

# Extensions of Deictic and Existential Constructions in French: *Voilà, Voici, and Il y a*\*

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## 0. Abstract

This study is a cognitive semantic analysis of the different senses of French *voilà* “there is” and *voici* “here is”. Their range of semantic and syntactic variation defies classical categorization in terms of grammatical or discourse elements. We demonstrate that their syntactic behavior is best explained by the semantic and pragmatic function of each of their senses. We analyze the motivated nature of relations between senses in terms of radial category theory (Lakoff 1987). Finally, we compare French and English deictic demonstrative constructions with special reference to their extensions to existential constructions.

Keywords: French, deictic, existential, extension, radial category

## 1. Introduction

French deictic locatives *voilà* “there is” and *voici* “here is” occur at first glance with greatly varying meanings and somewhat varying syntax, as the examples in (1) attest.

- (1) (a) *Nous y voilà, enfin arrivés.*  
We’ve finally arrived.
- (b) *Voilà les clés que tu cherchais.*  
There are the keys you were looking for.
- (c) *Voici son sac.*  
Here’s his bag.
- (d) *Voilà une bonne idée.*  
There’s a good idea.
- (e) *Voilà de la bonne littérature.*  
Now there’s good literature.
- (f) *Voilà le moment que nous attendions.*  
Here’s the moment we’ve been waiting for.
- (g) *Voilà deux heures que ça sent la vache.*  
That’s two hours it’s smelled like cow.
- (h) *Voilà deux kilomètres que ça sent.*

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- That's two kilometers it's smelled.
- (i) **Voilà que la fin approche.**  
Now the end is coming.
- (j) **Voilà mon oncle content.**  
Now there's my uncle happy.
- (k) **Voilà des étudiants de Berkeley.**  
There are some Berkeley students.
- (l) **En voilà des étudiants!**  
Now there are some students (for you)!
- (m) **Voilà votre café.**  
Here's your coffee.
- (n) **Me voilà à la conférence.**  
Here I am at the conference.
- (o) **Voici le but de la discussion...**  
Here's the point of the discussion...

The present study is a cognitive semantic analysis of the different senses of *voilà* and *voici*<sup>1</sup> found above. Their range of semantic and syntactic variation defies classical categorization in terms of grammatical or discourse elements. We demonstrate that their syntactic behavior is best explained by the semantic and pragmatic function of each of their senses. We analyze the motivated nature of relations between senses in terms of radial category theory (Lakoff 1987). Finally, we compare French and English deictic demonstrative constructions with special reference to their extensions to existential constructions.

### 1.1. Some historical background on *voilà* and *voici*

*Voilà* and *voici* derive historically from imperative forms of the verb “to see”, which in Modern French has the form *voir*, plus a deictic locative adverb, either *ci* “here” or *là* “there”, both of which still exist as clitics in Modern French. Very early attested forms maintained verbal inflection and permitted certain pronouns to come between the verbal form and the locative clitic (2).

- (2) (a) *veez là...* (Le Mort le Roi Artu)  
See(f.) there...
- (b) *voy la...*  
See(inf.) there...
- (c) *veez me là...*  
Here I am.

At least as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, however, these forms both lost their inflection and became agglomerated into a single lexical item, as their orthography and invariability of form in (1) show.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, *voilà* and *voici* were historically used to differentiate between proximal and distal relations, as *ci* and *là* still do, as in example (3), below. At present, these two forms are mostly interchangeable without semantic consequences, with *voilà* used most frequently and *voici* becoming less common among younger speakers. Further discussion of the historical development of *voici* and *voilà* can be found in section 4 below.

- (3) (a) *Tu parles de ce type-là?*  
Are you talking about that guy there?  
(b) *Non, de ce type-ci!*  
No, about this guy here!

## 1.2. Previous accounts

Previous accounts of *voilà* and *voici*, as Moignet (1969) points out, have labelled them according either to traditional parts of speech (“syntactic” properties) or discourse function (“pragmatic” properties) (4):

- (4) (a) Prepositions (Girault-Duvivier, 1851)  
(b) Adverbs (Brunot and Bruneau, 1969)  
(c) Verbs (Moignet, 1969)  
(d) Presentatives (Grenoble and Riley, 1996, Lambrecht 1981)  
(e) Interjections (Nyrop, 1914)  
(f) Factives (Damourette and Pichon, 1927)

With regard to the many divergent characterizations of *voilà-voici*, Moignet (1969) notes that:

Certaines [définitions] se réfèrent aux traditionnelles parties du discours...les autres les ignorent et...les caractérisent par une indication de fonction dans le discours. (p. 190) (Certain [definitions] refer to the traditional discourse roles...others ignore [the traditional roles] and...characterize [*voilà* and *voici*] by indicating their function in the discourse.)<sup>3</sup>

