The Positional Variation of *Always* in Middle and Early Modern English: A Corpus-Based Study

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Kim, Donghyun. 2010. The Positional Variation of *Always* in Middle and Early Modern English: A Corpus-Based Study. SNUL Working Papers in English Linguistics and Language 9, 1-14. The aim of this paper is to explore the positional variation of *always* in Middle and Early Modern English. It is particularly concerned with the distributional patterns of *always* in clause structure with the aid of the Helsinki Corpus. Drawing upon Quirk et al. (1985)'s positional description of adverbials, the present study provides a detailed account of the distribution of *always* in three main positions, i.e., initial, medial, and end position. The results of this study demonstrate the different distributional patterns of *always* depending on its placement in clause structure. In initial position, *provided always that* construction was prevalent, but it was exclusively limited to a certain text type. In medial position, six different positional patterns were illustrated with relevant examples. Finally, the study suggests that *always* in end position bears a semantic resemblance to the Present-Day English equivalent *all the time*. (Seoul National University)

Keywords: *always*, positional variation, frequency adverb, Helsinki Corpus

1. Introduction

In Present-Day English (hereafter PDE), frequency adverbs such as *always* are placed in certain positions in clause structure as following:¹

(1) a. We *usually* go to Scotland in August.
   b. You can *always* come and stay with us if you want to.

These frequency adverbs normally take medial position in a

¹ Quoted from *Practical English Usage*. 3rd ed. (2005)
sentence, (before the main verb or after the first auxiliary), although only a few of them may also occur in different positions. Considering the fact that a frequency adverb _always_ occurs in a certain position in PDE, this paper looks into the position of _always_ in clause structure with the aid of the Helsinki Corpus (hereafter HC). The paper is particularly concerned with the positional variation of _always_ from a historical perspective. To date, there has been no studies of the positional variation of frequency adverbs from a diachronic perspective. For the first time, this study presents a corpus-based analysis of the positional variation of _always_ in Middle English (hereafter ME) and Early Modern English (hereafter EME).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines where the frequency adverb _always_ is placed in PDE, and section 3 briefly describes the history of English _always_. Section 4 deals with the positional variation of _always_ in the ME and EME periods, and it also discusses different distributional patterns of _always_ in detail. There will be a collection of historical data extracted from the diachronic part of the Helsinki Corpus. Finally, section 5 offers a conclusion.

2. _Always_ in Present-Day English

Klima (1964) sets out a common pattern for the preverbal adverb of frequency (hereafter PAF), which is sometimes referred to as frequency adverbs. He suggests some rules of PAF placements. One of the examples in the article is as Nominal - Tense {Modal, be, have} Adv - V, as exemplified below:

(2) Publishers will _usually, always, not_ reject suggestions.

As can be seen from (2), the adverb _always_ is placed before the main verb and after the first auxiliary.

Drawing upon the Klima's description of the PAF, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) describe a class of PAF that tends to occur most naturally in the middle of a sentence. They mention

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2) Quoted from Klima (1964: 261)
that the preferred position for such PAF is somewhat complicated but predictable. Thus, the misplacement of these forms would produce ill-formed sentences, as illustrated in the following:

(3) a. *Always Mary is coming late to class.
    b. *Mary always is late for class.
    c. *Joan jogs in the morning always.
    d. *Bill has forgotten always to make his bed.

As shown above, the PAF always seems not to prefer sentence-initial and sentence-final position. Rather, it is generated medially between the subject and the predicate, more specifically, before the main verb or after the first auxiliary. And it is also preceded by a copula be in clause structure.

3. A historical sketch of English always

The ancestor of always was the genitive case of all way in ME, the inflection probably giving the sense ‘at every time’. The earliest example from Oxford English Dictionary (OED) was alles weis, then it merged later into a single word always in the EMD period. The OED provides various forms and examples. Here are some of the selected examples from the OED:

(4) a. c1230 Ancr.R. 4 Ye schullen alles weis, mid alle mihte,
    wel witen pe irre, & pe uttre vor hire sake.
    b. 1375 Bruce II. 92 James off dowglas, that ay-quhar
        All-wayis befor the byschop schar.
    c. c1400 Rom. Rose 919 A bachelere, That he made alleweyes
        with hym be.
    d. c1425 Cron. VII. vi. 10 In justice lawchful he wes allwayis.
    e. 1513 Edw. V Ded., Laudable custome that hath alwades
        been observed.

