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THE STATIVE / NON-STATIVE DISTINCTION AND THE VERBS OF CEREBRATION IN ENGLISH

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Grammarians have observed for some time now that the *now*-forms of verbs of cerebral activities or states, verbs of cerebration, are different from the *now*-forms of most other verbs in the English language. For instance, the *now*-form of the verb, *think*, requires the progressive tense marker as in the sentence, *I am thinking about my supper right now.* The *now*-form of the verb *know*, requires the simple present tense marker as in the sentence, *Right now, I know what he is doing.* (Not *I am knowing what he is doing.)

When he discusses this phenomenon, Zandvoort (1966:40) lists these verbs with other verbs that show no difference in the meaning of the progressive and non-progressive. He singles out *know* and *hear* for special comment, stating that the progressive is used to express 'development by degrees.' But when he writes about these verbs, he fails to include the other verbs of cerebration in his discussion.

In the same manner, Jespersen (1961: IV, 223, sec. 14.6(8)) states that "...*know, hear,* and *believe* cannot easily be used in the expanded forms (progressive tenses) when they denote one single act of perception." He, like Zandvoort, does not include a discussion of the remaining verbs of cerebration nor does he see the interaction of tense with the differing surface forms. Long (1961: 124) sees the "...common-aspect forms (the simple tenses) ...ordinarily used when verbs express what best can be thought of as reflexes —more or less automatic responses, whether sensory, emotional or intellectual." But he also does not focus on the verbs of cerebration to see the interplay of tense and form. He simply lists verbs which are subject to his rule: *I hear you / She sees you / I don't believe that / I remember that face / I forget your address / I think so / That suits me*, etc. In addition, Quirk et al. (1972: 85 sec. 3.25) refer to the use of *see* in the present under the heading of "...Universal time statements, particularly associated with stative verbs..."

The patterning of the verbs of cerebration with the differing tenses in English appears to be easily explicable at first glance, but on examination, it turns out to be fairly complex. As a result, to predict the use of the imperative, the different tenses and nominalized forms of the verbs of cerebration in English, a grammar which includes the notion of optionality as a formal construct representing the choice of a native speaker would appear to be necessary. Such a grammar could contain some of the apparatus of the extended standard theory for the generation of strings since Chomsky himself believes that at some point meaning must be linked to form. A fairly recent statement to this effect is found in Chomsky (1982:20): "The theory of transformational generative grammar (one variety of generative grammar) offers one

answer to these questions, an answer that I think is correct in essence though insufficiently general. The answer is that D-structure, determining GF-theta, is mapped onto S-structure by a certain class of rules, grammatical transformation..." (1982:31). In his view, transformations map meaning into form by relating D-structure to S-structure. For some languages such as Japanese, however, transformations are not very important since rules such as move-alpha cannot be used to the same extent that they are used in other languages such as English by Chomsky's own admission. The fault, at this point, is not with the Japanese language but with transformational grammar —a point that Gleason (1965: 209-214) made some years ago. For this reason, the model of linguistic analysis suggested here is different in certain respects from the Chomskyan model although it has the same objective; namely, the mapping of meaning into form. The crucial difference between such a grammar and the standard model proposed by Chomsky would come in the area of a reassessment of the use of transformations and also in the rejection of the autonomous syntax position held by Chomsky and the subsequent adoption of the generation of strings from semantic features as developed by Weinreich (1972). In this model there is a semantic calculator which scans strings of feature matrices, computes their value to see if they are compatible and then adjusts the matrices through the use of assigned or transfer features in cases where the features are used to develop surface forms which are different from underlying forms or which require readings that are not listed separately in the lexicon. Weinreich himself stated that these features are similar to the selectional features (restrictions) of Chomsky's *Aspects*-model. The difference between the Chomskyan features and the Weinreich features is that the latter can be assigned late in the generation of strings at or near the surface structure. Thus, for this study, inherent features are those specified as inhering in the lexical items in the lexicon; transfer features are those which are assigned by rule in the semantic calculator.

