



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Inversion and Word Order in English: A Functional Perspective

Aladdin Assaiqeli¹
Mahendran Maniam^{*,1}
Mohammed Farrah²

¹English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjong Malim 35900, Perak, MALAYSIA

²Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Hebron University, Hebron 00972, PALESTINE

Abstract

English is an SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) word order language. This canonical SVO pattern is the default unmarked word-order configuration typical of English, which makes this language to be classified under the typology of SVO languages. However, driven by the major purpose of language as an instrument of human communication and social interaction, and as a semantic system for making meanings, addressors sometimes depart in their discourse from this basic canonical order of constituents where a grammaticalized system like inversion takes place, resulting in inverted constructions. Through testing and developing the Degree of Focus Hypothesis, proposed by Huffman (1993), this study, which employed a mixed methods research design, sought to explore the communicative and semantic values of inversion; and the pragmalinguistic functions of preposing, i.e., clause-initial adjuncts, to the pragmatic process of communication. The study confirmed the Degree of Focus Hypothesis where the hypothesized notion of concentration of attention stemming from inversion was found to be applicable. The paper stressed that what triggers inversion or non-inversion is a certain communicative effect such as focus rather than a relation of formal determination where one element determines mechanically the form or appearance of another. A contribution to linguistic and educational research, the paper, therefore,

* Corresponding author, email: mahendran@fbk.upsi.edu.my

Citation in APA style: Assaiqeli, A., Maniam, M., & Farrah, M. (2021). Inversion and word order in English: A functional perspective. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(2), 523-545.

Received January 3, 2021; Revised February 25, 2021; Accepted March 3, 2021; Published Online May 3, 2021

<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v8i2.20217>

highlighted the importance of a human factor in the functioning of language and emphasized the need to break away from grammar-based teaching (traditional grammar) to discourse-based language teaching (communicative grammar) where languaging rather than language should be the focus of language teaching and learning.

Keywords: Inversion, word order, function, English, functional perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is used in ‘discourse’ for making meaning between individuals for communicative purposes. Discourse, as defined by Gee (1996, as cited in Pourdana, 2020) is “the socially comprehensive and accepted way of utilizing a language as the means of thinking, feeling, and social behaviors which are used to recognize an individual as a member of a society” (p. 19). Central to discourse or this act of meaning-making in English is word-order patterns or according to Lock (1996), the ‘order of constituents’.

Generally, English is an SVO or Subject, Verb, Object language. In some cases, other sentence constituents might be used instead of or along with the object. Therefore, using the designation SVX, where S stands for subject, V for verb, while the X denotes any other category from the seven underlying sentence patterns of English, e.g., object/adverbial/complement, etc.) (Quirk et al., 1985) would be a more precise depiction of English canonical word order. This SVX word order configuration is the default word order in English where the subject is being fronted and then the verb is following the subject. ‘Postverbal’ subjects, i.e., inverted word order constructions, are therefore uncommon in English. Most English declarative clauses contain ‘preverbal’ subjects by default. SVO/SVX is the word-order configuration prevalent in English. Departures from this default canonical word order are, as noted, uncommon (Prado-Alonso, 2019).

In discourse or communication, however, speakers sometimes depart from this basic, canonical ‘default’ word-order configuration. Driven by the major purpose of language as a tool of communication and social interaction (Reid, 1991); and as a semantic system for making meanings (Halliday, 1994), speakers sometimes reorder the constituents of a clause; mark certain themes, and use uncanonical inverted word-order (e.g., ‘subject second order’) constructions. This is, as this paper argues, done for creating a ‘semantic’ rather than a mere stylistic effect.

Language, as stated by Halliday (1994), “has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organized is functional in respect with these needs — it is not arbitrary” (p. xiii). Therefore, whatever reordering of constituents of a clause users carry out, it is made to bring about a semantic, functional value that enhances the pragmatic process of communication and the functional purposes language or linguistic systems have evolved to serve.

Unfortunately, despite the crucial significance of word-order patterns in conveying meanings outside the ordinary SVX linear-structural order of canonical syntax, word-order patterns have been until recently sidelined in linguistic research and language education. Comrie (1989, as cited in Govindasamy & David, 2002, p.

76), states almost ruefully that “little was achieved in the attempt to find better explanations underlying word-order generalizations”. The difficulty that ESL learners encounter in understanding certain linguistic nuances and grammatical systems such as inversion poses a problem for ESL practitioners. The lack of functional research in this area is, as adumbrated by Comrie (1989), regrettable. English word-order patterns are one of the most confounding textual features second language learners may encounter. According to Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 2), research in the study of word-order patterns is relatively new. They state that “while its structural properties (constituent order) have been well documented, its semantic properties have been at best elusive”.

Research has made a good attempt at describing the factors that drive the distribution and pragmatic use of these inversions in scientific texts. However, apart from a few similar studies (e.g., Govindasamy & David, 2002; Hartvigson & Jakobsen, 1974; Huffman, 1993; Prado-Alonso, 2019), most literature on inversion in English is ‘syntactic’ rather than ‘functional’ in nature and orientation. Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 2) as noted earlier, for example, state that “while its structural properties (constituent order) have been well documented, its semantic properties have been at best elusive”. Following a long tradition of ‘traditional’ or ‘descriptive’ or ‘structural’ grammars, though interesting, many studies on inversion are thus purely syntactic. What triggers inversion or non-inversion is seen as determined by syntax or in the words of Reid (1991), by a relation of formal determination. Such explanations are rule-based. They do not tie in with the picture of language as having evolved for communication and is designed to serve communicative purposes. Such syntax-based rather than discourse-based grammar explanation and teaching where, according to Reid (1991), one element determines mechanically the form or appearance of another, deprives language of its liveliness and capacity to evolve to accommodate evolving human needs. It makes language teachers and practitioners bogged down by what Reid (1991) describes as ‘relations of formal determination’. Indeed, as observed by Johnstone (2002), “neither linguists’ “descriptive grammars” nor the pedagogical grammars used in teaching language account for all of what people actually do as they interact through talk, sign, or writing. Sentence structures which, according to such grammars, are incomplete, incorrect, or even impossible are in fact routine in some situations” (p. 234). Language teachers should, therefore, break away from grammar-based teaching that limits the richness and reality of language and language use to function-based or discourse-based language learning and teaching (communicative grammar) where ‘languaging’ (Johnstone, 2002) rather than ‘language’ should be the focus of the process of language teaching and learning.

Teaching should be geared towards discourse rather than grammar, where the language is being taught and learned for life; and language teachers should move beyond the school experience of looking at language as an object (a body of rules), learned and taught as discrete items, exemplified in discrete, isolated sentences (where the goal of language learning is merely analysis); and start looking at the new language, first as a system of communication that serves the major functions in human life, learned and taught for the actual, genuine, spontaneous, and meaningful communication in L2 (where the goal here becomes utility or the oral use of language), and second as an ‘activity’, learned and mastered through the continual semiotic process of engaging in discourse (interpersonal interaction), and through meaningful interaction with interesting content (intrapersonal interaction) (Assaiqeli, 2019).

