

(N)either (n)or –
quantifiers, coordinators and focus particles in historical perspective

1 Introduction

1.1 Dual quantifiers and coordinators

- relationship between quantifiers and coordinators

quantifier	coordinator
<i>both</i>	a AND b
<i>either</i>	a OR b
<i>neither</i>	NOT (a OR b)

- (1) *Both students left the room.*
 (2) *Bill AND Fred left the room.*
 (3) *Will either student leave the room?*
 (4) *Will Bill OR Fred leave the room?*
 (5) *Neither student left the room.*
 (6) *NOT (Bill OR Fred) left the room.*

1.2 ... and focus particles: the case of *either*

- historical development: quantifier > coordinator > focus particle

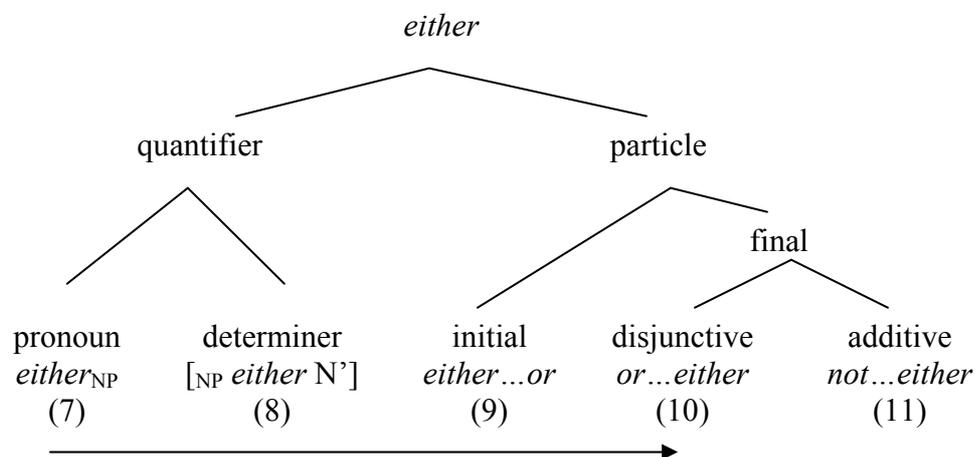


Diagram 1: Uses of *either* in Modern English

- (7) “I’m not going to translate for **either** of you,” he said softly. [BNC CAO 1996]
 (8) What kind of redress does **either** kind of prisoner have against these conditions? [BNC H45 1049]
 (9) Any effect produced must surely be wishful thinking **either** on the part of the practitioner or the patient, or both. [BNC C9V 1138]
 (10) 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]
 (11) My mother doesn’t like me **either**. [BNC EVC 1946]

- polarity properties of *either*

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

Table 1: polarity properties of *either*

- (12) 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]
- (13) Sophie froze, a glass in **either** hand, her gaze fixed on the bathroom door, her lips parted in a silent cry. [BNC FP7 409]
- (14) Did you ever know English law, or equity **either**, plain and to the purpose? (Ch. Dickens, cited from Rullmann 2002: 117)
- (15) Woe be to that man, or woman **either**, that pauses for a moment amongst you. (A. Bronte, cited from Rullmann 2002: 117)

2 Dual quantifiers and coordinators in English

- Old English system of dual quantifiers:

	NEG	GEN	COLL	'which of two'	contracted
a AND b		<i>æ</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>ægðer</i>
a OR b		<i>ā</i>		<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>awðer</i>
NOT (a OR b)	<i>n</i>	<i>ā</i>		<i>hwæðer</i>	<i>nawðer</i>

Old English

- (16) *æghwæðer*
Onð 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]
- (17) *āhwæðer*
7 þær hæfdon longsum gefeoht, ær þara folca aþer fluge.
 and there had long fought before DET.GEN.PL people o.o.o fled
 'They fought long before one (or other) of the two armies fled.' [Orosius 198, 25]
- (18) *nāhwæðer*
naðer ne mehte on oþrum sige geræcan
 neither not wanted on other victory reach
 'Neither wanted to grant the other the victory.' [Orosius 96, 33]

