On Some Complex
Constructions in English

The English language like any other natural language has some syntactic structures that appear different on the surface but are similar in meaning. Take, for example, active and passive structures *Henry wrote this poem* and *This poem was written by Henry*. As is seen, the deep subject and the deep object remain the same even though the order of words is changed when the sentence is passivized. Conversely, sentences with similar surface structures can be quite different in semantics. Consider the following sentences:

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1. *He expected John to come.*
2. *He persuaded John to come.*
3. *He promised John to come.*

If we try to analyze these sentences by means of the distributional method, we will have the same pattern for all of them: NP::V::NP::V(inf). In spite of the similarity of their surface structures, however, these sentences are quite different as far as their deep structures are concerned. In sentences (1) and (2) we observe double predication:

He expected / He persuaded – nuclear predication
John to come – secondary predication.

Things are considerably different with sentence (3). While *John* in the first two sentences is the agent of the action expressed by the verb *come*, the same cannot be said about *John* in sentence (3). Here the actual agent of the verb *come* is

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he. So we can conclude that *he* is the agent of both the verbs *promise* and *come*. Here we deal with the so called 'erasure principle' proposed by S. Rosenbaum, which does not allow the repetition of the same agent in the sentence. In their turn, sentences (1) and (2) have different underlying structures. Sentence (1) represents one deep structure: *He expected it John to come*. The corresponding question is *What did he expect?* Sentence (2) represents two deep structures: a) *He persuaded John into it*, b) *John to come*. In other words, *John* in the first sentence does not function as semantic object like it is in the second case. So *John* can act as semantic object for the verb *persuade* and at the same time as semantic subject for the verb *come*. This phenomenon is defined by L.Berk as 'object controlling principle' (Berk 1999).

N.Chomsky gives another reasoning to prove a difference between the structures *I persuaded the doctor to examine John* and *I expected the doctor to examine John*. When these sentences are transformed into passive constructions, the discrepancy becomes quite apparent:

I persuaded the doctor to examine John – 'I persuaded John to be examined by the doctor'

I expected the doctor to examine John – ' I expected John to be examined by the doctor'.

N.Chomsky finds that the two versions of the first pattern are not equivalent, since in case of the active structure the speaker's efforts are being exerted against the doctor, whereas in case of the passive structure they are being exerted against John. The second pattern does not manifest this kind of discrepancy (Chomsky 1976).

Of a certain interest is R.Borsley's approach to the problem. He introduced the so called separate control theory (Borsley 1997). Comparing the sentences *John persuaded Ben to go* and *John promised Ben to go,* the linguist points out the main difference claiming that in the first case the role of controller is the object, namely Ben; in the second case it is John who is the subject of the verb *go*. This accounts for the existence of the passive structure with *persuade*: *Ben was persuaded to go,* whereas with *promise* it is impossible: **Ben was promised to go.*

The sentences *John persuaded Ben to go* and *John promised Ben to go* differ in that the former has causative meaning. In this connection it would be of interest to draw a parallel between this causative sentence and other structures of a similar type, say *I had / got John (to) repair my car* and its synonymous version *I had my car repaired*. The main difference between the last two structures is that the latter has, in addition, passive meaning, which is indicated by the presence of participle II and the absence of the agent of the action *(repair)*. True, in some cases the agent may be mentioned in the structure as in

Guiliano, as a surprise and a token of his esteem, had had his English suit repaired and cleaned by the finest tailor in Rome. (Puzo)

As far as causative meaning is concerned, some constraint should be introduced here. It is evident that this meaning is largely dependent on the semantic role of the subject of the sentence. If the subject acts as beneficiary, who is interested in the action and stimulates it, the constructon has causative meaning as in

1. *He had / got his tonsils taken out*

2. *She had / got her rooms cleaned.*

The actions in the above sentences are performed according to the will and choice of the subject. But the subject may act in the opposite direction and thus become an experiencer, i.e. one who experiences some kind of discomfort, suffering or loss of something as in

He had / got his watch stolen.

The action *(steal)* cannot be considered beneficial to the subject since it took place against his will, beyond his control.

The linguists view this phenomenon differently. R.Greenbaum and S.Quirk (1978) define this meaning of the verbs *have* and *get* as factual. Almost the same view is held by J.Eastwood (1997), who claims that the verbs *have* and *get* mean *experience something, often something unpleasant*. Other linguists define this meaning of the verbs as passive-experiential. They state that the verbs *have* and *get* can have causative

meaning only in case the subject himself is interested in his watch being stolen (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999). So the sentence *He had / got his watch stolen* is interpreted by different linguists in two ways:

1. *He caused his watch to be stolen* (maybe for some intriguing purpose) – causative meaning

2. *He suffered the loss of his watch* – factual meaning.

