A Comparison of French and German

Auxiliary Verb Selection:

The HAVE/BE Alternation

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In both modern French and German, the auxiliary verb used for most
perfective conjugations is the equivalent of the English to have (avoir in French
and haben in German). Yet in both languages, there is also a class of verbs which
take the equivalent of the English to be (être in French and sein in German) as their
auxiliary verb in the perfective past tense. This phenomenon is exemplified in (1-
French) and (2-German)¹, where (1a) and (2a) are conjugated with the equivalent of
the English to have (henceforth noted HAVE), but (1b) and (2b) take the equivalent
of the English to be (henceforth BE) as their auxiliary verb.

1)  a) Il a/*est travaillé.  
    He has/*is worked  
    "He worked."

   b) Il *a/*est venu.  
    He *has/is come  
    "He came."

2)  a) Er hat/*ist gearbeitet.  
    He has/*is worked  
    "He worked."

   b) Er *hat/ist gekommen.  
    He *has/is come  
    "He came."

Teachers of French and German as foreign languages often instruct students
that the verbs which require BE as their auxiliary, as in (1b) and (2b), are "movement
verbs", or verbs which indicate a change in position or a change of condition.

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¹ Example sentences in this paper were created by the author unless another source
is specified. Most of the author's examples were checked by native speakers of the
relevant languages.
According to this explanation, the verbs which are conjugated with BE should be the same in both languages. In reality, however, the verbs making up this class vary greatly from one language to the other, with only a few verbs belonging to this class in both languages.

This paper is an attempt to explain the BE/HAVE alternation in French and German exemplified in sentences (1) and (2). To begin, several theories will be examined which attempt to explain auxiliary selection in one of these two languages or in all languages in general. The aforementioned explanation which is presented to most students of French and German ("movement verbs") is an example of such a theory, as are ones are based on criteria such as unaccusativity, telicity, and theta roles. This paper will demonstrate why all of these theories fail to provide a complete and convincing explanation for the BE/HAVE alternation in French and German. Instead of supporting one of these theories, this paper will propose a combination of theories which is able to illuminate more aspects of auxiliary selection than any single theory.

French and German are not the only languages which exhibit this type of behavior. Several other Romance and Germanic languages also show an alternation between HAVE and BE in their past perfect auxiliary verb selection, although certainly not all of these languages. Romance and Germanic languages can be thought of as being a cline, with languages in which all verbs take HAVE as their auxiliary (such as Rumanian, Portuguese, Swedish, and English) at one end, while at the other end are the languages in which the use of BE as a past tense
auxiliary is widespread (such as Italian), (Shannon, 1987). Most of the languages, including French and German, fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

The variations in the BE/HAVE alternation are found between individual languages and do not generalize to form a distinction between Romance and Germanic languages. Romance languages can be found at all points in the spectrum. There are those which never allow BE as a perfective auxiliary (Spanish), those that allow BE in a limited number of cases (French), and those that allow BE as an auxiliary for a high number of verbs (Italian). Germanic languages may also be found at various points along the spectrum. For example, both German and Dutch select BE as an auxiliary more often than French but less often than Italian.

For several decades, linguists have been searching for a commonality among verbs which take BE as their auxiliary, something which would allow them to draw a clear line between those verbs which take BE and those which take HAVE. There are countless theories which seek to explain not only the reason for the BE/HAVE alternation itself, but also reasons for the discrepancies between the various languages. This paper will address and discuss several such theories, focusing exclusively on French and German and the variation between these two languages in their auxiliary selection.

The differences between the two languages are best displayed by dividing the verbs which take BE as their auxiliary into three categories: those verbs that require BE in both languages, those that take BE in German but take HAVE in French, and those that are conjugated with BE in French but with HAVE in German. List 1
(below) contains examples from the first category, but it is not an exhaustive list.

List 1
English gloss:  
French:  
German:  
to go  
aller  
gehen  
to come  
venir  
kommen  
to die  
mourir  
sterben  
to be born  
naitre  
gebären  
to arrive  
arriver  
ankommen  
to become  
devenir  
werden  
to remain  
rester  
bleiben  
to fall  
tomber  
fallen

Because these verbs take BE as their auxiliary in both languages, (and in most other Romance and Germanic languages which exhibit the BE/HAVE alternation), they can be thought of as the core of this class of "BE verbs".

List 2 (below) contains examples from the second category, those verbs which take BE in German yet take HAVE in French.

List 2
English gloss:  
French:  
German:  
to be  
être  
sein  
to walk/ run  
courir  
lauufen  
to fly  
voler  
fliegen  
to travel  
voyager  
reisen  
to swim  
nager  
schwimmen  
to jump  
sauter  
springen

The verbs in the third category are all reflexive verbs. In French, reflexive verbs are conjugated with BE, whereas reflexive verbs in German always take HAVE as their auxiliary. A few examples are shown in List 3 (below).

