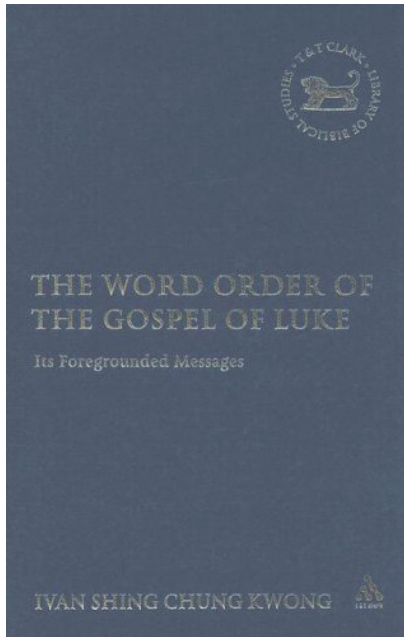


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The Word Order of the Gospel of Luke: Its Foregrounded Messages

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The purpose of this book is “to investigate the word order of all the clauses in the Gospel of Luke and some of its foregrounded messages” (1). Kwong studies the order of the clause components using a functional system of classification (Subject, Predicator, and Complement) drawn from systemic-functional linguistics. To his consideration of these basic elements, he adds two other complicating factors: circumstantial adjuncts and the tense form of the predicator. The goal of the study is to provide “a framework of the general tendencies of the constituent orders in the Gospel, and some marked word orders related to some foregrounded messages of the Gospel” (1).

Chapter 1 provides a helpful overview of the research into word order over the last one hundred years, in general linguistics and in both classical and New Testament Greek. There have been two basic approaches. One is the typological approach, which seeks to determine the preferred word order of a language. This determination then becomes the basis for comparing the characteristics and qualities of Greek with other languages. The second is the pragmatic approach, which seeks to describe the factors motivating departures from the preferred order. For instance, if one took the claim of BDF that V(erb)-S(ubject)-O(bject) is the preferred order, the pragmatic approach would seek to

understand what motivates a writer to use an OVS or SOV order. The typologist is primarily interested in classification; the analyst of pragmatics is primarily interested in understanding the meaning associated with the variation. In both approaches attention is focused on the ordering of the individual clause elements.

Kwong's study uses a symmetrical view of markedness to derive meaning from the frequency of the attested patterns, following Lyons.¹ It views frequency of use as inversely proportional to prominence. Thus, the most frequently occurring forms are least prominent or normal, while the least frequently occurring forms are most prominent or nonnormal. Data are ranked in a hierarchy according to frequency from most marked to least marked, describing the prominence of one form compared to another.²

Kwong's theoretical rationale for attributing significance to rare word-order collocations in Luke is based on Greenbaum's claim regarding frequency and acceptability: "One form is said to be the norm from which the others diverge.... informational prominence can be given to an element by placing it in a non-normal position" (1990, 303, cited in Kwong, 34). Kwong states, "This applies to the positions of elements in a sentence, or word order in a clause" (34). Notice that Greenbaum claims that prominence is assigned to an element X in clause XYZ by placing it in a nonnormal position. He does not assign prominence to the overall pattern of XYZ compared to ZYX. Kwong makes a rather significant theoretical leap by extending Greenbaum's principle to the significance of rarely occurring clause patterns.³ In doing so, he changes the locus of the prominence from the moved element to the *collocation* of clause elements. The moved element is no longer

1. Lyons (1977, 1:305-11) actually differentiates three kinds of markedness: formal, semantic, and distributional. Kwong essentially combines the three into a single, distributionally based view: "Basically having a similar view on the above three types of markedness, S Greenbaum simply modifies this view into two types of language use: 'normal' and 'non-normal' forms" (33-34).

2. There is a second view of markedness, from which the symmetrical view was derived by Lyons. This is the *asymmetrical* view, wherein each "marked" form serves to signal the presence of some unique linguistic feature. The unmarked form may or may not possess this feature; it is "unmarked." The goal of analysts using the asymmetrical view is to isolate and describe the discrete feature that each marked form signals. The asymmetrical and symmetrical approaches diverge significantly in their objectives. The failure to clarify which view of markedness one is using has caused confusion over what exactly is meant by claiming something is "marked." For an overview of markedness theory, see Andrew 1990.

