

Coursebooks or the BNC? Teaching English Verbs and Their Dependent Prepositions

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Article information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Received: 21 Jul 2022 Accepted: 25 Apr 2023 Available online: 28 Apr 2023</p> <p>Keywords: Prepositional verbs Dependent prepositions Prepositions after verbs Corpus Teaching</p>	<p><i>The study compares English dependent prepositions of the verbs agree, apply, and die shown in English language coursebooks and a corpus. It also suggests English prepositional verbs and their dependent prepositions that are suitable for teaching to L1 Thai learners and a method that should be employed for the instruction. The data were collected from four English language students' books used by many upper secondary schools in Thailand and the British National Corpus. The findings demonstrate that the coursebooks offer nearly all of the most frequent dependent prepositions of the verbs with scant sentence examples and collocations, while the corpus reveals more dependent prepositions with numerous sentence examples and collocations. Further, the corpus data provide many noun collocates that can be arranged into themes according to their semantic preferences. It is advisable that the coursebooks and corpus data should be used in Thai EFL class to complement each other. The most frequent constructions should also be taught as phraseology through indirect access to data-driven learning, with suggested inductive activities and examples of simplified key word in context concordances.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

English prepositional usage, prepositional usage after verbs in particular, tends to pose a daunting challenge to second language (L2) learners from a variety of first language (L1) backgrounds (Rastall, 1994; Catalán, 1996; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Cowan, 2008; Asma, 2010; Yu & Yoo, 2010; Hong et al., 2011; Seilhamer, 2011; Humeid, 2013; Sumonsriworakun & Pongpairroj, 2017). This problem also occurs among L1 Thai learners of English (Lekawatana, 1969; Pongpairroj, 2002; Humphries & Phoocharoensil, 2011; Sumonsriworakun & Pongpairroj, 2017), and may be largely attributed to differences in prepositional usage after verbs in English and Thai (Pongpairroj, 2002; Sumonsriworakun & Pongpairroj, 2017). What is more, the misuse of prepositions after verbs may stem from L2 learners' inability to recognize a minor discrepancy in meaning when the learners substitute one preposition for another in a context, as exemplified in (1) (Lee, 2012, p. 25):

(1) I know *of* him, but I do not know *about* him.

In (1), the verb *know* is followed by two prepositions, *of* and *about*, each of which reflects a subtle difference in meaning. The former preposition signifies that the subject *I* has heard of the object of the preposition *him*, while the latter indicates familiarity with further information concerning the male individual.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews English prepositional verbs and dependent prepositions; related notions of corpus linguistics, including the lexico-grammatical approach, syllabus design, collocation, and data-driven learning (DDL); and earlier studies on English prepositional verbs and dependent prepositions.

1. English prepositional verbs and dependent prepositions

English prepositional verbs (PVs) signify English intransitive verbs followed by prepositions (Ostyn-Rudzka, 2003). Examples of this particular kind of verb include *look (at)*, *look (for)*, *refer (to)*, *rely (on)*, and *come (across)*.

This verb category differs from phrasal verbs such as *tear off* or *find out* in that the components in the former construction cannot be separated from each other by a pronoun, as in (2a) and (2b), whereas the components in the latter can, as in (3a) and (3b) (Hampe, 2002, pp. 16-17).

- (2) a. I *looked at* it.
- b. *I *looked it at*.
- (3) a. I *tore off* it.
- b. I *tore it off*.

Another discrepancy in the two verb categories resides in idiomaticity. Phrasal verbs are idiomatic, but PVs are not. Specifically, whilst PVs usually denote the literal sense of their verbs, phrasal verbs generally convey meaning beyond the denotation of their verbs.

PVs can be categorized into two main types: fixed PVs and mobile PVs (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Fixed PVs, e.g., *come across*, are closely related, and therefore they cannot be passivized as in (4). On the other hand, mobile PVs, e.g., *refer to*, are passivizable, as in (5).

- (4) *An old toy *was come across* under his bed.
- (5) This book *was referred to* in his research article.

English dependent prepositions refer to English prepositions which typically follow certain verbs. They are sometimes called *prepositions after verbs* (Foley & Hall, 2003). For example, the verb *differ* can precede the prepositions *from* and *with*; however, they create different meanings. *Differ from* carries the meaning that two entities are not the same, and the PV comes before its direct object, which can refer to a person, animal, object, place, or an abstract concept, as in (6a), while *differ with* typically signifies 'to disagree', and is followed by a noun

referring to somebody with whom the subject of the sentence disagrees, as in (6b).

- (6) a. Cats differ from dogs.
- b. She always differs with her mom.

2. Related notions of corpus linguistics

2.1 Lexico-grammatical approach

A lexico-grammatical approach refers to an approach to language which involves an inherent association between vocabulary and grammar (Sinclair, 1991), yielding certain patterns that can be related to specific textual meaning and functions (Liu & Jiang, 2009). As language is considered phraseology, words tend to occur in many preferred sequences. Examples include prefabricated chunks such as *It is likely that...., I think....*; idiomatic sequences, e.g., *heavy rain*, rather than *thick rain*; or collocations such as *to pay particular attention* (Kennedy, 2008, p. 37). This linguistic approach postulates that the foundation of language is not words, but whole phrases, and that a phrase can be searched for through corpora. This postulate has challenged the traditional approach that views language as consisting of two separate components of lexis and grammar.

One fundamental concept within a lexico-grammatical approach is *semantic preference*, which refers to the relationship between a word and a set of semantically related words, such as the verb *undergo*, concerned with “medical procedures which are not sought” (Kennedy, 2008, p. 36).

2.2 Syllabus design

Due to reliance on the lexico-grammatical approach, frequent multi-word lexical units have a great influence on the lexical syllabus, which stresses the inclusion of the most frequent words of the language, together with their most common patterns, in the syllabus. Willis (1990) and Barlow (1996, p. 5) also favor the idea of word frequency, stating that, “Frequency data is important in second language teaching since it is accepted that the learner should, in general, be presented with patterns of usage that are common.”

2.3 Collocation

Collocation refers to “the characteristic co-occurrence of patterns of words, i.e., which words typically co-occur in corpus data” (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 56). Collocation can be divided into two types: lexical collocation and grammatical collocation. Lexical collocation is the co-occurrence of two lexical items, such as *strong tea, wolves howl* (Bahns, 1993). The second type of collocation is grammatical collocation, or colligation, which is defined as the co-occurrence between a lexical item and a grammatical one, e.g., a preposition (Bahns, 1993). An instance of grammatical collocation is that *depend* colligates with the preposition *on*.

2.4 DDL

DDL is a corpus-based approach to language learning, which allows learners to be exposed to a large amount of genuine data concerning a particular linguistic item (Johns, 1986). This approach enables language learning to be more stimulating while learners explore corpus data and seek to find language patterns. There are two accesses to DDL: direct access and indirect access. The former is when learners search for a linguistic item in a corpus, using a concordancer, while the latter is when they observe concordance lines that have been selected beforehand by the teacher.

3. Previous studies on English prepositional verbs and dependent prepositions

A number of studies on English PVs and dependent prepositions have been previously conducted. Biber et al. (1999) explored English prepositions in different genres, including conversation, fiction writing, newspaper articles, and academic prose. They found that prepositions were the most common function word class in news and academic prose, but they were far less frequent in conversation. The study's authors maintained that it is crucially important for L2 learners to study PVs as they are more frequently encountered across the genres, academic prose in particular. This contrasts with the case of phrasal verbs, which are more commonly used in spoken language. Further, as PVs exhibit inherently complicated behavior, they prove demanding for a number of English language learners. The researchers also pointed out that PVs are three to four times more common than phrasal verbs in academic writing.

Seilhamer (2011) examined the collocational strength of 192 different verb-preposition collocations in an academic writing sub-corpus of the BNC, and found that 23 verb-preposition constructions, including *rely on/upon*, *depend on/upon*, *account for*, and *participate in*, belong to the 'almost fixed' category of verb-preposition constructions, indicating that they should be taught as single units in English language class.

Sumonsriworakun and Pongpairroj (2017) examined Thai learners' systematicity in their interlanguage of English dependent prepositions. In their study, two tests, namely a Thai-English translation test and a cloze test, were conducted with 30 L1 Thai undergraduate students of English who were categorized into three equal-sized groups based upon their English proficiency: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. The tests encompassed four kinds of relationship between dependent prepositions in English and Thai: (1) [-prep] in English, but [+prep] in Thai; (2) [+prep] in English but [-prep] in Thai; (3) [+prep₁] in English, yet [+prep₂] in Thai; and (4) [+prep] in English and [+prep] in Thai. The results reveal that, regardless of their L2 proficiency levels, the learners tended to use English prepositions of all those types systematically conceivably due to cross-linguistic influence and cognitive factors, and that the learners at all the proficiency levels earned the highest scores for the fourth type of dependent prepositions, followed by the first, third, and the second types, respectively.

Saeedakhtar et al. (2020) administered the direct and indirect approaches to DDL to 60 Iranian female low-intermediate learners of English. They reported that both the hands-on group who examined concordancing lines on the computer and the hands-off group who studied the same

concordance lines on paper learned verb-preposition patterns better than the control group who was taught the same patterns explicitly through a traditional approach and that the hands-on group significantly outperformed the hands-off group in the delayed posttest. The questionnaire revealed that all the learners developed positive attitudes toward both approaches to DDL.

Quan et al. (2022) compared the Patterns in Context (PIC) method with the key word in context (KWIC) method. The former method focuses on a search item with its grammatical patterns, while the latter method seems to concentrate primarily on the search node. In their study, 18 pre-university intermediate students used two mobile apps for two weeks. The students' automatic logs of app use and their responses from questionnaires and interviews were examined. The results showed no obvious benefits of PIC over KWIC to enhance intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' academic English.

Notwithstanding some earlier studies on English prepositions conducted with L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds, this present research differs from prior studies in this area in that it attempts to compare English PVs and dependent prepositions in several EFL coursebooks used in Thai upper secondary schools against the BNC in order to complement EFL coursebooks that may provide insufficient amounts of collocations of the verbs. The three verbs which are commonly followed by prepositions, namely *agree*, *apply*, and *die*, were selected for this study because they are among the 1,000 most frequent words used in both spoken and written English communication, according to Longman Communication 3000, which was compiled from the 390-million-word Longman Corpus Network (Bullon & Leech, 2007). The three PVs are also on the list of 100 verbs frequently encountered in the written subcategory of the BNC (Baldwin, 2005).

The current study aims at resolving the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences among the dependent prepositions of the verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die* shown in the four selected coursebooks and the BNC?
2. What should be taught in regard to the three target English PVs and their dependent prepositions to Thai EFL learners, and how should the instruction be provided?

METHODOLOGY

1. Data collection

The data were elicited from two different sources. One major source comprised four EFL coursebooks licensed by Thailand's Office of the Basic Education Commission for use in fundamental English courses in certain Thai upper secondary schools. These books included Evans and Dooley (2021), Kay et al. (2021), Santos (2017), and Goldstein et al. (2015). The textbooks were selected as they contain a lesson or exercise on prepositional verbs and their dependent prepositions, and they are fairly recent, having been published from the year 2015 onwards. The data were collected specifically from the contents, exercises, and appendices of the coursebooks.

The other source of data is the original BNC1994 (referred to as the BNC in this article) that was accessed via the BNCweb (<http://bncweb.lancs.ac.uk>), a web-based interface that depends on the Corpus Query Processor (CQP) (Hardie, 2012). It is easy to use and offers a range of analysis options such as concordancing, collocations, and frequency lists.

