

EUROFILE PHOTO ESSAY



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Antwerp to Doel consisted of four hours of frantic pedalling. Even if there weren't many hills, it was an arduous journey.

When I finally arrived in the town it was not quite what I had expected. I had been anticipating an apocalyptic, windswept abandoned zone blown apart by the encroaching demand for space by industry.

The reality was a bustling lively town, filled with tourists, coaches parked on the side of the road, photographers, people filming and families having picnics.

The land which surrounded the town was split. On one side nuclear cooling towers loomed, bellowing steam void of natural life, while on the other was an expanse of rural natural beauty, with the chirping of birds and rusty leaves falling

from mature oaks. By making the town a public art space, a quite unique location has been created.

Like other places I am drawn to photograph, its days are numbered. It sits on death row.

However, unlike those other places and buildings, this town has fought back. It remains standing, full of life.

Once that fight finally does end, and much of the area again returns to water, these photographs will be all that remains of it.

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THE SEQUENCE OF STRINGING SENTENCES

English speakers may assume the way they construct phrases represents the natural order of things. In fact, says **PETER TRUDGILL** there are plenty of other ways to string a sentence together



If you have grown up speaking English, it is very easy to suppose that English is normal, and that the way we do things in our language is the only way these things can be done. The order of words in English sentences would be a case in point.

In a sentence like *The cat scratched the dog*, it is obvious to us that it was the cat that was doing the scratching and the dog that was being scratched. It is hard for us to conceive of there being any other possible interpretation.

But in fact there are languages in the world, such as the Hixkaryana language of northern Brazil, where putting *the cat* first in the sentence and *the dog* last would mean that the cat was the one that was being scratched and the dog the one that was doing the scratching.

There are no languages like this in Europe, but languages on our continent do still show considerable differences in the way words are ordered in sentences. The two immediate neighbours which the English language shares this island with, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, illustrate this very nicely.

English is a subject-verb-object language: we put the subject (*cat*) first in a sentence, then the verb (*scratched*), and then the object (*dog*). Welsh and Gaelic do it differently.

In these Celtic languages, the verb comes at the beginning of the sentence: the typical order of elements in a sentence is verb-subject-object. In the Welsh sentence *Crafodd y gath y ci*, the verb *crafodd* means 'scratched'; *y gath* means 'the cat' and *y ci* means 'the dog', so the literal translation is "Scratched the cat the dog".

In Scottish Gaelic, the same word order is also found: *Ghluais an cat am ball* translates literally as 'Moved the cat the ball', corresponding to English *The cat moved the ball*. In the other Celtic languages, too – Manx, Cornish, Breton and Irish Gaelic – the verb comes first.

There are also many languages in the world in which it is usual for the verb to

come, not first or second as in Welsh or English, but at the end: subject-object-verb: 'The cat the dog scratched'. European verb-last languages of this type include Turkish and Azerbaijani. In Turkish, the normal way of saying *Children like chocolate* is *Cocuklar cikolata sever*, 'children chocolate like'.

In the South Sami language of north central Norway and Sweden, verb-final word order is also the norm: *Dah maanah utnieh* is literally 'they children have'.

Elsewhere, there are also languages where the normal word order is verb-object-subject, 'scratched the dog the cat' – Malagasy, the main language of Madagascar, is like this. There are no such languages in Europe, but some European languages do have a relatively free ordering of words in sentences.

In Greek, *I gáta gratzounise to skyli*, 'The cat scratched the dog', could just as well be *Gratzounise i gáta to skyli*, or *Gratzounise to skyli i gáta*.

Germanic languages like German, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish basically work like English, but they additionally have a "verb-second rule" which means that the verb has to be the second main element of the sentence; so even if the first component in the sentence is not the subject, the verb still come second.

In Danish, *I maj kørte vi til kysten* is literally 'In May drove we to the coast', where English would have *In May we drove to the coast*. But English used to have this same rule, and even in the modern language we can still see traces of it, as in expressions such as *No sooner had he said that than it happened*, *Such was the situation that we couldn't stay*, *Then up the hill came the boy they were waiting for*, and *Especially attractive was her auburn hair*.

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AUBURN

The Latin word *albus* meant 'white'. Our word *album* is a different form of the same word, which originally meant 'white or blank tablet'. *Albumus* meant 'whitish', and in French it became *auborne*, meaning 'flaxen'. This was then borrowed into English as *abrown*, where the similarity with brown influenced the meaning, with the result that a word which originally meant 'off-white' now signifies 'reddish brown'.