Language instructors should go “beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication,” and focus instead on “probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language” (Brown, 2001, p. 42). Such social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language can only be enhanced if language practitioners move away from rule-based lifeless explanations to function-based analyses. Emphasis should be made on highlighting the importance of a ‘human factor’ in the functioning of language — “the distribution of morphemes cannot be fully explained without reference to their communicative value, and to the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of language users” (Huffman, 1993, p. 9).

The researchers, therefore, believe that the need for function-oriented or function-based research is important to develop a better understanding of those persistent grammatical problems and thus of the subtle workings of the English language. Language is a patterned socio-semiotic shared ‘system of communication’; acquired and developed in the course or ‘activity of languaging’ — ‘interaction’ — and used, in addition to the transmission of ideas from one mind to another (Assaiqeli, 2019; Samsudin, 2016), to serve major pragmatic functions in human lives, to make sense of their experience, to help enact social processes and interpersonal relationships, carry out daily social functions and activities (Assaiqeli, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This study was driven from this functional, practical, and pragmatic view of language — language as a tool of communication and social interaction, where forms of language are viewed as means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. Hence, in functional grammars, the emphasis is on the function conveyed by the form and not vice versa. Therefore, instead of asking: ‘what does a particular form mean?’, the question should be ‘how is a particular meaning expressed?’ (Halliday, 1994). Functional analyses of language make us appreciate the subtle workings of language. Functional analysis of complex language features makes language learning an easier task for ESL/EFL learners. They make language users understand why they sometimes choose a particular construction or a word or even one sound over another.

This study is in line with the works of Huffman (1993), and Govindasamy and David (2002) on the hypothesis about the degree of focus in verb-subject, subject-verb orderings. Along the same line, the present study is a continuation of the chain of development of the Degree of Focus Hypothesis — a further attempt to develop the hypothesis underlining the communicative and pragmatic values of XVS inversion.

The present study then investigated English word order from a functional point of view. It attempted at finding the semantic and communicative effects of ‘clause-initial adjuncts’, marked and unmarked themes, and uncanonical inverted word-order constructions. It examined whether inverted constructions, i.e., VS convey a functional meaning wherever they are applied. It looked, from a functional standpoint, at the semantic values conveyed by finite-subject and subject-finite order variations. This study was a further developmental attempt to find better explanations underlying different word-order configurations. Specifically, the study concentrated on the cognitively motivated phenomenon of verb inversion, that is, the verb-subject cluster. In doing so, functional explanations of the semantic values and effects of inverted word order patterns were made. Concepts such as ‘inversion’, ‘non-inversion’, ‘initial adverbials’ (Govindasamy & David, 2002), and ‘markedness’ (Dik, 1989; Lock, 1996) were all explored.

In a nutshell, this paper sought to arrive at certain generalizations pertaining to the grammaticalized system of subject-verb inversion to help ESL practitioners and learners have deeper insights into some of the aspects of the subtle workings of the English language. The specific objective of the study was to provide a functional analysis of the use of inversion in English. The study aimed substantially at finding whether inversion (verb-subject) (H.N. + Adj.) as opposed to non-inversion (subject-verb) (Adj. + H.N.), contributed any meaning to the pragmatic process of communication. The study was guided by the following two questions:

1. What is (are) the semantic value (s) of SVX (non-inversion) and XVS (inversion) word-order configurations?
2. What is (are) the semantic value (s) of clause-initial adjuncts of both SVX and XVS sentences?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Inversion

The bulk of English word-order patterns falls under that of SVX. This canonical SVX pattern is the basic, dominant, and unmarked word-order configuration, prevalent in the English language. It is the default word-order configuration typical of English. Therefore, English can generally be classified under the typology of SVX languages. Quite frequently, however, XVS — inversion — is used in all types of discourse. In linguistics, inversion can be defined as “any of several grammatical constructions where two expressions switch their canonical order of appearance, that is, they invert” (Abuzer, 2017, p. 9). According to Govindasamy and David (2002), inversion is defined as the appearance of the main verb before the subject of an utterance. The most frequent type of inversion in English is the subject auxiliary inversion, where an auxiliary verb changes places with its subject; this often occurs in questions, such as “‘Is he reading?’, where the subject ‘he’ is switched with the auxiliary ‘is’” (Abuzer, 2017, p. 9). Inverted orders can also be observed, according to Warner (2007) with other verbs in many other contexts where particular preverbal constituents or elements precede. The following body of selected examples illustrates such a relationship:

1. **Does** *this story* take place in the past, present or future? (Beck, 2002, p. 6).
2. What **is** *my timeframe*? (Shin, 2002, p. 35).
3. There **are** *three general forms of classroom singing activities*. (Abbott, 2002, p.13)
4. **Provide** *students* with some caveats to haiku writing. (Svendson, 2002, p. 38)
5. In what **was** *long the richest city in Latin America*, “each year, **there’s** *more and more hunger and less and less hope*,” **says** *Monica Carranza*, who runs the soup kitchen. (The Economist, 2001, p. 47)
6. Still so full of passion **was** *he* that he did not see her, as you sometimes cannot make out objects when you come first into the brilliant sun but only the shape of them. (Cowell, 1997, p. 28)
7. Near here **have taken** place some of the most striking events in the state’s history. (Huffman, 1993, p. 4)

It is important to state here that the phenomenon of inversion, unlike many other grammatical systems found in the English language, is unique. Even though inversion falls under the domain of syntax, its occurrence is not triggered by syntactic factors, e.g., preposed material or the absence of an object. It is the result of a desire to convey

a certain communicative effect. That is why attempts made to ascribe inversion to a “syntactic trigger” have been unsuccessful (Huffman, 1993). The peculiar nature of the phenomenon of inversion, being triggered by functional purposes (rather than a relation of formal determination) necessitates approaching the subject from a functional point of view (rather than a syntactic point of view). It is also equally important to note here that this paper’s approach is a little different in terms of the treatment of the subject at hand. Given the fact that inversion is triggered, not by a syntactic impetus, but by a need to convey a particular communicative effect such as focus or attention or involvement or emphatic effect, makes us look at inversion essentially from the point of view of the function rather than the small anatomical parts of the form.

The rationale for adopting this view resides in the understanding that once one decides that the verb is to appear to the left of the subject whether this is ‘half-verb inversion/subject-operator inversion’ where the verb is split into an auxiliary followed by the subject and then the second part of the verb or ‘full-verb inversion’, the intended communicative value is somewhat the same: less attention to be conferred on the topic. Therefore, examples like the following are included under the umbrella of inversion:

8. Rarely did I see him. (Huffman, 1993, p. 8)
9. Never has John’s health been better. (Huffman, 1993, p. 8)

Table 1. Inversion word-order systems.

No	Word-order system	Example
1	Non-inversion (subject-verb –SV)	<i>Evidently, then, music activities <u>have</u> the power to excite, move, and soothe learners in the language classroom. (Abbott, 2002, p. 10)</i>
2	Inversion (verb-subject – VS)	<i><u>Are</u> you lonesome tonight? (Abbott, 2002, p. 11)</i>

Inversion and inverted constructions — whether ‘full-verb inversion’ (i.e., ‘Here is the train’) or ‘subject-operator inversion’ (i.e., ‘By no means should he resign’) — have, according to Prado-Alonso (2019), “been the subject of extensive research” (p. 314) depending on the goal of each of those studies. These two types of inverted word-order configurations have also been further classified into ‘obligatory’ and ‘non-obligatory’ or optional constructions (see below).