Firstly, I investigated the verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die* and their dependent prepositions presented in the selected English coursebooks specifically designed for 10th to 12th grade students. Secondly, I searched the BNC, using encoded search strings, such as {*agree/V*} in order to obtain all possible variants of the verb, e.g., *agree*, *agrees*, *agreed*, *agreeing*. The reason why the BNC was chosen for this study is that, as an enormous corpus which contains 98,313,429 words from 4,124 written and spoken sources, it is a representative sample of written and spoken English language use. It can also yield statistical significance of the data, as compared to the new BNC, or the BNC2014, which still cannot do so (CASS, n.d.).

Thirdly, I further processed the results to find collocations of the verbs, selecting the collocation option in the BNC and restricting the tag of the collocates to prepositions with a window span of 1R (one word to the right of the search string) as the present study was interested in prepositions which follow the search verbs. In discovering the collocations of the verb in this study, the log-likelihood (LL) value was adopted since this statistical method focuses mainly on the frequency of collocates (Hunston, 2002) across the subcorpora of the BNC. It is preferred over the MI score because the latter inclines toward low-frequency units (Bestgen & Granger, 2014). Finally, the verb-preposition constructions containing LL values over 6.63 ($p < 0.01$) (Rayson et al., 2004) and appearing in the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.) that helped determine which constructions are worth being explored were further searched within a window span of 1R 3R (one to three words to the right of the search node) for their noun collocates which followed them. One fundamental reason for determining this range is that nouns can occur from one to three words to the right of the search node.

2. Data analysis

In the present study, the nouns that follow the verb-preposition constructions and which contain LL values over 6.63 were further examined primarily because the established value can be indicative of the habitual co-occurrence of the nouns and the verb-preposition constructions (Rayson et al., 2004). The top 20 noun collocates were then categorized according to their semantic preferences.

After that, the results from the BNC and the English language coursebooks were compared and discussed in relation to what English prepositional verbs to teach L1 Thai learners and how to most effectively convey the content.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: What are the similarities and differences among the dependent prepositions of the verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die* shown in the four selected coursebooks and the BNC?

1. Findings from the selected coursebooks

The three verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die* with dependent prepositions were investigated in this study. It was found that although the selected EFL textbooks were designed for students at upper secondary school level, they presented the three prepositional verbs and their dependent prepositions differently. The three prepositional verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die* were found in Evans and Dooley (2021), while two of these prepositional verbs *agree* and *die* appeared in Santos (2017), and only the verb *agree* was shown in Goldstein et al. (2015). *Agree* was said to be followed by the prepositions *with* and *on* (Evans & Dooley, 2021, p. 138), while in the exercise *agree* seemed to combine with *on*, as in “We need to **agree** a time to meet.” (Evans & Dooley, 2021, p. 40). This differed slightly from the three other textbooks: Kay et al. (2021) stated that *agree* preceded *on* or *with* without any exercise or example, and Goldstein et al. (2015) and Santos (2017) presented either of both cases. Goldstein et al. (2015, p. 64) showed that *agree* occurred before *on*, and reiterated this verb-preposition construction in a matching exercise (p. 112), while Santos (2017, p. 28) indicated that the verb preceded the preposition *with*, and provided one example: “Jake never **agrees with** anything we say.”

With regard to *apply*, Evans and Dooley (2021) and Kay et al. (2021) pointed out that it was typically followed by the preposition *for*, yet Evans and Dooley (2021) noted that, before the preposition *for*, the verb *apply* might take *to* as a preposition and they exemplified this grammatical point with an exercise item, “Emma has **applied** Leeds University a place on the History course.” (p. 40). Similarly, Kay et al. (2021) gave several examples of *apply for*, as in “I can **apply for** a summer job.”, “I would like to **apply for** the position of part-time office helper.” (p. 80), “Keren’s **applied for** a job in Atlanta.” (p. 146), along with a gap-filling exercise item, “I am writing to the position of receptionist.” Nonetheless, there was a lack of information regarding *apply* and its dependent prepositions in Goldstein et al. (2015) and Santos (2017).

The verb *die* was generally followed by three dependent prepositions, *of*, *from*, or *in* (an accident) (Evans & Dooley, 2021, p. 138), whereas Santos (2017) presented merely one preposition *of* that occurred after this verb. However, both coursebooks did not offer any exercise item or sentence example concerning *die* and its prepositions. Even more, *die* and its prepositions were not mentioned in Kay et al. (2021) and Goldstein et al. (2015). The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Agree, apply, and die, and their dependent prepositions found in the four coursebooks

Coursebook	Evans and Dooley (2021)	Kay et al. (2021)	Goldstein et al. (2015)	Santos (2017)
Prepositional verbs and their available dependent prepositions	agree with sb on sth apply (to sb) for sth die of/from die in an accident (p. 138)	agree on/with apply for (p. 146)	agree on (p. 64)	agree with die of (p. 28)
Example		- I can apply for a summer job. (p. 80) - I would like to apply for the position of part-time office helper. (p. 80) - Keren's applied for a job in Atlanta. (p. 146).		- Jake never agrees with anything we say. (p. 28)
Exercise	Fill in the correct preposition, then explain the phrases. - We need to agree a time to meet. - Emma has applied Leeds University a place on the History course. (p. 40)	Complete the sentences from a letter of application with phrases from the WRITING FOCUS. - I am writing to the position of receptionist. (apply for) (p. 80)	Look at the words in the boxes. Match them to make verb phrases. agree at arrive for look forward to prepare from recover on work with (p. 112)	

It is worthy of note that the four selected books gave very few noun collocates of the PVs that would help distinguish between the usage of the dependent prepositions of the verbs, possibly because space in the coursebooks was needed for many other dependent prepositions and lessons. This may lead the student to assume that two or more competing dependent prepositions such as *of* and *from* after the verb *die* have the same usage.

