

## The atypical subordinating conjunctions *(an)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um*

This article is about the function words *(an)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um*. German grammar rules classify them following the same pattern as for the function words *bis*, *seit* and *während*, which can be complemented by both noun phrases and finite subordinate clauses. In the first case they are categorized as prepositions and in the second as subordinating conjunctions (cf. Duden 2016; Di Meola 2000, p. 57). *(An)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* are classified as prepositions, which require a noun phrase as a complement and govern the case of their complement (cf. Duden 2016, p. 640).

This article goes into the syntactic behaviour of *(an)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* in more detail based on examples like the following:

- (1a) *Anstatt* [**das Auto in die Werkstatt zu bringen.**]<sub>zu-VP</sub> hat er es selbst repariert.
- (1b) Bei der anderen Frau waren die mit Strasssteinchen verzierten Nägel tatsächlich ein Zeichen dafür, dass sie kaum etwas tun durfte, *außer* [**sich um ihr Aussehen zu kümmern.**]<sub>zu-VP</sub>
- (1c) Man riet dem kleinen Peter davon ab, über die Straße zu gehen, *ohne* [**dabei auf den Verkehr zu achten.**]<sub>zu-VP</sub>
- (1d) Der Dirigent nutzt die knappe Zeit, *um* [**die Literatur mit seinem Orchester möglichst in Konzertreife einzuüben.**]<sub>zu-VP</sub>

When used to introduce *zu*-infinitive phrases (also *zu*-verb phrases), the four function words are classified inconsistently in the pertinent literature: A few authors writing on grammar refer to them as prepositions (cf. Blühdorn 2012, p. 324; Hoffmann 2021, pp. 425–427), but most authors define them as subordinating conjunctions (cf., for example, Duden 2016, pp. 640–643, Helbig/Buscha 2017, pp. 400 f.; Engel 2009, pp. 399–406). Zifonun/Hoffmann/Strecker (1997) refer to them noncommittally as particles (ibid., p. 1430). In traditional grammar there is no doubt that the four function words are prepositions in the first instance. Indeed, they were traditionally located between the word classes PREPOSITION and SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION (cf. Adelung 1811; Becker 1836):

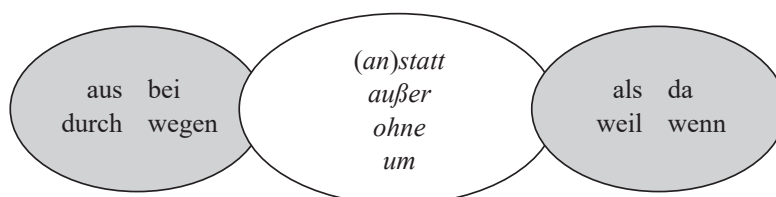


Fig. 1: *(an)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* between the word classes PREPOSITION and SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION

The grammatical classification of *(an)statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* as subordinating conjunctions in that system is called into question as the adverbial *zu*-verb phrases are not sentences in a formal sense, including neither a subject nor a finite verb. This study aims to:

- i) define the syntactic behaviour of (*an*)*statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* used to introduce *zu*-infinitive phrases more precisely. To do so, various syntactic arguments are put forward that lead to their grammatical classification as prepositions;
- ii) categorize the four function words consistently following the traditional procedure of classifying parts of speech, instead of their assuming two different functions or word classes;
- iii) capture the relationship for the four function words between centre and periphery within the word class PREPOSITION on the basis of prototype theory (Rosch 1975).

With the exception of *um*, the study will be expanded to include *dass*-clauses as they add further support to the grammatical classification of (*an*)*statt*, *außer* and *ohne* as prepositions. In this case, too, specific syntactic arguments speak in favour of their proposed part of speech.

