Prepositions

This handout is about prepositions that often go wrong, both in students’ speaking and writing. The phrases and sentences here were collected in the Advanced Oral Proficiency Class, which focuses on topics from Literature and Linguistics. There are three parts:

(1) Gap-filling task
(2) The right preposition
(3) One or two tips

You can use Part (1) to test yourself then look at Part (2) for the right answers.

(1) Gap-filling task

What is the right preposition to fill the gap?

This is a good example .............. synonymy
An introduction .................. linguistics
In contrast .............. Dickens
This had consequences ........... her future writing
Despite ............... her growing fame
He was committed ................ an asylum
I would like to concentrate ........... this point
She is not included ............... this list
He is searching ................ a job
We don´t like wars, but what can we do ................ them?
She was not content ............... her life
If we take a look ............ modern society
This word can be replaced ........... another
It´s difficult to say something intelligent and convincing ................ this point
There’s a scene in the film "Psycho" when the woman is .......... the shower
What do you understand .......... language change?
This is typical .......... contemporary research
She is an expert .......... psycholinguistics
She specialises .......... dialects
I would like to focus .......... language acquisition
I would like to put the emphasis .......... language acquisition
Acquisition is not the same .......... language learning
Acquisition is a much more interesting process .......... language learning
This speaker is not representative .......... a whole class of speakers
As a consequence .......... this
It was written .......... an expert
It can be found .......... the shelf in the library
That was very interesting, but I still have some questions .......... you
.......... one of the topics.
This is a clear sign .......... language change
Can you give an instance .......... this?
We have discussed .......... it already
German is on the verge .......... radical change
I would like to give a brief introduction .......... his work .......... language change
Is it possible to differentiate .......... A and B?
(2) The right preposition

This is a good example of synonymy
An introduction to linguistics
In contrast to Dickens
This had consequences for her future writing
Despite her growing fame
He was committed to an asylum
I would like to concentrate on this point
She is not included in this list
He is searching for a job
We don’t like wars, but what can we do about them?
She was not content with her life
If we take a look at modern society
This word can be replaced by another
It’s difficult to say something intelligent and convincing about / on this point
There’s a scene in the film "Psycho" when the woman is in the shower.
What do you understand by language change?
This is typical of contemporary research
She is an expert on psycholinguistics
She specialises in dialects
I would like to focus on language acquisition
I would like to put the emphasis on language acquisition
Acquisition is not the same as language learning
Acquisition is a much more interesting process than language learning
This speaker is not representative of a whole class of speakers
As a consequence of this
It was written by an expert
It can be found on the shelf in the library
That was very interesting, but I still have some questions for you on one of the topics.
This is a clear sign of language change
Can you give an instance of this?
We have discussed it already
German is on the verge of radical change
I would like to give a brief introduction to his work on language change
Is it possible to differentiate between A and B?

(3) Tips
If there are any of these you had problems with you can
(1) check them in the Cobuild
(2) mark the phrase with a highlighting pen e.g. take a look at or an example of or discuss it
(3) say it out loud several times
(4) convince yourself it is right (e.g. if you have been saying „diskutieren ueber etwas“ in German all your life, it can be quite hard to convince yourself that “discuss something” is correct English.)
(5) put the phrase in a sentence that makes sense to you and use it

These tips may look obvious or childish, but they are useful. The point is that working through this list once will not get the correct preposition into your memory and onto your tongue when you need it. There has to be some effort made, and not just once.

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