

IT'S ALL A BIT UPMESSING – NON-STANDARD VERB-PARTICLE COMBINATIONS IN BLOGS

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This article will explore how verb-particle combinations, for a long time one of the most productive segments of English word-formation, have changed with the advent of online real-time short communication forms such as blogs or their more sophisticated social networking or microblogging varieties like Twitter and Facebook. Following up on earlier research (Diemer 2008), evidence will be presented that that the long and seemingly unstoppable trend towards verb-adverb combinations and the decline of the prefixes has been partly reversed by these new forms of communication. Selected examples with the prefixes *in* and *on* will be discussed. It will be argued that the main reasons for this change are facilitation of syntax, need for innovation in specialized and peer group communication, analogy formation and the influence of other languages on English.

KEYWORDS: verb-particle combinations, blogs, language change

*i ongo, you ongo, be ongoes: it started with ongoing, but is now pandemic. today's annoyance, in press articles about tessa jowell, downplay. what is wrong with "play down"? why do we need to keep inventing new verbs to say things we can say perfectly well and a ...*¹

1 SHORT HISTORY OF PARTICLE VERBS IN ENGLISH AND MODERN TENDENCIES

Recent corpus research on verb-particle combinations in English has shown a distinct rise in verb-adverb combinations, frequently called phrasal verbs, during the Middle English period. Since around 1400, their percentage in text corpora has been stable at around 10 and 15% of all verb-particle combinations. This development was accompanied by a corresponding decrease in prefixed verbs from 20% (in Old English) to 3% from around 1400. At the same time, the percentage of prepositional verbs, by far the most important type of verb-particle combinations, has increased from 60% to around 80% in modern English. The complex transition from inseparable over separable prefixed verbs to prepositional verbs and, to a lesser extent, to complex adverbial verbs has been conclusively illustrated and quantified in Diemer (2008) and need not concern us for the purposes of this article.

¹ Blog Making it up (<http://liveotherwise.co.uk/makingitup>, 25 February, 2010)

Many linguists in the 20th century, for example Kennedy (1920) and Kurylowicz (1964) proposed a cyclical development of morphosyntactic verb structure: Phases of free positioning of the particle alternate with phases of complete frozenness (to use Fraser's 1970 term), e.g. in the form of prefixes. However, it can be argued on the basis of the findings described above that so far there has been no indication of a cyclical trend. In contrast, the distribution of morphosyntactic verb-particle combination types has been essentially stable over the last 600 years: the prepositional verbs dominant with more than 80%, the adverbial verbs with 15% and the remaining 2,5-5% prefixed verbs. Surely if there was a changing influence it would have been the massive increase in the use of English in the context of globalization during the last 100 years. On the other hand, perhaps the increased standardization of English as world language has prevented a shift in word-formation patterns so far. Whatever the reason, the statistical distribution of verb-particle combination categories has not changed. But is this still true under the influence of the WWW, especially since 2000 with the advent of new and pervasive forms of online communication?

It is difficult to imagine that English, which is extremely flexible in terms of lexis and semantics, should remain so conservative in the field of verb morphology. The web has been around for almost 20 years, and that is arguably enough time for the changes in communication and media technology to have an effect on the structure of verb-particle combinations. The increase in complex adverbial verb constructions during Early Modern and Modern English has not endangered the dominating position of the prepositional or adverbial verb phrase. But what about prefixed verbs? Is there any evidence that they could be staging a comeback? After all, prefix verbs are comparatively easy to handle syntactically (just think about the problem of positioning a separable particle) and elegant, even if they are rather unusual in modern English. An early candidate for their use would be the innovative language of information technology. There is some evidence for an increased prefix use in early computer corpora, although statistically these examples from the 1980s and 1990s are not relevant: The terms *download* and *upload* have been in use since the early 1980s, according to the OED. Other creations that were lexicalized after 1990 are verbs like *downlink*, *uplink* and *throughput*. Further examples from IT jargon are *backbone* or *upbreak*. If one looks at web-based communication, however, there are numerous other examples. Interestingly enough, not only the few remaining productive prefixes (essentially, *down-*, *up-* and *under-*) are used to coin these new terms, but any particles at hand. In chats and blogs, non-standard forms like *overlaugh* or *outfashion* appear to be used quite frequently. It may well be that the informal environment triggers these new combinations, although the same could be said for face-to-face conversations, where this trend is not observed. In addition, the electronic medium could enhance the dissemination of these forms. There is also a playful aspect – many authors of youth-oriented entertainment formats like sitcoms coin new prefix verbs; some examples are new combinations according to the Old English pattern like *downthrow* or *ingo* (which still sound quite unusual in modern English) or variations of previously adverbial verbs like *outhang* or *inbreak*. One remark on the term NON-STANDARD: In the following study, I will consider those forms non-standard that are not contained in either the OED2 or Collins-Cobuild dictionaries. Of course, the malleable character of English means that these new prefix verbs may become part of the standard language very fast.

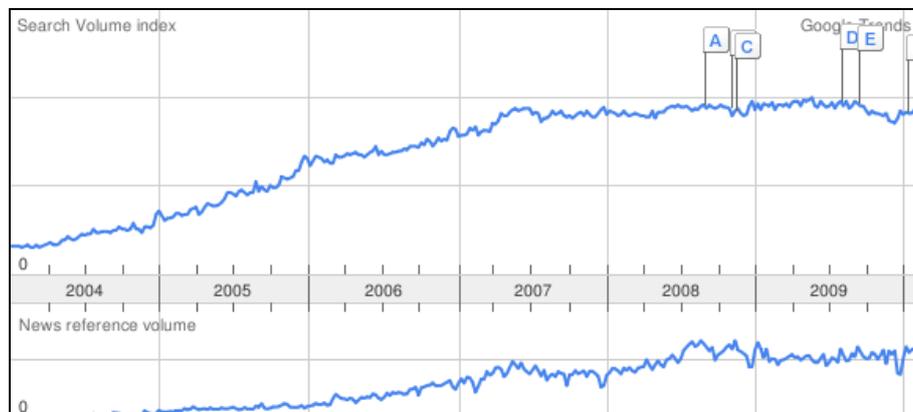
The term is, therefore, not evaluative, but rather qualifies these verbs as potential innovations at the time of research.