Thus, the model of linguistic description for this study assumes the following:

1. A base component, a sentence generating device, which produces strings of formatives and which contains a transformational component that rearranges these formatives according to given rules.
2. A lexicon in which lexical units are listed with their feature matrices in such a way that unambiguous readings of each item can be fully specified.
3. Lexical insertion is accomplished after all the rules of the base component and the transformational component have been applied.
4. It assigns semantic values to linguistic forms according to their occurrence in given syntactic environments or according to their compatibility with other syntactic or semantic features in the strings and deletes or otherwise changes them according to predetermined rules for its operation. For this function of the calculator, Weinreich offers an example in the question *Does this flower probably bloom in the winter?* which would be derived from an underlying string *This flower probably blooms in the winter* (1972:80). The semantic calculator would determine that *probably* is incompatible with the feature [+QUESTION] and thus delete it (1972:79-80).
5. It adjusts the readings of some feature matrices in some environments so that meanings not specified in the lexicon will be possible in these environments. Thus, for instance, *take* might have an inherent feature on the order of 'acquire willfully' in the lexicon but would need to be adjusted by the semantic calculator to accommodate *take medicine,* 'imbibe,' *take charge,* 'command' and so on. (The example is from Weinreich, 1980:72).

Besides providing a means in which optional choices can be included in a grammar through the rules in the semantic calculator, such a model provides a manner in which the meaning-bearing units of language arrived at through the study of semantics can be directly related to the syntax of the language being studied. In Weinreich's terms, the "... approach outlined here makes no attempts to fence off mutually exclusive domains for syntax and semantics" (1972:113). In a similar vein, McCawley (1979:5) points out that "... generative semanticists such as George Lakoff and myself rejected the notion of the grammaticality of a sentence in isolation, adopting the position that a sentence can be spoken of as grammatical only relative to meaning and a context...", thus reinforcing the position adopted here. The model developed here differs from that of the generative semanticists, however, since that model attempts to map the underlying semantic forms through lexical decomposition. (See, for instance, G. Lakoff (1971).) This model attempts to postulate underlying lexical-semantic forms and to plot the distribution of surface manifestations of these underlying forms and thus to account for various syntactic co-occurrence restrictions through the use of wide ranging rules or generalizations. It differs from other attempts at finding semantic primes such as that of Wierzbicka (1980) in that only those semantic features which correlate with differences in syntactic distribution of surface forms are treated. It also makes no attempt at finding names for these features which are, in some sense of the word, 'ultimately appropriate'; the names of these features are admittedly arbitrary just as the name *erg* or *watt* in the description of energy are also arbitrary. Wierzbicka (1980:99-100) complains about this arbitrariness, stating that "To account for the differences between the items in the set one would postulate some more such 'features'; the obvious candidates are '+/−visual', '+/−auditory', '+/−olfactory', '+/−gustatory', '+/−tactual')." She then complains about the use of such arbitrary features since they are meaningless. But she has to admit that within a particular formalism they become meaningful (1980:17). The use of features as "... the appropriate representation of lexical items..." in this study is then similar to that of Starosta (1982:379) who "... rejects the decomposition of words into semantic predicates and adopts binary features..." At this point, then, and for this study, the attempt will be made to show how features which are essentially semantic in nature affect the distribution of grammatical elements.

In the study, a distinction will be made between illocutionary environments and perlocutionary environments for the study of the distribution of the verbs of cerebration in English. The terms, 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary,' are borrowed from Austin (1962) and are used with somewhat the same force as he intended. The illocutionary environments are those in which sentences are used in "... the act of doing something in saying something, the performance of the function, or force, or use of a sentence..." The perlocutionary environments are those in which sentences are used as "... the consequences or effects of the speaker's act upon the speaker or hearer..." (Campbell 1974:222). Bierwisch expresses the same concept when he states: "... the illocutionary and the perlocutionary act correspond to the communicative sense of a speech act and its eventual consequences, respectively" (1980:3). Davis (1980:47) also states: "... eliciting an answer is a perlocutionary act." A perlocutionary environment, then, is an environment in which a perlocutionary act occurs; an illocutionary environment is one in which an illocutionary act occurs. In other words, the

perlocutionary environments are those in which the speaker is making a response to verbal or nonverbal communication. The illocutionary environments are those in which the speech act occurs without any necessary stimulation from another speaker. This distinction has been established to accommodate what Fillmore and McCawley, and undoubtedly other linguists, have noticed. Fillmore states:

> Unhappily, the recurrent embarrassment of the generative grammarian is that his students and his critics are forever contriving situations in which the sentences he had needed to believe were ungrammatical turned out to be completely appropriate (1973:273).