In their study of English word-order patterns in texts, Govindasamy and David (2002) hypothesize that non-inversion (subject-verb) and inverted (verb-subject) word-order configurations signal different levels of concentration of attention or involvement. While non-inversion conveys greater attention on the topic and occurrence at hand, the inverted word-order construction signals less attention on the topic and event in the discussion.

Inversion could take place in a series of different contexts. In some of these contexts, inversion is obligatory. In others, it is optional. Consider the following examples taken from Warner (2007):

10. *At issue is Section 1401(a) of the Controlled Substances Act.*
11. *At issue Section 1401(a) of the Controlled Substances Act is.*
12. *In the year 1748 died one of the most powerful of the new masters of India.*
13. *In the year 1748 one of the most powerful of the new masters of India died.*
14. *With success would come wealth.*
15. *With success wealth would come.*

Warner (2007) gives these examples to show that inversion could sometimes be obligatory and sometimes optional. He does not, however, comment on which of these examples constitute obligatory inversion and which the optional. Prado-Alonso (2019), however, defines non-obligatory inversion whether ‘full inversions’ or ‘subject-operator inversions’ as “constructions in which the addressor can opt for either the inverted word order or its canonical counterpart,” and by contrast, ‘obligatory’ full or subject-operator inversions as constructions “obligatorily triggered by certain fixed preverbal constituents, and are not replaceable in context by a comparable clause with SVX canonical word order because this is grammatically unavailable or conveys a different meaning” (pp. 314-315). Therefore, the presence or placement of ‘certain fixed preverbal constituents’ at the beginning of a clause necessitates mechanically obligatory inversion.

Prado-Alonso (2019, p. 317) provides the following as instances for optional and obligatory inversions:

16. (a) Here was a woman important enough to be buried next to the royal graveyard, the highest honor for anyone associated with the eastern Lunda kingdom.
(b) A woman important enough to be buried next to the royal graveyard, the highest honor for anyone associated with the eastern Lunda kingdom, was here.
17. (a) Only recently has attention shifted toward identifying genetic determinants of susceptibility [...].
(b) Attention has shifted toward identifying genetic determinants of susceptibility [...] only recently.
18. (a) Finally, probably far more common than either of the other forms of assault and harassment, are the beatings of effeminate boys.
(b) *Probably far more common than either of the other forms of assault and harassment, the beatings of effeminate boys, are finally.
19. (a) So begins her collapse into slavement to forms.
(b) *Her collapse into slavement to forms begins so.

In his study on obligatory inversion in scientific texts, Prado-Alonso (2019) identifies, on the basis of corpus-based statistical findings, four obligatory inversion types (obligatory inverted structures), triggered by four different types of fixed preverbal elements/triggers: deictic adverbs (e.g. ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘there’, etc.), enumerative listing conjuncts (e.g. ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘finally’, etc.), pro-forms or additive adverbs (e.g. ‘so’, ‘such’, ‘as’, etc.), and negative/restrictive prepositional or adverb phrases (e.g. ‘only’, ‘barely’, ‘never’, ‘little’, ‘nowhere’, ‘under no circumstances’, etc.). All of these preverbal triggers can trigger inverted constructions (XVS structures). The canonical SVX variant or counterpart (non-inverted structure) to these preverbal triggers, as can be seen in examples 1-5 above, can either convey a different meaning or be grammatically impossible or grammatically possible but infelicitous. In some cases, there is no exact grammaticalized canonical variant or variant at all.

Govindasamy and David (2002) call sentences that begin with initial adverbials or adjuncts (preverbal elements, according to Prado-Alonso, 2019) as ‘preposed’ sentences and those that do not begin with an adjunct as ‘non-preposed’ sentences. In their linguistic analysis of sentences of ‘non-preposed’ inverted word-order patterns, Govindasamy and David (2002) further list four types of verb forms as follows:

20. Imperative forms, e.g., stand up...
21. Question forms, e.g., will...

22. 'To' e.g., to be/have/go, etc.
23. 'There be' e.g., there is/are

Govindasamy and David (2002) state that the purpose of 'preposing', i.e., using a clause-initial adjunct is 'orientation'. This applies to either form, i.e., SVX or XVS. Thus clause-initial adjuncts are there to provide the reader with orientating information that will apprise them, in advance, of the following discussion — whether, for example, there will be a shift in the topic or rather a continuation or closure or any other modification the writer might wish to present. In the words of Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 8), "the orientating information can be either familiar information or unfamiliar information, discourse markers that indicate topic continuation or shift, time expressions, place/position, or conditionals".

Huffman (1993) and Govindasamy and David (2002) consider the concentration of attention as the catalyst behind the selection between inversion and non-inversion. According to Huffman (1993), inversion and its opposite constitute a linguistic sign. The use of inverted or uninverted word-order configurations is prompted by the different communicative values that each signal has. These two signals, e.g., the subject-verb or P E (Participant-Event) and verb-subject or E P (Event-Participant), use Huffman's terminology and constitute a linguistic sign; a signal-meaning pair whose association, according to Huffman (1993) is arbitrary, in the Saussurean sense where the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.

While the findings in this study fully contend with Huffman (1993) that inversion and non-inversion constitute, as two different systems, a linguistic sign whose application is motivated by cognitive factors and prompted by pragmatic purposes that will enhance the process of communication, it is argued here that this linguistic sign is not used in the same way as in the Saussurean sense. That is to say, the association of P E and E P is not being arbitrary. Generally, this does not, however, invalidate the Saussurean construct of the arbitrariness of the bulk of the linguistic signs. The syntactic systems of inversion and non-inversion can be just viewed as an exception to the arbitrariness of the Saussurean signifier-signified pair construct in the representational system of language. It is the contention of this study, therefore that P E/E P is not to be viewed in the same way as the indeed arbitrary application of the plural marker 's', for instance, added to a noun to signal/mark plurality where the use of the plural morpheme here is indeed arbitrary. It has just happened to be 's'. It could have been anything else, i.e., 'n' or 't' or 'z' or something even totally different such as the use of reduplication as in the Malay language, for example.

Applying the same notion of arbitrariness to P E and E P word-order configurations does not really work here for the very pragmatic reason suggested by Huffman (1993) — the concentration of attention. The functional and communicative effects triggered by the use of inverted E P and uninverted P E are reasons per se for carrying out inversion or its reverse.

Furthermore, the uncanonical configuration is prompted by a functional need. In the words of Halliday (1994, p. xiii): "language has evolved to satisfy human needs, and the way it is organized is functional with respect to these needs — it is not arbitrary". It is a fact applicable to all languages that initial positions are, unlike the use of the plural marker 's' in the English language, as noted, marked with emphasis. Automatically, the mere placement of an element, i.e., the subject or the participant in an initial position brings out emphasis and attention. For this reason, this study takes the position that applying the Saussurean notion of arbitrariness to P E and E P word-

order configurations is not quite applicable here; at least in the sense that it cannot be equated to many other linguistic signs where arbitrariness is evident. The construct of the importance of the first position even transcends the boundaries of language in that first positions in anything always bring emphasis and attention, focal attention.