3. Some of the studies that Kwong reviewed do make claims about which order of clause elements was dominant (e.g., Ebeling 1902; Frisk 1933; Dover 1968; Friedrich 1975). It is not clear that they are making the same claim as Kwong regarding the rare patterns and prominence. For instance, Ebeling's discussion of rare patterns focuses on the moved element that makes the pattern rare, associating it with emphasis or connection to the preceding clause (236-37). If the intention of these authors was to assign significance to the rare collocation instead of the moved element that makes it rare, Kwong does little to make this point in his review. In the pragmatic studies of word order, prominence is prototypically associated with the element(s) that makes the pattern rare, not the rare pattern itself.

considered prominent *within the clause*; instead, it is the rare patterning of the clause that is considered prominent *within the discourse*. More unsettling is the fact that Kwong does not provide any rationale for this shift, nor is there a specific description of what the use of these marked orders was intended to signal within the discourse. He operates on the assumption that a pattern's statistical infrequency inherently assigns prominence to it, resulting in the foregrounding of the clause's message.

Chapter 2 defines the terminology of the study, beginning with the functional clause components S(ubject), P(redicator), C(omplement), and A(djunct). Chapter 3 presents the relative positions of main constituents in Luke's Gospel, looking at the relative positions of S, P, and C in independent, dependent, infinitival, participial, and embedded clauses, as well as dependent clauses of embedded clauses. He considers both the frequency of the various collocations (e.g., SPC, PSC, SCP) and the ordering tendency of one element relative to another (e.g., the subject tending to precede the predicator in independent clauses). The information in this chapter is a valuable contribution in and of itself. He finds a preference for: (1) S to precede P in independent clauses and for P to precede S in dependent clauses; (2) S to precede C in both dependent and independent clauses; and (3) P to precede C in dependent clauses, but only in the case of the aorist tense in independent clauses; with nonaorist forms in independent clauses, CP is more widely attested.

Chapter 4 describes the position of circumstantial adjuncts relative to the main clause components. There is far too much data in this chapter to attempt to summarize; one can refer to the summary chart on 93 and the summary on 99–100.⁴

The purpose of chapter 5 is to “show Luke 7–8 is not only packed with Jesus' miracles, but these miracles are narrated alongside with other nearby events recorded by Luke to show Jesus' disciples' lack of understanding of his mission and role” (104).⁵ The chapter focuses on the incidents that concern the themes of fear and faithlessness and that are introduced using indirect speech: 7:3, 36; 8:9, 31, 38, 41; 11:37. With this limited introduction, Kwong proceeds to relate the occurrence of the marked orders with the themes found in these passages. However, there is no discussion about the exegetical significance of the marked order, that is, what specific conclusions can be drawn from their use. The lack of discussion is a major stumbling block for accepting Kwong's claims regarding the significance that can be drawn from the presence of marked word orders. He moves from statistical infrequency of the clause pattern to foregrounding of that clause's message without

4. This information on 99 is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/35byav>; 93 and 100 are blocked.

5. There is no rationale provided for Kwong's focus on Luke 7–8, nor for narrowing his focus primarily to indirect speeches.

providing the reader with a bridge to span the gap. I will cite a few examples of the kinds of conclusions he draws from applying his statistical model, then discuss the apparent presuppositions that undergird his model's theoretical framework.

Regarding Jesus' reply to the centurion in Luke 7:9, Kwong notes that a marked ACP order is used (οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τοσαύτην πίστιν εὔρον), "which shows the centurion's faith is the main cause of his servant's healing" (105). He appears to claim that the marked collocation foregrounds the information of the clause, signaling that it is important in comparison to the unmarked clauses in the context. Concerning 7:44–46, Kwong claims that the importance of Jesus' statement to Simon is foreseen through the use of three imperfective aspect verb forms (see Porter 1992, 21ff.) in combination with two marked word orders (Kwong, 106). Jesus' statement to Simon in 7:40 uses a "highly marked order CCP," followed by Simon's response using a highly marked SCP order. "This short interaction between Jesus and Simon with two highly marked patterns (verbiages placed before verbal processes) is to bring out the importance of the following statement of Jesus, especially 7.44–46, where Jesus is making a comparison between the woman and Simon" (107). Kwong claims that the marked order in verse 40 is to "highlight the content of Jesus' following statements" in verses 44–46, while the marked orders in verses 44–46 are used "to bring out comparisons and contrasts between Simon and the woman" (108).⁶ He at times claims a cataphoric function of the marked orders (e.g., "they bring out the importance of the *following* statement" [emphasis added]), while at other times the marked order functions to highlight the message of the marked clause itself.

Based on the analyses of chapters 3 and 4, Kwong's assertions are indeed accurate that these "marked" patterns occur infrequently in Luke. Based on the claims that he makes, and the limited discussion about the theoretical basis for these claims, I was left with questions about what can be specifically inferred from the presence of a rarely used collocation: (1) Is he claiming that the rare collocation was intentionally used by the writer to attract the reader's attention to the message? Is the rare collocation to be viewed as a foregrounding device employed by the writer/editor?⁷ (2) If the writer (consciously or unconsciously) used the rare collocation to foreground the message, is Kwong claiming that readers (either original or modern) should be able to discern these statistically

6. To read the complete argument in context, 106–8 may be previewed online at <http://tinyurl.com/3x5hgk>.

7. Kwong never associates use of a rare order with a writer's communicative intent, but it is difficult to understand how any significance can be assigned to its use unless the writer intentionally used it. If the significance of the collocation is derived from the location of a single element (as Greenbaum 1990, 303, asserts), then the locus of prominence properly belongs on that *element*, not on the *collocation*. Kwong does not turn his attention to the significance of individual elements until chapter 8.

determined rare collocations?⁸ (3) If the reader is expected to discern the rare collocations, how granular a discernment can be reasonably expected? Some marked orders cited for Luke 8:27b are ratios of 27 times versus 147 times, 78 times versus 306 times, and 7 times versus 27 times (109–10). Out of more than 19,000 words and over 2,500 primary clauses in Luke’s Gospel,⁹ how fine a ratio can an original reader be expected to have discerned? The lack of clarity regarding these sorts of presuppositional issues make it difficult to accept Kwong’s claims regarding the foregrounding effect of marked orders as currently described.

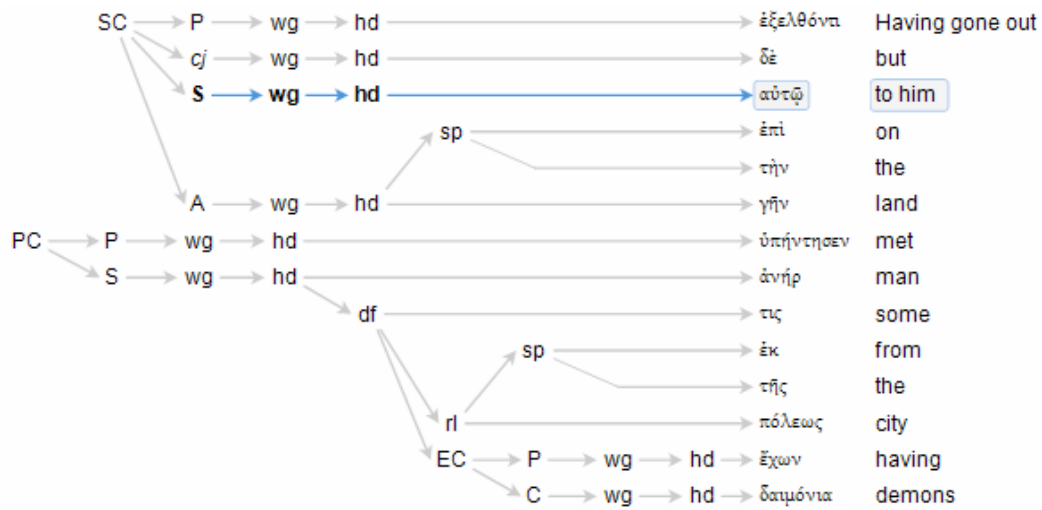
Another issue that undermines Kwong’s argument is an apparent inconsistency in how he treats the syntactic hierarchy of clauses.¹⁰ I found a number of instances where components of subordinate clauses were analyzed as though they were part of the main clause, which in turn affects his statistical conclusions regarding markedness. In the discussion of Luke 8:27 describing Jesus’ interaction with the Gerasene demoniac (ἐξελθόντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ὑπήντησεν ἀνὴρ τις ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἔχων δαιμόνια), Kwong notes that “the significance of their interaction is first highlighted by the marked orders.... the complement (αὐτῷ) of the main clause in 8:27 is placed before its predicate (ὑπήντησεν)” (109–10). While he construes αὐτῷ as part of the main clause on 110, on 109 he construes it as the complement of the participial construction. Is αὐτῷ best analyzed as fronted with respect to the main clause (i.e., ACAP), or as a component of the participial clause that functions as a circumstantial adjunct (i.e., AP)? It cannot be both.

The answer to this question has huge ramifications, since the answer determines Kwong’s statistical determinations of markedness. Below is a snapshot from the *OpenText.org Syntactically Analyzed Greek New Testament: Clause Analysis* (Porter 2006).

