FOR A UNIFIED DESCRIPTION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

-Application to the analysis of a verb operator-

HAVE

Pascal Yamak

This article is aimed at all those, teachers and advanced learners in English or other foreign languages, questioning the validity of conventional grammatical descriptions as commonly found in most manuals and textbooks at their disposal. For them, a general introduction to a synthetic approach of languages will be provided. Going beyond the traditional scope of analysis basically centered on the sentence morphology and surface meaning, this approach takes place in a theoretical framework where language is comprehended as a production-interpretation activity between subjects.

In order to illustrate the general principles considered, the introduction will be followed by a concrete study centered on HAVE, one of the three “primary” verbs in English with BE and DO which can be used both as full verbs and auxiliaries.

I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON LANGUAGE DESCRIPTION

Despite dramatic progress made in the field of linguistics during the last thirty years, it must be said that most grammar manuals and textbooks (not to say all) are still within a descriptive framework inherited from traditional grammar where classification of surface phenomena (in morpho-syntactic and semantic terms) is prevailing. Their main drawback relies on the segmentation of language they conduct and their presuppositions. Although they may tell “right” things on such and such matters, their basic approach is inappropriate since their main object of analysis remains within the scope of the sentence. Therefore, their attempt of formalism when describing the generation process for their object of study never overcomes the level of a mechanist combinative system where components are treated as labels. The taxonomic representation of a sentence as shown below constitutes a canonical example of such approach where the issue concerning the construction of meaning is dramatically simplified:

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sentence
  ^
 subject   predicate
    ^        |
  auxiliary predication
    ^          |
 operator
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He had given the girl an apple

According to Quirck et al. (1973) from which we extracted this tree scheme, “this particular division of the sentence helps us to understand, for example, how interrogative and negative sentences are formed, how certain adjuncts are positioned, and how certain types of emphasis are achieved.” In addition to the reduction of

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language activity to an algebra attempting to account for surface positions, such a scheme practically ignores the issue of referenciation. The sentence model does not integrate the fact that the personal pronoun “he” and the definite article “the” (when using a traditional terminology that should be questioned) in the above sentence refer to terms built previously to the sentence described and that without proper relations to these terms, their meaning cannot be fully interpreted. Another problem which occurs is the status given to the “had-en” form acknowledged as “past perfect”. Here tense appears as a subcategory of the [predication] node instead of being placed at an upper level since it relates to the whole unit defined as a sentence. Similar comments could be made on how the category of modality is superficially treated with respect to its relation to the sentence.

What such description clearly shows is the complete removal of the subjective point (the speaking subject) at the origin of a sentence from the scope of analysis despite that “he”, “had-en”, “the” and “an” are all traces of a system of relations directly (or not) anchored to this origin within which this sentence takes place. Viewed as an autonomous entity without any constitutive origin, a sentence is reduced to a combination of labels. In other words, as a sentence is not considered as the product of a signifying activity, the effective process of its production, the conditions allowing this process to be activated, the type of operations involved and their combinations are ipso facto not fully integrated within the frame of analysis and description.

A sentence will be considered here as the product of a double series of operations that cannot be dissociated: a first system, internal to the sentence itself, generates a predicative relation (subject-predicate).

The second system of operations that will be defined as enunciative operations enables for anchoring, directly or by relay, this predicative relation to a referential space built from a system of coordinates, called situation of enunciation (locution), centered on the subject of an enunciation (the enunciator) and the time of this enunciation. Without proper insertion into this referential space, a sentence cannot be interpreted. For instance, a simple example such as Mary is playing the piano appears to be compatible with a very narrow range of contexts: a picture’s caption in a children’s textbook or an enumeration such as All my children are playing in this concert: John is playing the piano, Mary is playing violin, etc.