He himself attempts to refute all possible classifications of *voici* and *voilà* besides “verb” because they do not fit well with the syntactic behavior of the deictics. He rejects functional definitions because they “do not say anything about the nature of the

sign" (ibid., 195) and all role-oriented definitions, because in each case only certain constructions with *voilà* or *voici* exhibit the prototypical syntax of the given grammatical role. But his classification is based entirely on the syntactic environment in which the forms in question can occur - not on prototypical valence, tense, or inflectional morphology constraints. He is forced, therefore, to submit that *voici* and *voilà* "form a sort of verb without morphological variation, [which are] impersonal, unimodal (indicative) and unitemporal (present)...which refuses nominal support" (ibid., 201).

In the same vein, Bouchard (1988) reflects on *voici* and *voilà*, taking solely their syntax into account. For him, as for Moignet, they are verbal forms restricted to the present of the indicative tense, which (and this is the crux) are subjectless. This is extremely problematic for his approach because languages, in his view, must be either pro-drop or non-pro-drop, and since French does not allow subjectless verbs anywhere else in its grammar, *voilà* and *voici* violate the generalization that present indicative verbs take subjects. His solution, that because they are not awarded TNS/AGR marking, *voilà* and *voici* are assigned no nominal case slot, is thereafter rejected by Morin (1988), who shows that because of the Marais Vendéen dialect of French, where *voilà* is inflected in the present indicative (3rd person), Bouchard's proposed cause for the subjectlessness is invalid.<sup>4</sup>

Other authors, including Grenoble and Riley (1996), have expressed interest in looking at *voilà* and *voici* as presentative deictics, with corresponding discourse deictic meaning, but restrict their analytic criteria to pragmatic inference and discourse function, ignoring syntactic behavior to a very large extent.

We argue that grammatical classifications based on classic categorization like those described above are insufficient since *voilà* displays both non-prototypical behavior in terms of traditional grammatical categories and a sufficiently wide range of semantic and pragmatic "senses" to defy a monotonic classification of its meaning. Moreover, these are the reasons for past disagreement and divergence.

### **1.3. The Nature of the Present Account**

The present analysis of French deixis differs from other analyses in several ways. First of all, unlike Moignet (1969) and others, we will not focus on finding one single syntactic category in which best to classify the particular lexical item we are considering. Rather, we recognize that grammatical categories are not subject necessary and sufficient conditions, and that many are radial, a view that is supported by fruitful research by Van Oosten (1986), Rice (1987), and Lakoff (1987), among others. Moreover, we feel that the unavoidable unresolvability of squabbling over whether *voilà* is really a verb, an adverb, or a preposition is in fact evidence that any attempt to apply rigid structure to aspects of human language that evidently are unwilling to comply constitutes an endeavor devoid of sense. The last twenty years

have taught us that necessary and sufficient conditions will not suffice to describe categories in human cognition (Lakoff 1987, Rosch and Lloyd 1978). Our goal, then, will be to describe a linked network of distinct senses (and corresponding syntactic behavior, i.e. constructions (Goldberg 1995)) for the words we investigate. If it falls out from this approach that in some contexts, *voici* has to be described as a preposition and in others as a presentative, this is very much an acceptable outcome, as noncentral members of any radial category tend to have the most erratic and interesting behavior.

An additional influence on our work is Langacker's (1991) theory of the functioning of the symbolization relationship between meaning and form of language, that is, how it is that the conceptual structure of a particular piece of language is linked to and drives the corresponding speech signal. We take the position that an analysis of a given word must centrally include a detailed description of every possible sense of that word and the pragmatics of the situations in which each of its senses could be used. The discovery of differences in syntactic behavior corresponding to those pragmatic/semantic distinctions between senses provide additional evidence for delineating different senses. Equally important are the contextual biases, interpretations, and restrictions on a given word in a specific linguistic context.

Thirdly, we recognize that extensions from one sense to another in semantic space can have different kinds of motivation. Among these are metonymy (frame-internal reference to one aspect or entity using the language associated with another), metaphor, constructional grounding, and blending, all of which will be discussed in detail below. We will claim with Sweetser (1990) that semantic change, just as polysemy in general, is regular and motivated, while not generative or absolutely predictable. This does not derive from frustration with the complexity of semantic networks, but grows rather out of the realization that the workings of the human cognitive system are not generative or predictable.

Finally, our approach differs from others we have had access to in the course of our investigation in that we recognize conceptual metaphor to be an important factor in semantic extensions like those mentioned above. We incorporate the fact that metaphor, as originally developed in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and developed further by Lakoff (1987 and 1993 among many others), is an immense cognitive structure underlying a large proportion of our language. While other analyses are forced to posit either arbitrariness or reinterpretation of an unsubstantiated ambiguity, we are able to supply a clear motivation for many cases that superficially appear to defy classical rules of logical semantic extension by analyzing the metaphorical structures that give rise to extensions.