We think that in both cases we observe causative meaning. The difference lies in the fact that the subject in the first case functions as instigator of the action, while in the second case it is unknown or the action may be the result of unfavorable circumstances (accident, crash, theft, storm, etc.) that the subject finds himself in. Below are some examples to illustrate this:

1. *Josephine Pharaoh had her house burgled and just lost her tiara, which was the only really good thing she had and now poor Mrs. Dacre has had her diamonds and rubies pinched, including the famous dog collar.* (Allingham)

2. *Do you think I... can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips and my drop of living water dashed from my cup?* (Bronte)

The above examples come to prove that the subject is related to the actions irrespective of the fact that the latter are not beneficial to him, more exactly the subject experiences some kind of moral discomfort or material loss. This kind of causative meaning can be defined as passive-causative as different from active-causative when the subject functions as instigator of the action.

The structure have / get + participle II is suggestive of another ambiguity, which refers to the actual instigator of the action. Consider the following sentence:

She had the menu planned.

It is not clear whether the subject planned the menu herself or she asked somebody else to do it, since this cannot be determined by the structure itself. To eliminate this ambiguity we should apply to the larger context, which is given below:

Saturday afternoons were one of her favorite times. With little opportunity to cook during the week, she liked to spend a good portion of the day hovering over her recipe books and putting together a gourmet meal... By mid-afternoon she had the menu planned. Leaving the kitchen, she opened the cellar and started down. (Cook)

So we see that the context makes the situation quite clear as to the actual agent of the action denoted by the verb *plan*.

It should be mentioned that the structure with the verb *get* implies more ambiguity than that with the verb *have*. Let us consider the sentence *John got his dishes washed.* J.Lakoff gives three interpretations of this sentence:

1. *John washed his dishes himself*

2. *John had someone wash his dishes*

3. *Someone washed John's dishes.*

As in the previous case, only a larger context can make the situation clear. Now if we compare the sentences *John got his dishes washed* and *John got Susan to wash his dishes*, we see that in the first sentence the subject is not expressed explicitly, while in the second sentence it is apparent (it is Susan). J.Lakoff (Lakoff 1973) observes another

differential feature, which the linguist tries to prove by means of the method of negation:

1. *John got his dishes washed* – 'John did not get his dishes washed'
2. *John got Susan to wash his dishes* – 'John did not get Susan to wash his dishes'.

The first negative sentence emphasizes the fact of the dishes not being washed, whereas the second structure shows that John failed to persuade Susan to wash his dishes. However, the second sentence has a certain implication: it is yet possible that the action may be performed by another person, say Mary or Betty.

Though the causative verbs *have* and *get* are synonymous in many ways, there is a certain semantic difference between them. The patterns with *have* usually imply the employer + employee relationship, in which the former rarely finds its explicit expression:

1. *She had her hair done.* (customer + hairdresser)
2. *I had my tooth extracted.* (patient + dentist)
3. *He had his car repaired.* (customer + mechanic).

As far as the verb *get* is concerned, it is usually associated with some kind of difficulty:

1. *If you can get the ear of a man like Janis our troubles would be over... He could get Tony and the other boys released.* (Lindsay)
2. *I got him to join up in the American Legion.* (Fitzgerald)

If we compare the second sentence with its synonymous versions *I had him join up in the American Legion* or *I made him join up in the American Legion*, we will see that an implication of difficulty is strongly emphasized in the basic version, since it is apparent from the context that the speaker not only makes his own efforts, but he also uses all kinds of connections to achieve his aim. The fact that it was really extremely strenuous for the speaker to get him (Gatsby) to join up in the American Legion is manifested in the following words of the speaker: *I raised him out of nothing, out of gutter.*

Another distinction between the verbs *have* and *get* is that the latter tends to be associated with physical assault, mental and psychological strain, hindrance, etc. Here are some examples to illustrate it:

1. *Adolf Morgenroth... got his arm crushed.* (Lewis)
2. *... if you can get a vodka made with grain instead of potatoes, you will find it still better.* (Fleming)
3. *I suggest you get them released.* (Lindsay)

To sum up, the English language has some constructions which seem identical at both the structural and semantic levels, but the analysis of their underlying structures reveals some important syntactic and semantic differences between them. Though synonymous in many ways, the causative verbs *have* and *get* manifest some slight semantic differences.

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Անգլերենի որոշ բաղադրյալ կառույցների շուրջ

Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են անգլերենի որոշ շարահյուսական կառույց-ներ, որոնք մակերեսային մակարդակում նույնական են թվում: Սակայն խոր-քային կառույցների դիրքերից կատարվող վերլուծությունը ի հայտ է բերում նրանց միջև եղած որոշակի շարահյուսական և իմաստային տարբերություն-ներ: Հոդվածում առաջադրվում է նոր կրավորական-պատճառական կառույց թերականական հասկացությունը: