

**From *æghwæðer* to *either*:
analogy, confusion and normative pressure**

1 Introduction

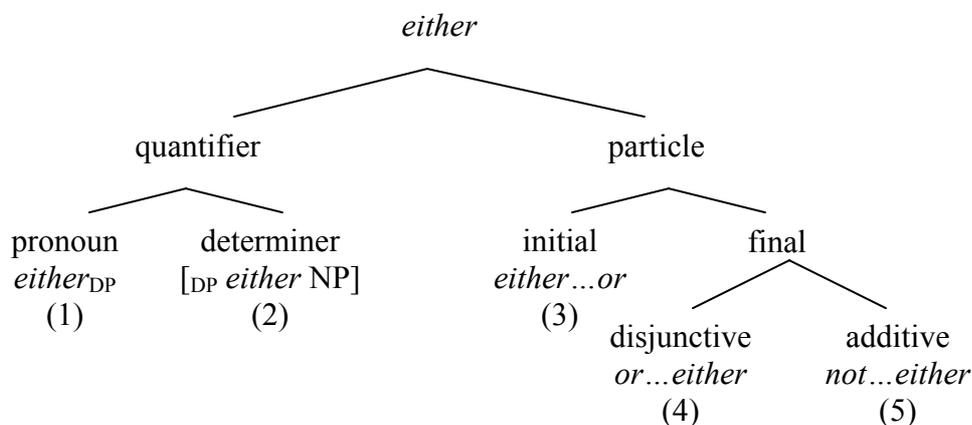


Diagram 1: Uses of *either* in Modern English

- (1) “I’m not going to translate for **either** of you,” he said softly. [BNC CAO 1996]
- (2) What kind of redress does **either** kind of prisoner have against these conditions? [BNC H45 1049]
- (3) Any effect produced must surely be wishful thinking **either** on the part of the practitioner or the patient, or both. [BNC C9V 1138]
- (4) And it is not that she knows me to be bad or weak, or you **either**, but her conventional mind could not grasp that a thing so often impure, can be made absolutely and perfectly pure. [BNC ABL 512]
- (5) My mother doesn’t like me **either**. [BNC EVC 1946]

- polarity properties of *either*

		assertive	non-assertive (DE)	
			positive	negative
pronoun	<i>either</i> _{DP}	–	+	+
determiner	[_{DP} <i>either</i> NP]	(–)	+	+
particle (initial)	<i>either ... or</i>	+	+	+
particle (final/disj)	<i>or ... either</i>	–	(–)	+
particle (final/conj)	<i>not ... either</i>	–	–	+

- (6) In front of her most of the herd seemed to be grazing alongside the path, on **either** side of it, but Brenda couldn’t leave the path on her bike. [BNC BOB 1142]
- (7) Sophie froze, a glass in **either** hand, her gaze fixed on the bathroom door, her lips parted in a silent cry. [BNC FP7 409]
- (8) Did you ever know English law, or equity **either**, plain and to the purpose? (Dickens, cited from Rullmann 2002: 117)
- (9) Woe be to that man, or woman **either**, that pauses for a moment amongst you. (A. Bronte, cited from Rullmann 2002: 117)

2 From Old English to Modern English

- Old English system of dual quantifiers (cf. Eienkel 1904a,b, Nusser 1913):

	NEG	GEN	COLL	‘which of two’	contracted
$a \wedge b$		<i>æ</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>ægðer</i>
$a \vee b$		<i>ā</i>		<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>awðer</i>
$\neg(a \vee b)$	<i>n</i>	<i>ā</i>		<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>nawðer</i>

(10) Old English

Ond se cyning æghwæðerum þissa biscopa his gyfe sealde.
 and DET king each.of.two.DAT.PL DET.GEN.PL bishops.GEN his gift gave
 ‘And to each of these bishops the king gave gifts.’ [Beda 504, 28; a900]

(11) Middle English

- a. *Æiðer wende to his hole.*
 each.of.two went to his hole
 ‘Each of the two [dragons] went to his hole.’ [Layamon Brut Clg. 15982; c1205]
- b. *Two nomys had þat noble...*
 two names had that nobleman known
Knownen in his cuntre kyndly by aither.
 known in his country rightly by one.or.other
 ‘Two names had that nobleman... known in his country by one (or other) of them.’
 [Destruction of Troy 10930; a1400]

(12) Modern northern dialects (cf. Wright 1898-1905: 243)

- a. *Tha can tak aather on ‘em.* (West Yorkshire)
 b. *Niver speaking a word aither to chick or child.* (West Yorkshire)
 c. *He tuk oot a cupple a glassis, en weed ader on us a gay strang dose.* (Westmorland)