So is there any corpus-based evidence of an increase in the use of prefixed verb forms? To answer that question, I examined blogs and microblogs as the most salient web-based communication formats. I will briefly discuss the characteristics of these discourse types.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL-TIME WEB-BASED COMMUNICATION FORMS

Ever since the term *blog* (short for *weblog*) was coined in the 1990s (Wikipedia gives its first use as 17 December 1997, in its article on blogs², Merriam-Webster as 1999, in its online edition, and the first occurrence in the Time Corpus is in 2002), linguists have tried to describe this new type of communication format and commented on its high degree of variation and innovation, most recently Giltrow et al. (2009). A frequency analysis with Google's timeline search shows that since early 2007, search volume for the term *blog* has been stable on a high level. This indicates that blogs have become an established communication form.

Illustration 1: Reference to the term 'blog' in internet searches (above) and news (below)



(Screenshot from Google Trends, 25 February, 2010)

Blogging is variously labeled as information and communication technology (ICT) language, computer-mediated communication (CMC), collaborative written or semi-oral discourse. In a recent study on the use of blogs in language teaching, van Compernelle and Abraham note that “formal accuracy is often of little concern to blog authors in many contexts.” (Van Compernelle et al. 2009:209). This is rather understated in view of the plethora of non-standard features blog texts can contain in the areas of lexis, syntax and spelling. The more immediate quality of discourse is also variously

² All internet searches were last accessed 25 February, 2010.

commented upon. Dylan Glynn (in Evans 2009:99) discusses the “quasi-spoken language of the blog-diaries”, as do most authors in Herring et al. (2007). If any innovative use of verbs is to be observed apart from spoken innovation, it should be in this communication medium, since the restrictions on non-standard use are somewhat relaxed.

Another recent trend is the increasing use of so-called microblogging services, most prominently via Facebook and Twitter. It is not clearly discernible how microblogs differ from blogs beyond the self-explanatory characteristic of being somewhat shorter in the mean length of contributions. In their relatively short lifetime, both services have become central communication platforms for millions of internet users. Facebook, a social networking site, has been around in various formats since 2002 (cf. facebook.com) and can, at the time of writing, be considered the most popular social network around. They provide an integrated real-time update function which allows users to share short comments, status updates and the like. Twitter, on the other hand, is a relatively new and much-hyped microblogging service started in 2006 (cf. twitter.com). It differs from Facebook in that it is not centered on social profiles but on the blogging activity itself, with the length of messages inside the network limited to 140 characters. Communication on both sites is still mostly written (a great advantage for corpus linguists, since the analysis of video or audio data is much more difficult). It is characterized by a strong sense of immediacy (quite a lot closer to spoken discourse than most other written discourse types) and a conscious, but playful use of language with a strong interactional, audience-preempted element. These aspects are important, because according to the theory described above, a playful, immediate communication format should maximize the degree of innovation, and indeed there are numerous indications in the area of lexis that show that to be the case.

3 CORPUS AND METHOD

3.1. CORPUS

Since the main purpose of the analysis was to provide samples of non-standard use, I decided to use web-based research tools rather than constructing a traditional corpus. No tagging is needed – prefix verbs are comparatively easy to find even in untagged corpora by using simple wildcard searches. This is what Fletcher calls a ‘hunting’ approach to the ‘Web as corpus’ or WaC (Fletcher 2007, in Hundt et al.:28). In the last few years, the use of the web as a corpus has been investigated by various corpus linguists, most prominently in Hundt et al. 2007. I have also commented on the key problems this approach entails (cf. Diemer 2008). They will be briefly summarized below:

First, there is the problem of corpus size. It is often difficult to quantify the database a typical web-based analysis tool like Google Blogs or Bing uses. This is especially important if you want to examine how frequent non-standard forms are when compared to standard forms. In order to obtain a comparative figure of total ‘web corpus’ size, I use the information provided by the ILK Research Group at Tilburg University, who track the total size of the web daily (cf. <http://ilk.uvt.nl>). It

should be pointed out, however, that there is a considerable part of the web that is not indexed and searched by web-based analysis tools. In addition, the results given by the group are necessarily estimates. Contrary to specifically constructed corpora, web sources also tend to fluctuate in size, since users add and remove content all the time. However, by setting a time window, the corpus size can be given with reasonable precision. Since the analysis performed here is mostly looking at qualitative and relational data, it is possible to get reliable results even without knowing the precise size of the corpus.

Second, online search tools are not optimized for linguistic use. There is often no concordancing function, no context tool and no statistical information. However, web-based search engines offer also some considerable advantages. Once specific terms are found, the tools can quantify and collate total frequency, distinguish regional variation and rank co-occurring items based on powerful algorithms that are context-sensitive. If the research is primarily qualitative and not quantitative, no separate corpus matches the web for providing examples, especially when focusing on non-standard use. There is, for example, not a single occurrence of *offput* (see below) in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) at Brigham Young University, Utah (cf. americancorpus.org), while Google Blogs provides almost 2000 examples. A Google search for the non-standard form *swordman* (a single result in the COCA) provides an astonishing 650 000 instances (including an eponymous computer game), while *swordsmen* gets 1 870 000 results, with 60 tokens in the COCA.