2. Findings from the BNC

2.1 Agree

In the BNC, there are 23,092 instances (234.88 instances per million (PM) words) of *agree* across 2,872 different texts. In contrast to the textbooks, numerous prepositions were found after the verb *agree*, e.g., *to*, *with*, *on*, *upon*, *between*, *by*, *at*, *in*. The results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2
Dependent prepositions of *agree* in the BNC

No.	Preposition	Log-likelihood value
1	to	20,419.04
2	with	14,384.90
3	on	2,074.41
4	upon	829.39
5	between	404.08

No.	Preposition	Log-likelihood value
6	by	332.05
7	at	77.65
8	in	66.32
9	about	30.24
10	among	25.17
11	during	17.38
12	under	7.94

According to Table 2, the three most frequent dependent prepositions of the verb *agree*, viz., *to*, *with*, and *on*, were further examined as they have the LL values of more than 6.63 and appear in the online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.), and the remaining prepositions after *agree* were excluded from this study.

2.1.1 Agree to

A search carried out for noun collocates of *agree to* yielded 6,150 tokens of its noun collocates (62.56 instances PM words) in 1,648 different texts. Table 3 shows the top 20 noun collocates of *agree to*, 14 of which were classified into two thematic categories according to their semantic preferences: (a) DISCUSSION, which encompasses five noun collocates, namely *talks*, *negotiations*, *meeting*, *arbitration*, and *interview*; (b) ARRANGEMENT, which includes five noun collocates, viz., *ceasefire*, *truce*, *terms*, *compromise*, and *plan*; and (c) IDEA, consisting of four noun collocates, i.e., *request*, *proposal*, *demands*, and *suggestion*. The other six noun collocates, namely *patron*, *goods*, *UN*, *distributor*, *aid*, and *publisher*, were ruled out because their concordance lines showed that they were not the object of the preposition *to*, but the object of the infinitive instead. The findings are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3
Noun collocates of *agree to* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	request	191.02
2	talks	141.15
3	proposal	138.92
4	ceasefire	134.30
5	negotiations	123.80
6	truce	110.85
7	meeting	73.31
8	arbitration	70.26
9	demands	59.57
10	patron	59.48
11	goods	58.67
12	UN (United Nations)	56.76
13	distributor	56.30

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
14	aid	55.81
15	publisher	55.44
16	terms	54.03
17	suggestion	53.65
18	compromise	53.64
19	interview	52.29
20	plan	47.61

Table 4
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *agree to*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>agree to</i>
1. DISCUSSION	talks, negotiations, meeting, arbitration, interview
2. ARRANGEMENT	ceasefire, truce, terms, compromise, plan
3. IDEA	request, proposal, demands, suggestion

2.1.2 Agree with

A total of 3,173 instances of the noun collocates (32.27 instances PM words) of *agree with* were discovered in the BNC. The top 20 noun collocates of *agree with* displayed in Table 5 fall into three main categories: (a) IDEA, comprising noun collocates: *sentiment(s)*, *statement*, *view(s)*, *proposition*, *suggestion*, *observations*, *conclusion(s)*, *decision*, and *comments*; and (b) PERSON or ORGANIZATION, which comprises seven noun collocates, namely *friend*, *gentleman*, *Mr*, *client*, *lord*, *IMF (International Monetary Fund)*, and *member*. It is worth noticing that in the table the three collocates, i.e., *sentiment(s)*, *view(s)*, and *conclusion(s)*, appear in both singular and plural forms, and *Mr* introduces a person's name. Additionally, even though *agree with* shares the theme IDEA with *agree to*, both verb-preposition constructions differ in noun collocates and the number of noun collocates: nine noun collocates of *agree with* consist of *sentiment(s)*, *statement*, *view(s)*, *proposition*, *suggestion*, *observations*, *conclusion(s)*, *decision*, and *comments*, yet four noun collocates of *agree to* are *request*, *proposal*, *demands*, and *suggestion*. Under this common theme, *request* and *suggestion* are two noun collocates that the two verb-preposition constructions share. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 5
Noun collocates of *agree with* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	friend	643.93
2	gentleman	198.75
3	Mr	157.58
4	sentiments	138.62
5	statement	110.88
6	view	93.52
7	client	74.22
8	lord	72.07
9	proposition	70.33

No.	Noun collocates	Log-likelihood value
10	suggestion	69.89
11	views	68.33
12	IMF	65.72
13	sentiment	55.90
14	observations	53.64
15	conclusions	51.72
16	decision	50.10
17	Mr.	48.53
18	conclusion	45
19	member	43.91
20	comments	42.27

Table 6
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *agree with*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>agree with</i>
1. IDEA	sentiment(s), statement, view(s), proposition, suggestion, observations, conclusion(s), decision, comments
2. PERSON/ORGANIZATION	friend, gentleman, Mr, client, lord, IMF, member

2.1.3 Agree on

There were 1,025 tokens (10.43 tokens PM words) of nouns that collocate with *agree on* across 542 different texts. The top 20 noun collocates are shown in Table 7, and three thematic classifications arose from the collocates, as presented in Table 8. The most popular theme emerging from noun collocates of *agree on* according to their semantic preferences is MONTH, which embodies *Dec., Aug., Nov., Jan., Sept., Oct., July, May, and March*. Another theme ARRANGEMENT covers seven noun collocates, viz., *measures, plan, price, formula, programme, policy, wording, and draft*. The last theme NECESSITY contains two noun collocates, *need* and *importance*. However, it is worth noting that although *agree on* and *agree to* share the theme ARRANGEMENT, the lexical items differ markedly in that under this theme *agree on* is followed by nouns with the sense of general arrangements, while *agree to* essentially precedes nouns indicating arrangements for stopping fighting or arguing. It is also evident that *plan* is the only member that both verb-preposition constructions have in common. Finally, the noun collocates *peace* was filtered out from this study because its concordances showed that it modifies head nouns such as *plan, treaty, settlement, or accord*.