8. If so, how could a reader possibly determine that a collocation is highly marked in Luke 7, less than a third of the way through the Gospel? Is it meant to be repeatedly read? Based on the literature review, similar studies of ordering found that different writers have different preferred orders. Ebeling (1902, 234) claims that Isocrates preferred SOV to SVO by a 5:1 ratio. Does this mean that the reader would have to create a unique interpretive framework of each writer’s preferred orders before being able to discern his foregrounding strategy? Do the patterns established in Luke’s Gospel apply to Acts, or is a new system required? In Andrews’s chapter entitled “The Myths of Markedness,” she addresses this issue: “The purpose of markedness theory is to explain properties of meaning that are invariant, not to justify a system based upon statistical frequency, which, by definition, is a context-specific phenomenon” (1990, 137). Herein lies a potential pitfall of this approach.

9. These data are taken from *The OpenText.org Syntactically Analyzed Greek New Testament* (2006)

10. Pitts (2006, R61) expresses concerns about the issue of embedding, stating, “his treatment of embedding (where a clause is embedded or contained in the component of another clause at a higher rank) is unclear, especially in relation to infinite structures and rankshifting as it relates categorically to prominence.”



If αὐτῷ is a component of the adjunct, then the reference in the main clause back to the referent of αὐτῷ would be construed as zero anaphora, that is, an implicit reference. The OpenText analysis more accurately reflects the grammatical function of αὐτῷ, in my opinion, and would render the order of both the participial clause and the main clause as *unmarked*. This in turn would impact the statistical conclusions regarding CPS and APS orders in independent clauses. This same issue arose again at various points, as in chapter 6 regarding the claim that the marked CP pattern occurs where the complement refers to Jesus in Luke 22:54 (Συλλαβόντες δὲ αὐτὸν ἤγαγον), 23:2 (Ἦρξαντο δὲ κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ λέγοντες), and 23:16, 22 (παιδεύσας οὖν αὐτὸν ἀπολύσω).¹¹ Kwong's system for correlating statistical infrequency to foregrounding may indeed be legitimate. However, the lack of a theoretical framework to substantiate this system, and the lack of explanation regarding how the writer/editor and the readers are theorized to have employed this system, left me unconvinced about the overall claim of the book. The questions raised regarding his analysis of components contained within circumstantial adjuncts undermined confidence in some of the statistical conclusions.

By far the most satisfying part of Kwong's analysis is his description of "semantic chaining," whereby thematically related synonyms and antonyms are used to link otherwise disconnected portions of the discourse into a cohesive macro-thematic unit.¹²

11. These verses may in fact be erroneous citations, as there are hundreds of citations provided. However, there were more than fifty other instances where circumstantial participial clause components were analyzed as though they were functioning at the main clause level. The general patterns Kwong was claiming were not overturned; only the statistical significance of the difference was affected.

12. See Van Neste 2004 for a monograph specifically devoted to this methodology. Kwong bases his approach upon Grimes 1975.

In chapter 5 he convincingly demonstrates that the use of *faith*, *fear*, and their synonyms and antonyms are used in Luke 7:36–9:45 to both connect and juxtapose participants from each scene—the “sinful” woman (7:50), the Gerasene people (8:35, 37), the hemorrhaging woman (8:48), and Jarius (8:50)—with the fear and unbelief of the disciples (8:25; 9:34, 41, 45). In chapter 6, his analysis of semantic chains and rhetorical argumentation employed in Luke 6, 9, and 23 is insightful. While he does cite the presence of marked forms occurring in the context, his integration of word order with his semantic and rhetorical analysis at times seems ad hoc.¹³

Kwong’s work makes some significant contributions; however, its overall argument suffers from not explaining exactly what can be inferred from the statistics. His assertions may in fact be correct; he may have finally solved the perennial problem of word order in Greek. However, Kwong’s analysis left me unconvinced that he has accurately captured the meaning or function signaled by marked orders. Andrews notes that, in describing systems that are more complex than simple binary oppositions, “statistical frequency can be very misleading, if not totally unsystematic” (1990, 139). The value of markedness theory lies in discretely isolating the meaning signaled by the presence of a marked form, be it emphasis, contrast, discontinuity, and so forth. Research regarding word order must move beyond statistics to describe what a marked form uniquely communicates and must correlate the decision to use a marked form with the author’s/redactor’s communicative goals.

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13. Kwong analyzes all of the CP patterns where Jesus is the referent of the complement. He claims that the significance of the marked order in these contexts is “representing people’s three different attitudes to him,” ostensibly to draw attention to one of these three groups by use of the marked form (130). He divides the people interacting with Jesus into those who wrongly follow Jesus, those who reject Jesus, and those who genuinely support Jesus (129). The problem with this kind of argument is that virtually *any* human participant in the Gospel would fall into one of these three categories. Is the marked form really the element that signals these three relationships to Jesus? Some of the twenty-four instances of this marked form have little to do with the three themes (see Luke 20–44; 22:54; 23:16, 22).

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