#### **1.4. Structure of the present analysis**

The present analysis involves: (1) positing distinct word senses where semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic properties between uses differ (Brugman 1981; Lakoff 1987); (2) categorizing each sense of *voilà* based on its own behavior, rather than trying to determine a single grammatical class (Van Oosten 1986); and (3) determining the systematic relations between the different senses of a given word, including metaphor, metonymy, and constructional grounding (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Sweetser 1990, and C. Johnson 1998).

In essence, the present work stems from a comparison between the ways that French and English cut up the semantic space of deixis and existence, with reference to Lakoff's (1987) discussion of *there* constructions in English. Most superficially, while English has one radial category of constructions that cover the semantic and pragmatic ground of deictics and existentials (from *There's my book, on the table.* (deixis) to *There are 9 planets in the solar system.* (existential)), French deictics *voilà* and *voici* are not extended to existential senses as the existential *il y a* "there is" similarly eschews deixis. Moreover, English has two productive deictics that express distal and proximal deixis in locational predications respectively: *There's my wallet* versus *Here's my wallet*. In contrast, the spatial distinction (*voilà* distal/*voici* proximal) is becoming restricted to a very formal register as well as certain extended senses. In order to properly compare the way that French and English segment the deictic and existential semantic space (section 5), we give a brief analysis of *il y a* (section 5.1).

The cases of *voilà* and *voici* are interesting in terms of the questions above first because they constitute a family of constructions that are organized in a radial category through metaphor, metonymy, constructional grounding, syntactic blends, and the pragmatics of certain communicative acts. More importantly, these forms display close ties to the speech contexts they occur in and the pragmatic information they convey for the simple reason that they communicate more than just a proposition. As deictics, they are grounded in space and time relative to the speaker and/or hearer. Additionally, they entail speech acts relying upon the current state of the interlocutor and instructions to change that state. Thus, the pragmatics of the speech context in which each sense is used and the particular semantics of the domain to which it is extended motivate the restrictions in each extension.

In section 2, we describe the central deictic demonstrative construction, from which other senses (section 3) of *voilà* and *voici* are extended. We then deal with issues pertaining to the historical development of these forms in section 4. Finally, we compare English *there* and French *voilà*, *voici*, and *il y a* (existential) construction (section 5).

## **2. The Central Deictic**

### **2.1. So you say you found the central case.**

Following Lakoff (1987), we will describe the central sense of locative deictics in terms of an Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM) (ibid.) or primary scene (Grady & Johnson 1997) of “Pointing Out” (☞). ICMs are schematic-level knowledge structures with gestalt and prototype properties. For example, understanding the English word *Tuesday* is mitigated by the ICM of Week. The Pointing Out ICM is an experiential gestalt that is common and crucial in young children’s linguistic and non-linguistic interaction. Lakoff describes this ICM as follows:

It is assumed as a background that some entity exists and is present at some location in the speaker’s visual field, that the speaker is directing his attention at it, and that the hearer is interested in its whereabouts but does not have his attention focused on it and may not even know that it is present. The speaker then directs the hearer’s attention to the location of the entity (perhaps accompanied by a pointing gesture) and brings it to the hearer’s attention that the entity is at the specified location [...] (Lakoff 1987:490).

From this ICM, *voilà* and *voici* explicitly encode both a directive to focus attention (*voi-*) and the location of the entity (*-ci* or *-la*). Their direct object is the entity pointed out. The uses of *voilà* and *voici* corresponding to this sense are those from (1) reproduced in (5) below:

- (5) (a) *Voilà les clés que tu cherchais.*  
There are the keys you were looking for.  
(b) *Voici son sac.*  
Here’s his bag.  
(c) *Voilà des étudiants de Berkeley.*  
There are some Berkeley students.

Although there is no accepted means by which to gather direct evidence that this is indeed the central sense of the radial category of senses of *voilà* and *voici*, we can marshal three kinds of circumstantial evidence. First, although a language’s historical and children’s cognitive/linguistic development are not always identical (Rice & Cuyckens 1998), there are many informative parallels between the two (Sweetser 1990). At the very least, the historical development and the acquisition data both show cognitive connections that humans can make. Historically, as discussed in section 4.2 below, *voilà* and *voici* are compositionally *voi* “see-IMP” and *là* “there” or *ci* “here”, which belong to the domain of spatial perception, suggesting that this is the more primary or more central case. Second, category research (Rosch and Lloyd 1978) has shown that prototypicality effects play a crucial role in category organization, and that prototypes are experientially more basic than either other

members of the category in question or components of the prototype (in other words, prototypes have gestalt structure). The spatial sense, in comparison with the others described below, fulfills these characteristics. Third, the spatial domain is the source domain of metaphors that map onto the target domain realms of discourse, time, and other conceptual domains to which *voilà* and *voici* are applied.

