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‘Always’ and ‘never’ in Late-Middle-English sentences

1 Introduction

The placement of adverbial constituents in the various stages of the history of English seems to be a rather complicated issue, both in terms of adverbial base position(s) and in terms of surface positions, which may be influenced by various factors. Trying to detect any regularity in these positions can easily lead to the question to what extent otherwise similar adverbials follow a similar pattern. The present paper will focus on two such constituents, always and never, and their positioning in the same Late-Middle-English text, Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory (1405-1471). Their similarity lies in the fact that both are adverbs expressing frequency. Their meanings are exactly the opposite, however this difference also points to a further similarity between them, which sets them apart from all other frequency adverbs: i.e., they represent the two extremes of the frequency scale. Nevertheless, this difference in meaning (positive vs. negative) is a fundamental one and we will see that certain grammatical differences may be explained as the result of this semantic difference. All in all, on the basis of the data (consisting of 87 clauses with always and 717 clauses with never) a common base position for the two adverbials may be suggested, while the surface variation in most cases can plausibly be explained. The positional variety displayed by these two adverbs in the corpus is illustrated below1.

2. Always

2.1 Overview of the positions of always

(1) but alweyes quene gweneuer prayed syr kay for his dedes
    but always Queen Guenever praised Sir Kay for his deeds
(2) and syr Florence with his C knyghtes alwey kepte the stale and foughte manly
    and Sir Florence with his hundred knights always kept the stand and fought manly
(3) and he rydeth alwey Inuysyble
    and he rides always invisible
(4) for I wylle alweyes flee pt noble kynge
    for I will always flee that noble knight
(5) Thenne the quene hadde alweyes a lytel brachet with her
    then the queen had always a little brachet with her
(6) therfor kepe wel the scaubard alweyes with yow
    therefore keep well the scabbard always with you
(7) thenne he wente vp vnto the roche and fonde the lyon whyche alwey kepte hym felaushyp
    then he went up onto the rock and found the lion which always kept him fellowship
(8) and alweyes to doo ladyes damoysels and gentylwymmen socour vpon payne of dethe
    and always to do ladies and damosels and gentlewomen succour upon pain of death
(9) and here shalt thou swere vpon my swerd to bere it alweyes vpon thy back
    and here shalt thou swear upon my sword to bear it always upon thy back

1 The original Middle-English sentences are followed by word-by-word translations in Modern English spelling. Archaic words (such as thou) are often kept. A full translation is given only when the meaning of the sentence cannot be easily guessed on the basis of the word-by-word translation.
(10) *All these with many other* were *alwayes* about Arthur day and ngyhte till the feste of
all these with many other were always about Arthur day and night till the feast of
Pentecost
Pentecost
(11) *Thenne the lady of the lake that was alwey frendely to kynge arthur* she understooode by
then the lady of the lake that was always friendly to King Arthur she understood by
*her subtyl craftes that kynge arthur was lyke to be destroyed*
her subtle crafts that King Arthur was likely to be destroyed
(12) *ye shal haue homage & feaute of me & an C knyghtes to be alweyes at your*
you shall have homage and fealty of me and one hundred knights to be always at your
*commandment*
commandment
(13) *and it shalle be alweyes at your commaundement*
and it shall be always at your commandment
(14) *Bothe I and these fyue honderd knyghtes shal alweyes be at your somons to doo you*
both I and these five hundred knights shall always be at your summons to do you
*seruyse as maye lye in oure powers*
service as may lie in our powers
(15) *but alweyes he was meke & mylde*
but always he was meek and mild
(16) *But Merlyn wold lete haue her no rest but alweyes he wold be with her*
but Merlyn would let have her no rest but always he would be with her
‘But Merlyn would let her have no rest but would always be with her.’

The examples above show that *always* occurs in the text in the following positions:
Initially, before subject and verb, as in (1); after the subject but before the verb, as in (2); after
a finite verb, as in (3) and (4); in the latter case, if there is an object, *always* can precede or
follow the object, as in (5) and (6), respectively. In relative clauses, *always* usually follows
the (subject) relative pronoun directly, as in (7). *Always* may occur both pre- and post-
verbally if the verb is non-finite, as shown by (8) and (9). However, if the verb (finite or non-
finite) is *be*, *always* has a strong tendency to be positioned after *be* (examples (10) – (13)) but
it may also occur between a finite verb and non-finite *be*, as in (14) or even clause-initially, as
in (15) and (16).