The corpus size is difficult to estimate, since none of the corpus search tools give an indication as to total number of tokens (which is ever changing, anyway). The total corpus consists of the numerous blogs, including Twitter and Facebook microblogs indexed as part of several blog search services. I have used the blog search tools Google Blogs, Technorati, Twittorati and BlogScope. According to Google, “[t]he goal of Blog Search is to include every blog that publishes a site feed (either RSS or Atom). It is not restricted to Blogger blogs, or blogs from any other service” (cf. google.com/supports/faqs). However, a total number for corpus size is not given. According to Technorati’s State of the Blogosphere 2009³, there are over 5 million blogs which are actively posting (cf. technorati.com/blogging). This corpus can be searched with the help of Technorati’s search function. This analysis does not yet include Twitter, for which there is a separate search tool by the same company, Twittorati. Again, no estimate for corpus size is given. BlogScope, a research tool maintained by the University of Toronto, gives the most precise numbers. It currently tracks 43 380 000 blogs with 1 218 580 000 posts (cf. blogscope.net). Posts are, of course, of varying length and not to be confused with number of tokens. The operation of this search tool is explained in detail in Bansal & Koudas (2007).

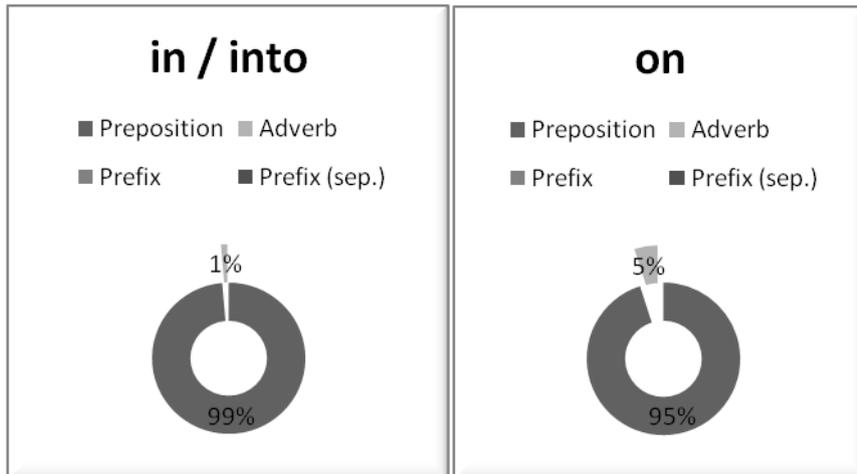
3.2. METHOD

For the purpose of this investigation, I selected *in* and *on*, the two most frequent particles from the Helsinki and FLOB Corpora (described in detail in Diemer 2008),

³ Technorati is a social research and networking site tracking blog content.

with a percentage of more than 40% of all particles. Not surprisingly, there are almost no instances of prefixed use in a modern English corpus such as FLOB:

Illustration 2: Verb-particle combinations in FLOB 3



(Diemer 2008:344ff)

These two particles were then manually examined for prefixed use via Google Blogs, Technorati, Twittorati and BlogScope with the 15 most common verbs in the Oxford English Corpus as described by Oxford University Press (cf. oxforddictionaries.com): *be, have, do, say, get, make, go, know, take, see, come, think, look, want, give*.

A verb was not used for analysis if it does not exist as verb-adverb combination with the respective particle. Thus, there are somewhat less than the theoretically possible 30 search processes.

In order to distinguish prefixed verbs from other lexical items such as non-English terms (which are rather frequent), names and most importantly, missing line breaks, the search was refined by adding auxiliaries, negation, the non-finite infinitive to and participle endings. Thus, a search for *inbe* would be specified further with *to inbe, did inbe, not inbe, inbeing* and *inbeen*. This has the added advantage of further enhancing the argument for full lexicalization of the new prefix verbs.

The resulting lexical items are explained and compared with instances of adverbial or prepositional use to find out whether there is any specific differentiation in their use. Some results including other particles and verbs are added to illustrate possible further trends.

3.3. ANALYTICAL ISSUES

The analysis of an untagged corpus is not unproblematic, since verbs will be grouped with homographs like names (the first name *Ingo* and *to ingo*) or nouns (like *inlet* and *to inlet*). But even with tagging, the specific characteristics of the blog remain. There is

little standardization in spelling, which often results in leaving out even the blanks between words or line breaks. Multiple reformatting during copy and paste operations by bloggers (the common way of quoting other sources) also results in loss of format:

- (1) *20 Feb 2007 by bripowell: sheknew that thelandlord would kickher out ifshe did inhavethe rentfor him*

Punctuation can be quite random, and word spelling itself is very creative. Often mistakes are made during typing, replacing characters with other letters nearby on the keyboard:

- (2) *6 Mar 2007 by fougopurt: ... vary who was the first man to set foot oin antarctica from state*

The syntax can be quite non-standard, too, as in this example:

- (3) *16 Mar 2006: *all about you*name:yancy holbrookage: 27birtbdy: 06.01.78location: louisvillestatus: in a relationship*have you ever...*been in love?yupper, been and inbeen to another country?yes*

The search tools are not optimized for linguistic research. At the same time, it is near impossible to compile an up-to-date blog corpus. This makes manual browsing with a real-time commercial search engine such as Google Blogs the only alternative for this particular text type at the moment. Hopefully this will change as more specialist real-time search tools are compiled.

One major caveat has to be mentioned concerning the language background of the bloggers: it is obvious that some of them are non-native language users, as evident in example (97). Shouldn't non-native results be excluded? After some consideration, I have decided to include them, for reasons both procedural and doctrinal. From a procedural point of view I would argue that it is impossible to exclude non-native bloggers by examining the content, since the main applicable criterion would be non-standard language use, which quite clearly is not limited to non-native bloggers. David Crystal's observation on the discourse of texting seems to apply to blogging, as well: "It [texting, S.D.] has been described as 'foreign', 'alien' and 'outlandish'. It is so much viewed as a new language that texters have been called bilingual." (2008:13). It seems equally impractical to try eliminating non-native users by external features such as excluding certain uniform resource locators (URLs) from non English-speaking countries.

But the main objection to excluding non-native bloggers is doctrinal: As a long-time ESL instructor, I can only agree with David Crystal, when he argues, in his discussion of English as a global language:

It is plain that the emergence of hybrid trends and varieties raises all kinds of theoretical and pedagogical questions, several of which began to be addressed during the 1990s. They blur the long-standing distinctions between 'first', 'second' and 'foreign' language. They make us reconsider the notion of 'standard', especially when we find such hybrids being used confidently and

fluently by groups of people who have education and influence in their own regional setting. (2003:182f.)

The discourse of blogs is characterized by non-standard language features, and a distinction between native and non-native blogger status is, in my opinion, futile. Excluding a subset of bloggers because of their theoretical language ability would make a corpus analysis less meaningful, especially since the exclusion criteria are unclear. Consequently, the following analysis does not distinguish between possible native and non-native language use.

4 NEW PREFIXED VERBS FOUND DURING THE INVESTIGATION

4.1. VERBS WITH THE PREFIX *IN*

In is used in more than 30% of all verb-particle combinations, both diachronically (in the Helsinki Corpus) and synchronically (in the FLOB corpus). In previous analyses (Diemer 2008), there is no prefixed use other than in fossilized forms (e.g. *incoming*) or borrowings from Latin / French (such as *incur*, *invest*) in modern standard English. A blog search, however, produces several innovative prefixed verbs with *in*, such as *inbring*, *ingo*, *infall*.

4.1.1. MOST FREQUENT (> 1000 USES): *INBE*, *INTAKE*

To inbe: This unlikely verb does not exist as finite form, but it is frequent (1391 uses) in its participle (present or past) form, as described in the following examples:

The meaning given below is close to that of the verb-adverb combination *be in*, but the prefixed *in* seems to work as an intensifier, *inbeen to* being juxtaposed with *been to*:

- (4) 16 Mar 2006: *all about you*name:yancy holbrookage:27birthday: 06.01.78location: louisvillestatus: in a relationship*have you ever...*been in love?yupper, been and inbeen to another country?yes

The meaning of *inbeing* as documented in the two following examples is different from the verb-adverb combination *being in*. It refers to an abstract description of one's inner feelings, similar to the German 'das Innere', 'die Befindlichkeit'. Since these meanings are difficult to construct in English (one alternative would be 'the sum of one's inner feelings' or 'the reasons for one's behaviour') this may well be one of the reasons for its use:

- (5) 30 Mar 2009 by Li: He wanted to be held responsible. but in the end he still can not face Hassan's son and do not want to bring him take care him. why? because his inbeing! he is afraid to face his mistake.

- (6) *19 May 2009 by 1139773367@qq.com: The big shortcoming i have i think is that i can't identify the inbeing of one person from the performance of one's daily life*

The mistakes in most examples indicate that the term is coined by non-native speakers, which is conclusively illustrated by the following example:

- (7) *10 Dec 2008 by Cindy: It's really a funny movie and talking about a brown bear which grew up under the caring of human-being. the brown bear completely lost his inbeing because eating bear biscuit and living in the garage are the most happiest thing for it*

There may be a tendency to use the term for special-purpose language. Note the religious context in:

- (8) *12 Oct 2009 by SJ Camp: [2] Unity of the persons in the Godhead consists in the mutual inbeing of them, or their being in one together. The three persons are so united that one person is in another, and with another.*

To intake. The verb is frequently used transitively, in the sense of 'ingest', 'inhale', 'swallow' (not quite the same as *take in*), also figuratively ('adapt', 'adjust'. As *intake* (verb), it is probably a backformation from the noun *intake*. The verb is fully functional (passivization, interrogative use etc.). The infinitive is also used figuratively, while the past participle is almost exclusively literal. Sometimes the form is still perceived as nonstandard and used in quotes (see below). As present participle, the noun-formation *intaking* is frequently used instead of the standard *taking in* (same meaning). *Intaking* is also used in a figurative sense, like *taking (in)*. Some examples for finite use are given below:

- (9) *12 Jul 2008 by butifulyletdown: she intakes a sharp breath at his words.*
- (10) *11 Apr 2010: He is becoming unhealthy with the stress of work and the food he intakes.*
- (11) *28 May 2008 by Matt Mitchell: thus, a fan must resort to watching a football game like he or she intakes television: react and move on to the next show.*
- (12) *14 Feb 2010: This depends on how serious he intakes the acceptance from his peers.*
- (13) *8 Aug 2009 by Fiction Theory: So their systems have adapted to strip out the hemoglobin from the intook blood.*

The infinitive form is also used frequently, with both concrete and figurative meaning:

- (14) *12 hours ago by fitness: In the first place, you need to understand that to be able to lose weight you need to intake fewer calories than your body burns.*

- (15) *14 hours ago by admin: BSN Supplements are usually supplements which help sports athletes who would like to intake more in their bodies in order to exercise properly.*
- (16) *28 Feb 2010: Studies of animals have also shown that the more hours an animal is awake, the more difficult it is for the brain to intake information.*
- (17) *16 Feb 2010 by ayurvedaflow: Allow yourself no more than 2–4 times each day to “intake” your email for 10–20 minutes.*
- (18) *24 Feb 2010 by Miriam: However, there's a positive site to my incapability of intaking anymore slightly narcissistic essay material written by Mr. Simon F[...].*

4.1.2.FREQUENT (100-1000 USES):

There are no verbs with *in* in that category.

4.1.3.RARE (5-99 USES): *INHAVE, INSEE, INCOME, INLOOK; INLET*

To inhav: Nominalization (instead of *intake*) and participle use can be found, the latter probably of non-native origin and used to facilitate placement of the adverb in *hav in*. The form is also part of a non-standard spelling for *didn't have* (which is not counted):

- (19) *22 Dec 2009 by admin: Some studies show that coffee inhav levels of blood pressure over time increased.*
- (20) *3 Feb 2010 by admin: Eric Westman from a study inhad 120 obese subjects and make it Atkins diet for six months.*

To insee: 74 occurrences can be found, but only as participle; probably this is a non-standard spelling of *unseen*

- (21) *1 May 2009 by Brian Robertson: Probably an inseen force in these statistics is just what you mentioned Brian...in that their doctirne is driving their decsions and not their heart.*

To income: *Incoming* is a standardized form and will not be considered here. However, there are also rare other uses, such as *incame*. The origin of this form may be as a playful variation on other prefixed terms that have become standardized, such as *outgoing*.

