



GRAMMAR: EXPRESSING EMPHASIS

I. INVERSION

1. After adverbial phrases of direction and place at the beginning of the sentence:

- (intransitive) verb + subject
- auxiliary verb + subject + main verb

e.g.: *Dave began to open the three parcels. Inside the first was a book of crosswords from his Aunt Alice.*

With the verb BE we always use this type of inversion, and we usually use it with such verbs as CLIMB, GO, COME, FLY, HANG, LIE, RUN, SIT, STAND, etc.

e.g.: *Above the fireplace was a portrait of the Duke. In an armchair sat his mother.*

NOTE: Inversion does NOT occur when the subject is a pronoun (~~*In an armchair sat she*~~).

In spoken English, inversion occurs after HERE, THERE, BACK, DOWN, IN, OFF, UP, ROUND, etc.

e.g.: *Here comes Jake's car.*

e.g.: *I lit a fuse and after a few seconds up went the rocket.*

2. In conditional sentences (instead of certain *if* sentences):

e.g.: *Should you need further information, please telephone our main office.*

e.g.: *Had you asked me, I would have told you the truth.*

NOTE: This type of inversion is typical of formal texts. Thus, don't use contractions.

3. In comparisons with *as* and *than*:

e.g.: *The cake was excellent, as was the coffee (or ...as the coffee was.)*

e.g.: *Research shows that children living in villages watch more TV than do their counterparts in inner city areas (or ...than their counterparts do...)*

NOTE: This type of inversion is typical of formal written language. It does not occur when the subject is a pronoun.

4. After negative adverbials at the beginning of a sentence:

***time adverbials:** *never (before), rarely, seldom; barely/hardly/scarcely... when/before; no sooner... than:*

e.g.: *Seldom do we have goods returned to us because they are faulty.*

e.g.: *Hardly had I got onto the motorway when I saw two police cars following me.*

***only after/later/once/then/when** (or any other time expression):



e.g.: *Only once did I go to the opera in the whole time I was in Italy.*

**only*+ other prepositional phrases (*only by.../in.../with...*, etc.):

e.g.: *Sheila had to work at evenings and weekends. Only in this way was she able to complete the report by the deadline.*

*preposition + *no* (*at no time, in no way, on no account, under/in no circumstances*):

e.g.: *Under no circumstances are passengers permitted to open the doors themselves.*

*expressions with *not* (*not only, not until*) and *not*+object:

e.g.: *Not a single word had she written since the exam had started.*

**little* with negative meaning:

e.g.: *Little do they know how lucky they are to live in such a wonderful house.*

NOTE: Inversion can occur after a CLAUSE beginning *only after/if/when* or *not until*.

e.g.: *Only when the famine gets worse will world governments begin to act.*

e.g.: *Not until the train pulled into Euston Station did Jim find that his coat had gone.*

5. After *so+adj... that, such+be... that, neither .../nor...*:

e.g.: *So successful was her business that Mary was able to retire at the age of 50.*

e.g.: *Such is the popularity of the play that the theater is likely to be full every night.*

e.g.: *The council never wanted the new drugstore to be built, nor did local residents.*

6. OBJECT – SUBJECT – VERB word order = stylistic feature of SPOKEN rather than written discourse that can appear in contexts where a STRONG CONTRAST is being made:

e.g.: *Him I like; her I don't.*

e.g.: *Peter I can comprehend; the others speak gibberish.*

7. PREDICATIVE ADJ or NOUN – SUBJECT – COPULA (BE) word order = in certain WRITTEN genres, such as fiction

e.g.: *A professor he was, but in name only.*

8. Fronting of...

a) negative or limiting adverbial constituents:

e.g.: *Never have I seen such a mess!*

b) Extent, degree, or comparison adverbial constituents:

e.g.: *So absurd was his manner that everyone in the party laughed at him.*



c) PRESENT PARTICIPLE

e.g.: Sitting at the kitchen table was our uncle.

d) PAST PARTICIPLE

e.g.: Hidden in the cellar were several barrels of wine.

e) With adverbials of POSITION and DIRECTION, fronting can take place with or without subject-verb inversion:

e.g.: John ran into the house >>> Into the house ran John / John ran.

e.g.: An elm tree stands in the garden >>> In the garden stands an elm tree / an elm tree stands.