2.2 Analysis

At first sight, the listed examples suggest that almost anything was possible; still there are
clearly observable tendencies or, at least, preferences, which may serve as starting points in
the quest for some kind of system. As for *always* (87 occurrences), the majority of
occurrences (nearly three quarters) are in main clauses, in which there seem to be two main
types. If the verb is *be*, the adverb is almost always positioned post-verbally, a situation very
similar to the present-day one, except that the tendency in the late-Middle English text (unlike
today) often, though not always, applies to the combinations of non-finite *be* with finite verbs
such as *shall* or *have* as well — cf. (13) and (14). In the case of other verbs, the usual place
for *always* seems to be the initial position (as in (1), for example), which may be regarded as
fronting (which, in turn, suggests that *always* is used by Malory primarily for reasons of
emphasis), but it is a type of fronting which hardly ever triggers inversion. Quite precisely,
there is only one sentence in the corpus with inversion triggered by *always* (see (17) below),
though the number of sentences with initial *always* is around forty. Remarkably, there are many other fronted adverbials in the text which are followed by inverted subject-verb order. A few examples are below:

(17) and alweyes mayst thow beholde whether we sytte here or not

and always mayest thou behold whether we sit here or not

(18) Thenne in alle haste came Vther with a grete hoost

then in all haste came Uther with a great host

(19) After the deth of the duke more than thre houres was Arthur begoten

after the death of the duke more than three hours was Arthur begotten

(20) with hym rode syr kaynus his sone & yong Arthur that was hys nourisshed broder

with him rode Sir Kaynus his son and young Arthur that was his nourished brother

(21) Also in Irland were two or thre kynges and al were vnder the obeissaunce of kyng Arthur

also in Ireland were two or three kings and all were under the obeisance of King Arthur

In the case of finite subclauses, *always* usually occurs after the finite verb, especially, but not exclusively, if the verb is *be*. In other cases, *always* may occasionally be positioned clause-initially or, in relative clauses, after the (pronominal) subject. The latter clause type is especially remarkable because it is in relative clauses that the developing division between clauses with *be* and clauses with other verbs resembles the modern system most clearly, as shown by (7) and (11). Non-finite clauses with *always* are too rare in the text to point to any serious conclusions but even here there seems to be a tendency to have *always* before the to-infinitive, while in the only sentence where the non-finite verb is *be*, *always* follows the verb. Cf. (8) and (12).

However, finite clauses are numerous enough to allow some speculation on the base position and the probable movements of *always*. Though there are often clear quantitative differences between the occurrences of the adverb in this or that position, simply counting these may not lead to any satisfying results. For example, in finite clauses, most occurrences of the adverb are clause-initial. Nevertheless, if we accept this position as base position, we are still left with a considerable number (nearly one fifth of the total number) of occurrences elsewhere, even if clauses with *be* and relative clauses are excluded as separate groups. Moreover, these occurrences include various different positions (such as after the subject but before the verb; after the verb but before the object; after the object), which would require explanations for the “lowering” of the adverbial to different landing-places.

On the basis of subordinate clauses (often supposed to be less susceptible of word order variation than main clauses), supported by the case of *be*-clauses as well, the base position for *always* is likely to be the position after the finite verb. While this would explain most of the *be*-clauses and most of the subordinate clauses, the other surface positions need to be accounted for. The frequently occurring clause-initial position, i.e., the fronting of the adverbial, which by the 15th century had had a long history in English (especially in main clauses, which is the case here as well) may be explained as a device of emphasis. The high frequency of fronting in the case of *always* may require some further explanation but it is worth remembering that the examined text reflects one person’s style and the word *always* by its meaning appears to be suitable for introducing emphasis or a certain dynamism into the literary text. It must be noted that *Le Morte Darthur*, after all, is a very dramatic and eventful (“dynamic”) story. The connection with this dynamic effect may also explain why the fronting of *always* tends to be avoided when the main verb is *be*, i.e., when the meaning of the verb itself is not dynamic but frequent with words expressing actions. In other words, this
seems to be based on stylistic, rather than strict grammatical considerations, which is all the more likely, since *always* does happen to be raised in some, though rather few, *be*-clauses and this suggests that there is no real grammatical blocking here. Some textual evidence that *always* is used as an emphatic device may be found in (22) below:

(22) **But alwey the xj Kynges with her chyvalrye neuer torned bak**
but always the eleven kings with their chivalry never turned back

In this clause, the two adverbials, *always* and *never*, are in a clear semantic conflict, unless fronted *alwey* is interpreted as a word of emphasis somewhat detached from the original meaning. This seems to be the only way to accept (22) as grammatical.

After this we are left only with 11 clauses to account for, out of 80 finite clauses containing *always*. Three of these are relative clauses, in which *always* follows the subject-pronoun directly, i.e., it is in pre-verbal position. If we accept that relative clauses form a separate group, which, to a degree, anticipates the present-day distribution of *always*, we can account for these three clauses and are left only with a single problematic one, which in fact follows the SVA order of the non-relative clauses. The table below illustrates the situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be-clauses: S(pron) + be + always (Cf. (11).)</th>
<th>Non-be-clauses: S(pron) + always + V (Cf. (7).)</th>
<th>Problem (1 clause): S(pron) + V + always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(23) by the medowe oughte to be vnderstande humlyte and be understood humility and pacyence tho ben the patience those are the thynge whichen alweye things which are always grene and quyeck green and quick</td>
<td>(24/A) And soo within a lytel while they met with Sir Launcelot that alweye had Lancelot that always had dame Bragwayn with hym Dame Bragwayn with him (24/B) for that knyghte nor horse was never formed that alweye myght stāde or endure always might stand or endure</td>
<td>(25) With that she sente a courier of hers that rode alweye with her for to knowe always with her for to know the trouthe of this dede the truth of this deed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, although three out of eleven clauses have been accounted for, in return we have clause (25), which is problematic because instead of following the pattern of other relative clauses it follows the more general pattern.

The other 8 clauses to be accounted for are of three types. One type (including three clauses) is illustrated by (26) below, but cf. also (13):

(26) **and it shall be alweyes as fresshe as it is now**
and it shall be always as fresh as it is now

Here the problem is that *always* does not follow directly the finite verb but rather it is after the non-finite one. Unfortunately, the number of clauses with combinations of finite and non-finite verbs is rather small in the corpus and they include occurrences of *always* both before

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and after the main (or non-finite) verb. Cf., for example, (4) and (14). What is remarkable still is that the type of (26) occurs exclusively with be as a main verb, therefore this seems to be the more restricted type. We may perhaps suspect here a situation of conflicting interest: while always ought to be placed (in general) after the finite and before the non-finite verb, non-finite be (perhaps due to its special status as a linking verb of little semantic content) may have an unusually strong “attachment” to its head, which is in conflict with the positional claims of always.

The second type requiring some explanation includes the following three clauses:

(27) Soo that he bare with hym alweyes tylle hys dethe daye in tokenyng to thynke on his faders dethe
    so that he bare with him always till his death day in token(ing) to think on his father’s death
(28) and putte hym alweyes a bak
    and put him always aback
(29) therfor kepe wel the scaubard alweyes with yow
    therefore keep well the scabbard always with you

These are the sentences in which always does not directly follow the verb. (27) is not a real problem, insofar as it does not really conflict with other word orders in the corpus: here the object is fronted and the verb is followed by several adverbials, whose relative order can not be the concern of the present examination. In (28) and (29) (or (6) — repeated here for convenience) the object appears between the verb and always. This is in contrast with other clauses (such as (5) above) in the corpus, in which the object is ordered after always. Another example besides (5) is below:

(30) kynge Mark cast alweyes in his hert how he myght destroye syr Tristram
    King Mark cast (‘schemed’) always in his heart how he might destroy Sir Tristram

How is the relative ordering of the two post-verbal constituents decided? At least one part of the answer may be the type of object the clause contains. On the one hand, the object of (28) is a pronoun, while the object of (29) is non-pronominal. On the other hand, all the clauses in which always comes before the object have non-pronominal objects. It may also be added that among the non-finite clauses of the corpus those containing post-verbal always as well as an object, pronominal objects directly follow the verb (thus come before always), as shown below:

(31) but at this tyme I must nedes departe bysechyng yow alwey of your good grace
    but at this time I must needs depart beseeching you always of your good grace
(32) and here shalt thou swere vpon my swerd to bere it alweyes vpon thy back and neuer to
    And here shalt thou swear upon my sword to bear it always upon thy back and never to
    reste tyl thou come to quene Gueneuer
    rest till thou come to queen Guenever

The examples point to the probability that pronominal objects are not easily separated from their verbs (except for reasons of object fronting), while in other cases always tends to come before the object. This explains the ordering of the object and post-verbal always in all the
clauses of the corpus except for (29). Interestingly, in the latter, there are again several adverbials and the object is in fact preceded by one, though it is not *always* but *well*.

