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Analysis of 'Yǒu' Type Sentence ('有' 字句) in Modern Chinese

Chiranjib Sinha*

English-speaking people, unfamiliar with Chinese, generally come up with some obvious structural similarities and differences between Chinese and English. The foremost point to be noted in this comparative and contrastive study is that Chinese is, first of all, not an inflected language; it basically relies on 'word order' (cí-xù 词序) to convey the meaning. A certain 'word' or 'words' of the language play the role of governing and determining the semantic (syntactic) relationship among the different words and linguistic units of the said sentence. The word 'yǒu' (有), which is the main subject of discussion in this paper is one such Chinese grammatical word. According to the Chinese grammatologists, this particular word is categorized as one of the verbs of the Chinese language like the same category of other verbs- 'shì' (是) and 'zài' (在). But, the major difference lies in the fact that while the verb 'shì' is not an action verb, but, from the usages of the word 'yǒu' on some occasions, it becomes quite evident that it also functions at times as an action verb. However, from the point of view of Chinese syntactic patterning and consideration, sentences with the verbal word 'yǒu' (有) have been termed as the 'yǒu' type of sentence ('有' 字句) in 'Modern Standard Chinese' (MSC-普通话).

In spoken and written forms of Chinese, 'yǒu' (有) is generally used as a 'verb of possession', equivalent to the English verb 'has', 'have' and 'had'. Thus, it seems to establish the link between the 'possessor' and the 'object' to be possessed or owned; the main question that needs to be clarified here is who is the possessor or the owner on the one hand and what the possessor has already possessed or is going to possess or own on the other. Nevertheless, it has also many other usages which developed in the course of the evolution of the language which becomes clear in a diachronic study of the Chinese language. So far as the pronunciation of this Chinese word 'yǒu' (有) is concerned, it is pronounced as 'yo' in English and 'yi-yo' both in Bengali and Hindi, essentially with the third tone as one of its 'basic phonetic characteristics'. An attempt has been made here to study the various grammatical features of this verb 'yǒu' (有) in MSC in a comparative linguistic perspective.

Grammatical Features of Verb 'Yǒu' (有)

At the outset what are, in general, the grammatical features of a word may be discussed here, which are, based on the context of the Chinese syntactic consideration. The

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grammatical features (or syntactical characteristic features) of a word imply all the meanings that the concerned 'word' denotes while establishing the linkages among other words, phrases or between different 'sentence elements' (句子成分) of the said sentence unit. Such grammatical words or grammatical segments of different nature are found in all languages and dialects that function as indispensable ones to make sense of the expressions or statements distinctly clear as far as possible. In this particular type of the usage, the word 'you' has extensive indicative features like 'existence' (存在), 'possession' (拥有), 'comparison' (比较) of quantity (of time and goods) and quality.

The starting point of the discussion should be the most common and very frequently occurring typical 'you' type of sentence in modern Chinese used here, as the 'verb of possession'.

First, expressing possession.

For instance:

2. 小王 + 有 + 书.

1. Xiǎo Wáng + yǒu + shū

Xiao Wang + has + books.

3. S + V + O

1. Xiao Wang has books.

In the sentence above the word 'Xiǎo Wáng' (小王) is the name of a person, a proper noun, that serves the function of a subject and the other part 'yǒu shū' (有书) is the predicate. The relationship between the two units above, *i.e.* 'Xiǎo Wáng' and 'shū' (书-book or books) is established by the possessive verb, 'yǒu' (有).

Some other sentences of this pattern are given below for more clarity.

(i) 中国学院的图书馆有很多中文书.

(There are many Chinese books in the Cheena Bhavan Library.)

(ii) 我们国家有天然资源.

(Our country has natural resources.)

In addition to the one above, now let us examine the other grammatical relationship, that the verb 'yǒu' (有) indicates in various other 'yǒu' type sentences ('有' 字句):

Second, expressing existence:

国际大学西边有一个汽车站.

(There is a bus stand on the western side of Visva- Bharati.)

那座山上有一个宾馆。

(There is a guest house on top of the mountain.)