As can be seen in (4), always in clause structure shows considerable positional distribution over time. In the present paper

3) Quoted from Grammarbook. 2nd ed. (1999)
we shall see how this positional variation is shown based on the HC.

4. *Always* in Middle and Early Modern English

4.1 Periods and data considered

With regard to the collection of data, the present study looked at ME and EME periods contained in the HC. There was no evidence that *always* occurred in Old English. It began to appear from ME1 period (1150 - 1250) of the HC. Thus, this study was primarily concerned with ME and EME periods in the HC. Table 1 shows the periodical information of the HC chosen in the analyses.

Table 1. The diachronic part of the Helsinki Corpus: Size and period divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subperiod</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
<td>1150 - 1250</td>
<td>113,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td>1250 - 1350</td>
<td>97,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>1350 - 1420</td>
<td>184,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>1420 - 1500</td>
<td>213,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>608,570</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME 1</td>
<td>1500 - 1570</td>
<td>190,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME 2</td>
<td>1570 - 1640</td>
<td>189,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME 3</td>
<td>1640 - 1710</td>
<td>171,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>551,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The HC provided 23 spelling variants of *always* over the course of time. A total of 278 instances of *always* were retrieved from the HC. Table 2 illustrates the spelling variants by period in the HC.

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4) from Kyoto's General Introduction (to the Helsinki Corpus)
Table 2. Spelling variants of *always* by period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>E2</th>
<th>E3</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>always</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>allway</em></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>allesweis</em></td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 2, the earliest form of *always* recorded in the HC was *allesweis* in M1 period. *Alwey* was a dominant form in M3 and M4, but the token of it dropped drastically in E1 and did not occur from E2. In earlier periods in EME, *alwais* prevailed but in E3 the current form *always* emerged as a dominant form.
4.2 The positional variation of *always* in Middle and Early Modern English

As regards the position of adverbials in clause structure, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 490-501) distinguish three main positions, which is initial, medial, and end position. Initial position is that preceding any other clause element. But it generally means the position before subject. Medial position can be described as that between subject and verb. If there is an auxiliary verb present, the adverbial is placed after auxiliary. If there are more than one auxiliary verb present, the adverbial is placed after the first auxiliary. End position is the position in the clauses following all obligatory elements. Some examples are given below:5)

(5) a. Suddenly, the driver started the engine. (Initial position)
   b. The driver *suddenly* started the engine. (Medial position)
   c. The driver started the engine *suddenly*. (End position)

Making reference to the positional distinction of adverbials above, this study examined the distribution of *always* in clause structure in MD and EME periods in the HC.

Table 3. Frequency of *always* in its placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>E2</th>
<th>E3</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 displays the distribution of *always* depending on its placement in clause structure in ME and EME. As can be seen above, the distribution of *always* is shown in three different positions. From the M3 period on, the medial position is the most frequent position, and the frequency of it is on the increase throughout the periods in the data. Selected examples of each position are given below.

5) from Quirk *et al.* (1985:591-492)
The initial position:

(6) a. And so ran aboute the streys in london nakyd & mad cryenge always I shall be stole. (E1/HC)
   b. For always the nature of nothynge maye be thought to be better then the beginnyng of the same thyng. (E1/HC)
   c. I shall never be a good scoller; and always when his fellowes wente to playe, he wold goe to his bocke···· (E2/HC)
   d. Provided always that it shall and may be lawful for any person or persons drawing Spritts Brandy or Low Wines from any Forreigne Materialls or any English Materialls···· (E3/HC)

The medial position:

(7) a. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wise man should always have the keeping of it. (E3/HC)
   b. There they always use to discharge their Birding-pees: creepe into the Kill-hole. (E2/HC)
   c. I suppose the people wolde haue always resysted hym, and haue kepte hym in perpetuall exile···· (E1/HC)
   d. The xxv. day ys fortunat to go on huntyng, to bye and to selie; he that ys born that day schuld be couetus and meruulus off condycionnys, and always be in nede and pouerte, and neuer stedffast, but always wandryng fro one cuntre to a-nodyr; yt ys parel to pase the see this day;···· (M4/HC)

The end position:

(8) a. Thay must haue corn and hay And oder mete always. Do now as I the say, In the name of the Holy Gast. (M4/HC)
   b. In erth, as any sod, liffyd with grete grevance always; And now I wax old, Seke, sory, and cold; As muk apon mold I widder away. (M4/HC)
   c. The ravyn is a-hungrye always. He is without any reson;
And he fynd any carryon, As peraventure may be fon, He will not away. (M4/HC)

d. And I knewe that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may beleue that thou hast sent me. (E2/HC)

As can be seen from (6c) and (6d), the positions of always in provided always that S+V and always when S+V construction were regarded as initial in this study since they crop up before the subject in clause structure although it is not right before the subject. As regards the initial position, the HC rendered quite a few examples like (6d), which included provided always that construction. This was the most interesting piece of data in the initial position in that the very construction does not occur in PDE. Thus, the construction seemed to require further investigation. Of a total of 52 instances of always in the initial position, provided always that construction constituted the majority of the tokens, providing a total of 36 occurrences.

Table 4. Occurrences of provided always that in the HC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>E2</th>
<th>E3</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>always</td>
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<td>that</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon closer inspection, however, the 36 instances closely resembled one another. Some examples are given below:

(9) a. Provided alwaies, that this Acte or any thinge therein conteyned, shall not extende to any person or pesons which shall kill any person or persons… (E2/HC)
b. Provided alwaies that nothing in this Act contained shall be construed to extend to any Popish Priest for saying Masse or officiating as a Priest within the Dwelling… (E3/HC)
c. Provided alwaey that this Acte extend not to Wollen Cloth called Kendalles nor Clothes called Carpenell White commonly made for lynynge for hosen. (E1/HC)
As shown above, these examples apparently look very much alike. Thus, the reasonable procedure to follow would be to investigate text types of each occurrence. The text type results in EME are as follows:

Table 5. Distribution of provided always that in text types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>provided always that</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Trial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that the texts representing law are predominant, and it can be noted that a single token of trial is also a related text type to law. Therefore, it can be concluded from the distribution that although the HC provides numerous tokens of provided always that construction, its actual use was very limited to formal text types, i.e., law and trial. Each text type example of law and trial is given below in (10) and (11):

(10) Provided always that in case upon such Search no such Pipe or other Private Conveyance shall be found such Gaugers Officers of Excise shall make good the Ground ... (E3/HC) – Law

(11) Provided always, if any other Case of supposed Treason shall chaunce hereafter to come in Question or Trial before any Justice, other than is in the said Statue expressed, that then the Justice shall forbear to adjudge the sayd case, untill it be shewed to the Parliament to trie, whether it should be Treason or Felonie. (E1/HC) – Trial

Now, let us consider the distribution of always in medial position by period. The distribution of always in medial position in the MD and EME periods showed considerable positional variations, compared to its placement in PDE. When analyzed in terms of its positional variations, the distribution of always in medial position rendered six different kinds of positional patterns. Table 6 illustrates the patterns:
Table 6. The positional variation of *always* in medial position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>E1</th>
<th>E2</th>
<th>E3</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S+always+V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S+V+always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S+Aux(1\textsuperscript{st})+always+V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S+always+Aux(1\textsuperscript{st})+V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S+always+Copula be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>S+always+Copula be</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that *always* occurred medially between the subject and the main verb when there is no auxiliary present. But it also frequently appeared after the main verb, quite contrary to its placement in PDE. The latter pattern, however, gradually decreased after the M3 period. Some examples are given below.

The S+always+V pattern:

(12) a. Not in my Life, Sir, I have fed purely upon Ale; I have eat my Ale, drank my Ale, and I *always* sleep upon Ale. (E3/HC)

b. ...whereby you shall be sure the better to effect your intended purpose without the said perrill or daunger but with the highest commendation in preuenting the euil that otherwise might ensue: which reasons *alwaies* enduced mee to laye round about the cauterized parts...