Govindasamy and David (2002), like Huffman (1993), consider inversion and non-inversion as a system signaling varying concentrations of attention or ‘degree of speaker’s involvement’ (Prado-Alonso, 2019). And assuming that this system of concentration of attention or involvement is available to language users, Govindasamy and David (2002) ask about how such users would exploit this system of concentration of attention for conveying messages. Huffman (1993), in his study of ‘Full-verb Inversion in English: A Functional Analysis’, lists a number of useful strategies of exploitation: scene setting, integrating, linking, creating smooth transitions, prediction, hedging, topic introduction, topic framing, and sequential development of topics. Huffman (1993) views contrast as yet another motivation for preposing. Similarly, he argues that preposing occurs when a list is being given, when there is a sort of schedule, when there are points in time, when describing a number of steps in a process, for instance, like those, in cooking. The next sub-sections are a review of some of these strategies of exploitation.

2.2 Strategies of Exploitation of Inversion

2.2.1 Scene setting strategy

In their study of the strategies of exploitation of inversion, Govindasamy and David (2002) found out that topic introduction, particularly for a first mention, was the most frequently used strategy of exploitation of inversion. Actually, 64 instances out of 117 of the strategies that make exploit or make use of inversion in their study, were about the topic introduction. Huffman (1993, pp. 16-17) (in Govindasamy & David, 2002, p. 10) explains the use of topic introduction as follows.

When a character is mentioned for the first time, there are two possibilities: either this first mention constitutes important information about the character, or it does not. If this character is an important one, who will appear in the narrative for some time, then he will probably deserve a relatively elaborate introduction. The first mention of the character will simply serve the purpose of establishing that character’s existence, but it will not constitute the main information about him. The really important information is reserved for later. E P (Event-Participant or less attention) will be used at this initial point, because merely indicating the existence of an entity, without saying much else about it calls for only a low degree of concentration of attention on that entity. Once the character’s existence has been established, the important facts about him will subsequently be given with P E (Participant-Event, that is, more attention). The E P of the introduction says, in effect: “This is not the important information about this character. That is yet to come” (Govindasamy & David, 2002, p.10).

Huffman (1993) asserts that the use of E P, meaning LESS FOCUS, to introduce a new character onto a scene serves as a gentle transition. It helps the author to introduce the new character with minimum disruption. The introduction of a new character onto a scene using the E P mode helps to keep the scene at hand remains in the center of attention. Had the new character, however, been introduced with P E, meaning MORE FOCUS, it would (be natural to) have the effect of a break.

Introducing a new character through the P E mode makes the scene just depicted stand on its own.

Govindasamy and David (2002) have found that the scene setting strategy, much discussed in Huffman's (1993) study of full-verb inversion in literary texts, does not feature much in journalistic writings. Actually, through the entire corpus they studied, they stated that they had found only one example concerning scene setting. As a result, they conclude that scene setting does not appear to be a particularly useful strategy in journalistic writings — as an autonomous genre.

2.2.2 Distinction strategy

Huffman (1993) states that the use of E P LESS FOCUS distinguishes more important characters or entities from less important ones. The use of P E and E P in this sense allows for a zooming-in-and-out effect. In the words of Huffman (1993, p. 22):

In addition to giving an author different options for presenting an individual participant, Degree of Focus can be used to differentiate among a plurality of participants. P E which concentrates attention highly, will be used for more focus worthy ones, and E P for those less so. (Huffman, 1993, p. 22)

While P E MORE FOCUS is used when the author wishes to confer more attention on a referent, E P LESS FOCUS is also used when “the reader’s attention is made to flit from one detail to another, none of these is really being of any importance” (Huffman, 1993, p. 24) where the ideas in a passage are organized spatially. This, according to Huffman (1993), gives the effect of ‘a look around’. No concentration of attention through the use of E P is being made. Rather swift views are being made.

2.2.3 Diffusion strategy

Another effect of using E P LESS FOCUS is that of diffusing or atomizing (Huffman, 1993). It has been stated so far that the intent of an author behind opting for the uncanonical E P was either to introduce a character gently onto an established scene or to create a zooming-out effect or a look around effect or to prevent any of several referents from coming into focus or to “save the focus for an important referent which would be mentioned next” (Huffman, 1993, p. 29).

Speaking of diffusion, Huffman (1993, p. 29) asserts that “in this new variation, there is indeed one referent which deserves the center of attention; but the author wishes to introduce it piecemeal, to deliberately prevent it from coming into focus all at once. The effect achieved is one of diffusion or atomization”. This type of construction, e.g., diffusing through E P LESS FOCUS is very effective when the author wishes to introduce a *deus ex machina*, that is, a sudden or unexpected saving power or a miraculous event that saves a situation otherwise ruined, onto a scene in a narrative. It helps create an atmosphere of ultimate suspense to diffuse or atomize the introduction of a *deus ex machina* into a piecemeal fashion before introducing it suddenly and glaringly with P E MORE FOCUS as shown in the following example by Huffman (1993). (*bold italics* is used for E P and **bold underline** for P E):

24. He staggered to his feet, tensed for more terrors, and looked up at a huge peaked cap. It was a white-topped cap, and above the green shade of the peak ***was a crown, an anchor, and gold foliage***. He saw white drill, epaulets, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform. A naval ***officer stood*** on the sand, looking down at Ralph in wary astonishment (COP 246) (p. 30).

The above passage shows clearly the effectiveness of using EP to diffuse the entry of an entity before bringing it suddenly into maximum focus with P E.

2.2.4 Topic introduction strategy

Govindasamy and David (2002) point out that Huffman's description about introducing a fictitious character through E P in a story can be applied also to other genres, e.g., journalistic writings. This can be seen in the substitution of a character — a feature characteristic of narratives — with a topic, the sort of thing that abounds in journalistic writings.

Like the introduction of a character in a narrative, the introduction of a topic in an article calls for attention to the existence of the topic whose degree of concentration of attention depends on the subsequent constituent order of information. If the subsequent information, for instance, uses subject-verb (non-inversion) constituent order, then the greater concentration of attention will, as a result, eventuate. If the subsequent information comes in the form of verb-subject (inversion/ less attention) constituent order, however, then, the topic introduced will soon evaporate as verb-subject order calls for the low degree of concentration of attention. Therefore, the type of constituent order, i.e., inversion or non-inversion will determine and indicate the topic that will be developed and the topic that will not.

The following example in Table 2, cited from Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 85), demonstrates this strategy of topic introduction as one of the main strategies of exploitation of verb inversion:

Table 2. An example of a topic introduction strategy (source: Govindasamy & David, 2002, p. 85).

Earlier span (topic: Mr. Jobs)	A new Steve Jobs; a second coming
Topic introduction (topic: Apple)	But is it the same old Apple?
Continuous span (topic: firm/Apple)	<u>The firm's (Apple)</u> predicament is that in the desktop computer market there is found to be only one winner- markets based on standards tend to work that way- and the IBM compatible PC is it. <u>Apple</u> , dazzled by its own brilliance, chose to go (sic) it alone, refusing to allow an industry of clones to arise, as IBM did.