There are various arguments in favour of their classification as prepositions that introduce infinitives, as summarized in Table 1:

Function word	Complemented by subordinate clauses	Complemented by <i>zu</i> -verb phrases	Complemented by <i>dass</i> -clauses	Position in the linear structure of <i>zu</i> -verb phrases and <i>dass</i> -clauses	Nominal character of <i>zu</i> -infinitive phrases and <i>dass</i> -clauses
( <i>an</i> ) <i>statt</i>	-	+	+	+	+
<i>außer</i>	-	+	+	+	+
<i>ohne</i>	-	+	+	+	+
<i>um</i>	-	+	-	+ ( <i>zu</i> -VP)	+ ( <i>zu</i> -VP)
prototypical preposition <i>aus</i>	-	-	-	+	+
prototypical subordinating conjunction <i>während</i>	+	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Comparison of (*an*)*statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* with a prototypical preposition and a prototypical subordinating conjunction

Similar to prototypical prepositions such as *aus*, the function words (*an*)*statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* exhibit two defining characteristics: first, their position within the linear structure of *zu*-verb phrases and *dass*-clauses, and second, the nominal properties of these *zu*-verb phrases and *dass*-clauses. In Table (1), these features are highlighted in light gray, as they indirectly support the grammatical classification of (*an*)*statt*, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* as prepositions. By contrast, when compared with a prototypical conjunction such as *während*, these four function words do not display any shared structural characteristics. Taking the complementation patterns of prototypical prepositions like *aus* into account,

whose slots may be filled by a noun phrase in a specific case, leads to the conclusion that (*an*)statt, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* have a different status within the word class PREPOSITION. This can be illustrated according to the centre-periphery model of prototype theory as follows:

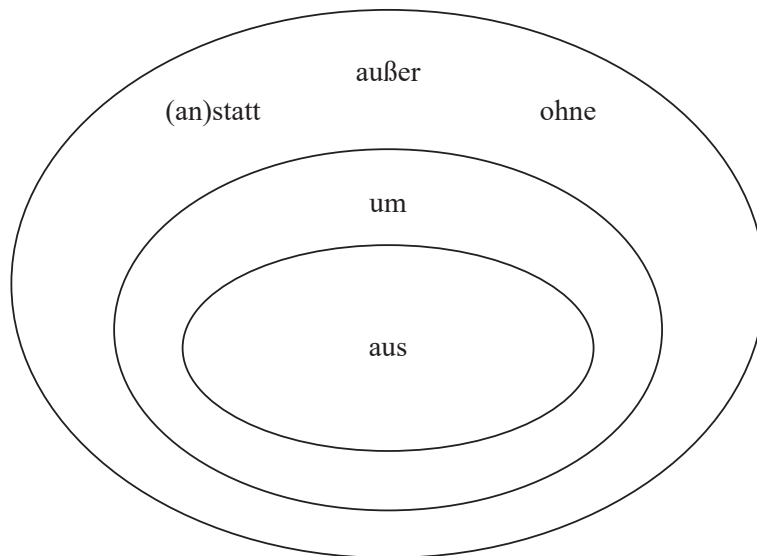


Fig. 2: Centre and periphery in the word class PREPOSITION

According to prototype theory, the core of the word class is occupied by prototypical representatives of the category, such as prepositions like *aus*. Compared to it, (*an*)statt, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* are positioned differently within the word class PREPOSITION. What they all have in common is that they cannot require a case when their slot is filled with *zu*-verb phrases or *dass*-clauses. *Um* is somewhat closer to the core because it is most similar to a preposition in that it is most restricted in terms of the formal category of its complement. Alongside *zu*-verb phrases, *um* can only be complemented by noun phrases marked for case; its slot cannot be filled by a *dass*-clause. (*An*)statt, *außer* and *ohne* are all further away from the core of the word class as their slots can also be filled by *dass*-clauses; they are placed on the periphery of the word class.

With regard to the classification of parts of speech and the procedure by which the lexical inventory is traditionally divided up into word classes, the classification of (*an*)statt, *außer*, *ohne* and *um* as prepositions, even though they can be complemented by *zu*-verb phrases and *dass*-clauses, opens up a discussion on the defining characteristics that traditional word classification theory assumes for establishing the word class PREPOSITION. On the one hand, their grammatical classification as prepositions implies an expanded view of grammatical categories that prepositions can take on; on the other hand, this new classification of parts of speech may also encourage recognition of the role of prepositions as sentence connectors, which is not accepted – or only inadequately so – by standard grammar rules.

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