

Ways of Expressing Cardinal and Ordinal Numerals in the History of English: From *one and twenty / one and twentieth* to *twenty-one / twenty-first*

This paper examines the ways in which cardinal and ordinal numerals from 21 to 99 have been expressed since the second half of the fourteenth century.

Regarding the history of cardinal numerals in English, the *OED*² states: “Combined with the numerals below ten (*one to nine*) to express the numbers between twenty and thirty; formerly (and still occasionally) *one and twenty, two and twenty*, etc. (rarely *twenty and one*, etc.); now commonly *twenty-one, twenty-two*, etc.” (*OED*², s.v. *twenty, numeral a. and n., A. adj.*, 1b) Since the fourteenth century, the following four patterns for the expression of cardinal numerals can be recognized as morphologically significant: Pattern A *one and twenty*, Pattern B *one(-)twenty*, Pattern C *twenty and one* and Pattern D *twenty(-)one*.

According to the present research, Chaucer (*Canterbury Tales*) contains Pattern A only (3 examples), Shakespeare (*Err.*, *TGV*, *Shr.*, *LLL*, *MND*, *MV*, *Wiv.*, *Ado*, *AYL*, *AWW*, *TN*, *MM*, *WT*, *Tmp.*) Pattern A (9) and D (4), and the Authorized Version of the English Bible (OT) Pattern C (229), A (4) and D (1). In stark contrast, present-day English corpora across four regional variants contain only Pattern D: British English (LOB (195), FLOB (156)), American English (Brown (202), Frown (171)), Australian English (ACE (80)) and Indian English (Kolhapur (143)). Accordingly, Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), quite naturally, only ever refer to Pattern D.

Thus, questions remain regarding when Pattern D took precedence over the other patterns, what accelerated the use of Pattern D, and why older patterns became obsolescent in the course of the twentieth century. In order to elucidate these points, this presentation attempts a thorough analysis of Patterns A-D over time. Such an analysis seems to have escaped grammarians’ attention.

An examination of electronic corpora utilized British / American English texts, consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of 325 / 410 different documents such as biographies, dramas, essays, journals, letters, novels and treatises, written since the second half of the fourteenth century. These were randomly selected and downloaded from the websites of reliable universities and organisations. Furthermore, the BNC, ARCHER 3.2, the IntelLex Past Masters (1500-1950, 115 volumes), the Diachronic Part of the Helsinki Corpus, the ICAMET, the CEECS, the Lampeter Corpus and the Newdigate Newsletters were analysed. Historical variants for the spelling of cardinal numerals were included in the analysis of these corpora; for example, 29 alphabetic forms including *brytty*, *thriti*, *threty*, *thurty* and *thirty* were search words for collecting numbers from thirty-one to thirty-nine.

Evidence from British English shows that Pattern B was rare throughout the period examined, partly because this was indistinctive from time-reference. Pattern C occurred almost exclusively in biblical prose. Patterns A and D were the two main rivals, and Pattern D gained predominance over the other patterns in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this presentation, the history of cardinal numerals in late eighteenth- to early twentieth-century America, and the history of ordinal numerals in the aforementioned corpora are also clarified, based upon 9,279 examples.

References

- Huddleston, Rodney and Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[*OED*²] Simpson, John A., ed. 2009. *Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, on*

CD-ROM Version 4.0. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London/New York, Longman.

(498 words excluding the title, linguistic examples and references)