The information intended to be given by the speaker in the first sentence is about where the bus stand is located. The word 'you', in such sentences, corresponds to the meaning of 'there is' or 'there are' of the English language. In addition to the illustration given above, there are also some other 'yǒu' type sentences giving the information of 'existence' of something or 'occurrence' of something new, but they are not accompanied by subject (主语).

For example:

有水吗?

(Is there water?)

有了地震。

(There was an earthquake.)

Third, giving a list of personnel and objects of different types:

我们大学有印度学生, 有日本学生, 有中国学生。

(Our University has Indian, Japanese and Chinese students or there are Indian, Japanese and Chinese students in our university.)

这个公园里有山, 有湖, 很美丽。

(There are mountains and rivers inside this park which are very beautiful.)

Here, one thing may be noted that the Chinese verb 'yǒu' (有) is used before each item of the list mentioned in the sentence, whereas in English the equivalent of the same word 'you' is not repeated in the same manner.

Fourth, showing inclusion:

一天有二十四个小时。

(There are 24 hours in a day.)

一个班有二十五个学生。

(There are twenty-five students in each class.)

Fifth, expressing weights of quantity in terms of measurement units:

这些水果有三公斤。

(These fruits weigh three catties.)

一个大象有一千多公斤。

(The weight of an elephant is more than one thousand kilograms.)

Sixth, showing a specific change in the quality and conditions of certain phenomena:

(i) 学生们的水平有了很大的变化.

(The standard of the students has greatly improved.)

(ii) 实施改革开放政策以来中国经济有了发展.

(Since the implementation of the reform and opening up policy, the economy of China has developed.)

去年下了大雨后有洪水.

(There was a flood after the heavy rain last year.)

Seventh, expressing estimate:

路有十米多宽.

(The road is more than 10 metres in width.)

我觉得今年她大约有三十多岁.

(I think, this year, she will probably be more than thirty years old.)

Eighth, giving an idea of more or less:

他在教汉语方面有了丰富的经验.

(He has rich experience in teaching Chinese.)

他有了年纪, 现在不能去旅游了.

He has become old and cannot go on a tour any more.

Ninth, giving a sense of contrast:

(i) 有人去, 有人不去.

(Some will go and some others will not go.)

(ii) 有的老师在, 有的老师不在, 已经回家了.

(Some teachers are present and some others are absent, they have already left for home.)

(iii) 这里有时候很冷.

(Sometimes this place is very cold.)

In a few sentences of this kind, the verb 'yǒu' (有) is used as an attributive.

Tenth, showing comparison:

这本书有那本书那么重.

(The weight of this book is the same as the other one.)

世界上没有第二个长城那么大的一个人造建筑物。

(There is no any other man made architecture in the world bigger than the Great Wall.)

In these types of sentences, the verb ‘yǒu’ (有) has the meaning of ‘reaching...’ and positioning the predicate after it indicates the degree of an action or a state, implying that no word of concrete number and measurement can follow the predicate. Therefore one is not supposed to say:

这本书有那本书重一公斤。

他没有我高一点儿. etc.

‘Yǒu’ (有) can also occur before the complement adjective acting as the adverbial adjunct, for example:

他说汉语说得有中国人那么好。

(He speaks Chinese just like a Chinese.)

他跑得没有你快。

(He cannot run faster than you.)

One important point of the grammatical feature of verb ‘yǒu’ (有) in Chinese is that, the verb ‘yǒu’ (有) can nowhere be reduplicated like some other Chinese verbs to either change the mood or stress certain parts of the sentence like: 看看, 试试, 坐坐 etc. In English we often see the verb ‘had’ is duplicated, like: I had had my tea before he came.

Subject and Object of ‘yǒu’ Type Sentence

The ‘subject’ (主语) and ‘object’ (宾语) are, generally speaking, the two inalienable constituents of all the ‘you’ type of sentences belonging to different grammatical categories (parts of speech and other types).

First of all let us note the ‘parts of speech’ (词类) of the ‘**subject**’ (主语) of the following ‘you’ type sentence.

First, as noun:

图书馆有书。

(There are books in the library.)

学校有一个大的操场。

(There is a big playground in the school.)

Second, as a pronoun:

(i) 我有词典.

(I have a dictionary.)