List 3
English gloss:  
French:  
German:  
to dress oneself  
s’habiller  
sich anziehen  
to wash oneself  
se laver  
sich waschen  
to open (intransitive)  
s’ouvrir  
sich öffnen  
to ask oneself/ to wonder  
se demander  
sich fragen
There do not appear to be any non-reflexive verbs which take BE in French and not in German.

There is also a sub-category of verbs which are reflexive in French, and thus require BE as their auxiliary, but which are non-reflexive in German. Interestingly, these non-reflexives generally also require BE as their auxiliary in German. These verbs thus technically fall under category 1 (see List 1). Yet because all of the French verbs in this class are reflexives, there seems to be a distinct difference between them and the other verbs exemplified in List 1. Consequently, they have been listed separately in List 4 (below).

List 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English gloss:</th>
<th>French:</th>
<th>German:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to fall asleep</td>
<td>s’endormir</td>
<td>einschlafen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to wake up</td>
<td>se réveiller</td>
<td>aufwachen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get up (out of bed)</td>
<td>se lever</td>
<td>aufstehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to evaporate</td>
<td>s’evaporer</td>
<td>verdampfen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, there are some verbs which can take BE in some situations, but which take HAVE in others. Both French and German contain numerous verbs which exhibit this dual behavior, although this class of verbs is not the same across the two languages. Such verbs will henceforth be called “two-way verbs”.

Examples of auxiliary choice which varies between sentences containing the same verb are shown in (3) - (6). In the first sentence in each pair, the verb selects BE as its auxiliary, yet in the second sentence of each pair, this same verb selects HAVE.
as its auxiliary. Sentences (3) and (4) are French; sentences (5) and (6) are German.

3) a) Il est sorti de la maison.
   He is went out from the house
   "He went out of the house."

   b) Il a sorti les meubles de la maison.
   He has taken out the furniture from the house
   "He took the furniture out of the house."

4) a) Ce livre est paru depuis longtemps.
   This book is appeared since long time
   "This book has been in print for a long time."

   b) Ce livre a paru l’an dernier.
   This book has appeared the year last
   "This book was published last year." (Huffman, 1977)

5) a) Sie sind nach Dresden gefahren.
   They are to Dresden went (by car or train)
   "They went (by car or train) to Dresden."

   b) Sie haben den Wagen in die Garage gefahren.
   They have the car into the garage drove
   "They drove the car into the garage."

6) a) Die Kinder sind nach draußen getanzt.
   The children are to outside danced
   "The children danced (in order to move from inside to) outside."

   b) Viele Leute haben getanzt.
   Many people had danced
   "Many people danced." (Shannon, 1987)

In examining these five classes of verbs (Lists 1-4 plus two-way verbs), there
are a few specific questions which seem to be relevant. The first of these questions is

2 For some phrases in which two-way verbs are conjugated with BE, the past
participle of the verb is regarded as an adjective instead of an active verb and the
phrase is referred to as an "adjectival phrase". Trying to determine whether the past
participle is technically an adjective or an active verb in these cases is a complicated
and difficult process and thus will not be attempted here. For the purposes of this
paper, past participles conjugated with BE in non-passive constructions will be
considered active verbs rather than adjectives.
whether there is an identifiable commonality between the verbs in the first category which would cause them to take BE as their auxiliary in both French and German. Building on that idea, what do the verbs in List 4 have in common with the verbs in List 1 which causes all of them to select BE as their auxiliary in both French and German, and yet how do these verbs differ from the others so that they are reflexive in French (but not in German)?

Secondly, what separates the verbs in the second category from those in the first category? Why does French treat these categories differently while German treats both categories the same? Thirdly, what do reflexive verbs have in common with the other BE verbs which would allow them to be conjugated with BE in French, and how do they differ from the other BE verbs so that they are conjugated with HAVE in German? Finally, what determines the choice of BE or HAVE in the case of two-way verbs? These questions are important to keep in mind when evaluating the various theories which have been offered to explain the distinction between BE and HAVE in French and German.

This paper will examine several such theories, beginning with the ones which take a syntactic approach, such as those based on the unaccusative hypothesis, which will be discussed shortly. This paper will also examine theories which are based on the following semantic criteria: movement or change of state, telicity, theta roles, and emphasis on state versus activity. Although none of these theories are able to fully account for all of the behavior associated with the auxiliary alternation in French and German, several of them are able to explain important aspects of the
behavior and thus appear to hold some validity.

A full explanation of the BE/HAVE auxiliary alternation in French and German is most likely a combination of various aspects of multiple theories. Not only is a combination of various theories required to account for the complicated set of behaviors associated with the auxiliary alternation in these two languages, but different theories most likely account for different behaviors. For example, the auxiliary selection of French reflexive verbs appears to be based on different criteria than the auxiliary selection of German two-way verbs. This paper will attempt to outline such a combination. This combined set of theories will address the questions previously posed in conjunction with the five verb classes (Lists 1-4 plus two-way verbs) involved in the auxiliary alternation of the two languages.

Theories which attempt to explain auxiliary selection (in any language) usually take either a syntactic or a semantic approach. The former is used to account for several two-way verbs in French and German. Looking back at sentences (3) and (5), one notices that the verbs in sentences which contain BE as an auxiliary (3a and 5a) are intransitive, whereas the verbs in sentences containing HAVE (3b and 5b) are both transitive (the verb has a direct object). Thus it appears that the behavior of some of the two-way verbs can be explained simply by stating that all transitive verbs take HAVE as their auxiliary, even if these same verbs take BE when used intransitively. In contrast, the syntactic differences between (4a) and (4b) are very slight, as are the ones between (6a) and (6b). The existence of these latter two-way verbs greatly increases the difficulty of finding a solely syntactic explanation for
auxiliary verb selection in French and German.

Most recent syntactic theories about the BE/HAVE alternation involve what is known as the "unaccusative hypothesis". This hypothesis states that there are two classes of intransitive verbs, the unaccusative, or ergative, verbs and the unergative verbs. The former class of verbs have no underlying subject at D-structure, but rather an underlying object which moves into subject position in surface structure. The verb *to remain* is an example of an unaccusative verb. In contrast, unergative verbs have an underlying subject but no underlying object. The verb *to speak* is an unergative verb. Related to these criteria is another way to define unaccusativity which states that an unaccusative verb is one which is unable to assign a theta-role to its subject (Burzio, 1986, and Levin and Hovav, 1995)\(^3\).

One diagnostic for identifying unaccusative verbs is the possibility (or lack thereof) an impersonal passive construction. Unaccusative verbs can not form impersonal passive constructions, whereas most unergative verbs can. Sentences (7) and (8), both German, are examples of this diagnostic for unaccusativity: the verb *ankommen* (*to arrive*) is unaccusative and can not form an impersonal passive (sentence 7), while the verb *arbeiten* (*to work*) is unergative and easily lends itself to an impersonal passive construction (sentence 8).

\(^3\) As reflected in the term "unaccusative," this class of verbs is unable to assign accusative Case and thus can not take a direct object at the surface level. In studying unaccusativity, Burzio (1986) noticed a correlation between the ability of a verb to assign accusative Case and its ability to assign a theta role to its subject. This correlation is now known as "Burzio’s Generalization" and led to the alternative definition of an unaccusative verb as one which does not assign a theta role to its subject (Levin and Rappaport, 1995).
According to several recent theories, the class of unaccusative verbs are those which take BE as their auxiliary in all languages which exhibit the BE/HAVE alternation, whereas unergative verbs, (as well as all transitive verbs), take HAVE as their auxiliary. Several theories have been set forth to explain how and why the unaccusativity of verbs affects their auxiliary verb choice. Working in French, Lois (1990) hypothesizes that the auxiliary avoir (HAVE) needs to receive the subject theta-role from its past participle. The past participles of unaccusative verbs are unable to provide such a theta-role (see alternative definition of unaccusativity above) and so these verbs can not be conjugated with avoir. Another theory has been proposed by Taraldsen (1987), who hypothesizes that the unaccusativity of a verb interacts with the linking of its subject to form a complete functional complex. For various reasons, linking can only be completed for the subjects of unaccusative verbs if they select BE as their auxiliary.

The unaccusative hypothesis is still controversial, as there are some linguists (Shannon, 1987 and 1988) who are not convinced that such a separation (between unaccusative and unergative verbs) exists within the body of intransitive verbs. If one assumes its existence, however, one is able to find evidence which could support the idea of a correlation between the class of unaccusative verbs and those
verbs which take BE as their auxiliary.

For example, the German verb *tanzen* normally selects HAVE as its auxiliary, as in sentence (6b), but occasionally this verb will take BE as its auxiliary, as in sentence (6a). When tested against the unaccusative diagnostic of a possible impersonal passive, the use of *tanzen* in (6a) appears to be unaccusative (see 9a), while the verb’s more frequent usage in (6b) appears to be unergative (see 9b):

9) a) *Es wurde nach draußen (von den Kindern) getanzt.*
   It was to outside (by the children) danced
   “There was dancing (by the children) outside.”
b) Es wurde (von vielen Leuten) getanzt.
   It was (by many people) danced
   ”There was dancing (by many people).”

Thus one possible reason for the difference in auxiliary selection between (6a) and (6b) could be the difference in unaccusatitivity of their respective uses of the verb *tanzen*.

More support for a correlation between auxiliary selection and unaccusatitivity is found in the fact that most of the verbs on List 4, all of which take BE in both French and German, are unaccusative verbs4. This classification is based on the unaccusative diagnostic which states that all causative alternation verbs are unaccusative when used intransitively. That is, verbs such as *to wake* or *to evaporate* have an external theta role when used transitively (when the subject of the clause is performing the action on the object of the clause) but are unaccusative

4 Because unaccusative verbs are a subset of intransitive verbs, reflexive verbs are generally not considered as candidates for unaccusatitivity. This apparent discrepancy relating to the French verbs on List 4 will be clarified later by Shannon’s (1988) explanation of the “detransitivizing” nature of French reflexive clitics.
when the subject of the clause is the one undergoing the action.

Despite these examples in which unaccusativity and auxiliary selection appear to be related, there is also ample evidence indicating that auxiliary selection is not actually based on this criterion. First of all, such a basis would not account for the differences between French and German auxiliary selection. If all unaccusative verbs, and only unaccusative verbs, took BE as their auxiliary, that would indicate that the verbs from List 2 must be unaccusative in German, but unergative in French. According to the unaccusative diagnostic of a possible impersonal passive construction, this classification is not accurate. Using this diagnostic, the French verb voyageur (to travel) is revealed to be unaccusative (sentence 10), whereas its German counterpart reisen (also to travel) is revealed to be unergative (sentence 11).

10) *Ca a été voyage.
   It has been traveled
   "It was traveled."

11) Es wurde gereist.
   It was traveled
   "There was traveling."

These two classifications are the reverse of what would be expected by the auxiliary selection theories based on the unaccusative hypothesis.

Theories based on this hypothesis also fail to account for several French two-way verbs. Sentence (4) shows that the verb paraître (to appear, past participle = paru) can take either BE or HAVE as its auxiliary. Once again using the unaccusative diagnostic of a possible impersonal passive construction, both usages of paraître are found to be unaccusative. That is, neither usage can form an
 impersonal passive construction, as shown in example (12).

12) a) *Ca a été paru depuis un an.
   It has been appeared since one year
   "It has been in print for a long time."
   b) *Ca a été paru l'an dernier.
   It has been appeared the year last
   "It was published last year."

Based on this evidence, as well as evidence from both French and German verbs on List 2, it appears that unaccusative verbs do not always take BE as their auxiliary. It is therefore unlikely that unaccusativity is the sole explanation for auxiliary selection, although verbs which are unaccusative and verbs which select BE as their auxiliary may overlap in certain cases (such as the verbs from List 3).

Although syntax may play a role in determining auxiliary selection, such as distinguishing between transitive and intransitive uses of a verb, it is not the only element involved. Semantics appears to also have an important function in auxiliary selection. As can be seen from (4) and (6), the same verb can take both BE and HAVE, depending solely on context.

There are several different theories for auxiliary selection based on semantic criteria. The criteria taught to most students learning French or German as a foreign language is in fact semantic. As stated earlier, students are instructed that verbs which take BE are (intransitive) verbs which indicate a movement or a change of state. Yet this criterion does not hold for all verbs. There are countless movement and change of state verbs which do not take BE as an auxiliary in French. Examples include sauter (to jump), disparaître (to disappear), and other verbs which comprise List 2.
Though less numerous, there are also change of state and movement verbs in German which usually take HAVE as their auxiliary and which only occasionally select BE. One such example is the verb *tanzen* (to dance). The typical behavior of this verb is shown in (6b); sentence (6a) depicts one of the infrequent occasions of auxiliary variation for this verb. Other examples of German change of state and movement verbs which usually take HAVE as their auxiliary are *sitzen* (to sit), *stehen* (to stand), and *liegen* (to lie). Although speakers in southern Germany (and some Swiss dialects) often conjugate these verbs with BE, all three verbs take HAVE in standard German (Shannon, 1987).

Not only are there change of state and movement verbs which do not take BE (or only rarely take BE) as their auxiliary, there are also verbs which indicate neither motion nor a change of state, yet require BE as their auxiliary. In both French and German, the verb which is the equivalent of the English *to remain* (*rester* in French and *bleiben* in German), a verb which in fact indicates a lack of motion, is always conjugated with BE. In German, the verb *sein*, (to be), also requires BE as its auxiliary in the perfective. Based on these examples, it seems that indication of movement or change of state is neither a necessary, nor a sufficient, condition for verbs to take BE as their auxiliary.

Other theories have proposed telicity as the basis for auxiliary verb selection. Specifically, it has been claimed that verbs whose meaning includes an end point or goal will choose BE as their auxiliary. Many German two-way verbs exhibit such behavior. These verbs are conjugated with BE when they are used in contexts in
which there is an expressed end point or goal; if there is no such expressed end point, the verb may select HAVE as its auxiliary. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in (13).

13) a) Ich bin in kurzer Zeit zur anderen Seite gerudert.
   "I rowed to the other side in a short time." -----telic

b) Ich habe stundenlang gerudert.
   "I rowed for hours." -----atelic (Shannon, 1988)

Yet there are also verbs, such as the French courir (to run), which never take BE as their auxiliary, even when used in a telic expression, such as (14).

14) Il a/*est couru au cinema.
   "He ran to the cinema"

In order to explain the behavior exemplified in (14), many theories which base auxiliary selection on telicity have been modified in the following way. The telos in (13a) is both physical ("to the other side") and temporal, in that the hearer knows that the activity was completed at a certain moment in time (the moment when the rower reached the other side). In contrast, the auxiliary selection of French verbs seems to especially focus on the temporal aspect of telicity.

Specifically, it has been suggested that French verbs which indicate a punctual action take BE as their auxiliary, whereas verbs which indicate a potentially durative action take HAVE as their auxiliary. According to Lepetit (1994), an action is punctual if it is not possible to start the action without also completing it. Both punctual and durative verbs may have a telos, or an end point, but for durational actions this telos must be explicitly stated, whereas the meaning of punctual verbs
already includes a telos.

Thus punctual actions are considered to have no duration (their starting point and end point are the same), and this characteristic can be used to test the theory that punctual verbs take BE as an auxiliary. According to this theory, verbs which can be used in a phrase which indicates a duration of time should take HAVE, whereas those verbs which do not allow such a construction (punctual verbs) should take BE. Testing several French verbs from Lists 1 and 2 supports this hypothesis. The verbs in sentences (15) and (16) are from List 1 (verbs which take BE), while the verbs in sentences (17) and (18) are from List 2 (verbs which take HAVE in French).

15) * Je suis arrivé pendant une heure. 
   I am arrived during one hour  
   "I was arriving for an hour"

16) * Je suis venu pendant une heure. 
   I am come during one hour 
   "I was (in the process of) coming for an hour."

17) J'ai couru pendant une heure. 
   I have run during one hour 
   "I ran for an hour."

18) J'ai nagé pendant une heure. 
   I have swum during one hour 
   "I swam for an hour."

The above examples support the hypothesis that punctual verbs take BE as their auxiliary. The verbs which can be used in phrases indicating a duration of time (sentences (17) and (18)) select HAVE as their auxiliary, whereas those verbs which do not allow such a construction (sentences (15) and (16)) are the verbs which
select BE.

There are, however, examples which do not follow the pattern expected by either the general telicity theory for German (that only telic verbs take BE) or the modified version for French (that all only punctual verbs take BE). Certain German verbs, such as *springen (to jump),* tend to select BE as their auxiliary in both telic and atelic contexts, as is shown in (19).

19) a) Das Kind *hat/ist vom Stuhl (runter-)gesprungen.
   The child *has/is from the stool (down) jumped
   "The child jumped (down) from the chair." ---telic
b) Das Kind *hat/ist viel (herum-)gesprungen.
   The child *has/is a lot (around) jumped
   "The child jumped (around) a lot." -----atelic (Shannon, 1987)

In French, the verb *rester (to remain),* which is a verb from List 1 (verbs which always take BE), can be combined with a statement about the duration of the action (as in sentence 20) and would thus not be considered punctual.

20) Je suis resté à la bibliothèque pendant une heure.
   I am stayed at the library during one hour
   "I stayed at the library for an hour."

Based on the examples in (19) and (20), it seems that auxiliary selection of BE is not based solely on telicity, although the two may often coincide, as seen in (13).

Another potential basis for auxiliary selection is the theta role of the verb's subject. One possibility is that for verbs which take BE, the subject is always the THEME of the verb. However, many of these verbs can be combined with the modifier "intentionally", a behavior which indicates that the subject of the verb is an AGENT, not a THEME. A few examples from both French and German are shown below.
21) Je suis tombé intentionnellement.
   I am fell intentionally
   "I intentionally fell down."

22) Je me suis lavé intentionnellement
   I reflexive am washed intentionally
   "I intentionally washed myself."

23) Ich bin absichtlich verschwunden.
   I am intentionally disappeared
   "I disappeared intentionally."

24) Ich bin absichtlich aufgestanden.
   I am intentionally got up
   "I intentionally got up."

Shannon (1987, 1988) argues that it is not agentivity which is important, but rather whether or not the subject is an undergoer of the action indicated by the verb. A THEME or a PATIENT is obviously an undergoer of the verb's action, and the subject of a phrase such as (21), (22), (23) or (24) is also an undergoer, despite also being an AGENT. Instead of thinking in terms of these traditional theta roles, Shannon (1987, 1988) discusses the semantic roles of actor and undergoer. He argues that subjects of phrases such as (21) - (24) are "affected actors".

Shannon (1987, 1988) hypothesizes that for a verb to select BE as its auxiliary, its subject must be an undergoer of the action indicated by the verb. Several German two-way verbs demonstrate this behavior; when the subject is an undergoer, the verb selects BE as its auxiliary, but when the subject is the source/location of the action, the verb selects HAVE. Sentences (25) and (26) are examples of this phenomenon. In (25a) and (26a), the subjects of the verbs are the undergoers of the actions, whereas in (25b) and (26b), the subjects are the
sources/locations of the actions.

25) a) Der Wein ist aus dem Faß gelaufen.
   The wine is out of the keg run
   "The wine ran (leaked) out of the keg."
   b) Das Faß hat gelaufen.
   The keg has run
   "The keg leaked."

26) a) Das Wasser ist auf den Boden getropft.
   The water is onto the floor dripped
   "The water dripped onto the floor."
   b) Der Wasserhahn hat getropft.
   The faucet has dripped
   "The faucet dripped."

There do not appear to be any examples of verbs conjugated with BE in either language whose subjects are not the undergoers in some form of the actions indicated by the verbs. There are, however, verbs which take HAVE yet which also have subjects which are the undergoers of the action indicated by the verbs. The French verbs nager (to swim), sauter (to jump), and être (to be) are a few examples, as well as the German two-way verbs which take HAVE when used in an atelic sense, such as in (13b). Thus the semantic role of the subject as an undergoer seems to be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a verb to select BE as its auxiliary.

Yet another semantic criterion has been proposed by Huffman (1977) and Bichakjian (1988) to explain auxiliary selection: the emphasis of a verb phrase on either a state or an activity. According to Huffman (1977), "Sometimes ... the lexical nature of a verb is such that it could denote either a state or the action which led to that state. In such a case, the speaker will have the option of focusing on either the action itself, or on the resulting condition, whichever is more appropriate to the
message he wishes to convey (italics by Huffman).” Huffman (1977) theorizes that the verbs which select BE as their auxiliary show a de-emphasis on activity and instead emphasize the condition resulting from the activity.

Working in French, Bichakjian (1988) also claims that the verbs which take BE are the ones for which the past participle indicates “l’état du sujet” (the state of the subject). He adds that the use of être does not easily lend itself to situations in which the speaker wants to emphasize the action itself. The prototypical verb which would select BE according to these theories is to become, the very meaning of which draws attention to a new state. The equivalent of this verb takes BE as its auxiliary in both French and German. These theories even account for the verb to remain, a verb whose equivalents take BE in both French and German but which other theories (including movement, telicity, punctuality) fail to explain.

Theories based on the stative/active opposition seem to be particularly relevant to two-way verbs, most of which are inchoatives (verbs indicating a change of state). The French verb changer (to change) provides a good example of this type of behavior in (27), as does the German verb gefrieren (to freeze) in (28). In both cases, the first sentence of the pair emphasizes the activity indicated by the verb by specifying when this activity took place, while the second sentence in the pair focuses on the state resulting from this action.

27) a) A ce moment-là, ma vie a changé. At that moment-there my life has changed “At that moment, her life changed.”
   b) Tu verras qu’il est changé. You see (future) that he is changed “You will see that he has changed.”
28) a) Es hat heute nacht gefroren.
   "There was a frost last night."
   b) Das Wasser ist zu Eis gefroren.
   "The water has frozen to ice."

   There are, however, many verbs in both French and German which always take BE, even when they focus on an action and not on the state resulting from it. The action can be emphasized by specifying the time at which it occurred (as in sentence 29- German) or by describing the manner in which it occurred (as in sentence 30- French).

   29) Er ist um zehn Uhr angekommen.
      "He arrived at ten o'clock."

   30) Elle est allée en voiture.
      "She went by car."

   In (31), it is obvious that the speaker is not focusing on the state resulting from the action of falling, since the subject is no longer in that state but has instead gotten back on her feet.

   31) Elle est tombée, mais puis elle s'est relevée.
      "She fell, but then she got back up."

   Thus it seems that none of the semantic criteria which have been examined so far- movement or change of state, telicity, theta roles, and the stative/active opposition- are able to fully account for the auxiliary selection in French and German. Nevertheless, all of these criteria appear to be connected in some way to the BE/HAVE alternation. This paper will therefore now turn to an attempt to
combine various aspects of different theories in a way which would most fully account for the full set of complicated behavior associated with auxiliary selection in French and German.

In order to construct such a combination, this paper will address several of the questions originally posed in response to the five categories of verbs presented at the beginning of the paper. First, is there an identifiable commonality between the verbs in the first category which would cause them to take BE as their auxiliary in both French and German? In response to this question, Shannon (1987, 1988) has developed a prototype of verbs which select BE as their auxiliary, as well as a prototype of verbs which take HAVE. The BE prototype is a telic/punctual verb which emphasizes the state resulting from the action indicated by the verb and whose subject is the undergoer of this action. This undergoer is affected and changes externally by changing state or position.

This model proposed by Shannon (1987, 1988) is a little too narrow to accurately describe all of the verbs found in List 1. Therefore, a modified version will be adopted here. Verbs which take BE in both French and German are verbs which relate to motion or change of state and which convey some information about the condition which results from these activities, and whose subjects are the undergoers of the actions indicated by the verbs. These characteristics apply to all of the verbs found on List 1, including the verb to remain (rester in French and bleiben in German). This verb specifies a lack of motion and a lack of change, and thus can be considered a verb which "relates" to motion or change of state. This verb also
conveys information about a condition which results from the action (or in this case, the lack of action) described.