Table 7
Noun collocates of *agree on* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocates	Log-likelihood value
1	Dec.	205.82
2	need	174.87
3	Aug.	153.89
4	Nov.	107.19
5	measures	78.07

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
6	Jan.	75.95
7	Sept.	67.27
8	Oct.	56.95
9	July	56.71
10	importance	46.60
11	wording	44.54
12	plan	42.43
13	price	41.77
14	formula	41.48
15	programme	41.33
16	May	38.95
17	March	38.31
18	policy	34.87
19	peace	34.20
20	draft	33.11

Table 8
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *agree on*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>agree with</i>
1. MONTH	Dec., Aug., Nov., Jan., Sept., Oct., July, May, March
2. ARRANGEMENT	measures, plan, price, formula, programme, policy, wording, draft
3. NECESSITY	need, importance

In sum, both the selected textbooks and the BNC supply three prepositions after the verb *agree*, i.e., *to*, *with*, and *on*. The corpus offers a number of noun collocates and suggests that the verb-preposition patterns show semantic preferences for the collocates.

2.2 Apply

There are 19,186 tokens (195.15 tokens PM words) of the verb *apply* which collocates with various prepositions, e.g., *to*, *for*, *in*, *across*, *throughout*, *by*, as displayed in Table 9. However, only the prepositions *to* and *for* were selected for the present study primarily because they are identified as the dependent prepositions of the verb *apply* by the online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.) and have LL values over 6.63 according to the BNC.

Table 9
Dependent prepositions of *apply* in the BNC

No.	Preposition	Log-likelihood value
1	to	24,896.31
2	for	6,952.56
3	in	743.41

No.	Preposition	Log-likelihood value
4	across	126.45
5	throughout	113.45
6	by	76.58
7	within	22.60
8	through	20.12
9	under	14
10	over	9.47
11	without	8.72

2.2.1 Apply to

The search for *apply to* in the corpus returned 6,477 tokens (65.88 tokens PM words) across 1,772 different texts. 20 nouns that occur most frequently with this verb-preposition construction were identified. The findings are summarized in Table 10. The nouns were then analyzed in terms of their semantic preferences, and three fundamental themes arose, as seen in Table 11. The most dominant theme LAW covers ten out of the 20 noun collocates, namely *court(s)*, *premises*, *contracts*, *proceedings*, *council*, *claims*, *subjects*, *agreement(s)*, *clauses*, and *persons*. A further theme of the nouns co-existing with *apply to* is BUSINESS, which comprises four members, viz., *companies*, *transactions*, *goods*, and *trusts*. The final theme MISCELLANEOUS, consisting of lexical items that cannot be grouped into any specific category, encompasses the noun collocates *areas*, *entity*, *situation*, and *types*. Notably, *court(s)* and *agreement(s)* occur in both singular and plural forms.

Table 10
Noun collocates of *apply to* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	court	594.91
2	premises	234.60
3	contracts	200.41
4	companies	138.05
5	transactions	137.94
6	proceedings	129.21
7	council	113.32
8	courts	113.30
9	claims	99.06
10	subjects	88.99
11	areas	82.02
12	agreements	75.56
13	maxplan	74.42
14	clauses	72.49
15	persons	70.70
16	goods	66.84
17	entity	66.80

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
18	trusts	63.25
19	situation	62.76
20	types	61.65

Table 11
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *apply to*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>apply to</i>
1. LAW	court(s), premises, contracts, proceedings, council, claims, subjects, agreement(s), clauses, persons
2. BUSINESS	companies, transactions, goods, trusts
3. MISCELLANEOUS	areas, entity, situation, types

2.2.2 Apply for

A search for *apply for* yielded 2,011 instances (20.45 instances PM words) across 889 different texts. The top 20 nouns which accompany *apply for* are shown in Table 12, with *job(s)* and *grant(s)* being in both singular and plural forms. Remarkably, *permission* is the word that most frequently combines with *apply for*, with the LL value of 920.41, and *membership* ranks second, with 627.46. It is important to note that *apply for* regularly heads two synonymous nouns, *job(s)* and *post*, with a total LL value of 1,427.40, being substantially higher than the LL values of each of the higher-ranked items, *permission* and *membership*. The verb phrase also collocates with *planning permission*, which means a formal agreement to erect new buildings or restore derelict constructions.

The noun collocates were subsequently classified into three thematic categories according to their semantic preferences, as in Table 13. The overarching thematic category RIGHT, which refers to something that someone is allowed to do or has legally or officially, encompasses 13 noun collocates of *apply for*, namely (*planning*) *permission*, *membership*, *order*, *status*, *licence*, *review*, *leave*, *asylum*, *residence*, *admission*, *citizenship*, and *discharge*. The second theme SUPPORT, which involves help in any forms, such as money or food, comprises three lexical items, viz., *grant(s)*, *relief*, and *benefit*, and the final theme EMPLOYMENT includes two lexical items, *job(s)* and *post*.

Table 12
Noun collocates of *apply for* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	permission	920.41
2	membership	627.46
3	job	616.44
4	jobs	554.07
5	planning	399.60
6	order	341.46

No.	Noun collocates	Log-likelihood value
7	status	334.76
8	licence	318.90
9	review	315.17
10	grant	307.11
11	leave	200.74
12	asylum	189.88
13	grants	172.06
14	residence	166.21
15	admission	165.93
16	post	159.15
17	relief	116.28
18	citizenship	109.60
19	discharge	104.44
20	benefit	101.45

Table 13
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *apply for*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>apply for</i>
1. RIGHT	<i>(planning) permission, membership, order, status, licence, review, leave, asylum, residence, admission, citizenship, discharge</i>
2. SUPPORT	<i>grant(s), relief, benefit</i>
3. EMPLOYMENT	<i>job(s), post(s)</i>

On the whole, the corpus data offer a range of noun collocates of *apply to* and *apply for*. The BNC suggests that *apply to* prefers nouns semantically related to themes LAW and BUSINESS, while Evans and Dooley (2021) provide the grammatical pattern, *apply to somebody or an organization*. Moreover, the BNC reveals that *apply for* often heads nouns categorized into the three themes RIGHT, SUPPORT, and EMPLOYMENT, while the verb-preposition construction is shown to precede nouns under the theme RIGHT, i.e., *a place*, and EMPLOYMENT, i.e., *job(s)* and *post(s)* in the two coursebooks.