These operations and their combination can be accessed through analysis since “one of the basic properties of language is to include the trace of the operations that constitute it” (Franckel, 1983). Language activates a set of markers organized differently according to each of its various occurrences such as English and Japanese. Such markers can be analyzed as operators functioning as signals for a subject (the listener- (re) interpreter or “co-enunciator”) to perform in recognition operations carried out in production by another subject (the enunciator). Typically taking shape into the “closed system” of grammatical items but not exclusively, markers both represent traces of operations as well as orders to reactivate these operations. For instance, verb operators like BE or HAVE can be viewed as the traces of two complementary specifications, identification and differentiation respectively, of a same locating operation. One of the main difficulties when analyzing a marker is to isolate its general invariant function (one or a set of operations) from all its specifications observed through its various concrete uses.
and to describe its scope of application in combination with other markers that set up its different specifications. However, we believe that the goal of any linguistic description should precisely be extracting a unity in the diversity and explaining how once discriminated functions can be strung together.

Such procedure can be considered as inverse to the classificatory approach particular to dictionaries and also commonly found in conventional grammar books. The approach they reflect leads to a kind of subdivision of meanings assigned to a given word after removal of the context and the conditions of communication that enable them to generate these meanings. Each is then defined and characterized by more or less approximation with such and such possible meanings of another word or expression belonging or not to the same tongue according to the purpose, without any mention or explanation on the conditions required for obtaining such equivalence. As a result of such treatment, each lexical entry appears like a set of semantically heterogeneous items integrating both the meaning specific to the word considered and the properties of sentences or larger contexts without any possible dissociation between them.

Our approach, on the contrary, aims at establishing this disconnection. By analyzing the constraints acting on and by the functional features of the operator studied, a general characterization can be progressively extracted. As a consequence, classes of context determined by the specifications they bring on the invariant value can then be established.

From this prospect, the study introduced below about HAVE, can be considered as a partial illustration of such approach. Since it starts from a hypothesis on the invariant value of HAVE, the main purpose will not be to isolate this basic value but to show that the different uses of HAVE can be fully explained as local specifications of this value due to its composition with properties belonging to the context. In other words, the study will be also a manner to validate in contrario, the hypothesis that an invariant value lays beyond the various occurrences of HAVE.

II. HAVE AS A LOCATING OPERATOR

HAVE appears in so many contexts that it seems to be difficult, at first sight, to find what is the connection between all its uses.

We will attempt to demonstrate that HAVE is the marker of one fundamental value, locating operation, and that the different interpretations of sentences are due only to the type of context: type of the subject \((C_s)^e\), complements \((C_l)\), postposed clauses, etc...

**LOCATING OPERATION**

We speak of locating operation when a term X is located in relation with a reference term Y in such a manner that one determines the other and provides it a value due to its relation with it.

If Y is said to be located in relation to X (which will then be the locating term), Y can thus be considered as being defined or determined by its preferred relation with X. This locating operation can be of two kinds: identification between Y and X or differentiation between Y and X.

When comparing the two sentences:

(1) *This bird is a budgerigar*
(2) *Mary has a budgerigar*

it will be said that in sentence (1), there is identification (a bird, as belonging to the class of budgerigars, to be identified to one "that is budgerigar"); in sentence (2) with a locating relation such that *budgerigar* is different from *Mary* but specified in relation to *Mary*, we can observe what in daily
language is called possession. This term will be discussed further. We can also notice that BE and HAVE are (but not solely*) preferred markers of the locating operation, given that there is inversion between sentence (1) and sentence (2) that constitutes HAVE as the inverse or dual locating operator of BE.

**TYPES OF SENTENCES WITH HAVE**

We will now examine a set of sentences, each illustrating what is acknowledged as a specific value of HAVE. Consider the following sentences:

(3) I have a budgerigar
(4) He has brown eyes
(5) He has a cold
(6) He's having a fight
(7) I had my friend repair my television
(8) I have a cockroach on my foot
(9) I had my car break down
(10) We don't have families like that anymore nowadays.
(11) I had the baby crying all night
(12) I have work to do
(13) I have to work hard
(14) Mary has studied hard

We will see that HAVE is used to locate an element of the sentence in relation to the subject (C₀) and that the value of the sentence comes from the nature of the terms pre-and postposed to HAVE.

**VALUE OF POSSESSION AND PROPERTY**

Sentences (3), (4), and (5) are the classic examples where HAVE has always been identified as a lexical verb. They are also those where the locating value of HAVE is mentioned least often. Locating of the complements (C₁) budgerigar, brown eyes and cold in relation to the C₀ I, he, and he can, however, be clearly observed. The terms in C₁ position are defined, i.e. located in relation to the terms filling the C₀ position. Therefore, these sentences enable a derivation of a budgerigar to my budgerigar, of brown eyes to his brown eyes and of a cold to his cold.