- quantifiers and contrastive coordinators

	PRON	C ₁	A	C ₂	B	ModE
a AND b	<i>ægðer</i>	<i>ge</i>	A	<i>ge</i>	B	<i>both...and</i>
a OR b	<i>awðer</i>	<i>opþe</i>	A	<i>opþe</i>	B	<i>either...or</i>
NOT (a OR b)	<i>nawðer</i>	<i>ne</i>	A	<i>ne</i>	B	<i>neither...nor</i>

(19) *ægðer*

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]

(20) *awðer*

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]

(21) *nawðer*

Næron nawðer ne on Fresisc gescæpene, ne on Denisc
 not.were neither not on Frisian shaped not on Danish
 ‘They were neither in the Frisian nor in the Danish shape.’ [Sax. Chron. 897]

3 From Old English to Middle English

3.1 The system of quantifiers

- ‘syncretism’ of *ægðer* and *awðer*
- neither* is created, in analogy to *either*

outher ≡ *either*
nouther ⇒ *neither*

	OE	MidE	ModE
a AND b	<i>ægðer</i>	<i>either</i> ~ <i>outher</i>	both
a OR b	<i>awðer</i>		<i>either</i> ~ <i>outher</i>
NOT (a OR b)	<i>nawðer</i>	<i>nouther</i> ~ <i>neither</i>	<i>neither</i> ~ <i>nouther</i>

(22) *either*

a. universal use

Æiðer wende to his hole.
 each.of.two went to his hole
 ‘Each of the two went to his hole.’ [Layamon Brut Clg. 15982; c1205]

b. existential use

Two nomys had þat noble...

two names had that nobleman

Known in his cuntre kyndly by aither.

known in his country commonly by one.or.other

‘Two names had that nobleman... known in his country by one of them.’

[Destruction of Troy 10390; a1400]

(23) *outher*

a. existential use

Ather of þaim is a grete penance to do.

outher of them is a great penance to do

‘It is a great penance to do either of those things.’ [Alph. Tales 325/24, c1450]

b. universal use

Aþer askede of oþeres stat.

outher asked of other’s condition

‘Both enquired about the other’s condition.’ [Bevis 99/1990, c1330]

(24) *nouther*

her noþer nadde noþing þat to oþeres wille was

their neither not.had nohing that to other will was

‘Neither of them had anything that the other desired.’ [Rob. of Gl. 4899]

(25) *neither*

Neither of hem hath power of his owene body.

neither of them has power of his own body

‘Neither of them has power over his own body.’ [Chaucer CT Pars., I 940; c1390]

- cf. varieties of Modern English: *outher* vs. *either*

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

a. *Tha can tak aather on ‘em.* (West Yorkshire)

b. *Niver speaking a word auther to chick or child.* (West Yorkshire)

c. *He tuk oot a cupple a glassis, en weed ader on us a gay strang dose.* (Westmorland)