(ii) 他有妹妹.

(He has a younger sister.)

Third, as a verb:

工作有很多方式.

(There are many ways to work.)

学习应该有计划.

(Study must be done in a planned way.)

Fourth, as a numeral-measure word phrase:

一本(书)有十章.

(There are 10 chapters in a book.)

一队有十一个人.

(There are eleven members in a team.)

Fifth, as a coordinative phrase:

中文系和英文系有一个学习计划.

(The Chinese and English Departments have one programme of studies.)

他和我有一样的意见.

(I have the same opinion as he has.)

Sixth, as 'de' (的) phrase:

参加的有十个人.

(There are ten participants.)

踢足球的也有外国学生.

(There are also foreign students playing football.)

Seventh, as locality phrase or an appositive phrase:

家里有五个人.

(There are five members in the family.)

公园里有很多外国人.

(There are many foreigners in the park.)

Next the 'parts of speech' (词类) of the objects of each of the following 'yǒu' type sentences may be noted.

First, as a noun:

学生有本子.

(Students have notebooks.)

教室里有一张地图.

(There is a map in the classroom.)

Second, as a pronoun:

参加会议的有她.

(She has attended the meeting.)

爬那座山的也有我.

(I have also climbed that mountain.)

Third, as a coordinative phrase:

他有一本书和一个本子.

(He has a book and a notebook.)

中国学院有录音机和电视机.

(Cheena Bhavan has a tape recorder and television.)

Fourth, as 'de' (的) phrase:

我有红的.

(I have a red one.)

他有黑的.

(He has a black one.)

Fifth, as an appositive phrase:

(i) 家里只有她们母女俩.

(The family has only two members, a mother and a daughter.)

(ii) 学校只有师生两类.

(There are only teachers and students in the school.)

Negation of the 'Yǒu' (有) Type of Sentence

The possessive verb 'yǒu' (有) is negated by adding the adverb 'méi' (没) which precedes the main verb 'yǒu' (有),

For example:

我 + 没 + 有 + 护照.

Wǒ + méi + yǒu + hùzhào

Sub + adverb + verb + object

I have no passport

Sometimes, mostly in conversational Chinese, the negative adverb 'méi' (没) is simply used instead of 'méi - yǒu' (没有).

For example:

我没钱.

Wǒ + méi + qián

(I don't have money.)

我没去那个地方.

(I have not been to that place.)

Though normally the verb 'yǒu' (有) does not take 'bù' (不) before it, but in conditional sentences (conditional clause or if clause), 'bù' (不) instead of 'méi' (没) may be used, for example:

不有一个好的老师讲课, 水平不会提高.

(If there is no good teacher to teach, the standard of the students will not improve.)

Apart from the said condition, the form of 'bù-yǒu' (不有) is used in the dialect of Kunming and other Yunnan dialects (1). On rare occasions, 'wú' (无) can be used to negate a 'yǒu' (有) type sentence, for example:

老师现在无话可说了.

(Now the teacher has nothing to say.)

Interrogative Form of the 'You' Type Sentence

There are two main methods to convert an affirmative 'yǒu' (有) type sentence into its interrogative form. These are: first, by using the 'model particle' (语气助词) 'ma' (吗) at the end of the sentence and second, by one 'affirmative-negative' method.

For example:

你到现在没有住处吗?

(Have you not found a place to stay?)

你是学生吗?

(Are you a student?)

According to the affirmative-negative' (affirmative yǒu 有 + negative méi 没有) method, the verb 'yǒu' (有) occurs twice in the said sentence with the negative adverb 'méi' (没) placed between them.

For example:

你有没有书?

(Do you have books?)

你有没有护照?

(Do you have a passport?)

Classification of 'You' (有) Type Sentence

All the 'yǒu' (有) type sentences that occur both in conversational and written Chinese may be classified into two major types such as the simple 'yǒu' (有) type sentence (基本式的'有'字句) and the extended 'yǒu' (有) type sentence (延伸式的'有'字句) from the viewpoint of their syntactic structure and features. First of all, let us consider the simple 'yǒu' (有) type sentence as a matter of reference here though it has already been mentioned earlier in a different context.