It should, however, be noted that if HAVE indicates a locating relation in each of these sentences, this relation* acquires different specifications:

- in (3), *I have a budgerigar*, there is a relation of possession. To have this value, the C₀ requires to be animate (*this budgerigar has a big cage* may be another option, but with *this table has three legs* there would not be possession but a property) and the complement to be alienable (the possessor can part with the object represented by the C₁, sell or give it, etc):
  - in (4), *He has brown eyes*,
  - in (5) *He has a cold*,

the possessor is not involved in the acquisition of the object represented by the C₁ and cannot exert any direct action on it. Here appears a relation of property with the meaning of characteristics. This can be a permanent property, as in (4), which can be glossed *he is brown-eyed*, or non permanent as in (5). An important condition for having a property is that the C₁ is inalienable.

When there is a relation of permanent property, the following phenomena can be observed:

One can have  

men have eyes  
men have two eyes
but not ............  *men have brown eyes

One can have  
a man has eyes  
a man has two eyes
but not ............  *a man has brown eyes  

When the C₀ refers to a class (MEN, A MAN), the C₁ cannot indicate a differential (or specific) property such as brown eyes above.

In the same manner, for any strongly determined C₀, *this man*, the C₁ requires to be submitted to a qualification being differential in relation to the class to which C₀
belongs: *this man has eyes* does not mean much since "all men have eyes" unlike *this man has brown eyes* (or *black eyes* or *only one eye*).

Note that in the three sentences (3), (4), (5) considered above, there is a stative relation, i.e. what is equivalent to a stative process, where the Co is the recipient and not the agent, with all the properties of stative processes (such as incompatibility with the BE-ING form and the imperative modality).

**HAVE + NOMINALIZED PREDICATE**

Sentence (6) *He’s having a fight* contrasts with the above sentences by denoting a dynamic and not a stative process. As a consequence, the BE-ING form is compatible. HAVE can be seen here as a dynamic verb referring to a process in progress where the beginning and the end can be considered. This comes from the fact that the Co is an animate able to fill the agenteive position and that the Ci is a nominalized predicate denoting a process (*TO FIGHT*) located in relation to the Co. HAVE is a locating operator but establishing a relation between a process and its agent. It thus appears again that the meaning of this sentence with HAVE is determined by the nature of the Ci. HAVE is here the verbal support filling the role of predicate for the underlying process: A FIGHT.

The Co animate + HAVE + nominalized predicate construction occurs in contemporary English very often. Expressions formed accordingly behave like the verbs underlying these nominalized predicates as shown in the following examples: to have a laugh, a go, a try, a bath, lunch, breakfast, a good cry, etc...

Note that if the verb underlying a nominalized predicate is a stative verb and not a dynamic verb (a verb denoting an action), the expression with HAVE remains a stative relation and enters the category of sentences indicating a non permanent property such as in the following example: *He has no desire.*

**HAVE IN A CAUSATIVE SCHEME OR AS OPERATOR OF thematization**

Sentence (7), *I had my friend repair my television*, represents a different issue. What is located in relation to the Co, is the relation *<MY FRIEND REPAIR MY TELEVISION>*. This sentence can be interpreted as:

(a) *I asked (or ordered, etc.) my friend to repair my television*, or as

(b) *My friend repaired my television for me*.

If the interpretation corresponds to (a), (7) falls into the category of sentences commonly called causative sentences. Such interpretation is possible only if the Co and Ci are both animate being able to play the role of agents. The Co occupies the position of initiator for the process *repaired*, while the Ci is its real agent. This causative value is not included in HAVE itself, but in the preferred relation between the Co and the Ci (one being the instigator and the other the executor).

However, the presence of these two agents does not activate a causative value automatically. This presence is a necessary but not sufficient condition. The actual situation between the individuals denoted by the Co and Ci decides the orientation of the interpretation, causative or non causative. In other words, the context plays a crucial role in the interpretation of the sentence in accordance with what has been stressed in the introduction.