McCawley makes a similar statement:

> The alleged ability of speakers of a language to distinguish between 'grammatical' and 'ungrammatical' strings of words is about as rare and as perverse as the ability to construct puns ... Anyone who has taught an introductory syntax course has had the experience of presenting an 'ungrammatical' example only to be told by some smart-aleck about an unsuspected interpretation on which the sentence is quite normal ... the strings of words on which grammaticality judgements are allegedly made exist only as typographical or acoustic objects, not as perceptual or cognitive objects as contrasted with its two interpretations, which do exist as perceptual objects (1982:78-9).

It would appear that one of the factors that make both the McCawley and the Fillmore statement true can be found in the distinction between perlocutionary or response environments for utterances and all other environments here designated as illocutionary environments.

The manner in which these environments affect the grammaticality of utterances is as follows: In an illocutionary environment, *I did* is not a grammatical utterance. But in a perlocutionary environment, it is:

Illocutionary environment: Who put these potatoes in the beef stew?
Perlocutionary environment: I did.

These environments affect the grammaticality in perhaps more subtle ways. For instance, the now-form for most verbs of cerebration is the simple present in illocutionary environment: *I believe that he can walk on water.* But in perlocutionary environments the now-form can be the present progressive.

Illocutionary environment: What on earth are you doing now that you see him walking on water?
Perlocutionary environment: I'm believing that he can walk on water.

No further attempt will be made at this point to show how these environments affect the grammaticality of sentences. It is hoped that their use will become clear as the study unfolds, but it might be pointed out that Eikmeyer and Rieser (1981:141) find the specification of contexts necessary in their development of a semantic theory in a fashion similar to that indicated here.

The verbs of cerebration have different surface manifestations for stative and non-stative underlying forms. For example, *think* is non-stative since it gives reference to an activity. *Know* is stative since it describes a state of having knowledge. Thus, **I'm knowing that the pelican is dying* is ungrammatical but *I'm thinking about the pelican* is grammatical. The distinction between stative and non-stative verbs is one which many grammarians find important for the description of the distribution of verb forms in many languages. This distinction separates the underlying stative verbs such as *like*,

which describe a state that an individual is in, and the underlying non-stative verbs such as *walk*, which is undertaken by an agent. Non-stative verbs freely co-occur with the imperative and the progressive tenses; the stative verbs do not. This is also true for the verbs of cerebration. The non-stative forms freely co-occur with the progressive tenses; the stative forms do not as in the sentences at (3), (5) and (6).

Under normal conditions, in illocutionary environments, the underlying verbs of cerebration require the simple present as the *now*-form. Besides this, they do not occur with the progressive or the imperative. Thus, all of the *a*-sentences at (1) through (8) are grammatical and none of the *b* or *c*-sentences are grammatical.

1. a. I believe that he is going to town tomorrow.
   b. * I am believing that he is going to town tomorrow.
   c. * Believe that he is going to town tomorrow.
2. a. I doubt that he will ever do that again.
   b. * I am doubting that he will ever do that again.
   c. * Doubt that he will ever do that again.

2'. a. I think that he is going to town tomorrow.
   b. * I am thinking that he is going to town tomorrow.
   c. * Think that he is going to town tomorrow.

