

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. *SNU 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⁾

(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

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⁾

- (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 þe inre, & þe 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 *alwaies*
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 divisions⁴⁾

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

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.

⁴⁾ from Kyoto's General Introduction (to the Helsinki Corpus)

Table 2. Spelling variants of *always* by period

	M1	M2	M3	M4	E1	E2	E3	total
<i>always</i>	—	—	—	—	9	5	55	69
<i>alwaies</i>	—	—	—	—	14	34	12	60
<i>alwey</i>	—	—	23	23	4	—	—	50
<i>alway</i>	—	2	2	9	10	1	—	24
<i>alwayes</i>	—	—	—	—	7	11	3	21
<i>allway</i>	—	—	—	7	—	1	—	8
<i>alweis</i>	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	7
<i>allwayes</i>	—	—	—	2	—	4	—	6
<i>alweys</i>	—	—	4	1	—	—	—	5
<i>alwaye</i>	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	5
<i>alweye</i>	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
<i>allways</i>	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	3
<i>alwaise</i>	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3
<i>allwaies</i>	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	3
<i>allwey</i>	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2
<i>allwas</i>	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
<i>alweyes</i>	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
<i>alwayse</i>	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
<i>allweys</i>	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
<i>allwaye</i>	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
<i>allewaye</i>	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
<i>alleway</i>	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
<i>allesweis</i>	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

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, *alwaies* 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

	M1	M2	M3	M4	E1	E2	E3	total
Initial	—	—	1	9	11	17	14	52
Medial	1	2	35	41	41	45	56	219
End	—	—	1	4	—	1	1	7

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.* (1985:491-492)

The initial position:

- (6) a. And so ran aboute the stretys in london nakyd & mad
cryenge *alway* I shall be stole. (E1/HC)
- b. For *alwayes* the nature of nothyng maye be thought to be
better then the begynnyng of the same thyng. (E1/HC)
- c. I shall never be a good scoller; and *alwaies* when his
fellowes wente to playe, he wold goe to his bocke...
(E2/HC)
- d. Provided *alwaies* 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 *alwaies* vse to discharge their Birding-peesces:
creepe into the Kill-hole. (E2/HC)
- c. I suppose the people wolde haue *alway* 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 selle; he that ys born that day schuld be couetus and
meruulus off condycionnys, and *alwey* be in nede and
pouerte, and neuer stedffast, but *alwey* 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 *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. The ravyn is a-hungrye *allway*. He is without any reson;

And he fynd any caryon, As peraventure may be fon, He
will not away. (M4/HC)

- d. 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 (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

	M1	M2	M3	M4	E1	E2	E3	total
<i>provided always that</i>	—	—	—	6	8	7	15	36

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. *Provyded alwey that* this Acte extend not to Wollen Cloth
called Kendalles nor Clothes called Carpenell White
commonly made for lynnyng 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

	Law	Trial
<i>provided always that</i>	35	1

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 alwaies that* in case upon such Search no such Pipe or other Private Conveyance shall be found such Gaugers Offercers 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

	M1	M2	M3	M4	E1	E2	E3	total
S+ <i>always</i> +V	—	—	2	13	3	6	10	34
S+V+ <i>always</i>	—	1	17	14	10	7	8	57
S+Aux(1 st) + <i>always</i> +V	—	—	9	4	9	17	14	53
S+ <i>always</i> + Aux(1 st)+V	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2
S+Copula <i>be</i> + <i>always</i>	1	1	7	8	15	16	24	72
S+ <i>always</i> + Copula <i>be</i>	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	3

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... (E3/HC)
- c. And *alwey* consyder this, that the most effecte, qwedyr yt be in gode or euyll, 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 poure *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(1st)+*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 herof þis Hewe, þat was gylful of wit, schameles and hardy in evel dedes, connyng 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 professed often to me, that he had never known an entire atheist, who fully believed there was no God. (E3/HC)

The S+*always*+Aux(1st)+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 committe Treason, or a trayterous acte,... (E1/HC)

- b. There was not long sithens two Roges that *alwaies* 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 *alwaies* equal. (E2/HC)
- c. Then Iesus said vnto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is *alway* 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 þan perfitely conclude by hur wordes and þe aungels also þat þis Ladie *alwey* 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 *alway* 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*.

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