

## The Definiteness Effect of *Have* and Other Possessive Verbs\*

Yuko Kobukata

### 1. Introduction

The definiteness effect is a frequently discussed feature of *there*-constructions (cf. Milsark (1974)). The effect is a manifestation of the requirement that the noun phrase whose existence is being asserted must be indefinite, as the following sentences show:

- (1) a. There is a candidate for the job.  
 b. \* There are the candidates for the job.

The sentence in (1b) is ungrammatical because the postverbal NP is definite unlike the sentence in (1a), where an indefinite object is used.

In addition to *there*-constructions, it is said that *have* sentences also exhibit the definiteness effect (cf. Partee (1999)): <sup>1</sup>

- (2) a. John has a sister.  
 b. \* John has the sisters.

This paper examines the definiteness effect of *have* and what Burton (1995) calls “possessive verbs.” Through a detailed investigation of the definiteness effect of these verbs, we will arrive at the conclusion that there is a certain relation between the definiteness of an object and the type of the reading of a sentence.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 observes the definiteness effect of *have*. Section 3 examines the definiteness effect of some other related verbs. Section 4, on the basis of the facts given in sections 2 and 3, points out an interesting relation between the type of the reading of a sentence and the definiteness of an object. Section 5 makes some concluding remarks.

### 2. The Definiteness Effect of *Have*

#### 2.1. Relational Nouns

##### 2.1.1. Relational Reading

Relational nouns denote relations over pairs of entities. They include nouns denoting kinship relations, such as *husband* and *sister*, those expressing social relationships such as *friend*, *lover*, and *boyfriend*, and those concerned with employment relations, such as *assistant* and *advisor*. First, let us consider the following sentences, where *have* takes relational nouns as its complement:

- (3) a. Mary has a husband. (kinship relation)  
 b. Mary has a friend. (social relation)  
 c. Mary has an assistant. (employment relation)

The readings of the sentences in (3) can be as follows:

- (4) a. Someone is a husband to Mary.  
 b. Someone is a friend to Mary.  
 c. Someone is an assistant to Mary.

The sentences in (4) say that there holds a certain relation between the subject and the object. We will call the above reading a relational reading.

It should be noted here that the objects in (3) are indefinite. It has been pointed out, by contrast, that it is impossible to get a relational reading when a definite object is involved as the following sentences show:<sup>2</sup>

- (5) a. # Mary has the husband of her own.  
 b. # Mary has the friend of her own.  
 c. # Mary has the assistant of her own.

The reading of (5) cannot be a relational one; the complements *the husband*, *the friend* and *the assistant* cannot be viewed as Mary's own husband or her own friend or her own assistant. Thus, a definite object is incompatible with a relational meaning, while an indefinite object is compatible with it.

The incompatibility of a definite object of *have* sentences with a relational reading is also shown by the following contrast:

- (6) a. Sandy has the child on her lap, but she has no child of her own.  
 b. # Sandy has a child, but she has no child.

When a definite object such as *the child* is used as in (6a), a relationship can be denied in the second conjunct without any contradiction. Thus, the first conjunct does not mean that the child is Sandy's own child. By contrast, the first conjunct in (6b), where an indefinite object is involved, typically conveys that *Sandy* and *a child* are in a parent-child relationship, that is, a relational reading. The second conjunct in (6b) describes that there is no parent-child relationship between them, and is therefore incompatible with the first conjunct. Hence, the contradiction.

To sum up, when *have* takes a relational noun as its object, and the sentence receives a relational reading, the definiteness effect arises. An indefinite object is compatible with a relational reading, while a definite object is not.

### 2.1.2. *Non-Relational Reading*

In addition to relational readings, there is another possible reading when *have* takes an indefinite relational noun as its object. Observe the following sentences:

- (7) a. Mary had a husband as her dance-partner.  
 b. Mary had a friend as her dance-partner.  
 c. Mary had an assistant as her dance-partner.

Let us take (7a) as an example. The sentence in (7a) does not mean that someone is a husband to Mary. Rather, the reading of (7a) is as follows:

- (8) Someone who was independently a husband stood in a dance-partner relationship to Mary.

Unlike a relational reading, the relation between the subject and object in (7a) is contextually dependent, i.e. specified by the *as*-phrases. Thus the sentence in (7a) does not necessarily tell Mary's marital state. That is, *a husband* can refer to some other person's husband. The same is true of (7b, c). We will call this type of reading a non-relational reading.