3. a. I trust that he will come back to me some day.
   b. * I am trusting that he will come back to me some day.
   c. * Trust that he will come back to you some day.
4. a. Jack knows that entropy will finally overcome.
   b. * Jack is knowing that entropy will finally overcome.
   c. * Know that entropy will finally overcome.
5. a. Jack is ignorant of the fact that entropy will finally overcome.
   b. * Jack is being ignorant of the fact that entropy will finally overcome.
   c. * Be ignorant of the fact that entropy will finally overcome. Cf. Be ignorant of the fact that entropy will finally overcome; see if I care.
6. a. Jeanice is absorbed in thought about her son's return.
   b. * Jeanice is being absorbed in thought about her son's return.
   c. * Be absorbed in thought about your son's return.
7. a. I presume that the world will come to an end soon.
   b. * I am presuming that the world will come to an end soon.
   c. * Presume that the world will come to an end soon.

7'. a. I am of the opinion that the world will come to an end soon.
   b. * I am being of the opinion that the world will come to an end soon.
   c. * Be of the opinion that the world will come to an end soon.

8. a. I have a mind to stop all this silly nonsense.
   b. * I am having a mind to stop all this silly nonsense.
   c. * Have a mind to stop all this silly nonsense.

All of the verbs in the *a*-sentences of (1) through (8) are stative and thus require the simple present tense as the *now*-form.

All of the underlying verbs of cerebration in this study have surface manifestations that can be used with the progressive tense as the *now*-form in illocutionary environments as in sentences (9) through (14) where the *a*-sentences are for the most part ungrammatical while the *b*-sentences are grammatical. This is quite different from the situation in sentences (1) through (8).

9. a. * Right now, I think about going home.
Cf. Every night, I think about going home.
b. Right now, I'm thinking about going home.
Cf. Right now, I'm drinking my coffee.
10. a. * Right now, I reflect on the nature of human existence.
b. Right now, I'm reflecting on the nature of human existence.
Cf. I'm trying as hard as I can.
11. a. ? Right now, I intend to make a million dollars from ten dollars of Clorox stock.
b. Right now, I'm intending to make a million dollars from ten dollars in Clorox stock.
Cf. Right now, I'm trying as hard as I can.
12. a. Right now, I assume that the world is coming to an end.
Cf. I assume that the world is coming to an end every night.
b. Right now, I'm assuming that the world is coming to an end right now.
Cf. Right now, I'm drinking my coffee.
13. a. * Right now, I take notice of the fact that the world is coming to an end.
Cf. I take notice of his movements every night.
b. Right now, I'm taking notice of the fact that the world is coming to an end.
Cf. I'm looking into my coffee cup.
14. a. * Right now, I learn that life is not all that easy.
b. Right now, I'm learning that life is not all that easy.
Cf. I'm trying as hard as I can.

It would appear that the reason for the grammatical markings for the sentences at (9) and (10) can be found in the distinction between cyclic and non-cyclic verbs. From this, the surface forms *think (that)* and *think about* are not only differentiated on the stative —non-stative dimension. The verbs in these sentences are also differentiated by the cyclic and non-cyclic distinction. This distinction between cyclic and non-cyclic verbs is one which Bull (1960:44-47) found important for the description of the distribution of the preterite and imperfect forms in Spanish and similar forms in other languages. Cyclicity and non-cyclicity separate the action underlying cyclic verbs such as *close*, which describe an action that must be terminated before it can be repeated and the action underlying non-cyclic verbs such as *walk*, which can be maintained indefinitely without any necessary termination (Bull 1960:16-19). Thus, *think* is non-cyclic since it gives reference to an activity that can be continued indefinitely. *Think about* is cyclic since the activity must be terminated and then repeated for indefinite continuation. Thus, **I'm thinking that there is a pelican in the distance* is ungrammatical but *I'm thinking about a pelican in the distance* is grammatical. The distinction in the difference between *think* and *think about* has been in the language since the Old English period. Jespersen (1961:IV, 222, sec. 14.6(6)) points out that there are actually two underlying forms for *think* in Old English one from OE *þencean* and one from OE *þyncean*. The latter freely occurs in sentences with the progressive, the former does not as in the following sentences: *I think it's going to rain* and *I was just thinking of you.*

On the other hand, the primary form of at least one of the verbs of cerebration in sentences (1) through (8) can be used in illocutionary environments with the progressive if it expresses the underlying meaning of ability as in the sentence at (15).

