

Existential HAVE in Late Latin: insights on its diachrony in the passage to Romance

This paper investigates the rise of existential HAVE in the transition from Latin to Romance and its paths of development. Existential HAVE constructions in Romance are usually viewed in the literature as stemming from the possessive scheme associated with the transitive verb of possession HAVE (Gaeta 2013; Ciconte 2015: 231; Cruschina 2015: 58, among others).

Early and Late Latin data, however, provide evidence for a different origin of these constructions. More specifically, it is shown that existential HAVE in Romance continues and further develops patterns which became available in Late Latin to ‘introduce a new entity or situation into the world of discourse’ within a spatio-temporal frame, starting from:

- (i) *the stative-locative meaning* of the verb HAVE (‘being in a (physical/abstract) state/place, location’) (... *ille geminus, qui Syracusis habet* ... (Plt. *Men.* 68-69) that.NOM twin.NOM who Syracuse.loc has ‘...that (other) twin, who is in Syracuse ...’),
- (ii) *its non-lexical uses*, witnessed by existential-like ‘impersonal’ constructions consisting of an adverb+the 3rd singular of the verb alternating with the verb BE, *esse* (e.g., *bene habet/est, recte habet/est* ‘it is good’, attested in Early (e.g., Plautus) and Classical authors (e.g., Cicero),
- (iii) *its functional equivalence with the copula esse* ‘be’, occurring in Early and Classical Latin (Baldi & Nuti 2010: 273, note 34; 278, 376; Pinkster 2015: 97; Ciconte 2015), attested also in equative clauses in Late Latin (*ubi omnia aequalia habent* (Orib. Syn. VII, 49, 10) where all.N.PL alike.N.PL have.PRS.IND.3PL ‘Where all these are alike’ (Luque Moreno 1998: 140)

Rare examples of existential-like HAVE are reported for Early Latin (Cato, III-II BC) (2), with the verb in the active impersonal form and the nominal in preverbal position in the accusative case (Baldi & Nuti 2010: 275): ... *nisi calicem pertusum cauum habeat* unless cup hole.ACC hollow have.SBJV.PRS.3S ‘... except that **there is a bowl with a pierced hole**’ (Cato, agr. 80,1).

Existential(-like) constructions with HAVE are well attested in Late Latin, in 4th-6th c. texts (e.g., *Itinerarium Egeriae, Mulomedichina Chironis, Palladius, Oribasius, Anthimus*), occurring with [-human], most typically inanimate, indefinite/non-specific pivots (exs. (1) – (2)) and are found also in spatial (*inde ad sanctam Teclam habebat de civitate forsitan mille quingentos passus* from-there to saint Tecla have.IMPF.3SG from city one thousand five-hundred.M.PL.ACC steps.M.PL.ACC ‘From that place to the mountain of God it was perhaps four miles’ (*Itin. Eger.* 23,2) and temporal constructions (*Pater eius ... ex quo hinc profectus est habet annos XIII* father.NOM his.GEN from which.ABLfrom-here leave.PST.PTCP.M.SG.NOM be.PRS.IND.3SG **have.PRS.IND.3SG years.ACC 14** ‘It has been fourteen years since his father left (from) here’ (Hist. Apoll. RA 31) (Svennung 1935: 475-477, 572-573; Leumann, Hofmann & Szantyr 1965: §221, c; Cennamo 2011: 177-179; Pinkster 2015: 97; Panayotakis 2016 and further examples and further references therein).

HAVE is in the third person singular ‘impersonal’ active (1) and passive (2) forms, with variability of the construction involving three syntactic domains:

- (i) **word order: post and pre-copular NP/pivot** (1a) *In Hebraeo ... non habet hunc numerum* (Hier. Ezech. 11. 297B) in Hebrew not have.PRS.IND.3SG this number.ACC ‘In Hebrew this number does not exist’ vs (1b)... *ibi ... altarium ... habet* (*Itin. Eger.* 4,4) there ... altar.ACC have.PRS.IND.3SG ‘... there ... there is an altar’); (2a) *Ibi habetur capella* (Pard. 369, y. 673) there have.MP. PRS.IND.3SG goat.NOM ‘There is a goat there’ vs (2b) ... *non alter habetur* (Comm. Ap. 374) not other.NOM have.MP.PRS.IND.3SG ‘there is nobody else’
- (ii) **±agr of the copula habere with the post-/pre-copular NP/pivot**: [+AGR]: (2a) *habetur capella*, (2b) *alter habetur*; [-AGR]: (2c): *habetur ... reliquias* (Diehl, ILCV 2013) have.MP.PRS.IND.3SG remnants ‘... there are remnants of ...’; (1c) ... *unde ergo habet zizania* (Vulg. *Matth.* 13, 26-7; Ciconte 2015: 231) whence therefore have.PRS.IND.3SG darnel.weeds.ACC ‘From where, therefore, are the darnel weeds?’

- (iii) **case-marking of the pre/post-copular NP/pivot: NOM vs ACC:** (2a) *habetur capella* vs (2d) *habetur ... tumulum* (Greg. Tur. glor. conf. 35) have. PRS.IND.3SG.MP tomb.ACC (Mikilová 2016: 158)

It will be shown that the data investigated point to the presence of ‘impersonal’ HAVE and lack of pivot agreement (in number /case) as the overt markers of a change in progress, leading to the subsequent reanalysis of the locative argument as a non-referential, unspecified argument, the abstract spatio-temporal argument of predication (as witnessed in early Italo-Romance), and ultimately to the new Romance existential construction (step III on the scheme in (3)), where the theme argument (y), the pivot, ‘takes the predicating function and is thus predicated of the unspecified (spatio-temporal) argument’ (x) (Bentley 2015: 152 and references therein)

Considering the diachronic steps in the changes in the logical structure of HAVE from verb of location/locative copula to an existential copula, illustrated in (3) (adapted from Bentley 2015: 151-152, Ciconte 2015: 231)

(3) I. Be/Have-Loc’ (location, theme) > II. Be/Have-Loc’ (x, theme) > III Be’/Have’ (x,y/pivot)

the Late Latin data investigated appear to witness an intermediate stage between steps I and II. *Habere* still occurs in its locative and copular functions. It does not consistently occur in the default third person singular, preceded/followed by a non-agreeing nominal, the theme, that is still an argument in the construction, and the locative phrase/adverb in the pattern is fully referential (unlike at stage II, where it has lost its locative meaning, as witnessed in some early Northern Italian texts) (Parry 2013; Bentley 2015: 152; Ciconte 2015).

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