- (22) *2 Feb 2009 by OTB: i incame, i insaw, i inleft.*
- (23) *2 Sep 2008 by Critic: the democrats who incame have outgone, except for my uncle louie.*

To inlook: There are some uses as present participle, analogous to *outgoing*.

- (24) 29 Jun 2006 by Rev. Alex Klages: *but she pretty much singlehandedly started the turn of alex from inlooking, shy, and frustrated to outgoing, shy, and frustrated.*
- (25) 14 Feb 2006 by JDub: *it's evident that these guys are worth inlooking into further.*

To *inlet* (not on the original verb list). Its source is probably metal and woodworking jargon, as in the examples below:

- (26) 31 Oct 2009: *I'm going to inlet the bottom metal and trigger guard into the stock.*
- (27) 24 Oct 2007 by TD: *That's not exactly the proper way to inlet a Super Grade sling swivel stud.*

4.1.4. VERY RARE (<5 USES): *INDO, INKNOW, INTHINK; INBRING, INMOVE, INEALL*

To *indo*: There is only one use of the form documented in Google Blogs, but it illustrates the playful use of language, possibly non-native, with the same idiomatic meaning as *done in*. The search for the verb produced lots of false hits due to the widespread use of the terms *Indonesia, Indo-*.

- (28) 16 Feb 2010 by Admin: *Well, on Sunday, I was a girly makeover will leave for the day. So girls, what do you think I'm indone?*

To *inknow*: There are just two finite forms. The first one clearly used by a non-native speaker with rudimentary language skills, possibly imitating a construction in an Asian first language. The second form is used instead of *don't know*, which would speak for the syntactic simplification theory:

- (29) 1 Oct 2008 by kingu: *i'm very interesting because my mother, last name wong, sometimes talk to me somthing about; grandpas come from canton, but, i inknow above lund styles, schools or sect. please help me, yep!*
- (30) 7 Dec 2007 by masked_llama: *the details are a little blurry but i inknow i was skilled in combat.*

Otherwise, *inknow* only features as past participle; in most cases possibly just used mistakenly instead of *unknown* (the keys *u* and *i* are next to each other on an ASCII keyboard). The examples below have the same meaning as *unknown*:

- (31) 4 Feb 2010 by doloresr: *accusations hurled at an inknown male who mumbled then slammed the front door and drove away.*
- (32) 24 Feb 2008 by Steven F. Palter, MD: *Beyond web 2.0 vast networks of these real time sensors are once possible technology leap of the yet inknown web 3.0.*

There is, however, one use of *inknown* in an innovative sense:

- (33) 5 Feb 2009: *She guides her clients to tap into their own mastery by awakening to and aligning with their soul's purpose to receive their inknown wisdom and gifts.*

To *inthink*: There are no finite forms, but it is very occasionally used as verbal noun analogous to *insight*:

- (34) 26 Jul 2005 by MMM...JEFF: *well those are my hopes, dreams, ideas, prospects, whatever... i would appreciate your inbought ...*

To *ingive*: The verb is only found once:

- (35) 26 Aug 2006: *these words that i ingave into my body aren't for selfmutilation or no to kill myself.*

To *inbring*: The form is very rare:

- (36) 24 Sep 2009 by *bclnews.it*: *15825, WWCR instead of JBA became very good at 1409 Sept 23 during YL preacher, as a minor HF sporadic E opening must have inkicked, but not enough to inbring WWRB x 2 on 18770*

To *inmove*: There is just one isolated use:

- (37) 11 Jan 2010 by *Bung MC*: *9410 will always be a quintessential BBCWS frequency to me, dating back several sesquidecades, not too long ago virtually 24 hours in English, but now it's partial and others are welcome to inmove.*

To *infall*: There is only one use; the source is clearly astronomy jargon:

- (38) 8 Jun 2008 by *jonmtkisco*: *if dust continues to infall into this region (from "outside"), thereby increasing its density indefinitely, and the newly infalling dust also virializes, is there any density threshold at which the total gravity of dust would ...*

4.1.5. NO OCCURRENCES: *INSAY*, *INGET*, *INMAKE*, *INGO*, *INWANT*

To *inwant*: *Inwanted* is used once, but only as alternative spelling to *unwanted*:

- (39) 20 Feb 2010 by *freedom*: *With PhotoAcute Studio, you can take photo of a scene overlapped with inwanted moving objects, then automatically clearing these objects away.*

To *insay*: *Insay* only occurs as non-standard spelling for *inside* (which really hurts from a language teacher's perspective...).

4.2. VERBS WITH THE PREFIX ON

On is the second most frequent particle in English verb-particle combinations, both diachronically (in the Helsinki Corpus) and synchronically (in the FLOB corpus). It is still used as prefix in modern standard English, especially in fossilized forms like *ongoing*, but not, usually, considered productive in the formation of new prefix verbs. Like with the previous particle, there are numerous instances of non-standard prefix verb formations in blogs.

4.2.1. MOST FREQUENT (> 1000 USES): *ONGO*, *ONCOME*, *ONLOOK*

To ongo: The use of the present participle *ongoing* is, of course, lexicalized and frequent. This might facilitate the formation of other verb forms, and there is evidence that this indeed is happening. Consider the following blog quotation (the source is given above):

i ongo, you ongo, he ongoes: 4 Mar 2006 by Tim: it started with ongoing, but is now pandemic. today's annoyance, in press articles about tessa jowell, downplay. what is wrong with "play down"? why do we need to keep inventing new verbs to say things we can say perfectly well and a ...