The Simple 'Yǒu' (有) Type Sentence (基本式的有字句)

For example:

他有一个朋友

(‘他-subject’ + ‘有 verb’ + 一个朋友-object’)

(He + has + a friend.)

(He has a friend.)

The Extended 'Yǒu' (有) Type Sentence (延伸式的'有'字句)

The extended 'yǒu' (有) type sentence is one in which we find many other words or phrases after the completion of the simple 'yǒu' (有) type sentence. Hence, it is known as the extended 'yǒu' type sentence.

For example:

(i) 他有一个朋友在印度工作.

(‘他 subject’ + ‘有 verb’ + ‘一个朋友 object’ + ‘在印度工作.’)

(He + has + a friend + working in India.)

He has a friend who is working in India.

(ii) 小李有个弟弟很可靠。

(Xiao Li has a younger brother who is quite reliable.)

The extended part has been underlined for the sake of clarity in understanding. The point to be noted here is that, in the simple 'you' type sentences, the objects provide the required information on the subject, but in the extended 'you' type sentences the 'extended part' of the sentences supplies additional information regarding the subject, middle part or the object of the first part of the sentence. Accordingly the extended 'you' type sentences may be further classified into **four** major categories.

First Category

Semantic Direction of the Extended Part Towards the Object: This may be discussed through the structural analysis of the two sentences above. The sentence No. 1 "tā yǒu yì ge péngyou zài yìndù gōng-zuò" (他有一个朋友在印度工作), as mentioned above consists of two clauses such as, first, "tā yǒu yì ge péngyou" (he has a friend), and second, "zài yìndù gōng-zuò" (working in India). The first clause "tā yǒu yì ge péngyou" is a simple 'yǒu' type sentence and the 'friend' (péngyou 朋友) is the object of the concerned sentence. The extended (second) part, *i.e.*, "zài yìndù gōng-zuò" (在印度工作) is the one that occurs after the simple 'yǒu' type of sentence, *i.e.* tā yǒu yì ge péngyou (他有一个朋友). The second part tells us about where the concerned friend is working. The object of the first clause (or part) is thus found to be the receiver of the action of the extended part.

In the second sentence 'Xiǎo Lǐ yǒu yì ge dìdì hěn kěkào' (小李有个弟弟很可靠), the extended part 'hěn kěkào' (很可靠) provides additional information regarding the character of the object 'younger brother' ('dìdì' 弟弟) of the simple 'you' type of sentence. Some other examples of the same type of sentence are given below.

我有朋友被打。

(One of my friends was beaten.)

我有一个朋友去中国了。

(I have a friend who has gone to China.)

Second Category

Semantic Direction of the Extended Part Towards Subject: These types of 'yǒu' sentences are found when the subject of the sentence is either the 'doer' or recipient of the action of the extended part.

For example:

他有词典查好这些字.

(He has a dictionary to look into these characters.)

小王有考试走了.

(Xiao Wang has left for his exam.)

In the two sentences above, the subject 'tā' (他) in the sentence No. 1 and Xiǎo Wáng (小王) in the sentence No. 2 are the **doers of the action** of the verb 'to look into' (chá 查) in the first sentence and 'to leave' (zǒu 走) in the second sentence as mentioned in the extended part of the sentences respectively.

Third Category

Next, the subject is **the recipient of the action** of the extended part.

For example:

这个东西有地方放.

(There is a place to keep this thing.)

Here subject 'thing' (dōngxi 东西) is the receiver of the action 'to keep' (fàng 放).

Fourth Category

Semantic Direction of the Extended Part Towards Both Subject and Object:

我有老师辅导.

(I have a teacher to guide me.)

我们有纸写.

(We have papers to write.)

The speciality of these kinds of sentences is that the extended part maintains the same kind of relationship with both the subject and object. In the first sentence, the subject, 'I' (wǒ 我) is the ultimate recipient of the action of the verb 'to guide' (fǔdǎo 辅导) and of the object-'teacher' (lǎoshī 老师) that occurs in the first part of the sentence- wǒ yǒu lǎoshī (我有老师). Further, the teacher (lǎoshī) acts as the subject of the second verbal 'action' to guide' (fǔdǎo 辅导). In the second sentence, 'we'- (wǒmen 我们) acts as the doer of the verbal 'action' 'to write' (xiě 写) and at the same time 'paper' (zhǐ 纸) is the receiver of the verbal 'action' 'to write' (xiě 写).