BUT:

e.g.: An elm tree is in the garden >>> In the garden is an elm tree NOT In the garden an elm tree is.

9. Complements: in short, pithy remarks, exclamations and interjections. It's a feature of SPOKEN English. **No inversion.**

e.g.: A funny language English is.

e.g.: Really ill I felt last night.

10. Also, COMPLEMENT – VERB – SUBJECT word order:

e.g.: Worried to death were her parents.

Only with the verb TO BE, when subjects are not pronouns, and when complements are phrases.

11. In SPEECH, we can front DIRECT OBJECTS: **No inversion.**

e.g.: A right mess of it they made!

e.g.: An awful accident we saw on the way here.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In general, we encounter the following word order

ADVERBIAL + VERB + ... (SUBJECT, etc.)

in speaking and in writing to reorientate the listener/reader to important, new information:

e.g.: In this street lived the father of the unfortunate Princess.



II. CLEFT & PSEUDO-CLEFT SENTENCES

1

- A) *Everyone assumes (that) I am not coming back, and that has surprised me.*
- B) *It has surprised me that everyone assumes (that) I am not coming back.*
- C) **What has surprised me is that everyone assumes (that) I am not coming back.**

2

- A) *More crucially, freedom and optimism were on offer.*
- B) **More crucially, what was on offer were freedom and optimism.**

3

- A) *A deep, sullen pessimism has replaced them.*
- B) **What has replaced them is a deep, sullen pessimism.**

(Sentences extracted from a Times Higher Education Supplement article that you can find at the bottom of this document)

Why does the author use the sentences in bold instead of those in italics?

In other words, ...

... do the sentences in italics in 1, 2, and 3 mean the same as the sentences in bold?

... does the sentence in bold in 1, 2, and 3 have exactly the same effect as the sentence(s) in italics? What effect is that? **The effect is emphasis.**

What other lexico-grammatical devices, including syntactical mechanisms, are used to express emphasis?

1. Inversion

e.g. *Not only did the students not fail the exam, but they got really good grades.*

e.g. *Nowhere in the world will I find more industrious and hardworking students.*

2. Intensifiers

e.g. *It's way too difficult; I give up.*

e.g. *She's way and away the best player in her team.*

e.g. *Leyla far outshines the rest of her class.*

Putting information under the spotlight: using **cleft and pseudo-cleft structures** (3 & 4).

What does "cleft" mean?

Cleft = Split, divide, separate



3. Cleft structures

- ☛ It + "to be" + spotlighted information + *that/who*
e.g. *Julia phoned us* → *It was Julia who phoned us* (not Mary, dad, etc.)

4. Pseudo-cleft structures

- ☛ Question word + information + "to be" + spotlighted information
e.g. *Her neighbor's noises used to drive her crazy* → *What used to drive her crazy were her neighbor's noises.*

or reverse order:

e.g. *Her neighbor's noises WAS what used to drive her crazy.*

III. ADDING WORDS FOR EMPHASIS

- 1. Adding "own"** to intensify possessive adjectives:
e.g.: *It was my **own** idea, and nobody else's!*

2. Adding "very" and "indeed":

- a) "Very" can be used in an emphatic manner to mean "exactly" or "precisely":
e.g.: *... and that got me to thinking... How many million people around the world were doing that very same thing at that **very** same moment?*
- b) "Very ... indeed" can be used to intensify adjectives:
e.g.: *I don't like adverts in general, but there are some that are **very, very** stupid **indeed** and really get me irritated.*

3. Emphasizing negatives:

- a) To emphasize "not": *at all, in the least, really, the least bit.*
e.g.: *Shayla is not **the least bit** attractive —in my opinion, of course.*
e.g.: *Her reaction doesn't surprise me **in the slightest**.*
- b) To emphasize "no" and "none": *at all, whatsoever.*
e.g.: *He took deep breaths... ragged breaths... and the tears fell until there were none left **whatsoever**.*
4. Adding "the" to emphasize uniqueness. It is heavily stressed in speech.
e.g.: *Surely you are not **THE** Paul Newman, are you?*
5. Adding question words that end in "-ever" to add an air of disbelief to the question.
e.g.: *I wanna know **whoever** told you I was watching that sort of programs?*
6. Adding auxiliary "do" to emphasize the verb. It is stressed in speech.
e.g.: *I **do** like Sarah... It's only that sometimes she can be a little to pushy...*

7. Adding adverbs and adjectives:



e.g.: I **actually** visited Elvis Presley's Graceland.

e.g.: This is the **sheer** truth, I promise!

e.g.: Small families breed pampered children? What **utter** nonsense!