2.3 Die

In the BNC, there are 21,322 occurrences (216.88 occurrences PM words) of the verb lemma *die*, and a list of prepositions that collocate with *die* is shown in Table 14. According to the table, three prepositions which most frequently co-occur with the lemma are *in*, *from*, and *at*, represented by the LL values of 9,282.55, 1,313.36, and 1,198.06, respectively. However, *aged*, ranked fourth, is identified as an adjective according to the online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.), thereby being ruled out of the study. In contrast to the BNC, the dictionary offers four prepositions after *die*, namely *from*, *of*, *for*, and *with*, with the first two prepositions shown to be used interchangeably in the dictionary. In the BNC, *die from* is ranked first, followed by *die of*, *die for*, and *die with*, corresponding to the LL values of 1,313.36, 376.91, 131.30, and 37.45, respectively. This study will examine the four dependent prepositions in order.

Table 14
Dependent prepositions of *die* in the BNC

No.	Preposition	Log-likelihood value
1	in	9,282.55
2	from	1,313.36
3	at	1,198.06
4	aged	1,021.71
5	after	964.34
6	on	758.11
7	within	499.43
8	before	450.32
9	during	405.50
10	of	376.91
11	without	270.33
12	for	131.30
13	as	126.99
14	like	46.51
15	with	37.45
16	under	22.41
17	near	12.50
18	inside	8.78
19	until	7.39
20	since	6.68

2.3.1 *Die from*

A total of 581 occurrences of *die from*, or 5.91 occurrences PM words, across 320 texts, were found in the corpus. The 20 most frequent noun collocates of the verb phrase are presented in Table 15 and grouped according to their semantic preferences, as in Table 16. As seen from Table 16, *die from* is regularly accompanied by the terms which belong to four thematic classifications: MEDICAL CONDITION, viz., (*head*) *injuries*, (*lung*) *cancer*, *disease(s)*, *wounds*, *AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)*, (*heart*) *attack*, *stab* *hypothermia*, *pneumonia*, *shock*, *overdose*, and *illness*; EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH, comprising *poisoning* and *stab*; FEELING, which embodies *starvation* and *hunger*; and UNIDENTIFIED REASON, which refers to an unknown or unspecific cause of death, i.e., *causes*, as in (1).

Table 15
20 Noun collocates of *die from* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	injuries	678.24
2	cancer	424.28
3	causes	234.83
4	disease	222.78
5	heart	182.34

No.	Noun collocates	Log-likelihood value
6	wounds	164.35
7	poisoning	144.22
8	AIDS	142.70
9	starvation	140.48
10	diseases	109.96
11	head	108.87
12	lung	98.51
13	attack	97.67
14	stab	89.48
15	hypothermia	72.29
16	pneumonia	69.87
17	shock	62.30
18	overdose	61.85
19	hunger	58.89
20	illness	55.77

Table 16

Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *die from*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>die from</i>
1. MEDICAL CONDITION	<i>(head) injuries, (lung) cancer, disease(s), wounds, AIDS, (heart) attack, hypothermia, pneumonia, shock, overdose, illness</i>
2. EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH	<i>poisoning, stab</i>
3. FEELING	<i>starvation, hunger</i>
4. UNIDENTIFIED REASON	<i>causes</i>

(1) People who died of cancer were less likely than those ***dying from other causes*** to have been in such homes, 7 per cent against 29 per cent. (WRITTEN)

2.3.2 *Die of*

The findings indicated that *die of* comprises 1,087 tokens, or 11.6 tokens PM words, across 635 texts in the BNC. Table 17 lists the 20 most frequent noun collocates of the verb phrase. The collocates were then grouped into three central themes according to their semantic preferences, as in Table 18. The first principal theme MEDICAL CONDITION includes 14 collocates, viz., *(lung) cancer, (heart) attack, AIDS, disease, pneumonia, fever, wounds, injuries, failure, hypothermia, shock, and overdose*. Another major theme FEELING covers five lexical items, namely *starvation, hunger, thirst, boredom, and exposure*. The last theme UNIDENTIFIED REASON comprises one accompanying noun, *causes*.

Table 17
20 Noun collocates of *die of* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	cancer	1,707.16
2	heart	1,158.46
3	attack	786.27
4	starvation	718.82
5	AIDS	436.76
6	disease	434.75
7	pneumonia	428.06
8	hunger	314.83
9	thirst	259.16
10	lung	227.42
11	fever	209.16
12	wounds	199.08
13	injuries	198.52
14	failure	189.82
15	hypothermia	164.13
16	boredom	149.63
17	causes	141.57
18	shock	137.88
19	exposure	134.71
20	overdose	125.92

Table 18
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *die of*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>die of</i>
1. MEDICAL CONDITION	<i>(lung) cancer, (heart) attack, AIDS, disease, pneumonia, fever, wounds, injuries, failure, hypothermia, shock, overdose</i>
2. FEELING	<i>starvation, hunger, thirst, boredom, exposure</i>
3. UNIDENTIFIED REASON	<i>causes</i>

The three thematic categories of the noun collocates of *die from* and *die of* are the same; however, the lexical items that subscribe to the first two themes MEDICAL CONDITION and FEELING show some differences. One observed difference between them is that *die from* often combines with words indicating EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH, namely *poisoning* and *stab*, in addition to those representing medical disorders and body parts, while *die of* does not. The other fundamental difference is that *die of* has three more noun collocates under the theme FEELING, i.e., *thirst*, *boredom*, and *exposure*, than *die from*.

2.3.3 *Die for*

The verb phrase returned 331 tokens (3.37 tokens PM words) across 248 texts in the BNC, and the three noun collocates include *sin(s)*, ranking first with an LL value of 258.43, followed by

country (61.33), and *cause* (43.78), respectively. The findings are displayed in Table 19. The noun collocates were categorized into two themes. The prevailing theme IDEOLOGY, which refers to a set of beliefs held by a group of people, encompasses three noun collocates, namely *sin(s)*, *country*, and *cause*, as exemplified in (2). The other theme UNIDENTIFIED REASON, which *die for* shares with *die from* and *die of*, encompasses one lexical item, *cause*.

