

**Two Types of Double Object Constructions in English:
An Explication of Oehrle's (1976) Observation**

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Abstract

This paper argues that there are two types of double object constructions (DOCs) in English: one is the DOC counterpart of the possessive *have* construction, and the other is the DOC counterpart of the existential *have* construction. Certain characteristics of the two *have* constructions are inherited to the two corresponding types of DOCs. By acknowledging the existence of the two distinct types of DOCs in English, we can finally account for not only some of the data of the DOC given in the literature but also the observations made by Oehrle (1976), which seem to have been somewhat overlooked.

1. Introduction

The double object construction (DOC), as exemplified in (1), has been examined by various researchers in several different theoretical frameworks (Green (1974), Oehrle (1976), Larson (1988, 1990), Pinker (1989), Jackendoff (1990), Goldberg (1992, 1995), Harley (2003), Beck and Johnson (2004), Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2008), to name a few).

- (1) Mike gave Mary a book.

It has sometimes been argued that the relation between the indirect and direct objects of the DOC denotes a similar relation to that denoted by the relation between the subject and object of *have* sentences such as (2) (e.g. Green (1974), Ross (1976), Pinker (1989), Harley (2003), Beck and Johnson (2004)):

- (2) Mary has a book.

Taking (1) for example, the giving event initiated by Mike resulted in Mary having a book.

However, as far as I know it has not been pointed out that, in accordance with there being

two different *have* constructions in English, there are two different types of DOCs. Examples of the two different *have* constructions are given below:

- (3) a. She has a child.
 b. He_i has a hole in his_i shoe.

Sentence (3a) is an instance of the possessive *have* construction, and sentence (3b) is an example of the existential *have* construction. The former denotes a situation where the subject referent has a child of her own, and the latter refers to a situation where there is a hole in a shoe that the subject referent wears. Examples of the two types of DOCs are given below:

- (4) a. Providence gave Mike a child.
 b. % This gave Mike_i several more people at his_i disposal.

Sentence (4a) instantiates the possessive type of the DOC, and sentence (4b) instantiates the existential type.¹ The former denotes a situation in which the person named Mike got a child of his own because of the protective care of God; the latter denotes a situation where the person named Mike came to be able to use several more people for certain purposes because of the entity or event denoted by the subject referent. Sentence (4a) is the DOC counterpart of the possessive *have* construction, and sentence (4b) is the DOC counterpart of the existential *have* construction. Certain characteristics of the two different *have* constructions to be clarified below are inherited to the corresponding types of DOCs. It is not until the distinction between the two different types of DOCs is made explicit that some of the data of the DOC presented in the literature can be properly understood. For example, the existential type of the DOC is actually instantiated by sentences like those in (5), which will be clear from the discussion in the subsequent sections.

- (5) a. I gave Ted my keys until tomorrow. (Ross (1976: 267))
 b. I gave John my bicycle for the afternoon. (Oehrle (1976: 22))

Furthermore, the assumption of the distinction enables us to account for the observations made by Oehrle (1976), which, despite the abundance of studies on the DOC, seem to have

¹ Some English native speakers find acceptable examples of the existential type of the DOC like (4b), while others do not. The % in front of the sentence in (4b) reflects this variability in judgments. This marker is employed throughout this paper.

been somewhat overlooked. Oehrle (1976: 19) notes that the instance of the DOC in (6a) has two interpretations given in (6b):²

- (6) a. Nixon gave Mailer a book. (Oehrle (1976: 19))
b. On reading (i), [6a] asserts that the ownership of the book passed from Nixon to Mailer; on reading (ii), [6a] is compatible with **a situation in which Nixon merely handed the book to Mailer, and questions of ownership are simply irrelevant.** (Oehrle (1976: 19), with modifications, bold mine)

In our framework, reading (i) of sentence (6a) is an instance of the possessive type of the DOC, and reading (ii) is an example of the existential type. It should be emphasized here that the existential type does not involve the relation of ownership between the indirect object and direct object arguments.

One possible implication of the discussion here will be that the distinction between the two types of DOCs must be taken into account, regardless of the difference in theoretical framework employed, in hypothesizing the representation(s) of the DOC.

This paper is organized as follows: section 2 overviews the possessive and existential *have* constructions in English. Section 3 points out the existence of the corresponding types of DOCs. Section 4 gives concluding remarks.

2. Possessive and existential *have* constructions

This section introduces the possessive and existential *have* constructions. Both constructions demonstrate the referential dependency of one argument upon the subject argument. The possessive *have* construction exhibits a referential dependency of the object argument on the subject argument (Takeuchi (2013)); on the other hand, the existential *have* construction demonstrates the same kind of dependency between the complement of the preposition and the subject argument (e.g. Nakau (1991), Harley (1998)).