With non-gradable adjectives (adjectives that express an absolute opinion):

e.g.: I recommend it. We had an **absolutely** fantastic time there.

e.g.: I must confess I found her advice **utterly** useless.

e.g.: Her dressing style is **simply** delightful.

IV. OTHER MEANS TO EXPRESS EMPHASIS

1. Time phrases, such as "day after day", "day in, day out", "time and time again", "over and over again",...

e.g.: She wears the same jeans day in, day out. I'm starting to dislike them.

2. Repeating the main verb:

e.g.: Of course, she **looked and looked and looked**, hoping it had landed on the ledge, but it just wasn't there.

3. Echoing phrases with "so" to express agreement:

e.g.:

Policeman: This is the man who tried to rob you, is he?

Girl: **So** he is!



Why I ...think no rational person should become an academic in Britain

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I am taking off to California for 2002-03. That is not much of a news item. Even in these straitened times, most academics take one year off in seven as sabbatical leave. What has surprised me is that everyone assumes that I am not coming back. Perhaps it is because of my increasingly public irritation with the present state of British higher education. I am sure I will return after a year in the academic paradise of Stanford, but my advice to anyone young enough and unencumbered enough to do so is indeed to get out and stay out - out of academic life, or if not, out of the British academic system.

British academic life has become unviable. It is ill-paid, overmanaged and increasingly uninteresting. For someone who can marry an investment banker, and/or be given a large house by their parents, it is just about financially possible, but even then, it is increasingly uninteresting as an intellectual exercise, and it has lost just about everything that made it worth pursuing 40 years ago.

In the 1960s, the bargain was a good one; you gave up the chance of wealth, power and fame and got the life of a free spirit in exchange. Now, you get Margart Hodge, John Randall and Howard Newby, and a salary that City firms would hesitate to offer their receptionists. In the 1960s, professors were paid much the same as GPs, MPs and under-secretaries in the civil service and, by the end of the decade, most of Camden Town could be purchased on a lecturer's salary. But you didn't expect to be a lecturer much beyond the age of 30 anyway. Following the Robbins report and the expansion of the university sector, you could have tenure at 24 and a chair at 30. Nor was fame entirely given up. Young sociologists at the London School of Economics were vastly more glamorous than even their director is today.

More crucially, what was on offer was freedom and optimism, and what has replaced them is a deep, sullen pessimism. The post-Robbins assumption was that it would be possible to create new universities that would run rings round Oxbridge: on the one hand, liberal arts colleges, and, on the other, the British offspring of Berkeley. Nobody in 2002 could read Albert Sloman's Reith Lectures in which he imagined that Essex might be the Berkeley of the UK system without realising that it is not only money that the present higher education system has run out of.

The contrast between the 1960s promise of indefinite expansion of new courses and new institutions, coupled with an influx of enthusiastic and well-qualified new students, and the contemporary world of reluctant and ill-qualified students filling crumbling, ill-equipped institutions, is too obvious to need belabouring. Oxbridge students in 2002 receive in real terms the funding of Essex students in 1979; and Essex students in 2002 have had the money spent on them cut by a third. Whether more means worse is arguable; that more means less well provided for - is undeniable.

In those distant days, the much-reviled "binary" system presented university lecturers with a spectacle of how the other half lived - teachers in polytechnics were at the mercy of local authorities, put upon by their principals and departmental chairs, by the chairmen of education committees and managers of very modest abilities. Now, the binary line has gone, and this is the fate of the entire sector.

Asking why anyone who could bail out to the US doesn't do so in the face of all this is a bit like wondering why Marx never quite gave up on the revolution. On the one hand, it is impossible to believe that rational human beings will go on making such a mess of a not entirely unmanageable system and on the other hand, anyone who worked in the system before it was wrecked finds it hard to walk away from the wreckage rather than hanging around to try to save something in the hope of better times ahead.

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=169436>