
Bækken’s book is a corpus-based study of word order in Early Modern English (EME) based on some 3000 pages of text dating between 1480 and 1730. In the history of English there was a major restructuring from Old English to Modern English. While the former had some kind of verb-second constraint, the current language has a dominant verb medial SVO order. B’s largely descriptive study is a contribution towards answering the questions of when this shift took place and what the contributing factors were. The domain of investigation is thus non-subject-initial declarative main clauses, inverted XVS and non-inverted XSV. B’s main finding is that during the EME period the language stabilized, leading to dominant XSV order towards the end. B identifies 1680–1730 as the period during which the most radical decrease in the use of inversion structures took place.

The body of the book investigates particular factors which might account for the gradual shift. Ch. 5 looks at the effect of text type and individual author on the rate of inversion. In general, the results here are somewhat erratic. For example, B observes that while some authors use inversion quite consistently, others show considerable variation even within texts of the same category. Chs. 6–8 discuss patterns with three particular initial elements: predicates, direct objects, and adverbials. B suggests that numerous factors including textual cohesion, emphasis, the category of the fronted element, the form of the subject, the relative weight of the subject and verb, and a tendency to reserve the postverbal position for focused and heavy elements are relevant for whether or not inversion is present.

Ch. 9 documents the behavior of certain adverbs known to have triggered inversion in Old and Middle English (for example here, then, neither, never). B claims that individual adverbs developed differently. For negative adverbs, which require inversion in Modern English, this means that so-called negative preposing was not always a unified phenomenon. For nonnegative adverbs, inversion rates in most cases dropped dramatically over the EME period, converging on the modern situation.

Ch. 10 investigates the discourse status, given vs. new information, of the initial elements and subjects. B finds that there is a strong tendency for the subject to be given information but that inversion increases the possibility that the subject will be new information. Initial elements, by contrast, may be either given or new information with roughly equal frequency.

Finally, Ch. 11 looks at the types of verbs in inversion contexts, finding significantly higher rates of inversion with intransitive verbs, particularly verbs of appearance or existence, over transitive and linking verbs.

The work contains numerous illustrative examples, statistical studies, and various cross-classifications of the data. Furthermore, each chapter ends with a useful summary of the observed patterns. Ch. 12 is a fine comprehensive overview of the work’s findings and could profitably be read first. Not surprisingly, B concludes that word order in EME is ultimately determined by a complex interplay of syntactic, discourse, and pragmatic factors. [ERIC POTS DAM, Yale University.]


Adverbs have for a long time challenged linguists in many domains, and there has been a recent revival of interest in their analysis and implications for linguistic theory. In this book, Alexiadou argues for an original, largely syntactic approach to adverb placement.

Ch. 1 introduces the various puzzles posed by adverbs. A sees the two primary facts for syntax to explain as (1) the limited number of adverb classes and (2) their rigid order in the clause. Ch. 2 summarizes the work’s theoretical foundation: Noam Chomsky’s minimalist program and Richard Kayne’s antisymmetric clause structure. In this framework, adjunction is disallowed, specifiers are licensed via feature checking with a head, and X’ projections have strict specifier-head-complement ordering. These assumptions entail the work’s main proposal: individual adverb classes are syntactically licensed as specifiers of semantically-contentful functional projections in the clausal domain. The core of the book uses a wealth of data, largely from Modern Greek (MG), to explore and support this thesis.

Ch. 3 develops MG clause structure, arguing for a highly articulated architecture in which CP, IP, and VP are each replaced by numerous functional projections. These projections provide some of the specifiers for the various adverb classes. For example, Ch. 4 investigates aspectual and temporal adverbs, which are licensed in the specifier of AspectP and TenseP respectively. A’s evidence comes from their ordering with other adverb classes, complementarity restrictions, and relativized minimalism effects. Ch. 5 extends the study to manner adverbs, clause-final adverbs, negative adverbs, and sentential adverbs in both simple and periphrastic constructions. Attempts to show that the varied and complex data can be accommodated with adverbs in specifiers. Surface
differences between sentences with respect to the placement of adverbs reduce to independently-motivated movement operations in the language.

A argues that adverbs may also be licensed via incorporation into a verbal head. Ch. 6 illustrates this option using MG adverb incorporation (AI), as in ferete kala vs kalofere 'he behaves well'. A concludes that AI is a syntactic movement operation and not lexical compounding. The trigger for the movement is the lack of structural complexity of the adverb. AI licenses the deficient element under the assumption that elements lacking internal structure must universally shift to the left.

Ch. 7 investigates various often-cited parallels between adverbs and adjectives. A argues that they belong to a single category because they are subject to similar ordering restrictions and licensing requirements. At the same time, differences that exist between them are a consequence of distinct structures and movement options in clauses vs. nominals.

By adopting a rather restrictive set of theoretical assumptions and investigating their consequences in a fairly well defined empirical domain, A is able to give a unified and predictiv syntax for adverbs. The book will be of particular interest to syntacticians interested in asymmetry or MG clause structure.

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Rechtschreibwörterbücher im Test:


This book is the first in a series of studies exploring the history, systematics, and pragmatics of the spelling dictionary, conducted as part of a four-year team research project at the universities of Rostock and Siegen and the Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim, Germany. The present empirical study focuses on two questions: to what extent are prototypical users successful in finding specific information in spelling dictionaries? And, based on the results, how can spelling dictionaries be improved?

To answer these questions, the study is divided into two parts: part A, a comparison of three German spelling dictionaries, examines the subjective opinions of dictionary users and their success in solving five test problems by consulting a dictionary. First, 60 secretaries and 30 teachers were interviewed about their experiences with and attitudes towards spelling dictionaries and randomly given one of the tested dictionaries. (1) Duden (Duden-Rechtschreib-ung, 20th edn., ed. by Dudenredaktion. Mannheim, Leipzig, Wien, Zurich, 1991), (2) Deutsches Wörterbuch (DW) (Mannheim & Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1990), and (3) Neues deutsches Wörterbuch (NDW) (by Isolde Steiner, Cologne: Lingen, n.d.). After a short familiarization period, the informants were asked to take systematic notes about their dictionary use for four weeks. The results show that the most frequently looked-up items involve sound-letter relations of technical and foreign terms, (non)capitalization, and separate or one-word spelling (‘Getrennt- und Zusammenschreibung’). The results of the spelling and punctuation test, presented extensively in graphs and tables, show that only slightly more than half of the five problems were solved successfully, with the Duden being the most helpful, followed by the DW and then the NDW.

Dictionary users encountered significantly more problems when relying on the sections explaining spelling and punctuation rules than when looking up the lexical entry directly. Thus, part B of the study addresses to what extent the form of rule presentations influences the user success rate. Three different rule presentation forms for comma placement were tested: the unchanged Duden version (D), an alphabetical version ordered by terms such as indirect speech (A), and a systematic version based on syntactic functions (S). Each version was used either alone or in combination with a dictionary of specific comma-relevant lexical entries, in particular, conjunctions and pronouns. Again, the informants, 132 students of business vocational schools and 30 university students, were asked for their opinions and to solve six comma-related problems. While no optimum version was found, the alphabetical and systematic versions with comma-relevant lists of words proved the most useful.

Based on these results, Part C concludes with fourteen proposals for improving spelling dictionaries by changing the presentation of both dictionary entries and spelling and punctuation rules. All in all, this well-organized and straightforward book provides useful information for those involved in lexicography and dictionary development as well as for teachers whose students use spelling dictionaries. [INGRID U. PFUHLL, BETHESDA, MD.]


What is it that leads language users to recognize a communicative event as an instance of a particular genre? Paltridge addresses this question here by de-