Similar cases include the following:

- (9) Mary had a husband.  
 (10) Paul: I have a brother of Jack's as secretary.  
 Kim: Oh, that's funny! Anne has a sister.

(Jensen and Vikner (1996:8))

- (11) Sandy has a child on her lap, but she has no child of her own.

Burton (1995:103) points out that even in the sentence in (9), which is without an *as*-phrase unlike that in (7), a non-relational reading is possible given the following context; Mary is a marriage counselor and counsels various spouses each day. The sentence does not necessarily tell her marital state although its typical interpretation is that she was once married, i.e. a relational reading. In other words, a sentence with an indefinite object is ambiguous in that it can receive either a relational reading, as we have seen in the previous section, or a non-relational one. The same is true of the dialogue in (10). As Jensen and Vikner (1996) point out, we can also get a non-relational interpretation in (10) when we imagine a situation where Paul and Kim are discussing who is the secretary of whom. What Kim says is that Anne's secretary is Jack's sister. He does not make reference to any sister of Anne's. The sentence in (11) is also acceptable, according to my informant. The locative phrase *on her lap* in the first conjunct makes the reading a non-relational one. The sentence does not mention whether *Sandy* has any child. Rather, what is expressed is a

*child's* temporal state, that is, he/she is sitting on *Sandy's* lap. The examples in (7) and (9-11) show that a non-relational reading is compatible with *have* sentences with an indefinite object.

It should be noted here that in addition to indefinite objects, definite objects are also compatible with a non-relational reading as the following examples illustrate:

- (12) a. Mary had the husband as her dance-partner.
- b. Mary had the friend as her dance-partner.
- c. Mary had the assistant as her dance-partner.

Let us take the sentence in (12a) as an example. The reading of this sentence is described as follows:

- (13) There was a person who was already a husband to someone other than Mary and it was this person that Mary had as her dance-partner.

This means that there is no marital relationship between *Mary* and *the husband*. When a phrase which prefers a relational reading is used, *have* sentences with a definite object are unacceptable as shown in the following:

- (14) a. # Mary had the husband of her own.
- b. # Mary had the friend of her own.
- c. # Mary had the assistant of her own.

In (14), instead of *as her dance-partner*, *of her own* is used. Definite objects are incompatible with *of her own*. This is because they make the reading of a sentence non-relational.

This is also illustrated in the following sentences:

- (15) a. Mary has John's sister as a secretary but she does not have a sister of her own.
- b. Sandy has Mary's child, but she does not have a child of her own.
- c. # Mary has a sister of her own but she does not have a sister.

In (15a), the object of *have* is *John's sister*, which is definite in that the genitive phrase explicitly conveys whose sister the noun phrase as a whole refers to. The reading of the first conjunct is non-relational, not relational. That is, the first conjunct asserts that Mary hires John's sister as her secretary. The meaning of the conjunct has nothing to do with whether Mary has a sister. Therefore, the whole sentence does make sense. This is also true of (15b). The first conjunct of the sentence in (15b) can be used when, for example, Sandy is looking after the child temporarily or even permanently. It can also

be said in a context where someone is looking at a photo where Sandy is holding Mary's child on her lap. The sentence does not convey any parent-child relationship between Sandy and the child. Both of the first conjuncts with a definite object in (15a, b) convey a non-relational reading, while the second ones with an indefinite object negate a relational reading. Thus the whole sentences in (15a, b) do make sense. In (15c), on the other hand, *of her own* forces the reading relational. Thus, the first conjunct conveys that there is a sibling relation between *Mary* and *a sister*. Therefore, cancellation of the relation in the second conjunct leads to a contradiction.

The same explanation holds for the following sentences:

- (16) a. Mary is a career woman, she sacrifices her personal life to the company. She has Risa's husband as a secretary now, but she does not have a husband.
- b. # Mary is a career woman, she sacrifices her personal life to the company. She has Risa's husband as a secretary now, but she does not have the husband.

The *but*-clause in (16a), where an indefinite object is involved, refers to Mary's marital state, while that in (16b) with a definite object expresses non-relational meaning. Consequently, the oddness of the sentence in (16b) naturally arises. Thus, the definite object makes it difficult to interpret the meaning of the sentence as relational.

When the reading of a *have* sentence is non-relational, definite objects as well as indefinite ones are acceptable, which is unlike with a relational reading.