(M3/HC)

c. And *alwey* consyder this, that the most effecte, qwedyr yt be in gode or euyl, ys yff thise forseyd colourys be in her owne kend; ... (M4/HC)
The *S+V+always* pattern:

(13) a. Much purulent matter came from him with his Urine, which he passed always with some pain; But one day with unexpressible torment:··· (E3/HC)

b. And but thou pourre alwey upon my face, And clepe me “faire dame” in every place. (M3/HC)

c. ...this was only because he thought it a decent way of speaking, and that as they went always in Cloaths, though in their Frolicks they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked··· (E3/HC)

When there is an auxiliary verb present, *always* was usually placed after auxiliary. When there were more than one auxiliary verb present, *always* was placed after the first auxiliary. The instances in which *always* was placed before auxiliary were very rare, and the HC provided only two instances in the E1 period. Examples below illustrate these findings:

The *S+Aux(1)+always+V* pattern:

(14) a. And yet seye I ferthermoore, that ye sholde alwey doon youre bisynesse to gete yow riches, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. (M3/HC)

b. By occasioun hero£gis Hewe, þat was gyfful of wit, schameles and hardy in eve! dedes, comme norme in lettrure and faire speche, and had alway i-made debaat and strif bytwene the priour and þe covent of Coventre,··· (M3/HC)

c. As to the Supream Being, he had always some Impression of one: and professt often to me, that he had never known an entire atheist, who fully believed there was no God. (E3/HC)

The *S+always+Aux(1)+V* pattern:

(15) a. And as my Lord here hath sayd, the Law always doth adjudge him a Traytor, who was priuie and doth procure
Treason, or any other Man to commit Treason, or a trayterous acte... (E1/HC)
b. There was not long sithens two Roges that always did associate them selues together, and would neuer seperat them selues... (E1/HC)

When always is situated adjacent to copula be, it was normally followed by copula be and this pattern was on the increase with the passage of time. The other way around where always appeared before the copula be was also provided by the HC, but the tokens were minimal, of a total of 3.

The S+Copula be+always pattern:

(16) a. And also that the softest and most tender Matter, as the Pith or Marrow is, is always laid up in the most inward Cabinet, and covered by a strong Coat of Wood; ... (E3/HC)
b. ...which passeth right ouer their heads, to whom the daies and nights are always equal. (E2/HC)
c. Then Iesus said vnto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. (E2/HC)

The S+always+Copula be pattern:

(17) a. ...and thys vyage was tryshe attemptyd and always was pute bake; and at the laste tyme we were caste a land at sent Towhys,... (E1/HC)
b. The xxv. day ys fortunat to go on huntyng, to bye and to selle; he that ys born that day schuld be couetus and meruulus off condycionnys, and alwey be in nede and pouerte, and neuer stedffast,... (M4/HC)
c. I may pan perfity conclude by hur wordes and pe aungels also pat pis Ladie alway is desirous to holynes and is gracious and full of compassion vn-to all Cristen pepull,... (M4/HC)

As illustrated in Table 3 earlier, the distribution of always in end
position was not common, with only 7 tokens provided by the HC. The 7 instances, however, seem to share a semantic similarity on careful investigation. To illustrate this, the earlier examples (8a), (8b) and (8d) are presented again, as in (18a), (18b) and (18c) below:

(18) a. Thay must haue corn and hay And oder mete alway. Do now as I the say, In the name of the Holy Gast. (M4/HC)
   b. In erth, as any sod, liffyd with grete grevance allway; And now I wax old, Seke, sory, and cold; As muk apon mold I widder away. (M4/HC)
   c. And I knewe that thou hearest me alwayes: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may beleue that thou hast sent me. (E2/HC)

As can be seen from these examples, *always* in end position seems to convey the sense ‘all along,’ or ‘though all time.’ compared to the dominant meaning ‘at every time’. The OED also provides the same sense when it compares *allway* with *always*. But the OED does not specify any syntactic or positional facts in its description of *always*. The following is the second meaning of *always* in the OED with quotes relevant to the present study.

(19) 2. *ALWAY; all along; through all time, without any interruption; ever, continually, perpetually. Opposed to for a time.*

1862 TRENCH Mirac. 50 They were done once, that they might be believed *always*.

It should also be pointed out that this sense of *always* in (19) can be in comparison with the PDE equivalent *all the time* in end position, as given in (20) below:

(20) The letter was in my pocket *all the time*. 
5. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the positional variation of *always* from a diachronic perspective based on the HC, focusing primarily on the distribution of *always* in clause structure. I have shown in this paper that in the MD and EME periods there were considerable positional variations of *always* across time. Although medial position was predominant over the course of time, some instances of initial and end positions were also given in the data. In initial position, somewhat idiosyncratic construction, *provided always that*, was prevalent but it was exclusively limited to the certain text type. In medial position, six different positional patterns were illustrated with relevant examples. Finally, the paper has suggested that *always* in end position bears a semantic resemblance to the PDE equivalent *all the time*.

References


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