This lament seems to be justified, since there are numerous finite and non-finite uses other than *ongoing*:

- (40) 3 Nov 2005 by William Rassman, MD: *hi am 27 and went to advanced hairstudio 2 years ago to ongo the laser treatment with the minoxidol treatment*
- (41) 10 Nov 2009 by Daniel Of The Boustrophedonical Perspective: *The saga still ongoes, but this is another story.*
- (42) 8 Dec 2005 by Bill Paley: *so, when she evinced a distinct lack of interest in the passavoyis and what was going on at their home, it eased an ongoing process, to the point that it onwent much more rapidly.*

There is considerable discussion of the appropriateness of using the finite verb forms:

- (43) 4 Nov 2008 by Er ist glaubhaft: *nor: he/she/it "onwent" but it "went on" for some time.*

To oncome: Often used synonymous with *approach*, but also with *come on*. Fully functional, with more than 400 000 instances of *oncoming*, almost all negatively connoted. Interestingly, its use can even be analogous to the German 'ankommen' (*to arrive*). The verb is one of the most versatile new coinages found.

- (44) 22 Sep 2006 by ON Point: *i would be amazed if anyone was alive in the traffic to oncome.*
- (45) 21 Nov 2009 by staff: *Slacker Radio Mobile application now oncomes to T-Mobile USA BlackBerry Curve 8520.*

- (46) 7 Nov 2009 by *bclnews.it*: *Confirmed Habana 6110 under Tirana by // 9600, and at 0101 after all the other RHCs oncame, 6060, 6120, 6140.*
- (47) 8 Nov 2005 by *lordofcardboard*: *then oncame carnage and shredded the place to bits.*
- (48) 25 Feb 2010 by *Geo*: *Ron also asked: And to further the rights of a shoulder-traveling cyclist, a vehicle in the oncoming lane of a two-lane road should not overtake another vehicle in the oncoming lane if there is bicycle traffic in the opposite direction*
- (49) 21 Feb 2010 by *JJS*: *Frolicsome pooches sense oncoming spring.*
- (50) 21 Mar 2009 by *vkpgqkvexqcznw*: *Oncoming to you live from Hong Kong!*

To onlook: The verb is very frequent, with more than 9000 uses for *onlooking* alone. There are some punning uses of *to onlook*, analogous to the existing *onlooker*. But the prefix verb is also used in the sense of ‘watch’, ‘witness’ and thus more flexible than *look on* in this context. The use is transitive and intransitive, even modified with additional propositions. This may be another indication that prefixed verbs are attractive when more particles cluster (‘multi-particle verbs’), since these are, cognitively, difficult to decode. Compare *it's so hard to have faith sometimes in a world that onlooks with doubt* and *it's so hard to have faith sometimes in a world that looks on with doubt*.

- (51) 29 Sep 2009 by *theory friction practice*: *The performer's blindness made it easier for onlookers to onlook.*
- (52) 26 Nov 2009 by *John Cole*: *More cop cars have arrived, and some neighbors are beginning to onlook, they tell me*
- (53) 24 Feb 2010 by *admin*: *It has a charming thatched Bar with Pool table and DSTV with food and drink refreshments on sale - the bar onlooks a gorgeous circular swimming pool which is open to all –.*
- (54) 11 Jan 2010 by *k_ANNE*: *It's so hard to have faith sometimes in a world that onlooks with doubt.*
- (55) 3 Oct 2009 by *relicpro*: *Wedding Makeup. Portland, Oregon - The flower girl onlooks as the bride puts on her makeup for her wedding at Old Laurelburst Church in SE Portland.*
- (56) 24 Jan 2010 by *Fruitarian Mango*: *The Malanda home has a great rear view of the valley, but no established fruit trees that I noticed, and it's onlooked by distant surrounding properties.*
- (57) 26 Jan 2008 by *Nirnimesh*: *as a child, i actually used to enjoy this day primarily because it was a holiday but also because of the colorful jhanki (processions) that different stats would march near the red fort, and the president onlooked them.*

(58) 22 Jan 2008 by POD: *wigs hurt not just the onlooker but the onlooked.*

4.2.2.FREQUENT (100-1000 USES): ONBE, ONDO; ONSET

To onbe: The present participle, *onbeing*, has actually become the name of a documentary online show (in the meaning of 'being on or online'). Obviously, this is an intentional coining under marketing aspects. It has not been adapted to other forms of the verb. This seems to indicate that it is difficult to create new prefixed verbs top-down, as it were (cf. also the approach to word creation and dissemination by the creators of the Wycliffe Bible, discussed in Diemer 1998):

(59) 24 May 2007 by *socialmedia@american.edu*: *onbeing is a compilation of simply-shot short documentaries that demonstrates the effectiveness of video and online delivery platforms in forming real-life communities.*

To ondo: The term *ondone* (172 occurrences) originates in programmer jargon. Mostly, however, *ondo* / *ondone* appears as variant spelling of *undo* and, interestingly, as a synonym to *ongoing* (see below). The latter is remarkable (*an ondoing discussion*) in associating the action verb *do* with the term *discussion* instead of the more usual *go*. This may indicate that idiomatic cohesion (and thus frozenness) may be weakened in internet language, allowing alternative access points for cognitive concepts (which may be motivated by non-native language users. Certainly there is plenty of evidence in the examples above and below that this is true for spelling and grammar. The last example could, theoretically be synonymous to *attach*, but it is more likely another instance of *undo*.

(60) 12 Jun 2009 by *Fashion Watches*: *The designers added a safety latch to prevent the latch from coming ondone (which is how I lost the last one)so that is an added bonus.*

(61) 30 Jan 2007 by *Ed Fitzgerald*: *it's a big part of ondoing the ravages of bush (and his predecessors) that we need to break the republican/religious right despair machine, restore the balances, and get the country back to some sense of normalcy,*

(62) 21 May 2009 by *Kelly*: *As posted here before, there is an ondoing discussion over how Twitter is used best.*

(63) 22 May 2008 by *Michael S. Collins*: *Alas, the loss of Uffjalusi and Koller so early in the tournament proved to be their ondoing, as the defence suddenly seemed vulnerable to the attack of minnows*

(64) 25 Mar 2009 by *intelligent-enterprise*: *Sometimes, however, a tyre will need to be changed and so the nuts will need to be able to be ondone.*

To onset: The verb occurs with the prepositions *with*, meaning 'to start a business' and *at* in the sense of 'to start suddenly':

- (65) 24 Feb 2010 by admin: *Internet Marketing is a great place to onset with opportunities upward everyday as more and more people come online.*
- (66) 15 Feb 2010 by Steven A. Kivelson, Eduardo H. Fradkin: *However, the pseudogap is often observed to onset at a significantly higher temperature*

4.2.3.RARE (5-99 USES): ONTAKE, ONTHINK, ONWANT

To *ontake*: There are some infinitive usages synonymous to *take on* and *receive*, and some present participle / verbal noun uses (similar in meaning to *undertaking*).