### 2.1.3. Summary

In sum, when *have* takes a relational noun as its object, and the whole sentence receives a relational reading, the object has to be indefinite (i.e., the definiteness effect arises), while with a non-relational reading, there is no such restriction and both indefinite and definite objects are possible. To put it differently, when *have* takes an indefinite relational noun as its object, there are two possible readings although a relational reading is more typical; a relational and non-relational readings. *Have* sentences with a definite object, however, allow only a non-relational reading.

## 2.2. Non-Relational Nouns

### 2.2.1. Ownership Reading

In the previous section, we saw that the definiteness effect of *have* emerges when the verb takes relational nouns and the sentence receives a relational reading. This is not the whole story, however. In this section, we

will see another definiteness effect that arises when *have* takes a non-relational noun as its object. First, let us consider the following sentences:

- (17) a. Surely someone in this room has a copy of 'The Language of Ronald Ziegler'.  
 b. Surely someone in this room owns a copy of 'The Language of Ronald Ziegler'.

Costa (1976:6) points out that the sentence in (17a) can be paraphrased with *own* as in (17b). It is generally assumed that *own* expresses alienable possession (cf. Kobukata (2004)). Thus, in (17a, b) the subject *someone* alienably possesses the object *a copy of 'The Language of Ronald Ziegler'*, which is a non-relational noun. Let us call this reading an ownership reading. Examples of the same type are illustrated in the following:

- (18) a. Mary has a mirror.  
 b. Mary owns a mirror.

The sentence in (18a) can also be paraphrased with *own* as in (18b). In other words, the example in (18a) can receive an ownership reading, where the object *a mirror* counts as a non-relational noun. It should be noted here that in the sentences in (17-18), the objects are indefinite.

The paraphrase relation in question, however, does not hold when definite objects are used. Observe the following sentences:

- (19) a. Surely someone in this room has the copy of 'The Language of Ronald Ziegler'.  
 b. Surely someone in this room owns the copy of 'The Language of Ronald Ziegler'.

As Costa (1976:6) shows, example (19a), which involves a definite object, cannot be paraphrased with *own* as in (19b). In (19a), the focus of attention is not on an alienable possessive relation between the subject and object, but on the location of the particular copy. Thus, unlike indefinite objects, the definite objects make the reading of the sentence in question different from an ownership reading. The definite objects make the relation between the subject and object temporal. The same explanation holds true with the following sentences:

- (20) a. Mary has the mirror today, but she does not own it, she has borrowed it.  
 b. Mary has the mirror. -

(20a), in which the second conjunct negates Mary's ownership of the mirror, is fully acceptable. The sentence means a temporal possession. Even without

the temporal expression *today*, which seems to make it easier to interpret the sentence as a temporal possession, *the mirror* does not refer to Mary's own mirror as in (20b).

These sentences suggest that an ownership reading is not possible when definite objects are used. Only indefinite objects are compatible with an ownership reading. In other words, the definiteness effect also arises when *have* takes a non-relational noun as its object and the reading of the sentence is an ownership reading.

There seems to be an apparent counterexample to our claim here. Observe the following sentences:

(21) Now who has that book? (Costa (1974:11))

(22) Did you say you have bought *Your Timple and You*?

I have that book too.

(Costa (1974:7))

According to Costa (1974), the sentence in (21) is ambiguous in that it asks about the current location of the book or inquires about who or how many people own the book. Likewise, the example in (22) indicates that *have* sentences with a definite object are compatible with an ownership reading. That is, (21) and (22) show that sentences with a definite object can receive an ownership reading. This seems to be a contradiction with our claim that the definiteness effect of *have* emerges when the sentence has an ownership reading. However, it is not. As Costa explains, *that book* in (21) is understood as "that type of book", which is also true of (22). This means that although *that book* is superficially definite, it is semantically indefinite in that it is not referential. Thus, it follows that these examples are not incompatible with our claim here.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2.2. *Non-Relational Reading*

In the previous section, we saw that the reading of a sentence with a definite object is not an ownership reading. That is, the definiteness effect of *have* arises when the sentence receives an ownership reading. But *have* sentences with a definite object are acceptable. How, then, are they interpreted? Observe the following sentences:

(23)A: Now where is the book?

B: Oh, I can see John has it.

(Costa (1974:10))

(24) John has that car today. (Dixon (1991:308))

The reading of (23B), which is an answer to the question in (23A), is thought to

be non-relational in that the sentence conveys that John has someone's book at her disposal and is able to use or handle it. If the reading of the sentence in (23B) were an ownership reading, the sentence itself would not make sense, since we cannot "see" an ownership relation. What is expressed by using the definite object is a temporary or current possession. It does not say anything about John's ownership of the book. The same is true of (24). The sentence tells us only that John is using that car irrespective of whether or not he owns that car. These facts indicate that a non-relational reading is compatible with *have* sentences with a definite object.

An indefinite object is also compatible with this reading as the following examples show:

- (25) a. Mary has a mirror {with/on} her.  
 b. Mary has a mirror.

The sentences in (25a) with locative phrases express a temporary possession. It does not express that Mary owns a mirror. Even without such locative phrases, as in (25b), it is possible to interpret a *have* sentence with an indefinite object in a non-relational reading if we know the fact that *a mirror* belongs to John, although an ownership interpretation is preferred.

To sum up, *have* sentences with either indefinite or definite object are compatible with a non-relational reading. As seen in the previous section, it is difficult to get an ownership reading for a non-relational noun when an object is definite. Thus, only an indefinite object is compatible with an ownership reading. It then follows that when *have* takes a non-relational noun as its object and the object is indefinite, there are two possible readings; an ownership reading and a non-relational reading. Recall that this type of ambiguity with an indefinite object is true of a relational noun, as pointed out in section 2.1. By contrast, in *have* sentences with a definite object only a non-relational reading is possible.

### 2.3. Summary

In this section, we have observed when the definiteness effect of *have* emerges. The definiteness effect of *have* emerges when the verb takes a relational noun as its object and the reading of *have* sentences is relational. The effect also emerges when the verb takes a non-relational noun and the reading is an ownership reading. In a non-relational reading, whether or not the object is a relational noun, the effect does not emerge.

Given these facts, it follows that when *have* takes an indefinite relational noun as the object, the reading is ambiguous between relational and



non-relational readings, although the former is more salient. This ambiguity is also true of *have* sentences with a non-relational noun as the object; when an indefinite object is used, the reading is ambiguous between non-relational and ownership readings. But the presence of a definite object forces a non-relational reading whether or not *have* takes a relational noun as its object.

### 3. The Definiteness Effect of Other Possessive Verbs

So far, we have seen the definiteness effect of *have*. There are some other related verbs, which also show the definiteness effect. In this section, we will see when the definiteness effect of them emerges.

#### 3.1. Burton (1995)

Burton classifies *have, get, obtain, find, choose, select, pick, pick out, etc.* into “possessive verbs”. He illustrates some empirical phenomena that distinguish between these verbs and other transitive verbs.

First, observe the following pairs of contrast:

- (26) a. Mary had an assistant for two weeks. (Burton (1995:115))  
 b. Mary got {a helper/a partner/a boyfriend}, but for just two days. (Burton (1995:84))
- (27) Mary {kissed/buried/annoyed/painted} a boyfriend, but for just two days.

(Burton (1995:84))

The reading of (26a) is that there was someone who was an assistant to Mary and the temporal phrase *for two weeks* does bound the period of time the person was an assistant for. This pattern parallels the sentences in (26b); *for*-phrase necessarily modifies the period of time during which someone was a helper, or a partner, or a boyfriend to *Mary*. But in (27), the phrase does not tell us anything about for how long the person was a boyfriend of *Mary*. Rather it tells us only how long the action described by the verb continued.

The second phenomenon is illustrated by the following examples:

- (28) a. Mary had Doug as an assistant. (Burton (1995:118))  
 b. Mary {hired/chose/got/selected/appointed} Doug as {a/her} secretary.  
 c. ?? Mary {kissed/touched/annoyed/killed} Doug as {a/her} secretary.

(Burton (1995:89))

As Burton points out, *as*-phrases used as object-modifiers are generally compatible with possessive verbs as illustrated in (28a,b), while the phrase is

incompatible with other transitive verbs as in (28c).

These examples show that possessive verbs constitute a natural class and are distinguished from other transitive verbs. In what follows, we will see when the definiteness effect of possessive verbs other than *have* emerges.

### 3.2. Relational Nouns

#### 3.2.1. Resultative Reading

Burton (1995), in his discussion of the readings of possessive verbs, notes that they are systematically ambiguous between two different readings when their objects are relational nouns. One is a resultative reading, and the other is an independent reading. First, let us observe the following examples.

- (29) a. Mary {got/selected/chose/picked/picked out} {a secretary/a husband}. (Burton (1995:57))  
 b. Mary {got/chose} a teaching assistant. (Burton (1995:58))

The reading of (29a) is as follows; as a result of the action, someone was put into the position of being a secretary or a husband. That is, someone became a secretary or a husband to *Mary*. For (29b), Burton gives a helpful context in which *Mary* is a teacher, and the department hires someone to work for her; someone is assigned to be her teaching assistant. The reading of (29) is called a resultative reading. Like the relational reading with *have*, which we have already seen in the previous section, the resultative reading with possessive verbs refers to the relation between the subject and the object.

It should be noted here that the resultative reading with possessive verbs is compatible with indefinite objects as in (29), while the reading is incompatible with definite objects (Moltmann (1995), Burton (1995)), as the following examples illustrate:

- (30) a. # Mary got that boyfriend.  
 b. # Mary got each boyfriend.  
 c. # Mary got most boyfriend.

(Burton (1995:143))

- (31) # Mary got the husband.

The sentences in (30) do not mean that someone became a boyfriend to *Mary*. In (31), the sentence cannot receive a resultative reading, either; it does not express that someone has become a husband to *Mary*.<sup>4</sup> It is generally said that *that*, *each*, *most*, and *the* in (30-31), which are classified as strong determiners (cf. Milsark (1974)) and characteristically prefer a familiar referent, presuppose the presence of the referent of the object in the discourse. Someone who already exists as a husband cannot become a husband to *Mary*.

It is this presupposition that interferes with the resultative reading.

When possessive verbs take relational nouns and the reading of the sentence is a resultative reading, only indefinite objects are possible.

### 3.2.2. *Independent Reading*

In addition to a resultative reading, there is another possible reading when possessive sentences occur with indefinite objects, “an independent reading.” Observe the following sentences:

- (32) a. Mary {got/selected/chose/picked/picked out} {a secretary/a husband}.
- b. Mary {got/chose} a teaching assistant.

Let us take the sentence with *a secretary* in (32a) as an example. For the independent reading of the sentence, Burton (1995:49) gives the following context: There was an existing secretary, and it was this person who already worked as a secretary, that Mary got (selected, chose, picked, or picked out) for some other (non-clerical) purpose. For example, suppose that at the office Christmas party, each of the women was assigned a dance-partner by drawing lots. In such a case, we can say, “Sue got an executive, June got one of the mail-boys, and Mary got a secretary.” Thus, the sentence does not express that someone became a secretary to Mary. A similar context is given for (32b) as follows; suppose that Mary is a student and is looking for a date, and that she decides that her math tutor is suitable. In this context, the sentence conveys that someone who is a teaching-assistant independently of *Mary* became her date. That is, the sentence does not express a resultative reading in which he became a teaching assistant to *Mary* as a result of her action.

Unlike a resultative reading, definite objects as well as indefinite objects go well with an independent reading. To see this, consider the following sentences:

- (33) a. Mary got a husband as a dance partner, and she is still single.
- b. Mary got the husband as a dance partner, and she is still single.

The sentences in (33a, b) are both felicitous, whether or not the object is definite, and they receive an independent reading. That is, both sentences do not express that Mary got married. These facts seem to follow from Burton’s observation; according to him, an *as*-phrase cancels out the resultative reading for *husband*. Because the phrase specifies and forces an independent reading, the sentences in (33a, b) can receive an independent reading. Even without *as*-phrases, the possible interpretation of *the husband*, is an independent

reading only, as the following sentences show:

- (34) a. Mary got the husband, and she is still single.  
 b. # Mary got a husband, and she is still single.

*The husband* in (34a) is taken as the husband of someone other than Mary. Thus, because *Mary got the husband* does not say anything about Mary's marital state, it is perfectly natural to assert her singlehood. For the sentence with an indefinite object in (34b), it typically receives a resultative reading. Hence, (34b) is a contradictory sentence. The oddness of (34b), however, can be removed, since it is possible to interpret *Mary got a husband* as an independent reading as we have seen in (32). At any rate, both indefinite and definite objects are compatible with an independent reading although the former prefers a resultative reading. Thus, when possessive verbs take relational nouns as its object and the sentence receives an independent reading, there is no definiteness effect, which is different from what is the case with a resultative reading.

### 3.3. *Non-Relational Nouns*

As we have seen in the previous section, there are two possible readings (resultative and independent readings) when possessive verbs take relational nouns as the object. According to Burton, in addition to those ambiguous cases, there are also number of sentences with these verbs which are not ambiguous. Consider the following sentences:

- (35) a. Mary {got/chose/picked/found} {an idiot/a Bulgarian}.  
 (Burton (1995:58))  
 b. Mary got {a book/a mirror/a skirt}.

