

BORDERLESS DEFINED

Newsletter of Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC



Adjectives and Word Order

Newsletter No. 110 issued by Noriko Rogers (April 24, 2022)

My apologies for the delay in delivering this newsletter to you. (I just realized that it was not sent out properly earlier this month!)

I hope that you are doing well and perhaps enjoying warmer weather depending on where you are.

Please see below the body of the newsletter that I meant to deliver a few weeks ago!

Before diving straight into adjectives, I would like to pose a general question: have you wondered about how specific the word order seems for successive adjectives in English?

Although it is 9 years old, [this Japanese article](#) ("A Comparison of Adjective Order in English and Japanese" by Neyatani Kanako & Tanaka Kosuke) examines at length just how intricate the rule is.

In the article, I found the study by Quirk et al. (1985) really interesting, especially with the premodifiers being categorized into 4 different zones between the determiner and the head noun (p.2-4 of the article).

What's even more interesting? Although premodifiers in the same zone can theoretically be swapped in order, there is natural and unnatural word order depending on what type(s) of adjectives are used consecutively (p.5 of the article above).

I will not get into too much detail here, but Quirk et al. point out that adjectives with objective meaning ("visually observable" and "objectively recognizable") tend to be placed closer to the noun than subjective ones ("subjectively accessible").

I think I will need to purchase the reference material cited in the article! (See the details below.)

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik (1985) A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, Longman.

The next Borderless Defined will be in your inbox in the week of April 25th. Thanks for reading!

Noriko Rogers

Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC

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