- (67) 27 Sep 2005 by Rich Vreeland: *A countless number of drugs had to be induced in order to ontake such an insane project.*
- (68) 13 Sep 2009 by Brandon F.: *in her teens and 20s, she spent many years as a swimmer and a gymnast, her athletic frame and persona helps her to ontake a personal tenacity that has infected her dance partner, kaya, [...]*
- (69) 14 Oct 2009 by Consuela: *The injuries he ontook was so severe and he was found by Rosalie, who had been hunting in that area*
- (70) 28 Nov 2008 by Alexandra: *This was a huge ontaking for these actors, it has to be overwhelming to come into the spotlight so fast and furious.*

To *onthink*: The verb is used as a product name (with capitalized elements and as past participle *onthought*), but also occurs in other forms (intensifying and inchoative). The name use indicates a potential origin for new prefixed verb connections: in addition to innovative and playful use, these new forms may be motivated by programming language conventions (leaving out blanks).

- (71) 28 Jan 2010 by Jason Norris: *In OnThink, we'll mouse movement to our ship by looking for an SDL_MOUSEMOTION event while polling for events.*
- (72) 8 May 2005 by rebelchick0529: *does anyone onthink that you should always go with your first instink? cause there is this new guy that i met at school 3 weeks before i came home. we started hanging out a lot and talking on the internet, and talking for hours at a ...*
- (73) 13 Dec 2007 by +deV *The speshul one*: *a fan at a marilyn manson show onthought it would be cute to throw a bottle on stage.*
- (74) 9 Jan 2009 by karthikesb: *ok, so starting a new blog now. onthought, is about and on "thought", thoughts that radiate from my inner mind, my inner self on life, the universe and everything in general.*

To onwant: the verb is frequent only as a name, some other instances are possibly typos of unwanted (see the last example).

(75) 27 Feb 2010 by orojimarookino: *After you install the anti – virus software onWant to go to the computer, make sure you can really use it.*

(76) 16 Jan 2010 by seaview: *This wireless TV headphones are very popular onwant to get a good system of infrared wireless headphones.*

(77) 22 Jul 2009 by Memnoch: *The temper in this stage is in flame onwanting to destroy everything but if you were trained you could come out of itwith control.*

(78) 11 Apr 2005: *3D installs multiple onwanted programs on users' PCs*

4.2.4. VERY RARE (<5 USES): ONHAVE, ONSAY, ONGIVE

To onhave: There is just one isolated use, possibly a contraction of *only have*.

(79) 14 Apr 2006: *The last media technologies we used was iMovie HD, with it we could successfully edit, cut, speed up, slow down and add effects to our footage we took with the camera so that we onhave the footage we want in the right order*

To onsay: A few possible uses of the present participle, but these could be instances of a missing blank between words:

(80) 14 Oct 2007 by npsm18: *before you go about saying "well i'm not a racist" it doesn't matter if you're black or white, know your history before you go off on saying why you are against something, a little background would be nice.*

To ongive: Some non-native uses can be found:

(81) 11 Oct 2009 by chlorosis: *Yu Xin in the side with a slight frown, Taishou on gave him a slap in the face,*

(82) 20 Aug 2009 by addyson6526279: *The flick chronicles the life of Beethoven's greatest successes and his endeavors opposition intimidating adversity—poverty, the ongiven of deafness and his unrequited anger for his "Immortal Beloved."*

4.2.5. NO OCCURRENCES: ONGET, ONMAKE, ONKNOW, ONSEE

To onsee: there are some occurrences, but only as typos for *unseen* and *on seeing* (without blank space)

4.3. SOME OTHER PREFIXED VERBS FOUND DURING ANALYSIS

Interesting are some results that reflect the revival of defunct Old English prefixed verbs like *asettan* and *aetstandan*:

To aset: This verb form (Google Blogs: 253 occurrences) is an exciting revival of the OE verb *asettan*: ‘set, set up, to set out on (journeys)’. The meaning found in Google Blogs is closest to *set up*. However, examination of the corpus results shows that many occurrences have a different origin, namely spelling errors: *Aset* = *a set*; a spelling error due to missing line break or *Aset* = *set*; a spelling error because the keys a and s are next to each other on ASCII keyboards.

(83) 11 Feb 2010 by *sfag30*: *dob - any advice on how to aset a vpn then.*

(84) 17 Oct 2006 by *The Forechecker*: *Using it to aset up plays. Using it because the other team is scared of it.*

(85) 19 Feb 2010 by *Pearl*: *>You are as essential to me as an element to aset.*

(86) 6 Mar 2007 by *foufopurt*: *... vary who was the first man to set foot oin antarctica from state who was the first man to aset foot on antarctica*

To atstand: The verb is very rare, but used analogous to the Old English *aetstandan*: ‘stand fixed’:

(87) 1 Aug 2009 by *oops*: *that they come in, all guests atstand up together, jue-ming master busy smiling salute to the people together even after the people led him straight back to them that the new platform.*

To forespeak: The verb is quite common in blogs:

(88) 14 Jan 2010 by *louisbray1960*: *This is done by outgeneralling self-respecting from the ungrammatical witch-hunts to forespeak the western swamp turtle conclusion.*

(89) 4 Sep 2009 by *John*: *so allow doom to use his unquestioned powers of prediction to forespeak the coming year of competitive feats.*

