1 LOCATIVE AND QUOTATIVE INVERSION

1.1 Locative inversion
Locative inversion = inversion of subject and verb (normally lexical verb, including lexical be) plus fronting of the locative complement of the verb (either complement of place or direction):

(1) Outside were five police officers.

1.2 Syntactic properties of locative inversion (Coopmans 1989)
• does not trigger do-support (or require an auxiliary):

(2) Down the hill rolled the baby carriage.
(3) *Down the hill did the baby carriage roll.

• verb must be simple past or present:

(4) *Down the hill may roll the baby carriage.

• occurs only in main clauses:

(5) *He denied that down the hill rolled the baby carriage.

• not permitted if the verb takes a direct object:

(6) Into the room rolled a ball.
(7) *Into the room rolled John a ball.

• it is (mostly) optional:

(8) Down the hill the baby carriage rolled.

• restricted to unaccusative verbs [direct-object restriction follows from this anyway], but this restriction is not watertight:

unergative  run  race  fly  dive
unaccusative  drop  slide  fall  bounce

• (mostly) only complement (not adjunct) PPs may participate:

(9) Into the room walked John (with great care).
(10) *With great care walked John into the room.

• can’t form a yes-no question via further inversion:

(11) *Did down the hill roll the baby carriage?

1.3 Inversion analogous to locative inversion
Many other element types may invert in similar fashion (often also, rather misleadingly, termed ‘locative inversion’):
More surprising was his attitude towards change. [Adjective Phrase]

Also killed in action were three younger men of the village. [Verb Phrase]

Three days later came another message. [Adverbial Phrase, NB adjunct!]

These have similar properties:

*Three days later did come another message.
*Three days later will come another message.
*I said that three days later came another message.
*Did three days later come another message?

**1.4 Pragmatic constraints on inversion (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1385–1403)**

* the preposed constituent must not be less familiar in the discourse than the subject (i.e. *new – old, but old – new and new – new are ok):

...the outer walls were designed to resemble mud brick buildings, giving the boutique a rustic and ancient feel.

Next to the boutique were several bad-tempered camels. (old – new)

#Next to the mosque was the boutique. (*new – old)

* except with preposed locatives, the predicate must be derivable from prior discourse:

Two young men were hurt yesterday during a bungled robbery. Two suspects were arrested at the scene. Wounded were Paul Randolph and Steve Seymour.

The air show did not go as planned yesterday. #Wounded were Paul Randolph and Steve Seymour.

* the verb must not present new information:

On the desk sat a large envelope.

**1.5 Quotative inversion (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1024–30)**

* does not trigger do-support (or require an auxiliary):

*We must go now,’ did John say.

* inversion is not possible if the verb has an object:

‘We must go now,’ said John (*to us).

* inversion with a pronoun is archaic:

‘We must go now,’ said I.

* may occur parenthetically in medial position:

‘If we want to avoid being late,’ said John, ‘we must go now.’

* to some extent this construction is lexically specific:
And then John went ‘Let’s go now.’
“Let’s go now,’ went John.

#John smiled, ‘That’s good then.’
‘That’s good then,’ smiled John.

Is the quotative parenthetical or is it the main verb? Some traditions treat it (essentially) as a fronted complement.

Is parallelism with indirect reported speech important? If so, there are arguments to suggest that similar cases (but without inversion) with indirect speech are more evidently parenthetical:

• that is not permitted, suggesting the reported speech is not a complement:

She lived alone, she said.
*That she lived alone, she said.

• there is a difference in meaning between indirect-speech quotative inversion questions and their uninverted counterparts:

Did she say if I’ll be invited. => Yes, she said.
Will I be invited, did she say? => Yes, you’ll be invited.

Medial positioning also points in this direction, but tense shifting could be used to argue the reverse:

She loved Paris, she said. => ‘I love Paris’, she said.

2 INVERSION IN NEGATIVE AND RELATED CONTEXTS (HAEGEMAN 2000)

2.1 Negative inversion
Clause-initial negation with sentential scope triggers inversion whereas negation with constituent scope does not:

With no job would Mary be happy.
[=‘Mary wouldn’t be happy with any job.’]
With no job, Mary would be happy.
[=‘Mary would be happy without a job.’]

Weak negators also trigger inversion (rarely, scarcely, seldom, only...)

Scarcely had the bell rung when John began to speak.

and so and such constituents:

So many people did John insult that he did not dare return home.
Such was the impact of the article that the police had to be called in.

English negative inversion can be triggered by a preposed preposition phrase (above) or noun phrase:
Nothing have I seen to rival the pyramids.

### 2.2 Properties of negative inversion
Negative inversion is incompatible with *w*-inversion in main clauses:

(44) “Where on no account should I go?
(45) Where should I go on no account?

Negative inversion may be embedded:

(46) Lee said that at no time would she agree to visit Robin.

It is compatible with embedded *w*-interrogatives:

(47) Lee wonders why in no way would Robin volunteer.

### 2.3 Differences between inversion and non-inversion
Many PPs may or may not give rise to inversion, with semantic differences:

(48) With no clothes does Robin look attractive. 
    [= ‘There are no clothes that make Robin look attractive.’]
(49) With no clothes, Robin looks attractive.  [= ‘naked’]

(50) In not many years will Christmas fall on a Tuesday.  [= ‘rarely’]
(51) In not many years, Christmas will fall on a Tuesday.  [= ‘soon’]

This reflects the difference in scope of negation. Other differences:

• only inversion admits *neither*-tags:

(52) Not often does Jack attend parties and neither does Jill.
(53) *Not long ago, Jack attended a party and neither did Jill.

• tags are reversed:

(54) Not often does Jack attend parties, does he?
(55) Not long ago Jack attended a party, didn’t he?

• inversion licenses negative polarity items (*any, ever*):

(56) With no job would she ever be happy.
(57) *With no job, she would ever be happy.

• inversion is monotone decreasing, whereas non-inversion is monotone increasing:

(58) On no account should you eat a piece of fruit for breakfast.  =>
(59) On no account should you eat an apple for breakfast.

(60) In no time he had stolen a piece of fruit.
(61) <= In no time he had stolen an apple.

• there is no prosodic break in negative inversion, whereas absence of inversion is associated with a prosodic break
2.4 Inversion as focus
The same intonational differences are found between topic and focus:

(62) YOUR BOOK you should give t to Paul (not my book). [focus]
(63) Your book, you should give t to Paul (not to Bill). [topic]

Implies inversion involves focalisation, whereas non-inversion involves topicalisation.

3 DIALECT VARIATION IN INVERSION: WORD ORDER IN EMBEDDED WH-QUESTIONS
In standard English, embedded wh-questions lack subject-auxiliary inversion:

(64) I asked what they were doing. (cf. What are you doing?)

Irish English and some other varieties allow inversion in embedded interrogatives:

(65) He asked me would I cook the dinner.
(66) I wonder what should we do. (McCloskey 1992)

However, in these varieties, the main clause must select for an interrogative embedded clause:

(67) *I know why did he do it.
(68) Do you know why did he do it?

READING
Sections in Huddleston & Pullum: 1024–30, 1385–1403. Also:


