricia Bou Franch.....	51
Adrián Cabedo Nebot <sup>a</sup> ; Andrea Carcelén Guerrero 2 <sup>b</sup> .....	53
Ana Belen Cabrejas-Peñuelas & Mercedes Díez-Prados.....	55
Ana Belén Cabrejas-Peñuelas; Rosana Dolón .....	57
Javier Calle-Martín <sup>a</sup> ; Laura Esteban-Segura <sup>a</sup> .....	59

Nuria Calvo Cortés.....	60
Nuria Calvo Cortés; Marta Nadales Ruiz.....	62
María Calzada Pérez.....	63
Andrea Carcelén Guerrero .....	65
Maria Luísa Carrió-Pastor .....	66
Antonio Vicente Casas Pedrosa .....	68
Richard Chapman.....	70
Richard Chapman.....	72
Maggie Charles .....	74
Luisa Chierichetti .....	76
Tomás Córcoles Molina .....	78
Cecilia Criado de Diego <sup>a</sup> ; Alicia San Mateo Valdehíta <sup>b</sup> .....	80
Miriam Criado-Peña.....	82
Juan A. Cutillas-Espinosa and Juan M. Hernández-Campoy.....	83
Václav Cvrček <sup>a</sup> ; David Lukeš <sup>a</sup> .....	86
Dario Del Fante <sup>a</sup> .....	88
Andrea Dömötör.....	90
Irene Doval Reixa.....	92
Mina Ebrahimi Erdi.....	93
Guadalupe Espinosa Guerri.....	95
Ainara Estarrona <sup>a</sup> ; Manuel Padilla-Moyano <sup>b</sup> ; Ander Soraluze <sup>a</sup> .....	97
Maricel Esteban-Fonollosa.....	98
Annick Farina.....	100
Carla Fernández Melendres; Jorge Galván Berdonces; Antonio Moreno-Ortiz.....	102
Renata Ferreira Costa .....	103
Imma Ferri-Miralles; Keith Stuart.....	105
Liviana Galiano .....	107
Beatriz Gallardo Paúls; Salvador Enguix Oliver.....	108
Alexandro Garcia-Laguia.....	110
Óscar García Marchena .....	112
María Dolores García-Pastor <sup>a</sup> ; Montserrat Pérez Giménez <sup>b</sup> .....	114
Tamara García Vidal; Belén Zapata Barrero.....	115
Giovanni Garofalo.....	118
Maria-Lluísa Gea-Valor .....	120

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## Main syntactic features of English predicative prepositional phrases

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**Keywords:** *syntax, English, predicative prepositional phrase, subject complement, substitution, coordination, ellipsis, fronting, stranded preposition*

### Abstract

This paper is aimed at analyzing the main syntactic features of predicative prepositional phrases (henceforth, PPPs) in English. Little attention has been paid to them so far since neither their relevance nor their frequency are supposed to be enough. Different examples illustrating those syntactic characteristics will be obtained from the *BNC* and the *ICE-GB* as well as from various grammars and monolingual dictionaries.

First of all, they can be described as those phrases which are headed by a preposition whose Complement (C) is a Noun Phrase (NP) and which perform the function of Subject Complement (C<sup>s</sup>) at clause level. Such is the case of “of value” in [1]:

[1] It can be concluded that Adomnan's life of Columba is *of value* for the structure of society which seems not to have changed greatly between Columba's time and Adomnan (ICE-GB:W1A-002 #115:1).

Thus, there is an intensive relationship between the Subject (S) and this unit since the latter predicates something of the S, thus conveying a condition, feature, quality, or state which is attached to the S.

Secondly, depending on the nature of the meaning they express, the examples in italics below can be replaced by the Adjective Phrases, Verb Phrases, and clauses included between square brackets:

[2] If you do not listen your responses may be "*off beam*" [wrong] and you may appear to others to be rather stupid (BNC:EEB 603).

[3] Mary then came to see me and was at this point *in tears* [crying] over the incident and her treatment by Mr Smith (ICE-GB:W1B-021 #72:5).

[4] He was *a little out of breath* [breathing fast and with difficulty], having hurried to the town meeting (BNC:CFJ 311).

Moreover, it is possible to find examples of PPPs in coordination, what is an argument proving the similarities between them and Adjective Phrases:

[5] Doctors at the hospital say Mr Crowther is continuing to show signs of slight improvement although he's still *in intensive care* and *in a critical condition* (BNC:K22 1981).

[6] She is young and *in good health* (Quirk *et alii*, 1985, p. 732).

Many examples of PPPs are the result of a previous process of ellipsis (whereby some words have been omitted from a given structure; e.g. “an aspect” after the copulative verb “is” in [7]) or fronting (for instance, [8]):

[7] And uh o one particular aspect <,> o of the delays uh i is uh uh *of considerable relevance* uh on this occasion <,> (ICE-GB:S2A-063 #7:1:A).

[8] *At odds with the mayor* remain the residents of the condos, who are willing to fight a long battle over the additional taxes (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1389).

In addition, there are examples of stranded prepositions in exclamative, interrogative, and relative clauses, as shown in sentences [9]-[11]:

[9] *What a mess* she was *in* [...] (ICE-GB:W2F-003 #107:1).

[10] *What stature* is she *of*? (Jespersen, 1909-49, vol. III, p. 398).

[11] But I think Heseltine's got what it takes to win the next election and get us out of

*this mess* that we are *in* (ICE-GB:S2B-003 #77:1:M).

Finally different conclusions will be drawn on the previous analysis. It can be highlighted, among others, that the syntactic behaviour of PPPs is very similar to that of Adjective Phrases.

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## **The words that count: exploring theoretical questions in corpus linguistics**

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*Keywords: theory; sampling; discourse analysis; context*

### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to re-examine some fundamental theoretical issues concerned with the use of corpus linguistics to investigate language. What should be at the basis of the design of our corpora? Why are these elements important and how do they ensure significant and reliable results from interrogation of corpus data?

Using examples from small-scale corpora as points of comparison with the increasingly large general language corpora currently available or being constructed, a critical reading of corpus linguistic practice is proposed. The intention is not to question the fundamental value of corpus-based linguistic inquiry, but to remind us of the complexity of the tasks involved. Various issues are presented, including the tension produced by using ‘hard’ data to understand abstract ideas; the almost insoluble problem of truly effective and representative sampling; the task of dealing with ‘natural’ errors, mistakes and slips-of-the-tongue in counting frequencies; the role of Discourse Analysis and whether it can be based on ‘the word’ (as opposed to other linguistic indicators and aspects of context); whether smaller, more closely grounded and contextualised corpora are better suited to discourse analytical approaches, and if there can be a fruitful interaction between large-scale, mass-corpora and small, virtually hand-made computer-based archives.

This series of questions, coming directly from attempts to use corpus linguistics in ‘real’ case studies, prompts thinking about the most fundamental aspects of corpus linguistics methodology. What do we really think corpus linguistic analysis can tell us? Does it offer answers to questions like: What is language? How does a particular language work? What are the relations between form and sense? Can we perfect our descriptive grammars through corpus linguistics? Is it possible to describe how language is meaningful in certain contexts? Does corpus data analysis adequately take account of