There are two more finite clauses in the corpus unaccounted for: they are the (non-relative) clauses in which *always* is found between the subject and the verb. (Here (2) will be repeated as (33).)

(33) *and syr Florence with his C knyghtes alwey kepte the stale and foughte manly*
    and Sir Florence with his hundred knights always kept the stand and fought manly

(34) *& so they sette a pavelione ouer the stone & þe swerd & fyue alwayes watched*
    and so they set a pavilion over the stone and the sword and five always watched

This position for *always* is, of course, rather similar to the present-day one but in *Le Morte Darthur* it is an infrequent positioning (except in relative clauses as discussed above). It clearly must be one of the possibilities in late-Middle-English (after all the present-day situation must have started somehow) but whether it is merely a stylistic variation or something else is not easy to guess on the basis of two occurrences. Altogether there are only 5 clauses: (25), (27), (29), (33) and (34) out of a corpus of 80 finite clauses in which the placement of *always* has not been systematically accounted for, where one must resort to the stylistic or psychological considerations of the author.

3. *Never*

3.1 *Overview of the positions of never*

(35) *alle men that beheld hym sayd they sawe neuer knyghte fyghte so wel as Arthur dyd*
    all men that beheld him said they saw never knight fight so well as Arthur did
    *considering the blood that he bled*

(36) *for suche another despyte had I neuer in my Courte*
    for such another despite had I never in my Court

(37) *In this countrey sayd syr Marhaus cam neuer knyghte syn it was cristened but he fonde*
    in this country said Sir Marhaus came never knight since it was christened but he found
    *strange auentures*

(38) *And yf I leue hym now perauentur I shalle neuer mete with hym ageyne*
    and if I leave him now peradventure I shall never meet with him again

(39) *Now shalle I neuer reste tyl I mete with tho kynges in a fayre feld*
    now shall I never rest till I meet with those kings in a fair field

(40) *for soo foule ne shamefully dyd neuer woman rule a knyghte as I haue done you*
    for so foul nor shamefully did never woman rule a knight as I have done you
    *because so cruelly or shamefully never did a woman rule a knight as I have done to you*

(41) *hit was neuer the custome of no place of worship that euer I came in*
    it was never the custom of no place of worship that ever I came in

(42) *Thus was gauayne sworne vpon the four euuangelystes that he shold neuer be ageynst*
    thus was Gawaine sworn upon the four Evangelists that he should never be against
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lady ne gentilwoman
lady nor gentlewoman

(43) there were neuer knyghtes sene fyghte more fyersly than they dyd
there were never knights seen fight more fiercely than they did

(44) for shame stryke neuer a Knyght when he is at the erthe
for shame strike never a knight when he is at the earth

(45) and neuer haue I loued lady nor damoysel tyl now in an vnhappy tyme
and never have I loved lady nor damosel till now in an unhappy time

(46) and neuer it was by thy force
and never it was by thy force

(47) I neuer defended but none
I never defended that none
‘I never denied that to anyone’

(48) I rebuked hym neuer for no hate that I hated hym but for grete loue that I had to hym
I rebuked him never for no hate that I hated him but for great love that I had to him
‘It was never because of hate but great love that I rebuked him’

(49) I counceylle you neuer to obey the Romayns
I counsel you never to obey the Romans

(50) and soo by their comynal assente promysed to syr Marhaus neuer to be foes vnto kynge
and so by their communal assent promised to Sir Marhaus never to be foes unto King Arthur

Arthur

The positions of never found in the text are illustrated above. Never typically occurs after the finite verb, regardless whether the verb is be or not, as in examples (35) to (44). Some variation can be found when, due to a fronted constituent, the subject-verb order before never is inverted (examples (36), (37), (39) and (40)), since, though the verb precedes never, the subject may be on either side of it. (Cf. (35) and (37) or (39) and (40).) Another position is when never itself is fronted (either with inversion following or without), examples (45) and (46). Other (less frequent) positions in finite clauses (SAV and SVOA) are illustrated by (47) and (48), respectively. In non-finite clauses, such as (49) and (50), never is positioned before the verb. In addition to these, never like always, occurs in subjectless or verbless clauses but the main positions are the ones listed above.

