

## A Study of *Wh*- words and the Infinitive in English

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In this essay, we argue about the infinitive form of the verb when used with *wh*- words in contemporary English in both independent and subordinate clauses. The explanation proposed is made by showing a theoretical framework of this construction, based on the meaning of the infinitive, the meaning of *to* and the pragmatic implications of the meanings of *wh*- words as regards the existence of what they refer to. Our method shows that linguistic semantics and pragmatics can contribute in a significant way to the explanation of what would appear to be mere distributional or syntactic facts.

The full pattern of distribution of the above-mentioned infinitive form raises many questions. (1) Given the fact that both infinitival constructions are possible in the interrogative, why does one find only the *to* + infinitive construction in the affirmative? (2) Is there any difference in meaning which would justify the use of both constructions in utterances with interrogative force, or are they merely free variations? (3) Why is + *to* infinitive not attested after *why* in interrogatives? (4) What is the relation of the traditionally-given distribution to the full pattern shown above?

In Duffley & Enns(1996)(abbreviated D&E), they insist that all of these questions can be solved, using a strictly semantic approach to syntax which will work with the three parameters they propose. Their approach is speaker-and not hearer- based, since it is the way in which

the speaker construes the situation which determines the way he expresses it. In any case, D&E's approach is a better one than the previous work in that they illustrate an analysis based on the semantic, in a sense, pragmatic approach, not simply showing the pattern of distribution. However, it is a fact that their approach has left something to be desired.

Although D&E explain that the meaning of *to* in this construction is concerned with the existence of a temporal before-after relationship, they do not sufficiently state the reason why *to* has such a meaning. Also the conclusion proposed in D&E cannot always be applied to other constructions, though they insist that this idea can apply in those cases.

In this essay, we propose that, in considering this construction, it is necessary to treat this within the whole framework of semantics and pragmatics, and the concept of iconicity is important in developing the explanatory power of the meaning of *to* in this construction. Moreover, unlike D&E, we suggest that we should have a speaker-hearer-based approach, not solely a speaker-based one. And D&E's explanation about why the language behavior of *why* is different from that of the other *wh*- words is insufficient. Therefore, we also attempt to give a better explanation of this.