The object argument of the possessive *have* construction is referentially dependent on the subject argument (Takeuchi (2013)). For example, the sentences in (7), with universal quantifiers in the subject positions, exhibit this dependency clearly. Consider (7):

- (7) a. Everyone has a house.

² Oehrle (1976: 19) gives another interpretation of sentence (6a). He notes that “[6a] is compatible with a situation in which Mailer wrote a book which he wouldn’t have been able to write if it hadn’t been for Nixon.” This interpretation is not dealt with in this paper due to the limitation of space, although sentence (6a) on this reading can be considered to be an instance of the possessive type of the DOC (cf. Takeuchi (2015)).

- b. Everyone has a wife.

That is to say, each member of the set denoted by the quantifier has a house or wife different from any other member's in the same set; the values of the direct objects covary with the values of the subjects.

Note that the referential dependency is *not* observed in sentences with verbs like *know*. Observe (8):

- (8) Everyone knows a {house / wife}.

The sentence in (8) does *not* refer to situations where each member of the set denoted by the quantifier knows a house or wife of his or her own. In fact, English native speakers find it rather difficult to interpret sentence (8). The data in (7) and (8) indicate that the possessive *have* construction is associated with the referential dependency of one element on another.

By hypothesizing the referential dependency in the possessive *have* construction, we can account for the fact that the possessive *have* construction exhibits the definiteness restriction, a restriction against definite NPs in the object position of the construction (Costa (1974), Heine (1997), Tham (2006), among others). Observe (9):

- (9) a. Judy has {a / *the} car. (Heine (1997: 35), asterisk added by the author)
 b. John has {a / *the} wife. (cf. Tham (2006: 137))

The definite articles in the object NPs of the sentences in (9) hinder the references of the NPs from being fixed in terms of the references of the subjects, since the definite articles in this particular position cannot refer back to the subject referents (cf. Guéron (2003: 212-213)).^{3, 4}

The complement of the preposition of the existential *have* construction is referentially dependent on the subject argument. This dependency is clearly observed in the sentences in (10), where there are universal quantifiers in the subject positions:

- (10) a. Everyone_i has your name on his_i hat.
 b. Everyone_i has Colin Powell at his_i disposal.

³ Harley (2004: 259) notes that Jacqueline Guéron (p.c.) also observes the definiteness restriction demonstrated by the possessive *have* construction.

⁴ The definiteness restriction exhibited by the possessive *have* construction does not seem to be inherited to its counterpart of the DOC for reasons currently unknown.

Each member of the set denoted by the quantifier in (10a) has someone else's name (written) on his hat; similarly, each member of the set denoted by the quantifier in (10b) can ask Colin Powell to do almost anything for them. For example, each member can have him go wherever they want him to go. Both these cases exhibit the covariation of the value of the complement of the preposition with the value of the subject.

The referential dependency in question is also illustrated by the following data:

- (11) She has a hole in {her_i / *his} shirt. (cf. Nakau (1991: 341))

As is clear in (11), when the PP contains a pronoun, the pronoun must refer back to the subject.

The referential dependency is *not* observed between the complement of the preposition and the subject argument in sentences with verbs like *put*. Consider (12):

- (12) She_i put a magazine on {her_i / his / their} sofa.

What seems to be at issue here is the lexical meaning of the verb appearing in this sentence, namely *put*. The person who does the act of putting and the place where something is put do not need to be referentially dependent upon each other; in other words, the reference of a place where something is put does not need to be determined in relation to the reference of a person who puts it there. The facts illustrated in (11) and (12) indicate that the existential *have* construction is associated with the referential dependency of one element on another.

There is no relation of so-called ownership between the subject and (surface) object arguments of the existential *have* construction. For example, sentence (11) describes a situation where there is a hole in a shirt worn by the subject referent, not a situation where the subject referent owns a hole and it is in a shirt. This is illustrated by the diagnostics presented in Takeuchi (2010). Consider (13):

- (13) a. There is a hole in her shirt.
b. * Her_i hole is in her_i shirt.

Sentence (11) can be paraphrased as sentence (13a), not as sentence (13b). The marker in front of sentence (13b) indicates that the sentence cannot function as a paraphrase of sentence (11).

The classification between possessive and existential constructions is supported by the

following data:⁵

- (14) a. * He has a house for the day.
 b. * He has a wife for the day.
- (15) a. He_i has a bag on his_i back for the day.
 b. The table_i has a lamp on it_i for the day.