3.2 Analysis

This time the corpus is much larger than in the case of always: never has more than seven hundred (717) occurrences in Le Morte Darthur. Since always and never are semantically related adverbs, it can be reasonably expected that their treatment in terms of positioning will at least partly overlap. Indeed this is the case to a considerable extent. As it has already been mentioned, in finite clauses the most frequent position of never by far is the position after the finite verb and before the non-finite one if there is a non-finite verb in the clause. This means (and here seems to be a difference between always and never) that never does not occur after a non-finite verb the way always does in, e.g., (13), not even when the non-finite verb is be. This post-finite-verb position is amply illustrated by (35) – (44) above.
It has been mentioned that in some clauses the verb and never are separated by the subject, i.e., when subject-verb inversion occurs (e.g., because of a fronted constituent) but there are also clauses in which the subject appears after never: in spite of the inversion, never directly follows the verb. (36), (37), (39) and (40) above illustrate this variation. Here we can observe a rather consistent tendency: On the one hand, if the subject is pronominal, it will be positioned directly after the verb and before never. On the other hand, if the subject is not pronominal, it will be preceded by never, with the single exception of (53).

(51) & ellys shall we neuer matche hem
    and else shall we never match them
(52) but suche shame had neuer man as I had this day with the thre bretheren
    but such shame had never man as I had this day with the three brothers
(53) And for the dethe of my noble sone syre Lamorak shalle my herte neuer be gladde
    and for the death of my noble son Sir Lamorak shall my heart never be glad

As it is, (53) does not seem to fit the pattern; later, however, we will see that it may not be truly irregular after all.

In the case of always, the post-finite-verb position seemed to be a probable base position, from which the adverbial might move to other positions with the possibility of plausible explanations. As for never, on the basis of the proportion of this position in the corpus, as well as on the basis of the above analysis of the positions of always, the same post-finite-verb position may reasonably be supposed to be the base position again, at least as a starting hypothesis. Since other positions of never can also be found, now we must see to what extent they can be derived from the hypothetical (i.e., post-finite-verb) base position.

There are a few clauses in which never does not directly follow the verb but rather the object after it. See, e.g., (48) above or (54) and (55) below:

(54) I calle my selfe neuer the more coward though syre Launcelot gaf me a falle
    I call myself never the more coward though Sir Lancelot gave me a fall
(55) for I knewe hym neuer yet
    for I knew him never yet

In all but one of these cases the object is a pronoun. This supports the explanation already referred to with regard to always in section 2.

As (45) –(47) indicate, never, like always, may also move upwards, i.e., towards the beginning of the clause. Like always, never is often fronted, i.e., it appears before the subject. The fronted adverbial may or may not be followed by subject-verb inversion. (45) and (46) are examples of this difference, some further examples are below.

(56) neuer had I soo grete nede of no knyghtes helpe
    never had I so great need of no knight's help
(57) but neuer they coude here of hym
    but never they could hear of him
(58) and neuer man myghte haue grace to knowe hym
    and never man might have grace to know him

Throughout the whole text, inversion appears to be a frequently used but seemingly optional structure. We have already seen that the presence of pronouns may result in changes in the
surface order of clause constituents; still it is impossible to apply this explanation here, since most subjects are pronominal after *never* in both the inverted and the non-inverted structures of the corpus. In fact, the non-pronominal subjects after fronted *never* are regularly found in non-inverted structures. It is rather conspicuous; after all, while pronouns may be said to cliticize onto their verbs and move along with them (as described, e.g., in Fisher et al 2000:118-120), non-pronominal subjects cannot be expected to do so. (In the case of fronted *always*, there seems to be practically no inversion but negative *never* does trigger it in a number of clauses – the structure has even survived in present-day English; therefore it is a rather intriguing question why we find no inversion in many other cases.) Some of these clauses, however, suggest an explanation which concerns the function of *never*. Sometimes, as in (58) or in the examples below, it seems that *never* may be interpreted as a negative determiner (synonymous with *no*):

(59) & *neuer creature coude make hyr mery*  
and never creature could make her merry

(60) *for neuer Crysten kynge had neuer soo many worthy men at this table as I haue had ...*  
for never Christian king had never so many worthy men at this table as I have had