It was stated that topic introduction is a strategy that can be exploited from inversion. In the above-mentioned example, a shift is noticed in the topic from 'Mr. Jobs' to 'Apple' through the application of inversion which is done here through the use of the interrogative auxiliary *is*. The new topic, 'Apple' which initially receives a low focus verb-subject introduction is sustained and given more prominence and thus focus in the following clauses through the application of subject-verb constituent order. Had the newly introduced topic, 'Apple', however, not been introduced in the latter clauses through uninverted subject-verb clauses as opposed to inverted verb-subject clauses, it would have immediately vanished after its low focus introduction.

If the newly through-inversion introduced topic does not merit more attention, it will remain as it is without any further development, (satisfied with its mere initial existence) where a shift back to the earlier span will take place since the newly introduced topic is apparently not focus worthy (Govindasamy & David, 2002).

2.2.5 Topic framing strategy

Another strategy of exploitation of inversion that Govindasamy and David (2002) talk about concerns ‘topic framing using prediction pairs’. Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 91) state that “the break from the canonical word-order SV to VS serves as a framing device”. Goutsos (1997, p. 46) defines topic framing as a “sequential technique used for the explicit indication of sequential boundaries. It is achieved by simultaneously indicating the ending of a continuation span and the starting of an ensuing transition span”. Therefore, to frame a topic, the writer closes through a topic shift the current continuation span and opens a transition span, which will serve as a topic introduction (Goutsos, 1997). Prediction pairs are comprised of predictive and predicted members. In their study, the researchers found that the predictive member is usually a question (E P LOW FOCUS), which is used to end a previous span and then work as a gentle introduction to another span, or topic that will soon resume focus through P E. Govindasamy and David (2002, p. 87) state that “the writers by using inversion (E P LOW FOCUS) have helped readers to reduce their attention on the topic at the point the question is introduced before anchoring them on to a new topic”.

2.3 Levels of Focus

Huffman (1993) states that there are three levels of focus from which a speaker can choose; the first being signaled by P E, the second signaled by E P, the third signaled by E P in addition to a preceding ‘there’. While ‘here’ carries high deixis, ‘there’ carries low deixis. The nature of ‘there’, particularly non-referential ‘there’ coupled with E P, makes it a notch or one level lower in focus than E P. Therefore, the use of deictic adverb ‘there’, according to Huffman (1993) is not “dummy” and that it is functional and that the functionality of ‘there’ refutes the claim that E P and ‘there’ E P “are fully synonymous” (Huffman, 1993, p. 38).

Huffman (1993) proposes a three-step focus hypothesis in which the effects of downfocusing are three-tiered, that is there are three levels of downfocusing. Those three levels of focus could be used as degrees of focus to structure a text. For example, the author of a particular narrative may start a scene with more focus using P E then less focus using E P then lesser focus using ‘there’ (followed by) E P, shift again to more focus using P E or they may manipulate the degrees of focus the way they deem best to achieve certain effects, etc.

2.4 Certain Lexical Items and Focus

According to Huffman (1993), certain lexical items have inherent effects of MORE FOCUS. Examples of such lexical items will be the definite article, pronouns, and proper nouns. These lexical items due to their semantic content are incompatible with downfocusing or with a low focus strategy. This in a way proves that “the use of

grammatical devices is not capricious or arbitrary; that it directly reflects the semantic values communicated by these devices” (Huffman, 1993, p. 48).

Huffman (1993, p. 60) points out that when “a new topic or new idea is introduced, it is with P E MORE FOCUS. When a remark is merely corroborative, or briefly elaborative, of something that someone has just said, the choice is E P LESS FOCUS”. Therefore, if one observes the way a narrative is structured, they will generally find that P E MORE FOCUS is used every time the topic is altered to shed the special attention the new entity deserves unless the writer for some other reason wants otherwise.

2.5 Clause-Initial Adjuncts

Clause-initial Adjuncts (also called initial adverbials [Govindasamy & David, 2002]/linking adverbials/fixed preverbal constituents [Prado-Alonso, 2019]) as defined in this paper, refer to any ‘preposed’ element or constituent that precedes the SVX or XVS type of bonding and provide a kind of background orientating information in the case of SVX structures that can help process a coming message, or trigger obligatory XVS inversion. Therefore, central to the concept of ‘adjunct’ as seen in this paper is the initial position rather than medial or final positions of the adverbial. It is important to note here that the concept ‘adjunct’ also includes what Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) classified as ‘disjunct’ in their classification of adverbs that function as adverbials: adjuncts, disjuncts, and conjuncts, according to their status in the sentence. Consider the following examples of initial adverbials that have been preposed or, in other words, thematized:

25. *At around 5000 B.C.*, man learned to smelt and shape copper. (Lock, 1996, p. 223)
26. Why? *First*, border controls were tightened and hundreds of would-be troublemakers were turned back. *Second*, the police did not create no-go areas, as they did in 2001 [...]. (The Economist, 2002, p. 47)

For purposes of analysis, it is often helpful to divide American society into five social classes. ‘First’ is a very small upper class, or social elite, consisting chiefly of those who have inherited social privilege from others. ‘Second’ is a larger upper middle class, whose members often are professionals, corporate managers, leading scientists, and the like (Prado-Alonso, 2019, p. 324). The nominal suffix is invariant, ‘as’ is the verbal suffix in Barbare (Prado-Alonso, 2019, p. 324). In addition, resources should be available virtually on a mandatory footing for social workers’ use, ‘should’ they require them and their clients agree to their use where statutory orders are not in force (Prado-Alonso, 2019, p. 324). The italicized expressions ‘at around 5000 B.C.,’ ‘first’ and ‘second,’ ‘as’, and ‘should’ constitute the sentence-initial adjuncts in these five examples. The subject and the main verb come after the adjuncts in these sentences. Note the SVX structure in example (2), and XVS inverted structure in (3).

2.6 Markedness

The term ‘markedness’ which was originally introduced by Roman Jakobson (Waugh & Halle, 1984) to indicate certain relationships within phonological and morphological oppositions has recently been used to indicate “marked” and “unmarked” construction type (Dik, 1989).

2.6.1 *Marked and unmarked word orders*

- 27. Mother, I like the most. (Marked)
- 28. I like mother the most. (Unmarked)

The word-order pattern in (3) is not typical of the English SVX typological word-order configuration. It is infrequent and thus described as ‘marked’. This is in contradistinction to the corresponding frequent, usual, or ‘unmarked’ order (Connolly, 1991). Marked order of constituents, though not very frequent (and that is why it is marked), is not uncommon in English.

3. METHODS

In its attempt at finding whether XVS inversion as opposed to SVX non-inversion, contributes any semantics to the pragmatic process of communication, the present study employed a mixed-methods research design. It is a function-oriented textual analysis supported by quantitative methodology. In other words, this study aimed to analyze the communicative values of inversion — spotted in the atypical departures from the canonical SVX — the default word order in English — to the uncanonical XVS word-order constructions by statistical as well as interpretive means. The paper adopted a statistical approach like that used by the Columbia School and followed somewhat the same interpretive methodology and framework adopted by Huffman (1993) and Govindasamy and David (2002).