Table 19
Noun collocates of *die for* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	sin(s)	258.43
2	country	61.33
3	cause	43.78

Table 20
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *die for*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>die for</i>
1. IDEOLOGY	<i>sin(s)</i> , <i>country</i> , <i>cause</i>
2. UNIDENTIFIED REASON	<i>cause</i>

(2) In the communion service we state quite clearly that Jesus ***died for*** the ***sins*** of the world. (SPOKEN)

2.3.4 Die with

A total of 200 instances (2.03 instances PM words) of *die with* were found in 166 different texts across the BNC, and two noun collocates of this verb-preposition construction are displayed in Table 21. The first noun collocate is *dignity*, with an LL value of 220.29, and the second one is *AIDS*, with an LL value of 59.63. As with *die from* and *die of*, *die with* has *AIDS*, not any other illness, as its noun collocate. These three verb phrases, however, vary in their popularity with the collocate *AIDS*; *die of* enjoys the greatest popularity with an LL value of 436.76, followed by *die from* (142.70) and *die with* (59.63).

According to their semantic preferences, the two accompanying nouns were grouped into two different themes. The first theme PRIDE has one noun *dignity*, and the second theme MEDICAL CONDITION contains a single lexical item *AIDS*.

Table 21
Noun collocates of *die with* in the BNC

No.	Noun collocate	Log-likelihood value
1	dignity	220.29
2	AIDS	59.63

Table 22
Semantic preferences of noun collocates of *die with*

Semantic preferences	Noun collocates of <i>die with</i>
1. PRIDE	<i>dignity</i>
2. MEDICAL CONDITION	<i>AIDS</i>

Overall, while the coursebooks state that *die* is followed by the prepositions *of*, *from*, and *in*, the BNC and dictionary suggest that the verb *die* combines with *from*, *of*, *for*, and *with*. The corpus data also reveal the themes UNIDENTIFIED REASON shared by *die from/of/for*, and MEDICAL CONDITION shared by *die from/of/with*. *Die from* and *die of* also prefer the nouns semantically connected to the two other themes MEDICAL CONDITION and FEELING. *Die of* is often accompanied by the nouns which refer to extreme feelings, while *die from* is often followed by the nouns under the theme EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH. *Die for* generally co-occurs with the nouns that carry the meaning of IDEOLOGY, whereas *die with* often precedes the nouns semantically linked to PRIDE.

Research question 2: What should be taught in regard to the three target English PVs and their dependent prepositions to Thai EFL learners, and how should the instruction be provided?

The results regarding the PVs in the coursebooks should serve as a source of teaching English dependent prepositions of the PVs to Thai EFL learners. These coursebooks, complemented by the results of this current research, can also serve as another source for classroom instruction (Seilhamer, 2011). The three target English PVs and their dependent prepositions should be learned as phraseological units in order of the LL values of the constructions and their presence in the online Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (University Press, n.d.). The findings are summarized in Table 23, with different formatting representing overlapping themes for prepositions after the same verb.

Table 23
Content for teaching *agree/apply/die* + preposition

Verb	Preposition	Theme
agree	to	discussion, arrangement , <i>idea</i>
	with	<i>idea</i> , person/organization
	on	month, arrangement , necessity
apply	to	law, business
	for	right, support, employment
die	from	<u>medical condition</u> , external cause of death, feeling, <u>unidentified reason</u>
	of	<u>medical condition</u> , feeling, <u>unidentified reason</u>
	for	ideology, <u>unidentified reason</u>
	with	pride, <u>medical condition</u>

Regarding how to teach the PV constructions, the indirect approach to DDL should be administered to upper secondary school level Thai EFL students as it was found to be more effective than its direct counterpart (Johns, 1986; Saeedakhtar et al., 2020). This approach prevents students from technical problems that may arise in class and allows the teacher to select and simplify concordance output from the BNC through various means such as deleting or adjusting some proper names, adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and non-restrictive relative clauses (Gabrielatos, 2005). The teacher should allow students to read concordance lines in KWIC view, rather than in complete sentences, because it is easier for learners to recognize patterns of language use in the search words aligned vertically in KWIC view than in complete sentence contexts (O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2022). This is in line with Quan et al. (2022) who found that KWIC is as useful as PIC in terms of improving students’ academic English. The concordance lines shown in the material provided in this current study (See Appendices A and B) were drawn from written genres because prepositional verbs occur much more frequently in these genres than in their spoken counterparts (Biber et al., 1999). After reading certain simplified concordance lines for two minutes, the students were asked to group noun collocates of the verb-preposition constructions into separate themes for five minutes and to discuss the results with one other for ten minutes.

For a theme classification that more than one verb phrase shares, such as *agree to* and *agree with*, the teacher can ask students to compare the simplified concordance lines in which the noun collocates appear and then to tell any observed differences between them. This activity will orient students toward a subtle difference between two verb phrases guided by a leading question. The material designed for teaching collocational differences between *agree to* and *agree with* is given in Appendix B.

CONCLUSION

This study compared the dependent prepositions of the verbs *agree*, *apply*, and *die*, shown in the coursebooks and the BNC, and sought to determine what should be taught in regard to the three English verbs and their dependent prepositions to Thai EFL learners, and how the instruction should be provided. The results indicated that the most frequent prepositions after the verbs presented in the coursebooks and the corpus are similar; both sources include *agree to/with/on*, *apply to/for*, but two coursebooks present *die off/from/in*, while the corpus data, in consultation with the online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.), reveal *die from/off/for/with*.

It was also found that corpus data offer considerably more noun collocates and sentence examples than the coursebooks, possibly because the coursebooks have limited space, yet contain a range of English language lessons. The top 20 noun collocates of each of the verb-preposition constructions found in the corpus fall into thematic categories according to their semantic preferences. *Agree to* is typically followed by nouns semantically linked to the themes DISCUSSION, ARRANGEMENT, and IDEA; *agree with* usually combines with nouns encompassing the themes IDEA and PERSON or ORGANIZATION; and *agree on* generally precedes nouns in relation to the themes MONTH, ARRANGEMENT, and NECESSITY. It is worth noting that *agree*

with has approximately twice more members under the theme IDEA than *agree to*. Besides, *agree on* is essentially related to nouns representing general arrangements, while *agree to* mostly collocates with nouns semantically associated with the resolution of military conflicts. Concerning *apply*, the BNC suggests that *apply to* co-occurs with nouns pertaining to the themes LAW and BUSINESS, while Evans and Dooley (2021) gave the grammatical pattern, *apply to somebody or an organization*. Moreover, the BNC reveals that *apply for* often collocates nouns categorized into the three themes RIGHT, SUPPORT, and EMPLOYMENT, while the two coursebooks show that the verb-preposition construction precedes nouns organized into the themes RIGHT and EMPLOYMENT. Finally, the coursebooks mention that *die* is followed by the prepositions *of*, *from*, and *in*, but the BNC and dictionary suggest that the verb *die* combines with *from*, *of*, *for*, and *with*. The corpus data also reveal the themes UNIDENTIFIED REASON shared by *die from/of/for*, and MEDICAL CONDITION shared by *die from/of/with*. *Die from* and *die of* are also followed by the nouns revolving around the two other themes MEDICAL CONDITION and FEELING. *Die of* often co-occurs with the nouns which refer to extreme feelings, while *die from* is additionally often followed by nouns under the theme EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH. *Die for* generally combines with the nouns representing the theme IDEOLOGY, while *die with* often precedes the nouns relating to the theme PRIDE.

With respect to what to teach Thai EFL learners about the three target English PVs and their dependent prepositions, the content in the coursebooks should be used and complemented by the findings of collocations categorized into themes indicated in this research. In terms of how to teach this lesson, it is recommended that the teacher should introduce an indirect approach to DDL by selecting and simplifying the BNC's concordance lines that contain the constructions under study and having the students read them in KWIC view for two minutes. The students may then be asked to categorize the collocations of the verb-preposition constructions into different themes for five minutes and talk to their classmate about the results for ten minutes. The students will also be expected to compare the collocates of the verb phrases that share the same theme in order to seek subtle differences in their usage.

There are, however, certain limitations to the study. Firstly, the results have still not been tried out in language classrooms. For this reason, some factors, such as the relationship between the amount of content and the number of teaching hours allowed, may need to be considered when the lessons are applied to real classroom settings. Secondly, the research collected data solely from the BNC; consequently, the results might be skewed when compared to other English varieties. Moreover, some noun collocates are not easily classified into one or another theme according to their semantic preferences; therefore, teachers should select collocates that are expected to be classified indisputably into a particular theme.

There are possibilities for conducting further research in this area. Future research can be carried out by investigating a larger number of verbs with dependent prepositions. Moreover, it is suggested that that usage of dependent prepositions after adjectives, e.g., *different to/from/than*, *upset about/by/over/with* be investigated. Lastly, it is advisable that further research be conducted in terms of strengths and weaknesses of using corpora for teaching English dependent prepositions in the classroom, or even the effectiveness of the method discussed in this corpus-based study.

It is hoped that the results of the study can help EFL learners and teachers, notably Thai ones, use English dependent prepositions of frequently used verbs accurately, and serve as a possible method of teaching L1 Thai learners about English PVs. The findings will also raise English language teachers' awareness about the combination of the content of English dependent prepositions described in students' books and data found in corpora for instruction so that students can gain profound and accurate insight into the collocations and usages of the constructions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was funded by the Research Department of Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, Thailand.

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Appendix A

Simplified KWIC concordance lines for *agree to* from the BNC

earthquake which struck India. President Yeltsin has	agreed to	talks to end the political crisis in Russia.
on Aug. 22, the men's representatives	agreed to	negotiations after nine days' action.
Minister of Finance gave in to their demands and	agreed to	a meeting with the leaders of
What theme do you think the words talks , negotiations , and meeting share? (Possible answer: DISCUSSION)		

negotiations continued before the two sides	agreed to	a truce of twenty-eight years
that he would not	agree to	a ceasefire until Doe had resigned and left the country.
if you	agree to	the above terms , please sign here.
What theme do you think the words truce , ceasefire , and terms share? (Possible answer: ARRANGEMENT)		

Ann agreed to	agreed to	Leo's request for a dance by the pool.
but the bank was aware that she might not	agree to	the proposal .
He was simply	agreeing to	her demands in order to avoid another argument.
What theme do you think the words request , proposal , and demands share? (Possible answer: IDEA)		

Appendix B

Simplified KWIC concordance lines for *agree to* and *agree with* from the BNC

Ann agreed to	<i>agreed to</i>	Leo's <i>request</i> for a dance by the pool.
but the bank was aware that she might not	<i>agree to</i>	the <i>proposal</i> .
He was simply	<i>agreeing to</i>	her <i>demands</i> in order to avoid another argument.
last statement is not true as I	<i>agree with</i>	the <i>sentiments</i> of those who have argued that the Exile clubs should not be in the Courage Leagues, which are meant to be for English players.
over two-thirds of people	<i>agreed with</i>	the <i>statement</i> that "Exercise improves the quality of sleep".
He is another politician I admire, and I tend to	<i>agree with</i>	the <i>view</i> that he is the best leader the party never had.
since he had refused to look at it, and did not	<i>agree with</i>	its <i>proposition</i>
Not all will necessarily	<i>agree with</i>	the <i>suggestion</i> that those who fight in wars are historically more important
But if the theory always gave predictions that	<i>agreed with</i>	<i>observations</i> , we could be confident that it was the right one.
Does he	<i>agree with</i>	the <i>conclusions</i> of the report?
<p>According to the concordance lines given, what do you think the similarities and differences between the noun collocates of <i>agree to</i> and <i>agree with</i> are in terms of number and theme? (Possible answer: A similarity is that the collocates of both verb phrases share the same theme IDEA, and a difference is that <i>agree with</i> has more noun collocates than <i>agree to</i>.)</p>		