In (60), *never* occurs twice. Multiple negation is not infrequent in *Le Morte Darthur* — cf., e.g., (47). What is unusual still is the fact that the same negative word is used twice in the same clause but in different places; therefore it is not typical double negation, nor simply the typical stylistic reinforcement by repetition. However, the double use of *never* is quite understandable if the first *never* is a determiner, while the other one is an adverbial. Then the clause can be regarded as a regular doubly negated Middle-English clause. (On Middle English negation cf., e.g., Blake 1992.) This will also explain why there is no inversion after the first *never*: simply because it is a determiner. Furthermore, a new examination of the “deviant” (53), (see above) as well as its regular counterparts, namely, (36), (37), (39), (40), (51) and (52), may reveal a similar correspondence there: *never* standing before (rather than after) the non-pronominal subjects (in inversion), as in (37), (40) and (52) may at least often be argued to be a determiner, not an adverbial. At the same time, pronominal subjects, which are always before *never* cannot take determiners. Nor can the phrase *my herte* in (53), since it already contains a determiner, therefore this subject logically follows the pattern of pronominal subjects by not admitting *never* between the (inverted) positions of verb and subject. *Never* also occurs after the subject and before the verb, as in (47) above or in (61) below.

(61) *Also I charge the syre Damas vpon payne of deth  that thow neuer destresse no knytyes*  
also I charge thee Sir Damas upon pain of death that thou never distress no knights

Some of these clauses are relative clauses (cf. the discussion of relative clauses above), e.g.:

(62) *I thanke hym of his curtosye and goodenes that he wold take vpon hym suche labour for*  
I thank him of his courtesy and goodness that he would take upon him such labour for

*me that neuer dyd hym bounte nor curtosye*  
me that never did him bounty (‘generosity’) nor courtesy

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Other clauses of this order include other types of subordinate clauses or even main clauses. This preverbal position seems to be something like an alternative base position insofar as there appears to be no clear explanation for the choice of this or the post-finite-verb position — apart from the author’s decision. Though the situation may remind us of the present-day system, in reality they are fundamentally different: while present-day never (similarly to always) is normally placed after the operator (if an operator is present) and before any other verb; in our Late-Middle-English corpus never, though most often placed after the finite verb, may sometimes occur before it, even when the verb is be, have or a modal, as the examples below show:

(63) for the moost party of your barons of your realme knewe neuer whos sone ye were
    for the most part of your barons of your realm knew never whose son you were

(64) I shalle neuer foryeue you that trespas
    I shall never forgive you that trespass

(65) hit was neuer the custome of no place of worship that euer I came in
    it was never the custom of no place of worship that ever I came in

(66) that I neuer sawe Knyghte doo so merueyllously as he hath done these thre dayes
    that I never saw knight do so marvellously as he has done these three days

(67) And by no meane she neuer coude gete his love
    and by no means she never could get his love

(68) I neuer was wrothe nor greately heuy with no good Knyghte
    I never was wroth nor greatly heavy with no good knight

Finally, never occurs in a number of non-finite clauses as well, in which it is invariably before the (non-finite) verb.

(68) Here I ensure yow by the feithe of my body neuer to depar te from yow whyle my lyf
    here I ensure you by the faith of my body never to depart from you while my life

lasteth
    lasts

Other examples are (49) and (50) above. This position is quite in accordance with the occurrence of never between the finite and the non-finite verb in finite clauses. Altogether the fact that this positioning is more frequent and consistent (both in the finite and non-finite clauses) than in the case of always may be connected to the negative meaning of never, which is practically used in place of not or, rather, as an emphatic form of not; after all the latter would normally be placed in the same post-finite-verb, pre-non-finite-verb position.

(70) Thenne there were somme other Barons that counceylled the Kynge not to doo soo
    then there were some other barons that counselled the king not to do so

(71) therfor thou were better not to come within this castel
    therefore thou were better not to come within this castle

4 Summary

Above is a case study concerning the variability of adverbial placement in Late-Middle-English. The data show that although the number of possibilities may at first appear to be
confusingly large, clear preferences for certain positions can be detected and a considerable portion of positional deviations can be systematically accounted for. It has been argued that both adverbials have their base positions after the finite verb. Variations may be due to a number of factors (supported by various examples in the corpus), including emphasis (in the case of fronting) and grammatical factors, such as pronominal vs. non-pronominal subjects and objects, clause type (relative clauses) and even the possibility that *never* may have functioned both as an adverbial and a determiner with the necessary result of different positioning.

References

http://www.hti.umich.edu/c/cme/

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