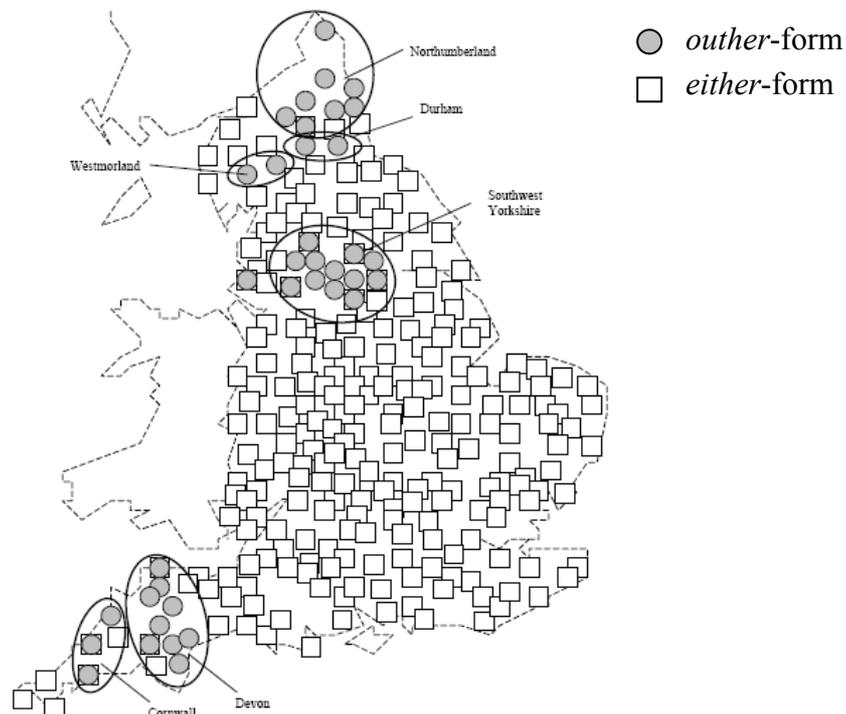


Diagram 2: Pronominal *either* and *outher* in dialects of Modern English (based on Orton et al. 1962-71)

3 The development of initial *either*

QUANT	PRON	C ₁	A	C ₂	B	ModE
$a \wedge b$	<i>ægðer</i>	<i>ge</i>	A	<i>ge</i>	B	<i>both...and</i>
$a \vee b$	<i>awðer</i>	<i>opþe</i>	A	<i>opþe</i>	B	<i>either...or</i>
$\neg (a \vee b)$	<i>nawðer</i>	<i>ne</i>	A	<i>ne</i>	B	<i>neither...nor</i>

- (13) *se was ægðer, ge heora kyning, ge heora biscop*
 DET was both CONJ their king CONJ their bishop
 ‘He was both their king and their bishop.’ [Alfred, Orosius 238, 14; c893]
- (14) *eala, wære he auðer, opþe hat, opþe ceald!*
 alas were he one.of.two or hot or cold
 ‘alas, were he either hot or cold!’ [Alfred, Gregory’s Pastoral Care 445, 36; a900]

- further developments (cf. Nusser 1913):

QUANT	PRON	C ₁	A	C ₂	B	ModE
$a \wedge b$	<i>ægðer</i>		A	<i>ge and ægðer</i>	B	<i>both...and</i>
$a \vee b$	<i>awðer</i>		A	<i>opþe o(þe)r awðer</i>	B	<i>either...or</i>
$\neg (a \vee b)$	<i>nawðer</i>		A	<i>ne nawðer</i>	B	<i>neither...nor</i>

- *either...or* is well-established in Middle English:

- (15) *Som folk desire vs for richesse...And somme for she kan either synge or daunce.*
 [Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, Wife of Bath D.259; c1395]

4 Disjunctive final *either*

- Eienkel (1904a): reanalysis of *either* as an additive particle; change of position in analogy to *also*:
 “Es muss einen disjunktiven doppelsatz gegeben haben, dessen zweites glied durch die von *either* verstärkte konjunktion *or* eingeführt wurde. In dieser konstruktion konnte *either* den sinn annehmen, den es heute noch besitzt, nämlich ‘auch’. Hatte es aber einmal diesen Sinn erlangt, so musste es früher oder später in die Stellung rücken, die sein synonym *also* für gewöhnlich einnimmt, nämlich die stellung am schlusse des satzes.” (Eienkel 1904a: 68)

- (16) $A \text{ or } \textit{either} B \equiv A \text{ or } B \textit{ also}$
 \searrow
 \equiv
 $A \text{ or } B \textit{ either}$

- Problems: (i) Eienkel’s hypothetical *doppelsatz* is not attested; (ii) postposing of pronoun/initial particle has affected all quantifiers, not only *either*.