(15) I'm not thinking very well nowadays.

Other primary forms of the verbs of cerebration do not occur with the ability reading as

in sentence (15). Besides this, stative verbs of cerebration which do not occur with the progressive under normal circumstances (in illocutionary environments) can occur with the progressive in perlocutionary environments as in sentences (16) through (21).

16. a. S1: You're not doing anything about it. You don't believe that He will heal you.
    b. S2: I am so. I am believing that He will heal me.
17. a. S1: You are not thinking very clearly.
    b. S2: Oh, I don't know about that. I am doubting his original proposition.
    c. S1: You are not thinking very clearly.
    d. S2: Oh, I don't know about that. I am thinking that his original proposition might be correct.
18. a. S1: You didn't trust the statement that I made to you last week and you aren't trusting it now.
    b. S2: I didn't trust it last week, but I am trusting it now.
19. a. S1: What were you doing when the district attorney was cross-examining you?
    b. S2: I was playing dumb, looking stupid and not knowing anything.
20. a. S1: When that question comes up again, be dumb and play ignorant.
    b. S2: I am being ignorant when any question comes up.
21. a. S1: To really act as though you are absorbed in thought, you must be absorbed in thought.
    b. S2: I am being absorbed in thought all the time.
22. a S1: Yesterday, I presumed that the world would come to an end soon. But today, I'm not too sure.
    b. S2: I am presuming that the world will come to an end all the time.
    c. S1: Anyone being of the opinion all the time that anybody can do anything at any time indicates that this individual is crazy.
    d. S2: I am being of that opinion all the time.
23. a. S1: Anyone having a mind to watch television all the time is daffy.
    b. S2: I am having a mind to watch television all the time.

Just as stative verbs of cerebration which do not occur with the progressive under normal circumstances (in illocutionary environments) can occur with the progressive in other circumstances (perlocutionary environments) so also these same verbs, which do not occur with the imperative in illocutionary environments, can occur with the imperative in perlocutionary environments as in the sentences from (24) through (31).

24. a. S1: I don't believe that he can heal me of anything.
    b. S2: Please believe that he can heal you of your terminal cancer.
25. a. S1: I doubt that he will ever be able to heal me.
    b. S2: Doubt that he will ever be able to heal you and he will be unable to do just that.
    c. S1: I don't think that he will ever be able to heal me.
    d. S2: Think that he will be able to heal you and he will be able to do just that.
26. a. S1: I cannot trust him to heal me.
    b. S2: Trust that he will be able to heal you and he will be able to do just that.
27. a. S1: Jack knows that the end is in sight.
    b. S2: *Know that the end is in sight and it will soon appear around the corner. Cf. Know thyself.
28. a. S1: I don't care if I never learn all of the facts about esoteric approaches to language.
    b. S2: All right, be ignorant of the facts about esoteric approaches to language, see if I care.

29. a. S1: Why aren't you listening to me? Are you sick or are you lost in thought?
    b. S2: (Blank stare.)
    c. S1: All right, be absorbed in thought, see if I care.
30. a. S1: I presume we will inherit a cool million in the very near future.
    b. S2: All right, presume that we will inherit a million in the near future but I hope that our presumption does not soar too high.
    c. S1: I am of the opinion that the world will come to an end soon.
    d. S2: All right, be of the opinion that the world will come to an end soon, see if I care.
31. a. S1: I have a mind to stop Billy from playing the part of a clown at the party tonight.
    b. S2: All right. Have a mind to stop Billy from playing the part of a clown but please don't be too serious about it. He'll create a scene.

From the above sentences (24-31), it should be apparent that all of the verbs of cerebration in this study (with the exception of *know*) can occur with the imperative in perlocutionary environments. (Although *know* occurs with the imperative in the sentence *Know thyself* as a stock phrase or idiom, it does not seem to occur with the imperative if it is followed by a *that*-clause.)