3.1 Data Collection

The research data were collected from five TESOL journal articles, taken from Volume 11, Number 1 Spring, 2002; and ten articles were taken from The Economist weekly newspaper between 2001-2002 (see Appendix), five articles each. The rationale behind the selection of articles, as a genre, for this analysis lies in the academic and professional nature of the texts. However, the selection of these articles was done randomly. This is to get an impartial picture about how much inversion is employed in academic and professional articles of the type mentioned; for up to the writing of this line, the researchers did not know how many inversions would be featured in academic and professional articles.

The choice of articles was random. However, the number of articles chosen was not random — 10 articles that feature professional writing and 5 articles that exhibit academic writing. The reason for this discrepancy was the various lengths of the articles. The length of the professional articles ranges between 600-1000 words, while that of the academic ones between 1500-4000 words. And since the researchers wanted also to see the frequency of inversion in each of the two types of articles selected, then more professional articles had to be selected since they are much shorter than the academic ones, hence is the variation in the number of articles (see Table 3).

Table 3. The research design.

Genre	Type of articles	No. of articles	Approximate length of articles	Period of publication
Academic writing	Research articles on academic themes from a TESOL journal	5	1500-4000 words	2002
Professional writing	Research articles on political themes from The Economist	10	600-1000 words	2001-2003

3.2 Data Analysis

Using textual analysis, the present study aimed at finding whether inversion (VS) as opposed to non-inversion (SV), viewed as a grammatical system, contributes any meaning to the pragmatic process of communication. To answer the research questions, every clause selected for textual analysis was examined for (1) its word-order configuration or inverted/uninverted construction, i.e., verb-subject/event-participant and subject-verb/participant-event, and (2) clause-initial adjuncts (preposing/preverbal elements). Emphasis was given to the classification of the tokens into inverted (XVS) and non-inverted (SVX) sentences. Both sets were then analyzed functionally for any marked order. Finally, adjuncts — the preposed/preverbal elements — were, after the process of tabulation had taken place, examined, from a functional point of view, for the nature of the information they carry. In the process of analysis, the researchers used the following coding features.

- *Italics* for subject-verb (non-inversion) word-order configuration
- Underline for verb-subject (inversion) word-order configuration
- **Bold** for preposed material (clause-initial adjuncts)

Table 4 and Table 5 provide descriptive statistics of the results. They present a general portrait of all the findings quantitatively. This serves as an orientation for the process of interpretive/qualitative analysis.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of P E (SV) and E P (VS) word-order configurations.

	Academic articles	Professional articles	Total
Total P E (SV)	531 (57.59%)	391 (42.41%)	922 (100%)
Total E P (VS)	204 (85.71%)	34 (14.19%)	238 (100%)

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of preposed tokens.

	Academic articles	Professional articles	Total
Preposed information	170 (62.97%)	100 (37.03%)	270 (100%)
P E (SV)	140 (61.40%)	88 (38.60%)	228 (100%)
E P (VS)	30 (71.43%)	12 (28.37%)	100%

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study analyzed two different sub-genres, i.e., two types of articles: academic and professional. As shown in Table 4 above, inverted occurrences (238) were comparatively less than the uninverted occurrences (922). This finding, as shown more elaborately in the next section, supports the early-stated fact that the P E (SV) word-order configuration is the basic dominant word order prevalent in English.

Due to the fact that the number of clauses analyzed in the academic and professional articles is not exactly the same, making definite conclusions here regarding which type of articles employs more or less preposing, cannot be ascertained. Therefore, the findings here will be just an approximation of what the above-drawn table reveals. The above table shows that preposing occurred more with academic writing (62.97%) rather than that of professional (37.03%).

The figures displayed in Table 6 reveal that the total number of sentences analyzed in this study was 1160, of which 922 (79.48%) had the canonical Participant-Event P E/SV word-order configuration; while 238 (20.52%) sentences were of the less canonical English VS/EP word-order configuration.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of preposed tokens and word-order configurations.

	Non-preposed clauses	Preposed clauses	Total
P E word-order configuration (Non-inversion)	694 (77.98%)	228 (84.44%)	922
E P word-order configuration (Inversion)	196 (22.02%)	42 (15.56%)	238
Total	890 (100%)	270 (100%)	1160

This finding confirms Croft's (1990) and Govindasamy and David's (2002) finding that SV/P E is indeed the basic and dominant word-order configuration typical of English. However, quite often, in the discourse, language users depart from this canonical SV/P E 'default' word-order. Thus, as could be seen in Table 6 above, there were 238 (20.52%) instances of inverted sentences. Though, this figure/percentage, compared to the 922 (79.48%) non-inverted canonical sentences, may not seem that large, is, in fact, sizeable enough to warrant attention. It is significant enough to show that inversion, as a linguistic system, is really established.

As for preposing, i.e., sentence initial adjuncts, there were 270 occurrences in total. Out of such a number, there were 228 (84.44%) occurrences, preceding P E, i.e., canonical non-inverted clauses; and 42 (15.56%) ones preceding E P, i.e., marked inverted clauses — not a significant percentage, comparatively. This finding shows that preposing was not at all a *sine qua non* for inversion (SV), i.e., inverted word-order as was suggested by researchers who unsuccessfully tried to ascribe inversion to syntactic factors. Inverted clauses can occur with the absence of preposed information. Preposing may be considered as a characteristic of inversion but it is not a necessary condition for it. Inversion can occur with or without it.

As for non-preposing, out of the total number of non-inverted clauses of 890, there were 694 (77.98%) occurrences of canonical P E word order, and 196 (22.02%) of inverted E P word order, as shown in Table 6 above. The percentage of inverted E P word order (22.02%) confirmed the above finding that preposing was not a *sine qua non* for inversion since the percentage of inverted word order in non-preposed clauses, which was (22.02%), exceeded that of preposed inverted clauses, which was (15.56%).

4.1 Analysis of Question 1: The Semantic Value(s) of Inversion

This research aimed to find out whether inversion (VS) carries out any communicative or semantic values. The theoretical underpinnings of this research were predicated upon the works of Huffman (1993), and Govindasamy and David (2002) whose works on inversion focused on the testing of the hypothesis of the

‘concentration of attention’. This hypothesis, proposed by Huffman (1993) and developed by Govindasamy and David (2002), states that the choice whether to use inversion or non-inversion in discourse is motivated by the degree of attention of concentration a language user wishes to confer on a particular agent or entity in a clause.

This study’s attempt at further developing this hypothesis has so far emphasized, on the one hand, the validity of the premises upon which the hypothesis operates and has, on the other hand, proved the ‘topic introduction strategy’ to be the most used professional and academic discourse. 15 occurrences out of the 238 examples of E P found in this study constituted the topic introduction strategy. As argued earlier, the same strategy is also employed in fictitious and journalistic discourse. For an example from the professional discourse, consider the following extract taken from the corpora canvassed for this study (notice that *bold italics* is still used for E P and **bold underline** for P E):

D1 In a television debate on November 12th, ***the three candidates*** who next Tuesday will compete to be leaders of the Labour Party said what they would do if they were Israel’s prime minister...”If **I were** prime minister,” *fantasised Amran Mitzna*, Haifa’s mayor and the current front-runner, “**I promise** to separate Israel from the Palestinians, by negotiation if possible, if not, then by unilateral withdrawal.” ***Haim Ramon***, a veteran Labour politician, said he would not waste time trying to negotiate with the present Palestinian leaders, but would press ahead with the “security fence” between Israel and the West Bank. (The Economist, 2002, p. 44)

D1 demonstrates a topic shift from ‘the three candidates to Amran Mitzna’. ‘Amran Mitzna’, the new topic, however, was introduced in a special way. Readers did not know, for example, who the character, i.e., the ‘I’ in “If **I were** prime minister,” was yet — not before E P was used. It is through the use of E P that readers have come to know about the identity of the new character who has then developed through the resumption of the use of P E again. What E P did was to introduce the character gently onto the scene thus allowing for a minimum disruption. To further clarify the point, it would be useful for one to imagine the order of the second clause above being reversed from ‘fantasised Amran Mitzna’ to ‘Amran Mitzna fantasised’. With this reversion in order — that is with the introduction of the agent through P E — one would for at least a second, feel startled as though one has lost track; and one may even find himself/herself asking about who ‘Amran Mitzna’ is. That is precisely what the introduction of the new agent through E P makes one avoid. It creates a smooth and gentle transition in the passage one is reading. It makes the ideas flow smoothly with no or minimum of disruption.

It is important before looking at other examples of topic introduction strategy to state that the fact that ‘Amran Mitzna’, the (new) topic introduced through inversion, was not sustained in the rest of the passage. Another topic, ‘Haim Ramon’, which is to be also followed by another new topic, gets into the picture, thus causing the previous topic to move away from the center of focus — a strategy that calls for lesser concentration of attention. The mere existence of the topic was all that was wanted.

The following extract is another example of a new topic that is not sustained in the rest of the passage — only a mere existence of it. This calls for lesser concentration of attention, followed by a resumption of the previous topic, a structure that calls for a greater concentration of attention:

- D2 Like minorities everywhere, **Christians in the Muslim world have** learned to live with ambiguity. However nationalist **they may be**, somewhere *there lurks a fear* that their loyalties are suspect. **These fears**, whether real or imagined, have grown in the wake of September 11th, just as they have for Muslims living in the West. **Christian outrage at the attacks on America was** louder than their Muslim neighbours', while Christian concern over the counter-attack on Afghanistan has been more muted. (The Economist, 2001, p. 51)

The foregoing excerpt begins with a 'preposed element' (like minorities everywhere) which is followed by P E MORE FOCUS. The commencement with P E shows in reality that the subject which was 'Christians in the Muslim world' would be the main focus of the following discourse and hence the P E. However, in the following sentence, there is a swift change in the topic from 'Christians in the Muslim world' to 'fear'. However, this change of topic which was carried out via the use of E P LESS FOCUS quickly again evaporates upon the resumption of the previous topic with P E MORE FOCUS.

In the following excerpt, an example from the academic discourse is used to illustrate a 'topic introduction' that is, unlike the previous two examples, sustained throughout the rest of the passage.

- D3 What *is reading*? How *do you teach* someone to do it, especially in a second or foreign language? **These are** very large questions that, of course, cannot be addressed in much detail in a single article. (Eskey, 2002, p. 5)

The passage began with E P LESS FOCUS thus introducing 'very gently' a topic to be developed later on through 'reversion' to P E MORE FOCUS. The topic of 'reading' becomes the cynosure of focus in the remainder of the passage.

It is important now to state that, though counted imperatives (following Govindasamy & David, 2002) were counted among inverted constructions, this study does not, strictly speaking, consider them so; and though counted 'Wh-question constructions' were also counted as inversions, this study does not consider all of such constructions as constitutive of inversions. Following is a brief discussion of each.

4.1.1 Imperatives

Researchers do not strictly consider 'imperatives', i.e., sentences conveying or giving 'lists', 'guidelines', 'instructions', 'steps in a process', as forms of inversion as such sentences have a P E word order. However, the subject or participant in such imperative constructions — which must be 'you' — is ellipted or omitted as it is implicitly understood to be 'You'. For, example, in the sentence:

- D4 *Ask students to follow, the subject is understood to be (You) Ask students to follow.*

4.1.2 Wh-question constructions

Unlike one may think — not all 'Wh-question constructions', by virtue of being 'interrogatives', automatically constitute inversion. In the process of analysis, i.e., coding, six interrogative cases have interestingly been found not to constitute inversion. Consider the following contrast.

- D5 What *is the main point*? (Beck, 2002, p.35)

D6 What *information comes* first? (Beck, 2002, p. 35).

While the first example of a Wh-question features inversion, the second does not. This leads us to the conclusion that not all Wh-questions constitute inversion and that while some Wh-questions could feature inverted word-order configuration, some others could not. The following are some more examples of Wh-questions that do not feature inversion:

D7 What *language should* I avoid? (Beck, 2002, p. 35)

D8 What *resources do* I have available? (Beck, 2002, p. 35).

Further, this conclusion could also be extended to other forms of interrogatives or constructions that have the force of a question. Consider the following examples. How can I make my points clear? (inverted) (Beck, 2002, p. 35).

D9 Did the instructor give any restrictions or suggestions? (inverted). (Beck, 2002, p. 35)

The last example, an interesting phenomenon, comes under a category of interrogatives called ‘declarative questions’. According to Swan (2005), ‘declarative questions’ which are usually pronounced with a rising tone “can be used when the speaker thinks s/he knows or has understood something, but wants to make sure or express surprise” (p. 476).

4.2 Analysis of Question 2: The Semantic Value(s) of Clause-initial Adjuncts

Clause-initial adjuncts — part of discourse devices — are preposed elements that mostly carry ‘orientating information’. Thus clause-initial adjuncts, whether featured in SVX or XVS construction types, are there essentially to provide the reader with orientating information that will apprise him or her beforehand of what is to come next, for example, whether there will be a shift in the topic or a continuation or an end, etc. This orientating information can take the form of time expressions, location/ position, conditionals, metadiscourse items, discourse markers that indicate continuity or discontinuity or topic shift (Govindasamy & David, 2002). The following are some extracts in which some examples of clause-initial adjuncts encountered in this study are embedded, along with their communicative functions and semantic values:

D10 It is hard, looking back over the past decade or so, to imagine a better few weeks for Russia-at home or abroad. Since September 11th, Vladimir Putin has done a lot to make the West like him. (The Economist, 2001, p. 55)

The aforementioned sentence-initial adjunct — ‘Since September 11th’ — denotes ‘time’ and signals ‘continuity’. It sorts of gives a background for orientating information that helps process a coming message. And that is actually the purpose of preposing of material. It helps the processing of the coming message. Out of the 270 clause-initial adjuncts found in the study, there were 12 occurrences of this sort, i.e., devices that signal time and signal continuity. All of these occurrences are P E. Table 7 represents such figures quantitatively.

Table 7. Adjuncts denoting time and signaling continuity.

Adjuncts denoting time and signaling continuity	P E	E P
	12	0

It is worth mentioning that only 1 out of the 12 occurrences was from the academic articles. The rest were from the professional/journalistic ones. Following is an extract that has sentence-initial adjuncts that feature ‘enumeration’ — a discourse device that is used by writers to signal continuity.