- Nusser (1913), Rullmann (2002): postposing of initial particle as a natural process:
 “This kind of postposing is quite plausible, given that in today’s language it is still possible for initial coordination markers such as *both*, which is a close cousin of *either* and *neither* to be postposed.” (Rullmann 2002: 123-4)
- Important: postposing of the initial particle can be found with all types of quantifiers (in Middle English):

(17) conjunction

& mad Adam, & hys wyf eyber, a cote of leþer.
 ‘and made Adam, and also his wife, a tunic of leather.’
 [Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost 344; c1390]

(18) disjunction

Thai found þou werse than harlotes, Or jogulours ether.
 ‘They found you worse than harlots, or entertainers (either).’
 [Friar Daw’s Reply 89; 1402]

(19) negation

... ne dredeð na wind ne na weder nowðer
 ‘... does not dread the wind, nor the storm, neither’
 [St. Juliana 72; c1230]

- Development may even have started in Old English:

(20) *næs æror ðe ænegu gesceaft,*
 was.not before you any creature
þe auht oððe nauht auðer worhte ...
 REL anything or nothing either did
 ‘Ere thee there was not any creature either to do or to leave undone...’
 [Meters of Boethius XX, 42; a900] (transl. Sedgfield)

- More general pattern:

QUANT	A	C	B	PRON
$a \wedge b$	A	<i>and</i>	B	<i>either</i>
$a \vee b$	A	<i>or</i>	B	<i>outher</i> ~ <i>either</i>
$\neg (a \vee b)$	A	<i>ne</i>	B	<i>nouther</i>

- Initial coordinators as appositional structures: apposition is invertible.
- Question: Why did final disjunctive *either* become a negative polarity item?
- Pragmatic explanation: afterthoughts *add information*; disjunctions are very uninformative in upward entailing contexts (cf. Higginbotham 1991, Amritavalli 2003).

(21) Mother: *Who will you marry?*

Daughter: *I’ll marry Jim...or Bill!*

(22) $(a \wedge b) \supset \{a, b\} \supset (a \vee b)$

- Downward entailing contexts (e.g. negation): degree of informativity is inverted.

(23) Mother: *Who will you marry?*
Daughter: *I don't think I'll marry Jim...or Bill(, either).*

(24) $\neg(a \vee b) \supset \{\neg a, \neg b\} \supset \neg(a \wedge b)$

- **Hypothesis:** Uninformative patterns are rare in discourse and are lost as the result of infrequent use (cf. Hawkins' 2004 'Performance-Grammar Correspondence Hypothesis').

5 Additive final *either*

- 19th cent.: *neither* is still used as a negative additive particle ('also not'; negative concord).

(25) *Lady Edbury would never see Roy-Richmond after that, nor the old lord neither.*
[G. Meredith, *Harry Richmond*, III.xiii. 225; 1871]

- Loss of negative concord (cf. Jespersen 1917, Mazzon 2004); 'n-drop' (van der Auwera et al. 2006); under normative pressure?

“Das bei der negierten konstruktion jetzt in der gebildeten sprache übliche *either*, also etwa *nor on mine either*, gehört hier nicht hin, es ist lediglich durch die konsequente einwirkung gelehrter grammatiker an die stelle des älteren *neither* getreten...”
(Einenkel 1904: 68)

- Consequence: *either* adopts the negative existential presupposition of final *neither* and also 'inherits' its distributional restrictions (negative contexts).
- More recent development (20th century?): disjunctive and additive final *either* seem to be equated, are subject to identical/similar distributional restrictions; another instance of 'confusion'/syncretism?

6 Conclusions

- Seemingly idiosyncratic distributional properties of various types of *either* should be approached from a diachronic perspective.
- Important factors that seem to have had an effect on the polarity properties of *either*:
 - ANALOGY; *either* forms part of a system of quantifiers and particles whose elements exert paradigmatic pressure on each other.
 - CONFUSION/SYNCRETISM: semantic or distributional differentiations have been given up (*ægðer* vs. *awðer*, disjunctive vs. additive final *either*); often followed by specialization (i.e. one of the original elements is lost).
 - NORMATIVE PRESSURE: overestimated by some historical linguists?
- Epilogue:

“Aus den obigen bemerkungen ergibt sich ohne weiteres, wie unsinnig der durch die, offenbar durch das Lateinische verführten, modernen grammatiker veranlasste ersatz des alten *neither* durch *either* ist. Das mod. *Nor I either* besagt gerade das gegenteil von dem was es besagen soll oder bedeutet zum mindesten einen ganz hässlichen widerspruch. Das alte, richtige *Nor I neither* aber gilt als slang!”
(Einenkel 1904b: 78-79)

Selected literature (not all references are mentioned in the handout)

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