So then, it can be that all of the verbs of cerebration have a common underlying semantic form since they all manifest an idiosyncratic patterning as stative verbs including exclusion from the imperative and progressive constructions. Similar surface forms, however, may have different co-ocurrence restrictions depending on either their assignment to different underlying forms or to the assignment of transfer features to them in the surface. Thus, *think* as a verb of cerebration is basically a stative verb marked [+STATIVE] as in the sentences at (2 d-f) when it is in construction with *that*. When *think* occurs alone or in construction with *about* as in sentences (9) and (15), it is basically an activity verb marked [−STATIVE] similar to *reflect, intend, assume* and *learn*. Thus, there are two different underlying verbs of cerebration which have surface manifestations resulting in the use of the lexical token *think*: one is marked [+STATIVE] and the other is marked [−STATIVE]. It is also of interest, however, that the former, *think that*, can occur in constructions where stative verbs do not usually occur with the progressive or the imperative as in the sentences at (17 c-d) and (25 c-d) in perlocutionary environments. To account for this, a transfer feature [−STATIVE] is assigned to *think* for its occurrence in these environments. The verb *think* then becomes archetypal for all other verbs of cerebration, then, patterning like verbs such as *believe, doubt, trust, know, be ignorant, be absorbed in thought, presume, be of the opinion* and *have a mind to*, on the one hand, and like verbs such as *reflect, intend, assume* and *learn*, on the other.

From this point it is possible to separate the verbs of cerebration into semantically based sub-classes. One of these classes could be marked [+COGITATION] [+STATIVE] and could include verbs such as *think (that)* and *be absorbed in thought*. Another sub-class could be marked [+COGITATION] [−STATIVE] and would include such verbs as *think* and *think (about)*. A more complete specification of the verbs of cerebration might be as follows:

	+STATIVE		−STATIVE
+CREDIBILITY	believe (that)	have faith in	
+INCREDIBILITY	doubt (that)	don't believe	
+CONFIDENCE	trust (that)	believe trust	
+COGNITION	know (that)	know	take notice of
+INCOGNITION	be ignorant of	be unaware	
+COGITATION	be absorbed in thought	think (that)	think (about) reflect, think
+POSTULATION	presume	be of the opinion	assume
+INTENTION			intend
+EDUCATION			learn

Although it is possible to find other verbs of cerebration and to arrange them into different groups than the one suggested here, it would seem that this grouping nicely demonstrates the interaction of stativity / non-stativity with the differing surface forms of the verbs of cerebration. Thus, verbs which are marked [+STATIVE] in the lexicon with an inherent feature receive a transfer feature marking them [−STATIVE] in perlocutionary environments. It is in this manner that the occurrence of many verbs of cerebration, which normally behave as stative verbs but which can occur with the progressive and the imperative as activity verbs in some environments, can be specified.

In conclusion, then, the assumption of common underlying forms for some of the verbs of cerebration and the use of Weinreich's transfer features to predict the derivation of the diversity of surface forms from these underlying forms prove useful in a description of the nature of these verbs. Such an assumption also suggests practical applications; for, if in fact underlying semantic considerations are directly related to the grammatical distribution of surface forms, then a strategy for teaching the grammatical distribution of these forms is implied. Such a strategy is reminiscent of the series method put forth by the early twentieth century methodologist, Gouin, and recently advocated by Diller (1971). In particular, insofar as the relation of semantic features to syntactic forms is concerned, it would appear that those underlying forms which are related semantically should be taught at the same time as in the series method so that the similarities and differences in meaning can be described to the students in such a way that the differences in grammatical form can be derived by the students from these differences in meaning, for, as Oller and Ziahosseiny (1970) have pointed out, it is the very subtle differences that cause the greatest difficulties. Besides this, it is apparent that the distinction between perlocutionary environments and illocutionary environments creates situations in which grammaticality judgements vary. It would thus be incumbent on language teachers, materials developers and textbook writers to produce lessons with both kinds of environments so that students can be exposed to the full range of language use and grammaticality judgements arising from this use.

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