With the exception of rester and the reflexive verbs, all French verbs which take BE must express punctual (as opposed to durative) actions. There is no such requirement in German. There appears to be no concrete reason that rester is allowed to take BE despite its durative aspect; possible reasons for the use of BE as an auxiliary for French reflexives will be discussed a little later.

Thus the next set of questions which needs to be addressed is: What separates the verbs in the second category from those in the first category? Why does French treat these categories differently (the French verbs in the second category take HAVE) while German treats both categories the same?

The main difference between the verbs in the first and second categories is that the latter do not provide as much information about the states resulting from the actions described. That is, use of the verb to die (mourir in French and sterben in German) indicates that someone is in the state of being dead, and use of the verb to arrive (arriver in French and ankommen in German) indicates that someone is in the state of being in a new place, but use of the verbs to run (courir in French and laufen in German) or to jump (sauter in French and springen in German) do not provide much information about the states resulting from these actions. Only when a telos is explicitly stated (such as the location which was reached by running)

5 The German verb sein (to be) differs from the other verbs in the first and second categories in numerous ways. There appears to be no concrete reason for it to take BE as its auxiliary.
do these latter verbs become somewhat stative instead of active.

The verbs in the first and second categories are treated as identical by the German language but not by the French language. For whatever reason, the latter seems to have more stringent standards for which verbs it allows to select BE as an auxiliary verb. That is, if a verb does not rigidly conform to each and every part of the BE prototype in French, it can not select BE as its auxiliary. In the case of the verbs found on List 2, they apparently do not conform rigidly enough to the requirement that they "convey some information about the condition which results" from the activities indicated by the verbs.

One possible reason for the higher standards in French than in German is that higher standards results in fewer verbs selecting BE in French, and speakers of this language may be seeking to reduce the distribution of this auxiliary. According to Rydén (1991), the elimination of BE as a past tense auxiliary in English was due to the functional diversity of this verb (it already served both as copula and as the passive marker). The same could perhaps be true for French as well, although BE is only limited, not eliminated, as an auxiliary in French. Since BE already functions for several other purposes in French (copula and passive), its use as a past tense auxiliary could give rise to ambiguities. The more restricted the use of BE as an auxiliary, the less the likelihood of having an ambiguity arise. In German, the verb *werden* is used as the passive marker and thus BE is only used as a copula and as an auxiliary.

Before moving on to examine the next category of verbs, it may be helpful to
construct a chart of the conclusions which have been drawn so far. The following chart displays the combination of theories which explain the BE/HAVE alternation for the first two categories of verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 verbs</th>
<th>Category 2 verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(take BE in both languages)</td>
<td>(take BE in Ger., take HAVE in Fr.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**German**
- Prototype:
  1. relate to motion/change of state
  2. convey info. about condition resulting from action
  3. subject of verb = undergoer

**French**
- Prototype, but requirement #2 is not strictly enforced
- Take HAVE because unlike in German, requirement #2 is strictly enforced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ must be punctual (not durative)</td>
<td>take HAVE because requirement #2 is strictly enforced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next category which presents itself for examination consists of reflexive verbs. These verbs are conjugated with BE in French, but take HAVE in German. The reason for this difference appears to be based on transitivity. In both French and German, only intransitive verbs can take BE as their auxiliary. Reflexives are generally considered to be transitive in that the reflexive pronoun is the direct object of the verb. According to Shannon (1987), however, in French “the reflexive pronoun has become a proverbial clitic, thereby losing its privileged status as a clear, independent argument of the verb (... it apparently can not be stressed by itself, contrasted or moved) and instead becoming incorporated into the verb as a detransitivizing prefix to the verb.” In contrast, German reflexive pronouns may be stressed, contrasted and moved. They appear to retain their status as independent arguments and thus as direct objects of the verb (which is consequently transitive).

Shannon (1987) adds that because the past participle in French agrees with the
proverbial clitic, the participle might look as if it were agreeing with the subject when in fact it is actually agreeing with the reflexive clitic. He states that this illusion may indicate “that the reflexive [is] not really a separate argument and moreover that the subject [is] in fact the undergoer - which would of course ... motivate the use of BE, not HAVE.”

The original questions posed concerning auxiliary selection for reflexive verbs were: what do reflexive verbs have in common with the other BE verbs which would allow them to be conjugated with BE in French, and how do they differ from the other BE verbs so that they are conjugated with HAVE in German? In response to the latter question, the reflexive verbs in German are transitive and thus are not allowed to select BE as their auxiliary.

