

## **Some remarks on the synchronic and diachronic variation within a lexical verb + a particle + an object pattern in present-day English**

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The present paper deals with synchronic and diachronic properties of verb-particle constructions in English-an area of investigation which has been given relatively little attention in recent literature. Due to their semantic and syntactic structure multi-word verbs pose problems of simple classification. More specifically, we are concerned here with two fundamental problems: with assigning an accurate label to verbal particles and with establishing under which circumstances some particles are likely to occupy the position to the left or the right of the noun-object. From the synchronic point of view, the position of verbal particles in a sentence seems to be largely determined by a 'semantic focus'. A semantic focus requires an extra stress to be laid, depending of the characteristics of the semantic content, either on the verbal particle or on the noun-object.

From the diachronic point of view, various aspects may come into play, though a word stress or a general change in the syntactic structure of present-day English are most frequently cited factors. As might be expected, opinions of scholars on the issue differ and no conclusive evidence has yet been put forward.

Another problem which is frequently addressed is whether the adverbial particles (those forming close semantic units with phrasal verb as opposed to prepositional verbs) should be interpreted as adverbs at all. It is frequently argued that ordinary adverbs show different characteristics from those co-occurring with phrasal verbs.

Finally, a review of overlapping and conflicting theories is made in order to appreciate the extent to which the above-mentioned problems are important in analyzing multi-word verbs.