As illustrated in (14) and (15), expressions such as *for the day* can co-occur only with the existential construction. The fact that expressions denoting limited duration cannot easily occur in the possessive construction indicates that the construction expresses a rather atemporal relation between the subject and object arguments. On the other hand, the data in (15) indicate that the existential construction expresses a spatio-temporally limited relation between the subject argument and the situation denoted by the elements following *have*. Sentence (15a) denotes a relation between the subject referent and there being a bag on his back, and sentence (15b) refers to a relation between the subject referent and there being a lamp on the top of it. These spatial relations can easily be bounded.

Last but not least, the PP of the existential construction of *have* can be omitted. As observed by Costa (1974), certain *have* sentences can instantiate the existential construction even though there is no PP appearing in surface structure. For example, Costa (1974) gives an example where the PP is omitted for contextual reasons. Consider (16):

- (16) A: Hey, something's tickling my nose – do I have something **up my nose**?
 B: You have a fly, believe it or not. (Costa (1974: 17), bold mine)
- (17) You have a fly up your nose.

The PP of the *have* sentence uttered by Speaker B in (16) is introduced in the previous sentence uttered by Speaker A and thus is omitted in sentence B. The *have* sentence in (16B) is actually the *have* sentence in (17). This fact will be of use in the following section.

⁵ Sentence (14a) is acceptable in a situation where the subject referent has rented a house for special purposes (e.g. for a special party) for a day or two. In this interpretation, no definiteness restriction can be observed, as illustrated in (i), indicating that a *have* sentence with this interpretation does not instantiate the possessive *have* construction.

(i) Mike has {Mary's / the} house for the upcoming party.

3. Possessive and existential types of DOCs

This section points out the existence of two types of DOCs: the possessive and existential types. They correspond to the possessive and existential *have* constructions, respectively. The direct object argument of the possessive type of the DOC is referentially dependent on the indirect object argument; on the other hand, the complement of the preposition of the existential type of the DOC is referentially dependent on the indirect object argument. It is not until the distinction between the two types of DOCs is made explicit that one can provide a proper explanation for some of the data of the DOC given in the literature.

Instances of the possessive type of the DOC are given in (18):

- (18) a. Providence gave him a {house / wife}.
b. Providence gave everyone a {house / wife}.

The direct object argument in sentence (18a) is referentially dependent upon the indirect object argument; that is to say, after the giving event the indirect object referent got a house or wife of his own. This dependency is more clearly observed in sentence (18b), where there is a universal quantifier in the indirect object position. In this case, each member of the set denoted by the quantifier had or got a house or wife different from any other member's in the same set; sentence (18b) exhibits the covariation of the value of the direct object with the value of the indirect object.

By assuming the referential dependency of the direct object argument upon the indirect object argument, we can provide an explanation for a brief observation made by Harley (2003). She observes that the DOC in (19) can express the idea that John impregnated Mary; that is, Mary got her own child:

- (19) John gave Mary a child. (Harley (2003: 42))

In the present framework, the DOC in (19) instantiates the possessive type; that is to say, the reference of the direct object argument is determined in relation to the reference of the indirect object argument. Therefore, the child in question is interpreted as Mary's child; the referential dependency gives birth to the interpretation made by Harley.

Let us move on to the discussion on the existential type of the DOC. Instances of this type are given in (20):

- (20) a. % This gave him_i several more people at his_i disposal.
b. % Julia turned to Grace_i and handed her_i the small package in her_i hand.

(*The Courtship of the Vicar's Daughter*)

- c. % They handed her_i the paper in her_i hand. She_i was so amazed.

(*Short Stories for the Young and Old at Heart*)

This type demonstrates the referential dependency of an element within the complement of the preposition upon the indirect object argument. Consider (21):

- (21) a. * This gave **him** several more people at **her** disposal.
 b. * Julia turned to Grace_i and handed **her**_i the small package in **his** hand.
 c. * They handed **her** the paper in **his** hand.

As illustrated in (20) and (21), the pronouns in the PPs must refer back to the referents of the indirect objects; in (20), the pronouns *his* and *her* in the PPs function as formal bound variables.

The referential dependency in the existential type of the DOC is more clearly observed in sentence (22), with a universal quantifier in the indirect object position:

- (22) % This gave everyone_i Colin Powell at his_i disposal.

In this case, the person named Colin Powell was available to each member of the set denoted by the quantifier. The value of the complement of the preposition covaries with the value of the indirect object; the pronoun *his* in the PP in (22) as well functions as a formal bound variable.

The possessive type of the DOC is the DOC counterpart of the possessive *have* construction; the existential type is the DOC counterpart of the existential *have* construction. This classification is supported by the following data:

- (23) a. * Providence gave them a daughter for the day.
 b. * Mary_i's long prayers gave her_i a child for the weekend.