Although both Co and Ci can be agents, the reason why (7) can be glossed as (b) *My friend repaired my television for me*, relies on the fact that the Co cannot be the instigator but the beneficiary. In this case, the
relation which appears is not of causative type but a relation that we will call "thematization". The operation of thematization will be described in detail below.

Note that by substituting my friend, which makes the value of the relation in the sentence ambiguous, by Smith and Sons (the name of a repair service company), only the causative value is filtered. This demonstrates how the sociocultural environment can be crucial in the interpretation of a sentence.

The following sentences clearly show that the causative interpretation is uncertain:

(7a) I had my sister on the phone this evening
(7b) I had my sister call me on the phone this morning
(7c) I had the receptionist call me at 6 a.m.
(7d) To have P. Eakins call you on the phone was like having the President ask you to tea at the White House.

Note that under the passive orientation, sentence (7') I had my television repaired does not specify the features of the agent so that we cannot clearly decide between the causative or the thematization scheme. In all sentences of the same kind where the agent is not expressed, there is ambiguity. It should be noted that in traditional grammar books with sentences like I had my shoes repaired or I had a house built when speaking about causative HAVE, the situation involved by the meaning of words removes the ambiguity and only gives place to the causative value. Furthermore, sentence (7'') I had my car stolen is compatible with the two interpretations according to the situation it is pronounced: causative (I have arranged the steal) or thematization (here is what happened to me).

THEMATIZATION

Consider the following sentences:

(8) I have a cockroach on my foot
(9) I had my car break down
(10) We don't have families like that anymore nowadays
(11) I had the baby crying all night
(12) I have work to do
(13) I have to work hard

As in previous examples with HAVE, we can confirm the presence of a C0 functioning as locating term for the C1 or the predicative relation that follows.

In sentence (8), the value is neither possession nor property. What is located in relation to I is cockroach on my foot. The sentence can be glossed such as (8') There is a cockroach on my foot. The difference between (8) and (8') relies on the fact that the starting point for sentence (8) is I. This term, which here represents the enunciator, is thematized. Such thematization is made possible due to the presence of this underlying I in the possessive pronoun my in my foot. A sentence such as There are cockroaches under the box over there could not be thematized by I.

In sentence (9), I had my car break down, the non-animate feature of the C1 blocks the causative interpretation as it is not compatible with the function of agent. Sentence (9) is a different manner to express sentence (9') My car broke down. Here it can be noted that in the same manner as the previous sentence, the subjacent I in the pronoun my in my car is taken as the starting point for sentence (9): I has been thematized.

In English, this thematization process is activated very frequently, which consists in taking as the starting point of the sentence, not the C0 of the verb, but either the enunciator or any other element to be highlighted. The same operation can also be seen in French for instance: "J'ai mes
enfants à déjeuner samedi" (I have my kids for lunch on Saturday), "J'ai ma voiture qui est de nouveau en panne" (I have my car break down again), etc...

In sentence (10), *We don't have families like that anymore*, the reference time from which the whole sentence is located, *We*, is not underlying a possessive pronoun expressed in the sentence but an implicit context in our country or in our civilization, etc.) referring to the situation of enunciation. Without thematization, the sentence would have been centered on this situation with THERE ARE.

It should be mentioned that various factors can play the role of filter to give prominence to this value of thematization. For instance, sentence (10') *I'd rather have Mary do it*, will tend to be interpreted as *I'd rather see Mary do it* likely due to the modality WOULD-RATHER underscoring the beneficiary. However, in a context where the matter is obviously to ask somebody to do something, the causative interpretation does not make any problem: *I'd rather have Mary do it because Kenny would mess it all.*

More markedly, sentence (10") *I'd rather have them win*, represents a case where the value of thematization is almost the only one possible: "I'd rather see them win". This is due to the type of process represented by *win*: I can hardly be considered as activating WIN. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that in a particular situation where an author speaking about his characters would say: *I'd rather have them win*, the causative interpretation seems to be possible according to our informants, though a sentence such as *I'd rather get them to win* would sound more natural. This is consistent with our remarks on how such sentences are ambiguous as we have already mentioned when introducing the causative schemes.

When sentence (11) is considered, it appears that the ING form blocks the causative interpretation despite the fact that both C and C are animate and so compatible with the position of agent.