One must remember that the extended 'yǒu' (有) type sentences are made by adding verbs or verbal phrases, adjectives and occasionally by adding nouns or

sub-predicate phrases. All simple 'yǒu' (有) type sentences cannot be extended and changed into an extended 'yǒu' (有) type sentence, only those which have nouns and pronouns in the subject and object can be changed.

Some Other Grammatical Features of 'Yǒu' (有) Type Sentences

All the above mentioned 'yǒu' type sentences are mostly the usual type of sentences to be found both in conversational and written Chinese. In addition to those, there are also some other types in which the 'word order' (cí-xù 词序) is somewhat different. Examples of such sentences are given below for a better understanding.

For example:

(i) 钱, 我有.

(object + subject + verb)

(I have money.)

(ii) 那本词典, 张平有.

(object + subject + verb)

(Zhang Ping has that dictionary.)

In simple 'yǒu' (有) type sentences, the main expression or theme of the sentence relies on the last part of the sentence which is generally an object.

For example:

他有高的水平.

(His standard is high/ he has a higher standard.)

In this sentence the main theme 'high standard' (gāo de shuǐpíng 高的水平) occurs as the predicate. In the case of extended 'you' sentences, the main theme lies in the extended part of the sentence, for example:

路上有人被摔倒了.

(Someone fell down on the road.)

Here the extended part 'fall down' (shuāi dǎo le 摔倒了) supplies the main information for the above sentence unit.

The verb 有 is often found in a "pivotal sentence" (兼语句) and sentences with verbal constructions in the series (连动句).

For example:

1. 我有一个朋友叫张文

(I have a friend called Zhang Wen.)

Here 'I' (wǒ 我) is the subject of the verb 'yǒu' (有) and object of 'yǒu' is 'a friend' (yì ge péngyou 一个朋友) which is also the subject of the verb 'call' (jiào 叫) and the entire phrase - 'have a friend called Zhang Wen' (yǒu yì ge péngyou jiào Zhāng Wén 有一个朋友叫张文) - is the pivotal phrase.

2. 我有时间看报

(I have time to read news papers.)

In this sentence, 'I' (wǒ 我) is the subject, 'yǒu' (有) is the predicative verb No.1; the 'time' (shíjiān 时间) is the object of the first part (wǒ yǒu shíjiān 我有时间) and "to see" (kàn 看) is the predicative verb No.2 with its immediate object the "newspaper" (bào 报) as the second object. In such sentence type as mentioned above there are two predicative verbs with two objects.

Generally one should not use the word 'hěn' (很 meaning 'very') or other adverbial modifier before 'yǒu' (有) to express the degree of quantity or quality. Hence we cannot say 'tā hěn yǒu péngyou' (他很有朋友), but if, there is an abstract noun at the end of the sentence to express certain characteristics or quality of subject, then the same type of adverbial modifier 'hěn' (很) can be used. In this case 'yǒu' (有) + 'noun' word serves like an adjective.

For example:

(i) 那个老人很有志气.

(That old man has high aspirations.)

(ii) 那个学生非常有修养.

(That boy is well trained and cultured.)

In the case of the content of the last part expressing a numeral phrase of indefinite number as an attribute, the adverbial modifier 'hěn' (很) can be added before 'yǒu' (有); but generally no other adverbs of degree are used.

For example:

(i) 我很有几个好朋友.

(I have many good friends.)

(ii) 中国学院很有几本好词典.

(There are a few good dictionaries in Cheena Bhavan.)

Conclusion

Possessive verbs are basically to be found in all the languages and dialects. But their usages vary considerably both from the viewpoint of structural formation and

semantic implications. The usage of this Chinese possessive verb 'yǒu' has wider grammatical usages since the beginning of the archaic Chinese of the ancient times. Further research may be done on this subject to explore more data and information on the syntactic characteristic features of this key grammatical word of 'yǒu' (有).

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