As is the relation between the subject and object arguments of the possessive *have* construction, the relation between the indirect object and direct object arguments of the possessive type of the DOC is rather atemporal. This is illustrated by the sentences in (23), where expressions delimiting the relation such as *for the day* and *for the weekend* cannot occur.

As is the relation between the subject and the situation denoted by the elements following *have* in the existential *have* construction, the existential type of the DOC expresses a spatio-temporally limited relation between the indirect object and the situation denoted by the elements following it. This is confirmed by the fact that the relation can easily be bounded by expressions denoting limited duration. Consider (24):

- (24) % This gave Mike_i several more people at his_i disposal for the weekend.

Expressions such as *for the weekend* can co-occur with this type of the DOC. Sentence (24) involves a situation where Mike came to be able to use a certain number of people for certain purposes because of the subject referent, and the situation is temporal and can thus easily be bounded.

The following kinds of data presented in the literature also instantiate the existential type:

- (25) a. I gave Ted my keys until tomorrow. (= (5a))
b. I gave John my bicycle for the afternoon. (= (5b))
c. Mary gave Bill the car until 3 o'clock (earlier this morning).
(Harley (2011: 444))

The PPs of the sentences in (25) are not realized in surface structure. Sentence (25a) denotes a situation where the person named Ted came to be able to use keys belonging to the subject referent until the following day; sentence (25b) refers to a situation where the person named John came to be able to use speaker's bike freely; sentence (25c) denotes a situation where the person named Bill came to be able to use the car in question until three o'clock because of the subject referent. The sentences in (25) all express situations that can be bounded, namely, the situations of an item or items belonging to the subject referent being available for another person to employ.

In cases like (25), it may be the case that the concept expressible by expressions like *at one's disposal* does not appear for contextual reasons. The PP of the existential type of the DOC may not be realized in surface structure, as is the case with the existential *have* construction exemplified in (26):

- (26) A: Hey, something's tickling my nose – do I have something **up my nose**?
B: You have a fly, believe it or not. (= (16))

The PP of the *have* sentence uttered by Speaker B in (26) is introduced in the previous sentence uttered by Speaker A and thus is omitted in sentence B.⁶

⁶ I leave for future research the clarification of the exact nature of the non-realization of the PP of the existential type of the DOC.

Now that we have argued for the existence of the two distinct types of DOCs, we can finally provide an explanation for the two interpretations of one instance of the DOC given by Oehrle (1976). Consider (6) again, repeated here as (27):

- (27) a. Nixon gave Mailer a book.
 b. On reading (i), [27a] asserts that the ownership of the book passed from Nixon to Mailer; on reading (ii), [27a] is compatible with **a situation in which Nixon merely handed the book to Mailer, and questions of ownership are simply irrelevant.**

Reading (i) instantiates the possessive type of the DOC, while reading (ii) instantiates the existential type, whose PP is not realized. Sentence (27a) on reading (ii) describes a situation where Nixon having handed the book to Mailer resulted in the book being available to Mailer for a certain amount of time. The two types can be disambiguated by the appearance of expressions like *until tomorrow*. Observe (28):

- (28) Nixon gave Mailer a book until tomorrow.

The sentence in (28) can only instantiate reading (ii), that is, the existential type.

Sentence (29) will be another example of the existential type of the DOC whose PP is not realized in surface structure:

- (29) Give me the salt, please.

Sentence (29) is an imperative sentence and can be uttered in a situation where the speaker wants the hearer to hand her the salt that is situated near the hearer. Since it is contextually evident, it will not be necessary in this case for the PP to be explicitly uttered. In imperatives sentences like (29) can occur expressions denoting limited duration. Consider (30):

- (30) Give me the car for the weekend.

The implication would be that the car in question will be given back to its owner after the weekend.

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued for the existence of the two distinct types of double object

constructions (DOCs): the possessive type and the existential type. The former corresponds to the possessive *have* construction, and the latter to the existential *have* construction. I have revealed that some examples of the DOC given in the literature in fact instantiate the existential type. This distinction must be taken into account regardless of the difference in theoretical framework in which the DOC is investigated.

Let me add, lastly, another possible example of the existential type of the DOC, which seems to be included in (31) (the bold part):

- (31) Although theoreticians at first felt rather uncomfortable with renormalization theory they began to accept it since **it gave them a tool at hand** by which they could make numerical predictions that were in astonishing agreement with experiment. (*Quantum Field Theory: Competitive Models*, bold mine)

In this case, the PP is realized as the expression *at hand*.

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