Sentence (11) could be glossed as *I had the following situation: the baby cried all night* where ING clearly participates to the (re)construction of a situation to be located as a whole in relation to the C. We can recognize here, at the level of locating relations between situations (here situation of enunciation and situation in which the relation <BABY-CRY> has been validated (considered as true) by the enunciator), what we have mentioned at the beginning of the article: HAVE establishes a locating relation between two different situations. The analysis should be carried on with but this would go beyond the scope of this article. We will only point out that *I have the baby crying*... sounds odd and that BE is more likely to occur: *the baby is crying*; on the other hand, *I'll have the baby crying all night if I don't give it its teddy bear* is fully acceptable.

In sentences (12) *I have work to do* and (13) *I have to work hard*, the operation of thematization can be observed again. In both cases, HAVE carries out a locating operation on a predicative relation (that we will represent roughly as <X, DO, WORK> in relation to a preferred term (here, the enunciator). More concretely, this means that:

1)the elements put into relation are of different nature (operation of differentiation between a term on one hand and a predicative relation on the other hand);

2)these elements are located on two different planes: one for the reference term I corresponding to the actual plane where the enunciator is anchored; the other locating the incomplete predicative relation (the agent being not specified) which validation
is the object of an aim (as marked by TO) carried out by the enunciator that constitutes it as a fictive modal plane; and 3) the term \( I \) selected as the reference point for the locating operation marked by HAVE is positioned less as the agent, origin of the predicative relation, than a preferred support for, but external to, this relation. These three arguments can be confirmed in glosses provided for HAVE TO compared with MUST: it is always specified that the enunciator is less expected to take responsibility for the obligation hanging over the subject of the sentence than taking over an "external and factual" obligation. It can also be observed that obligation here is a secondary phenomenon originated by a specific locating relation in combination with the relation between the enunciator and the co-enunciator. In this extent, HAVE TO is not more modal than it was causative in sentences like (7). The modal value depends on other factors (TO in particular) showing the process as "pending".

We still have to provide a few comments about the difference between (12) I have work to do and (13) I have to work hard. It is interesting to note that on one hand, our informants have not seen significant differences between the two sentences and that on the other hand, grammar books mainly describe HAVE TO as a quasi-modality equivalent to MUST and do not make any mention about sentence (12).

It should be emphasized that the difference between (12) and (13) depends on a different thematization within the incomplete predicative relation <X, DO, WORK>; in (12), the potential agent being not specified, the C, (WORK) is selected as the support for thematization without generating any change in the orientation of the predicate\(^6\). The surface sentence highlights the term WORK, located in relation to a possible agent \( I \), to the detriment of the predicate at which aim is rejected to the backside (unlike (13) I have to..., where the modal interpretation was preferred).

Lastly, it will be noted that once the locating relation (and consequently selection of a potential agent) has been established, the predicate cannot carry the trace of a change in orientation (active \( \rightarrow \) passive) any more so that * I have work to be done becomes impossible. This is due to the fact that the sentence would suggest that a determined agent (by someone who is not anyone) has been selected, which is contradictory with the type of the predicative relation considered. However, in a different context if the theme is obviously not the same as the implied agent, a passive form can be found (12') I have a chair to be repaired; the same observation can be made if the locating operation is carried out in relation to the situation\(^10\) and not in relation to an animate (12") There is work to be done.

**HAVE AS AUXILIARY**

Let us now consider sentence (14) Mary has studied hard. We will not analyze the issue of aspect arising with this "present perfect" in detail. We will only complete the table of values taken by HAVE with some remarks staying within the scope of this article.

Here HAVE is what is agreed to be called an auxiliary. However, the locating operation is still present even if it is found at an abstract level with only a very loose connection with what has been told about the first mentioned examples. What is located in relation to the C, is again a process work hard, but this time introduced as accomplished (which naturally does not always mean "achieved" as it depends on the type of process and the time markers). The
difference between the two terms located by HAVE as mentioned above thus occurs between (1) a past situation reconstructed by inferential relation from a present situation which has first been noticed by the enunciator and (2) this present situation. When not previously introduced by the context, this second situation can, for instance, be expressed by *Her report is completely finished* coming after (14). Once again, the Co Mary, as being related to the present situation, becomes the reference point from which the enunciator takes position to consider the process *work hard*. This "present" locating operation carried out by HAVE is clearly reflected by the tense.

It is interesting to note that in (14) *Mary has worked hard* as well as in (14’) *Mary is working hard*, Mary is both the subject of the process *work hard* and the starting point of the sentence. However, in the case of *is working*, the aspect is open (unaccomplished, i.e. a process which has not reached its last point), whereas in *has studied* the process is closed (accomplished). This change in aspect results in an inversion of the BE operator into HAVE.

Another factor of inversion has been examined when considering sentence (7) *I had my friend repair my television*: it was the change in thematization. In the sentence *my friend repaired my television* or *my friend was repairing my television*, the starting point of the sentence is the same as the starting point of the predicative relation, i.e. the Co of the verb. In sentence (7), on the contrary, the Co of *repair* is not the starting point of the sentence: *my friend ≠ I*, so that inversion occurs from BE into HAVE.

We will finish with a few comments about the case of HAVE GOT met in competition with HAVE (example: *He has got a car*). At the end of this article, we see that HAVE can be analyzed here as an auxiliary marking a relation of aspectual kind reflecting the history of an "acquisition process" (get) that has reached its resulting state. It is also possible to only consider what HAVE GOT has become now: the marker of a locating operation in relation to the Co where GOT has lost its original meaning so that HAVE is given the opportunity to express a relation of possession between a "possessed" object and a "possessor".

**CONCLUSION**

The construction of a locating relation between two different terms with one in Co position constituting the starting point (reference term) of the relation appears to be the common denominator of HAVE as a locating operator. This mechanism clearly appears with the thematization process; it also underlies the causative scheme, modal HAVE TO, and the present perfect where beyond their respective specific values always appears a Co both external to the process it locates but involved in its construction. The analysis should, however, be carried on further. Comparison between modal HAVE TO and IS TO on one side and the progressive and present perfect forms on the other side also requires to be conducted for a deeper understanding of the functioning of HAVE in the modal and aspectual fields respectively.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this study on HAVE was first to show how this verb operator can be analyzed as the marker of an invariant operation acting in combination with other operations specified by its context and the situation of enunciation to generate the different local values observed on the surface. More basically, the aim was finally to invite teachers and advanced learners of English or other foreign languages to consider and develop an approach of language going beyond the
conventional separation arbitrarily made between morphology, syntax, semantic and lexicon and rejecting taxonomic and surface descriptions.

This expectation is based on the strong belief that anyone in a learning or teaching position can strongly benefit of such approach without being constrained to deeply assimilate the conceptual tools and procedures of manipulation of sentences developed within the scope of linguistics. It is indeed common sense that any significant progress in the search for an operative concept able to properly reflect the invariant meaning of a word or an expression and explain (predict) its various uses requires a qualitative leap in the process of abstraction of factual phenomena. No doubt it would be helpful for anyone to acquire a minimum of analytic tools as developed by linguistics for that purpose. An example among others can be given: the crucial concept of thematization. Training students to recognize the starting point of a sentence does not represent a serious technical problem. Nor providing them a better understanding of the categories of aspect and modality so poorly described in grammar books (a rapid survey shows, for instance, that the modal category of certain/uncertain is completely ignored by most students, which is not surprising since they are still taught, for instance, that WILL expresses by itself "a future event").

Nevertheless, however necessary a formal apparatus may be in the description of languages for learning purposes, there is more basically the need for a methodological approach that does not reduce them to a collection of sentence patterns isolated from their conditions of occurrence; and of lexical and grammar items that do not split their meaning into a collection of polysemic items which, it must be said, never covers all their potential specifications. Since
dictionaries and grammar books in their usual forms are still inevitable, the minimum approach would be first to be clearly aware of their limits and also, through appropriate exercises, to attempt to restore what they have erased and complete what they have omitted: for instance, any description of a linguistic form should be made under explicit context for a better understanding of its conditions of use. No doubt it would be far more useful in terms of learning efficiency than all the mechanical drills forcing students to treat sentences like objects of puzzle games.