D11 Why? First, border controls were tightened and hundreds of would-be troublemakers were turned back. Second, the police did not create no-go areas, as they did in 2001, but deployed lots of police, many in plain clothes, using quiet mobile phones instead of crackly radios. Third, the forum organizers tightened their own security [...]. (The Economist, 2002, p. 47)

The function of the clause-initial adjunct of the next extract is that of ‘topic shift’. The time expression, ‘in the summer of 2001’ signals a topic shift from ‘The European Social Forum’ to an ‘anti-globalist extremist’ and hence introducing a new topic. Out of the 270 clause-initial adjuncts found in the study, four occurrences denote such a feature as Table 8 illustrates.

Table 8. Adjunctive time expressions that denote a topic shift.

Adjunctive time expressions that denote a topic shift	P E	E P
	4	0

D12 **The European Social Forum**, a gathering-broadly speaking- of ant-capitalist sceptics about globalization and American foreign policy, last week drew more than 500,000 people to Florence, one of Italy’s most fragile cities. Italians were worried. In the summer of 2001, when the G8 rich countries’ leaders held a summit in Genoa, **anti-globalist extremist** ransacked the place and attacked the police who then lost their heads. A young man was killed, many people were beaten up. (The Economist, 2002, p. 47)

The following extract features clause-initial adjuncts that signal ‘time transition’ and thus continuity of topic:

D13 In the short run, this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life [...]. After the procedure is completed, one arranges the material into different groups again. Then, they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually, they will be used once more, and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. (Eskey, 2002, p. 5)

Notice how the sentence-initial adjuncts in the above excerpt make the text flow smoothly from one point to another. They create a smooth transition in the text. Of this sort of adjunctive expressions, there were eight occurrences.

5. CONCLUSION

Motivated by the fact that the distribution of morphemes is neither haphazard or arbitrary nor mechanical, the study set out to investigate and seek answers to two research questions about the phenomenon of inversion. The questions revolved around the semantic and communicative values of inversion desired to be communicated by

language users who use inverted word order. Related to inversion is the question about the possible semantic effects communicated by clause-initial adjuncts.

The study, which represents a further developmental attempt to find better explanations underlying different word-order configurations, commenced with an assumption that inversion and non-inversion constitute two different systems or signals pertaining to the degree of focus or rather concentration of attention. It was hypothesized that each signal represents a different degree of concentration of attention. Following this, the study found that while ‘non-inversion’ conveys greater attention on the topic and event at hand, ‘inversion’ signals a different communicative function — less attention on the topic and event in the discussion. These findings have corroborated the Degree of Focus Hypothesis, postulated by Huffman (1993) and developed by Govindasamy and David (2002).

A contribution to linguistic and educational research, the present study provided a textual analysis of the pragmatic use of inversion, stressing that what triggers inversion or non-inversion is a certain communicative effect such as focus rather than a relation of formal determination where one element determines mechanically the form or appearance of another (Reid, 1991). Such approaches to grammar explanation and teaching, the study demonstrated, deprive language of its liveliness and capacity to evolve to accommodate evolving human needs, highlighting, therefore, the importance of a ‘human factor’ in the functioning of language; and emphasizing the need to break away from grammar-based teaching that limits this richness of language and language use to discourse-based language learning and teaching (communicative grammar) where ‘languaging’ rather than ‘language’ should be the focus of the process of language teaching and learning.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, M. (2002). Using music to promote L2 learning among adult learners. *TESOL*, 11(1), 10-17.
- Abuzer, K. D. (2017, April 27). *Word order and inversion* [Paper presentation]. International Scientific and Practical Conference “World Science”, Dubai, UAE.
- Assaiqeli, A. (2019). God taught Adam and spoke to Moses: Language origin, functions and early multilingual development. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 11(5), 1-38. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v11i5.15206>
- Beck, A. (2002). Writing strategies worksheet. *TESOL*, 11(1), 34-35.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Comrie, B. (1989). *Language universals and linguistic typology: Syntax and morphology* (2nd ed.). The University of Chicago Press.
- Connolly, J. H. (1991). *Constituent order in functional grammar: Synchronic and diachronic perspectives*. Mouton De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110875836>
- Cowell, S. (1997). *The players: A novel of the young Shakespeare*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Croft, W. (1990). *Typology and universals*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dik, S. C. (1989). *The theory of functional grammar*. Mouton De Gruyter.
- Eskey, D. E. (2002). Reading and the teaching of L2 reading. *TESOL*, 11(1): 5-9.

- Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (2nd ed.). Taylor & Francis.
- Goutsos, D. (1997). *Modeling discourse topic: Sequential relations and strategies in expository texts*. Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Govindasamy, S., & David, M. K. (2002). Literacy practices: Developing hypothesis about the functions of English word order patterns in texts. In M. K. David & F. Hashim (Eds.), *Approaches to teaching reading: Focus on the second language reader* (pp. 75-94). MELTA-Sasbadi.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). Arnold.
- Hartvigson, H. H., & Jakobsen, L. K. (1974). *Inversion in present-day English* (2nd ed.). Odense University Press.
- Huffman, A. (1993). *Full-verb inversion in English: A functional analysis* [Unpublished manuscript]. The Columbia School of Linguistics, Columbia University.
- Johnstone, B. (2002). *Discourse analysis*. Blackwell.
- Lock, G. (1996). *Functional English grammar: An introduction for second language practitioners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pourdana, N. (2020). Duplicity in political texts: Are lie-spotting strategies efficient in L2 contexts? *The Asian Journal of English Language & Pedagogy*, 8(1), 18-30.
- Prado-Alonso, C. (2019). Obligatory inversion in scientific texts. *Studia Neophilologica*, 91(3), 314-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274.2019.1652112>
- Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A university grammar of English*. Longman.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Longman.
- Reid, W. (1991). *Verb and noun number: A functional approach*. Longman.
- Samsudin, Z. (2016). Comparing the process approach with the product approach in teaching academic writing to first-year undergraduates. *The Asian Journal of English Language & Pedagogy*, 4, 84-104.
- Shin, S. J. (2002). Ten techniques for successful writing tutorials. *TESOL*, 11(1), 25-31.
- Svendson, A. (2002). Season it with haiku. *TESOL*, 11(1), 38-39.
- Swan, M. (2005). *Practical English usage* (3rd ed.). Oxford.
- Warner, A. (2007). Parameters of variation between verb-subject and subject-verb order in late Middle English. *English Language and Linguistics*, 11(1), 81-111. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674306002127>
- Waugh, L. R., & Halle, M. (Eds.). (1984). *Roman Jakobson Russian and Slavic grammar: Studies 1931-1981*. Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110822885>

APPENDIX

The Economist, weekly edition of Nov. 3rd -9th 2001, and Nov. 16th-22nd 2002

List of Articles, November 16th-22nd 2002

1. **Osama Bin Laden** Still there?
2. **Crackdown in Jordan** A town in trouble
3. **Israel's Labour Party** Fantasy prime ministers
4. **German Politics** Gerhard Schröder's rocky new start
5. **Italy's globalization debate** Fallacious Fallaci

List of Articles, November 3rd -9th 2001

6. **Argentina's economy**
7. **Brazil's Arab Diaspora**
8. **Mexico's army**
9. **Christians in the Middle East:** Testing times
10. **Changing Russia** A gleam of hope