The answer to the former question is more complicated. Although many French reflexive verbs exhibit the traits of a prototypical BE verb, such as having a subject which is the undergoer of the action described and being inchoative, not all French reflexives share these traits. For example, the verb se laver (to wash oneself) is potentially durative, rather than punctual, and the verb se demander (to ask oneself/ to wonder) does not refer to a movement or a change of state, nor does it convey any information about the condition resulting from the action indicated by the verb. For these reasons, it seems likely that French reflexive verbs select BE as their auxiliary for syntactic, rather than semantic reasons. That is, French syntax must include a rule which states that all reflexive verbs are conjugated with BE in the past perfective tense.
The verbs found on List 4 are reflexive in French, but not in German. The question to be addressed concerning them is: what do these verbs have in common with the verbs in List 1 which causes all of them to select BE as their auxiliary in both French and German? The answer is that all of the verbs found on List 4 are inchoative (they indicate a specific change of state). The subject of an inchoative verb is always the undergoer of the action indicated and these verbs clearly convey information about the condition resulting from this action. Thus an inchoative verb displays all of the traits of the prototype for taking BE as an auxiliary. In addition, all of the French verbs found on List 4 are punctual, which is another requirement for verbs to take BE as their auxiliary in French. Besides these semantic criteria, the French verbs in this category would be conjugated with BE because of the aforementioned syntactic rule for French reflexive verbs.

Before continuing, it may be helpful to update the chart which displays the combination of theories explaining the BE/HAVE alternation for each category of verbs. This chart now has the following appearance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 verbs</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(take BE in both</td>
<td>prototype:</td>
<td>prototype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>languages)</td>
<td>1. relate to motion/change of</td>
<td>+ must be punctual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. convey info. about condition</td>
<td>(not durative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. subject of verb = undergoer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Category 2 verbs     | prototype, but requirement #2  | take HAVE because           |
|----------------------| is not strictly enforced        | unlike in German,           |
| (take BE in Ger.,     |                                | requirement #2 is          |
| take HAVE in Fr.)    |                                | strictly enforced           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Category 3 verbs</strong></th>
<th><strong>German</strong></th>
<th><strong>French</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(reflexives)</td>
<td>take HAVE because they are transitive</td>
<td>syntactic rule states: reflexives take BE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbs from List 4</td>
<td>inchoative verbs, therefore they fit prototype to take BE</td>
<td>inchoative and punctual; also follow syntactic rule for French reflexive verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(subcategory of Cat. 1, reflexive in Fr. but non-reflexive in Ger.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final category of verbs which needs to be addressed consists of two-way verbs. As previously asked, what determines the choice of BE or HAVE in the case of two-way verbs? In both French and German, this choice seems to be motivated by a few specific features of the verb. First of all, a verb will take HAVE when it is used transitively, even though the same verb takes BE when it is used intransitively.

Secondly, BE will be selected over HAVE when the verb phrase emphasizes the state which results from the action indicated by the verb rather than the action itself. Nearly every one of the two-way verbs in both French and German is an inchoative verb whose lexical nature is such that it could denote either a state or the action which led to that state. Examples of two-way verbs in French are augmenter (to increase), baisser (to decrease), dégeler (to thaw), grossir (to gain weight), maigrir (to lose weight), pourrir (to rot), and vieillir (to age). Examples of German two-way verbs are altern (to age), faulen (to rot), heilen (to heal), reifen (to ripen), and trocknen (to dry). In German, the stative/active opposition is most often revealed.

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6 Lepetit (1994).

using telicity. Verbs phrases which include a telos emphasize the state resulting from the action indicated by the verb, whereas atelic verb phrases focus attention on the action itself.

Thus the final version of the chart displaying the combination of theories which address the BE/HAVE alternation for all of the verb categories is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 verbs (take BE in both languages)</th>
<th>Category 2 verbs (take BE in Ger., take HAVE in Fr.)</th>
<th>Category 3 verbs (reflexives)</th>
<th>two-way verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prototype:</td>
<td>prototype, but requirement #2 is not strictly enforced</td>
<td>take HAVE because they are transitive</td>
<td>take BE when emphasis is on state resulting from action rather than emphasis on the action itself; state often emphasized by indicating telos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. relate to motion/change of state</td>
<td></td>
<td>take HAVE because they are transitive</td>
<td>same as German, except that telicity is less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. convey info. about condition resulting from action</td>
<td></td>
<td>syntactic rule: reflexives take BE</td>
<td>inchoative and punctual; also follow syntactic rule for French reflexive verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. subject of verb = undergoer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One can now see that there is no simple explanation for the BE/HAVE alternation in French and German. Although the two languages both display this alternation in their auxiliary selection, they implement it in slightly different ways.
Both appear to base their auxiliary selection on a prototype describing the ideal verb which should be conjugated with BE, but French adds other restrictions to the prototype and thus selects BE less frequently than German. Auxiliary selection in German appears to be purely semantically based, whereas in French, syntax plays a role in auxiliary selection at least for reflexive verbs.

There are still countless questions to be answered concerning auxiliary selection in these two languages. For example, the German verb sein (to be) does not fit the prototype for a verb to select BE, and yet it always takes that auxiliary. Further investigation is needed to determine the reason for this behavior. Another area of possible exploration is the relationship between characteristics such as unaccusativity and the selection of BE as an auxiliary. Although this paper concluded that unaccusativity (and telicity, etc.) was not the sole basis for auxiliary selection, there does appear to be a relationship between them. A thorough description of this relationship is another area for further study.
References