In addition, students should be clearly invited to have a criticizing view of the divisions made by dictionaries and grammar books on the scope of use of grammatical and lexical items: there is no fixed knowledge, particularly in the field of grammar. They should also be encouraged to reassemble the numerous values once labeled by means of approximate "synonyms" into fewer categories of meaning. In most cases, the reunification process can be carried out significantly using few conceptual tools regarding how dictionaries, in particular, can splinter the basic meaning of a word into a number of values without clear specification of the criteria used for this purpose. In addition to a comparison between these values aiming at extracting their common and specific properties, this can be conducted through comparison of forms viewed as synonyms within the same language or not: is it necessary to stress that the translation/interpretation activity constitutes another proper tool, providing that it is used as an opportunity for comparative study between synonyms?

Anybody can notice when submitting Japanese students to translation drills, that most of them see HAVE as an equivalent form for "MOTTE-IRU" despite a significant number of years spent in coping
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with English. We believe this constitutes by itself a good reflection of what a mechanical description of language may lead to: a fragmented knowledge. The present article can be viewed as an attempt to introduce an approach that may contribute to remedy to this situation or, at least, to help students at being aware of a fact of which proper understanding would likely initiate the conditions for significant improvement in their learning process: the wonderful property of the formal system of representation and referenciation shown by languages consisting in a prodigious economy of means for an infinite variation of use.

NOTES

* Part-time instructor, French Department, Faculty of Education, Nagasaki University
- JE-EJ Translator

1) The theoretical concepts we are using have been borrowed from the formal system of the enunciation-predication theory developed by A. Culioli (for more detail, refer to the reference list). However, our aim is not to summarize or even illustrate the theory itself but to highlight one of its methodological characteristics of great significance in the field of foreign language education: rejecting labels produced by approximate classification for a transcategorial approach aiming at describing language in terms of a system of operations with the purpose of simulating its activity.

2) The C_i or zero-rank complement corresponds to the grammatical subject. Note that the expression of "subject" is ambiguous. It may refer as well to the enunciator as the subject of the sentence. Complements are designated according to their order of appearance in the predicative relation, C_i (object), C_j (attribute).

3) The locating operation can be expressed by other markers. For example, in the sentence Mary's budgerigar is on my desk, "S plays the role of a locating operator. Mary ≠ budgerigar and budgerigar is located in relation to Mary.

4) The locating relation shall be understood as an abstract relation and not necessarily as a spatial relation.

5) In a simplified manner, we will call "nominalized predicate", any noun generated by nominalization of a verb, an adjective or even a whole sentence: a fight (to fight); a try (to try); whiteness (white); my life in Nagasaki (I live in Nagasaki).

6) Predicate: here a verb with its function of "realtor", i.e. tool used to relate the terms selected for the construction of a sentence (see note 8).

7) A verb always refers to a process. (Very) roughly, two basic types of process can be distinguished: stative processes, which have no progression; and dynamic processes, which have a progression.

8) This relation is called "predicative relation" as it refers to the construction of a relation between a term (noun), FRIEND and a predicate <REPAIR-TELEVISION>. In a broad meaning, "predicate" refers to the verb and its complements. In a narrow meaning, "predicate" only refers to the verb, which is the relator used to relate two terms, here FRIEND and TELEVISION. According to the starting term selected, the predicative relation will have an active or a passive orientation. For example, when the starting term coincides with the agent at the origin of the process, the orientation will be active giving what is commonly described as "active voice".

The predicative relation is the first step in the construction of a sentence, prior to any operation of determination: selection
of a time reference and aspect for the predicative relation, selection of a determiner for nouns, etc. These operations of determination, which allow the terms to be located in relation to the situation of enunciation defined by the subject and the time of enunciation, are called enunciative operations. The final surface sentence results from these operations.

Note: For more convenience, MY has been kept before the nouns. This does not affect our argumentation.

9) This change in orientation for the relation should normally result in a change in voice so as to generate a passive form be done. This can be found for example with There is work to be done which competes with There is work to do. The impossible change in voice may be explained by the fact that in our example I have work to do, the subject of the infinitive is "pending" so that the orientation of the predicate would be neutralized.

10) The situation of enunciation with THERE as the representative term would then be thematized.

REFERENCES

IN ENGLISH


IN FRENCH


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