

## Stylistic Inversion and the EPP: A Socio-Syntactic Approach

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This study attempts to connect sociolinguistic parameters of speech use and the syntax of two related constructions. We focus on what the acceptability contrast of the locative inversion (LI) and presentational *there* insertion (PTI) constructions imply when considering some recent accounts of the EPP effects (i.e., the obligatory subject requirement). In terms of acceptability, Aissen (1975) points out that violations involving PTI are generally less severe than those involving LI.

In our study, a grammaticality judgment test composed of LI and PTI constructions was administered to 60 native English speaking university students. Judgments were quantified and social variables such as style, sex and level of English Composition were examined through a GoldVarb analysis. Results show judgment contrasts in (1)-(4) and confirm the degraded nature of the LI constructions. A preference for PTI constructions is shown in formal situations, for females, and for advanced English composition level students.

In the current syntactic framework, degrees of unacceptability are generally dealt with in terms of either different types or number of constraints that are violated in a particular derivation (Epstein 1990). Given this, we argue that the dislocated locative phrase moves first to Spec of TP and then moves further to the topic position, while presentational *there* is directly inserted in Spec of TP (Bresnan 1994, Kim 2000). [See also (5) and (6) where the Subject Aux Inversion possibility shows that the fronted locative PP does not stay put in the surface subject position.]

Our study has some theoretical importance concerning the nature of the EPP. Under Chomsky's (1995) featural view of the EPP, we cannot capture the contrast in (1)-(4); i.e., the locative phrase in the topic position has satisfies the EPP during its derivation. Presentational *there* also satisfies the EPP upon merger into the structure. Hence, there should be no difference between LI and PTI, contrary to the fact. Under Chomsky's (1998) overtly filled Spec conception of the EPP, the contrast can be easily captured. In the case of LI, the locative phrase does not reside in Spec of TP. It stays at the topic position when the overtly filled Spec requirement of the EPP is monitored. This is why LI constructions are slightly degraded in general, compared with the PTI counterparts where presentational *there* stays put at the surface subject position.

Hence, our study attempted to fuse theoretical implications of two syntactic structures and sociolinguistic variation. It was confirmed that Chomsky's conception of the EPP, as the filled Spec requirement (with some kind of a selectional feature licensing: see (7)) is more appropriate. In terms of acceptability, LI constructions were judged as more degraded than PTI constructions. Moreover, the actual use of the constructions displayed sociolinguistic variation concerning construction preference.

### Examples

- (1) a. An old file cabinet stands in the corner of the room  
b. %In the corner of the room stands an old file cabinet      % = mixed judgments  
c. There stands in the corner of the room an old file cabinet
- (2) a. A picture of Einstein hangs on the office wall  
b. %On the office wall hangs a picture of Einstein  
c. There hangs on the office wall a picture of Einstein
- (3) a. A small child stepped out in front of his car  
b. %In front of his car stepped out a small child  
c. There stepped out in front of his car a small child
- (4) a. Two joggers ran down the street  
b. %Down the street ran two joggers  
c. There ran down the street two joggers
- (5) How likely *is there* to be a riot
- (6) \*How likely *is outside* to be a man

- (7) a. \**Completely drunk* jumped a man  
b. \**Crammed with babies* rolled a baby carriage

### **Selected References**

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