Hanna from Poland asks:

Hello.

In 'have a meeting', is 'have' stative or dynamic? The reason I ask is that in "Longman English Grammar" by L.G. Alexander, p. 201, I read that 'have' meaning 'possess' can be replaced by 'have got' and combines with appointments, etc and then I read an example "I have (got) an appointment with my dentist tomorrow." So my conclusion was – it is stative.

But in "Advanced Language Practice" by M.Vince, p.11, I came across: "The team members are having a meeting tomorrow." and I felt confused.

My next question is about the verb 'own' which I always thought stative until I read "More and more people are owning bicycles." (Advanced Language Practice, M.Vince, p.4.) Would you be so kind as to explain this to me?

Looking forward to your reply,

Hanna

'Stative / Dynamic'

Mark Shea answers:

Hi Hanna,

So, is "to have a meeting" stative or dynamic then? This is an excellent question and deals with a very complex and changing area of English grammar - the nature of verbs.

All grammar books will tell you that some verbs are **dynamic** - that is to say they talk about **actions**; they involve energy and movement and these verbs are frequently
used in continuous forms. Examples are the verbs 'to do', 'to eat', and 'to watch'. I might say:

"I'm doing my homework, eating a sandwich and watching television all at the same time!"

Other verbs are stative - they describe states rather than actions. There's no action involved in the verb 'possess', for example. We don't normally use stative verbs in the continuous. We can't say 'I'm possessing a bike', for example.

Unfortunately, there are many verbs which can have both stative and dynamic meanings...

So, if we ask Maria -

"Are you and your husband going to have any more children?" -

She might answer:

"No, we already have three."

Here, the verb 'to have' is stative. It could be replaced with 'have got' and should not be used in the continuous. It would be wrong to say 'I am having three children already'.

But if we change the meaning slightly, a wife might phone her husband and ask:

"What are you doing?"

He might reply:

"I'm having a cup of coffee with my friend."

This time the verb 'to have' is dynamic; the meaning has changed. It is talking about the action of enjoying a social activity, and so it can be continuous.

"I'm having a cup of coffee with my friend."

I would argue that your example with 'meetings' is very similar...

"I have/I've got a meeting" is stative - it means 'possess' in the sense that we have it in our diaries, for example.
If we say:
“We are **having** a meeting”,
it is **dynamic** and means much the same thing as:
“We are **meeting**”.
So 'to have a meeting' can be both **stative and dynamic**, and Mr Alexander and Mr Vince are both right!

I have to confess, I don't like the second example nearly as much. I think 'own' is definitely **stative**, and using it as a dynamic verb is just **bad style**.

When we say: "**More and more people are owning bikes**" - we really mean 'getting' or 'buying', otherwise we **should** say:
"**More and more people own bikes.**"

Unfortunately this trend - to use stative verbs as dynamic - is growing. In advertising, for example, there is a lot of pressure to sound as dynamic as possible. One famous chain of hamburger restaurants has a very annoying slogan - "I'm loving it." That's bad English and I for one won't eat there any more!

I hope this has answered your question, Hanna.

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