The objects of the sentences in (35) are regarded as non-relational nouns. According to Burton, the only appropriate reading of (35a) is that the person was an idiot (or a Bulgarian) independently of Mary's action, not that he became an idiot (or a Bulgarian) as a result of her action. In order to get a resultative reading, we need a contextual help; when we construe *an idiot* or *a Bulgarian* as a changeable property (e.g. playing a role as an idiot or a Bulgarian in a movie), a resultative reading is possible. But an independent reading is strongly preferred at any rate. The same is true of (35b). The reading of (35b) is not that a book (a mirror, a skirt) came into existence by Mary's action. It should be noted here that an independent reading with a non-relational noun is compatible with indefinite objects as in (35).

The independent reading is also compatible with definite objects as the following sentences show:



reading of the sentence is relational. The same requirement is obtained in (40) as follows:

- (40) a. Mary has a mirror. (= (18))  
 b. Mary has the mirror today, but she does not own it, she has borrowed it.  
 (= (20a))

When the sentence in (40) receives an ownership reading, the object of *have* has to be indefinite too, which is different from the sentence in (40b). This is also true of possessive verbs:

- (41) a. Mary got a husband. (= (29))  
 b. # Mary got the husband. (= (31))

As (41) shows, when a sentence receives a resultative reading, the object has to be indefinite.

By contrast, when the reading of *have* sentences is non-relational, both indefinite and definite objects are possible:

- (42) a. Mary has a husband as her dance-partner. (= (7))  
 b. Mary has the husband as her dance-partner. (= (12))

To put it in a different way, when the object is definite, the reading of the sentence has to be non-relational, while when the object is indefinite, the reading is ambiguous (relational or non-relational). The same applies to possessive verbs. When a possessive sentence receives an independent reading, both indefinite and definite objects are possible:

- (43) a. Mary got a husband as a dance partner, and she is still single.  
 b. Mary got the husband as a dance partner, and she is still single.  
 (= (33))

Thus, when the object is definite, the reading has to be an independent reading, while the reading is ambiguous (resultative or independent) when the object is indefinite.

Thus, on one hand, the type of a reading specifies the definiteness of an object and not vice versa, and on the other, the definiteness of an object specifies the type of a reading and not vice versa. These asymmetric relations between the reading of a sentence and the definiteness of an object can be summarized as follows (The arrows in (44) indicate the direction of an implication):

(44)	reading		object
a.	relational/ownership/resultative	→	indefinite
b.	non-relational/independent	←	definite

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have seen the definiteness effect of *have* and other possessive verbs. It has been shown that the definiteness effect of *have* emerges when the reading of a sentence is either a relational or ownership one, and that the effect of other possessive verbs shows up when the reading is a resultative one. We have further pointed out asymmetric relations between the definiteness of an object and the reading of a sentence.

### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the indefinite article, weak determiners, such as *some, three, at least three, several, many, a few, no, at most three, exactly three* show a similar pattern to (1a) and (2a). By contrast, strong determiners such as *every, both, most, neither, all, all three, the three* are not compatible with *there*-constructions and *have* sentences (cf. Milsark (1974)).

<sup>2</sup> When the kinship noun *child* is used, the sentence is possible. Observe the following sentence:

(i) Sandy has the child.

When *child* in (i) is used as opposed to adults, that is, it is interpreted non-relationally, sentence (i) is possible.

<sup>3</sup> This, however, brings us to the question of why the verb *own* itself is compatible with a definite object as the following example shows:

(i) John owns that car.

The fact that *own* can take a definite object may suggest an approach which is quite different from the one pursued here. Unfortunately, it is unclear how this fact should be accounted for at present.

<sup>4</sup> Several counterexamples are pointed out by Burton (1995:143):

(i) Mary got {each/most/every} boyfriend by putting lonely-hearts ads in the newspaper.

<sup>5</sup> Jensen and Vikner (1996) points out that the Danish verb *have* shows a similar pattern. Observe the interaction between the definiteness of an object and the possible reading as follows:

(i) A relational reading requires an indefinite object.

(ii) A definite object requires a control reading.

See Jensen and Vikner (1996) for details.

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Doctoral Program in Humanities and Social Sciences  
 University of Tsukuba  
 e-mail: ykobu@f2.dion.ne.jp