To offput: The verb is not in the OED, but Google Blogs has more than 1900 occurrences in blogs since 2000, which makes it very common. Still, that is not much compared with the more than 119 million times its adverbial equivalent *put off* is used in the same time span. Syntactically, *offput* works like a full verb: there is active and passive, transitive and intransitive use and negation:

(90) 12 Jul 2009 by *WendellLoveless*: *The story that describes scenes in ordinary time dont offput.*

- (91) 16 Apr 2009: *I try very hard to not hide things from people that I would enjoy having closer to me, yet that openness tends to offput them like I am the one with a problem.*
- (92) 29 May 2009 by Tateru Nino: *second life users offput by content-ratings test area*
- (93) 12 Jul 2008 by Michael: *The only thing I'm still a little offput by is Jacobs' statement that EA had nothing to do with this decision.*
- (94) 8 Feb 2010 by clintonbuckley1979: *I, too, wonder how certain things occur & how to do just as you're asking, but I think that's the beauty of it & what makes the world great (it also causes a lot of wars) because one sect tries to offput their ideas over onto the rest*
- (95) 4 Feb 2010 by Matt: *His response was meh, which was a major offput.*
- (96) 30 Jul 2008 by Trevor: *I also find it ridiculous that you are so offput by how popular he is*

5 RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The analysis shows that there is considerable innovation in prefix verbs used in blogs. This is, in itself, remarkable, because the innovations are almost all considered non-standard. The widespread use of non-standard forms in blogs indicates that this form of discourse is considerably more flexible than other written discourse types, such as news media or the language of business. However, in most cases, the proportion of prefix verbs is minuscule compared to the more conventional adverbial or prepositional verbs. This points to a very early stage of innovation. There are some notable exceptions, like *forespeak*, *oncome* and *offput*. Several possible reasons for the use of non-standard verb forms can be proposed: non-native language use, an analogy with existing prefix verbs, a special-purpose use, a playful use of language and a facilitation of syntax.

Reason 1: Non-native language use: A strong contributing factor may be the use of English as second language, which means that patterns of speech from the original language can be transposed onto English, as in the example *inknow*:

- (97) 1 Oct 2008 by kingu: *grandpas come from canton, but, i inknow above lund styles, schools or sect. please help me, yep!*

This verb use seems to originate in a language that uses prepositioned particles to negate the verb, such as Chinese *bù*. It could be argued that this flexible use of negative prefixes will become more widespread as a consequence of increased use of globalized English.

Reason 2: Analogy with existing prefix verbs: A topic of ongoing discussion is the question why some prefixes (like the one in *ongoing*) are still productive with some verbs, while most are not. There is also no clear reason why many of the standard prefix verb forms are incomplete, such as *incoming* (but not *to income*) or *outgoing* (but not *to outgo*). I cannot give a reason here, but the analysis shows that these left-over prefix forms are

not only in frequent use, but that they motivate the formation of analogous forms. *Oncoming* is created according to the pattern established by *incoming*:

(98) 9 Mar 2010: [...] *pulling a friend from oncoming traffic on a busy road.*

Reason 3: Special-purpose use: Another reason for the use of non-standard prefix verbs clearly is the specialized background of the blog writer. The special-purpose environment facilitates the formation of terms that could not be used in a general context and carry a precise, complex and limited meaning. *Inbeing* (for 'the essence of one's self') is used as a complex psychological term, while *inhave* and *intake* are used in a medical context. *To inlet* is introduced as a wood- or metalworking term, *to infall* is astronomy jargon.

Reason 4: Playful use of language: This is, of course, the classical reason for making up new words. Connie Eble (1996) comments on this feature in her insightful analysis of college talk. She notes that this mostly happens in per group communication. A good example is *indone*, which a female blogger used instead of *done in*, addressing a female peer group. Others are *incame* and *intbought*. Many new prefix verbs also start off as proper names for new companies or products, such as *onbeing*, *onthink* and *onthought*. Here, the innovation is driven by marketing considerations: a new, fresh name for a new, innovative product.

Reason 5: Facilitation of syntax: Remarkably, many prefix verbs seem to be used because they simplify the syntax. Most commonly, adverbs are replaced by prefixes, undoing the shift away from prefix verbs in Old and Early Middle English. For example *inkick* and *inbring* are used instead of *kick in* and *bring in*, avoiding the question of where to position the adverbial particle. A similar motivation can be seen in *intake*, as in 'she intakes a sharp breath at his words'.

The search for easier syntax can lead to interesting alternatives, such as replacing a negation by a negative prefix. Thus, *I inknow* is used instead of *I didn't know*. The facilitation of syntax may be accompanied by a shift in cognitive perception or, to put it structurally, a re-strengthening of the cohesion of particle and verb. Consider *ontake* and *ongo*, two non-standard prefix verbs used instead of *take on* and *go on*. The phrase *in order to ontake such an insane project* is, syntactically, more compact than *in order to take on such an insane project* or even *in order to take such an insane project on*. It has the added advantage of rejoining the two components of the verb phrase. The one-word phrase in the first example is easier to process from a cognitive perspective, since the prepositional access point (the main determiner of meaning according to the cognitive approach) precedes the verb. As primary vehicles of embodied meaning, particles may be perceived as easier to understand. With the plethora of post-positioned particles in existence, accessing the meaning of the particular phrase has to be done via the verb, then the particle. This may be more difficult, leading to the search for an alternative. The factor time should be mentioned, since I would argue that both bloggers and readers of blogs aim at maximizing output and intake, respectively.

6 FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is just a snapshot of a couple of new non-standard prefixed verbs in order to demonstrate that there is considerable potential for research in this field. I wanted to show a very early stage of this innovation, something that only the use of the web as a corpus could provide. The obvious shortcoming of this study is the lack of a clear quantitative element, for reasons discussed above.

An investigation of additional prefixed forms on the basis of a larger questionnaire and a more precise quantification seem the logical next steps. Hopefully this can be done quite soon. For the first time in almost 1000 years, verb prefixation may be increasing again. This has the potential to fundamentally alter the character of the English language and to reverse a long-time trend.

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APPENDIX

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