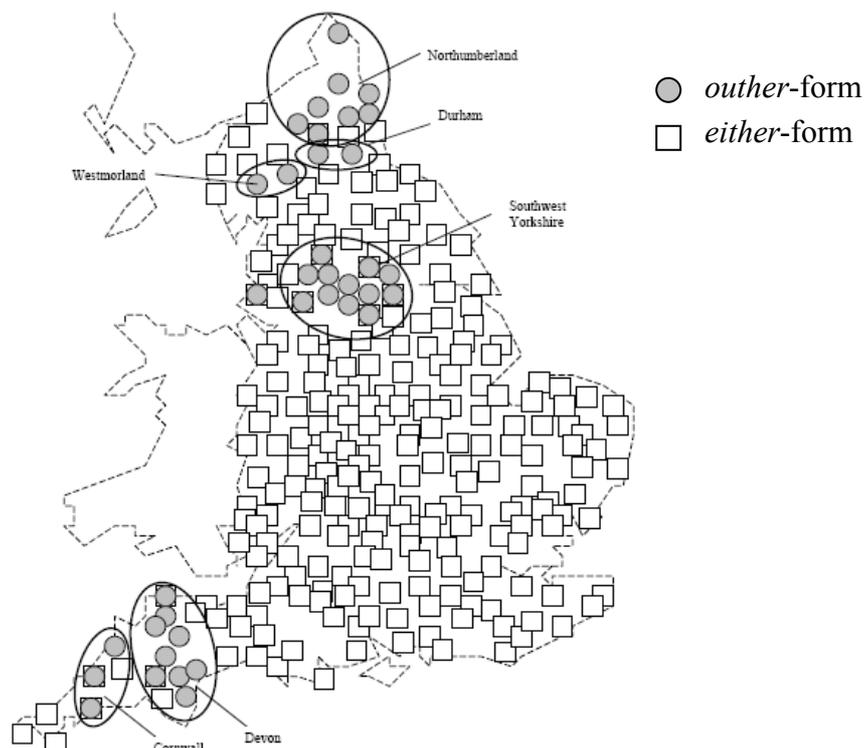


Diagram 2: Pronominal *either* and *outher* in dialects of Modern English

3.2 Dual quantifiers and contrastive coordinators

- developments from Old English to Middle English:
 - deletion of first coordinator (*ge*, *opþe*, *ne*)
 - use of other coordinators in the second position, also repetition of quantifier

QUANT	PRON	C ₁	A	C ₂	B	ModE
a AND b	<i>ægðer</i>	<i>ge</i>	A	<i>ge</i> <i>and</i> <i>ægðer</i>	B	<i>both...and</i>
a OR b	<i>awðer</i>	<i>opþe</i>	A	<i>opþe</i> <i>o(þe)r</i> <i>awðer</i>	B	<i>either...or</i>
NOT (a OR b)	<i>nawðer</i>	<i>ne</i>	A	<i>ne</i> <i>nawðer</i>	B	<i>neither...nor</i>

- the situation in Middle English:

QUANT	PRON	A	C ₂	B	ModE
a AND b	<i>either</i>	A	<i>ge</i> <i>and</i> <i>either</i>	B	<i>both...and</i>
a OR b	<i>either</i> <i>outher</i>	A	<i>o(the)r</i> <i>either</i> <i>outher</i>	B	<i>either...or</i>
NOT (a OR b)	<i>nouther</i> <i>neither</i>	A	<i>ne</i> <i>nouther</i> <i>neither</i>	B	<i>neither...nor</i>

- examples of correlative constructions with two occurrences of the quantifier in ME

- (27) *either...either*
In those golden times either philosophers did governe, either else governours did use philosophie. [Hellowes Gueuara's Ep. 20, 1574]
- (28) *outher...outher*
Ymaad, outher of chalk outher of glas.
 made either of chalk either of glass
 'made of either glass or chalk.' [Chaucer, Canon's Yeoman's Tale, 1149]
- (29) *nouther...nouther*
The other kynde of Justice is wherby a man nother taketh nother giveth les nor more then he ought. [Cox's Rhetoryke, a 1530]
- (30) *neither...neither*
Neither in market neyther in your large halle
 neither in market neither in your large hall
 'neither in the market nor in your large hall' [Ch. II 274]

- More general pattern:

QUANT	A	C	B	PRON
a AND b	A	<i>and</i>	B	<i>either</i>
a OR b	A	<i>or</i>	B	<i>outher</i> ~ <i>either</i>
NOT (a OR b)	A	<i>ne</i>	B	<i>nouther</i> ~ <i>neither</i>

- Question: Why did final disjunctive *either* turn into a negative polarity item?
- Pragmatic explanation: afterthoughts *add information*; disjunctions are very uninformative in upward entailing contexts (cf. Higginbotham 1991, Amritavalli 2003).

(36) Mother: *Who will you marry?*
Daughter: *I'll marry Jim...or Bill!*

(37) $(a \text{ AND } b) \supset \{a, b\} \supset (a \text{ OR } b)$

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

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

(39) $\text{NOT}(a \text{ OR } b) \supset \{\text{NOT } a, \text{NOT } b\} \supset \text{NOT}(a \text{ AND } b)$

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

6 The development of additive final *either*

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

(40) *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)

“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 have merged and are subject to identical/similar distributional restrictions; another instance of 'confusion'/syncretism?

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