## 2.2. The Syntax

The basic structure of the Central Deictic is a construction with the following minimal specification: a deictic locative adverb<sup>5</sup> (i.e. *voilà* or *voici*) and a noun phrase (which we show to be the direct object of the construction). In this section we will discuss some of the formal properties of the Central Deictic, including its relation to the declarative and imperative verbal modes, and the possibilities of embedding, negating, and questioning it.

### 2.2.1 *Voilà*: Declarative or Imperative (or Both)?

The central Deictic's NP can be either a pronominal or a full NP, which can optionally include modifiers of all sorts and can be definite or indefinite (6).

(6) Mod + N	<i>Voilà ton petit frère.</i> There's your little brother.
indefinite determiner + N	<i>Voilà un (des) oiseau(x).</i> There's a (some) bird(s).
definite determiner + N	<i>Voilà le roi.</i> There's the king.
N + relative clause	<i>Voilà la fille dont je t'avais parlé.</i> There's the girl that I talked to you about.
N + gerundial phrase	<i>Voilà Paul qui pleure.</i> There's Paul crying.
	<i>Voilà Marie travaillant.</i> There's Marie working.

The pronominalization of the NP in the central deictic shows that the NP is the direct object of *voilà* and that its syntax is like that of a declarative sentence, though the action of "pointing out" displays imperative-like semantics. The pronoun used in the *voilà* construction is a direct object pronoun placed before *voilà* (7a), like the declarative (7b), but unlike the affirmative imperative, which places the pronoun after the verb (7c) but before the locational complement (7e). Note that the negative imperative (7d) places the direct object pronoun before the verb.

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|-----|-----|---|---|
| (7) | (a) | <i>Voilà les clés que tu cherchais.</i><br>There's the keys you were looking for. | <i>Les voilà.</i><br>There they are.            |
|     | (b) | <i>Je vois les clés que tu cherchais.</i><br>I see the keys you were looking for. | <i>Je les vois.</i><br>I see them.              |
|     | (c) | <i>Apporte les clés que je cherchais.</i><br>Bring the keys I was looking for.    | <i>Apporte-les.</i><br>Bring them.              |
|     | (d) | <i>N'apporte pas les clés.</i><br>Don't bring the keys.                           | <i>Ne les apporte pas.</i><br>Don't bring them. |
|     | (e) | <i>Apporte les clefs à la cuisine.</i><br>Carry the keys to the kitchen.          | <i>Apporte-les là-bas.</i><br>Carry them there. |

This is also true for the cases where the NP is preceded by an indefinite article (partitive NP's), where the pronoun *en* "some", patterns like the direct object pronouns above, coming before the verb in declarative and *voilà* constructions, but after the verb in imperative constructions.

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| (8) | <i>Voilà des étudiants de Berkeley.</i><br>There's some Berkeley students. | <i>En voilà.</i><br>There are some. |
|-----|--|-------------------------------------|

A possible explanation for *voilà*'s acquisition of declarative pronominalization patterns is that it has a conventionalized propositional content, specifically, not only "look at that thing there," as the imperative would indicate, but additionally, "that thing is there". The conventional presence of this proposition can be shown by the *Oui, je sais* test (Jones 1996:181). If a sentence can be answered with *Oui, je sais* "yes, I know", then a proposition has been expressed. Note that this works for both declarative (9a) and *voilà* constructions (9b), but fails for imperatives (9c).

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| (9) | (a) | <i>-Je lui ai parlé hier.</i><br>I talked to her yesterday.<br><i>-Oui, je sais.</i><br>Yes, I know.                                   |
|     | (b) | <i>-Voilà tes clés.</i><br>There are your keys.<br><i>-Oui, je sais.</i><br>Yes, I know.   |
|     | (c) | <i>-Regardez les mignonnes petites vaches!</i><br>Look at the cute little cows!<br><i>-*Oui, je sais.</i><br>Yes, I know. <sup>6</sup> |

The *voilà* construction differs from other declarative sentences in some respects, however. One of the more obvious ways is that there is no explicit subject, which is true for the imperative as well. This suggests that the pragmatics of the “pointing out” scene surfaces in the syntax of the construction. In pro-drop languages, the subject pronoun can be omitted when the subject is known to speaker and interlocutor. The same is true for imperatives and *voilà* constructions in French (which is not pro-drop) because of their semantics; both have understood subjects, namely, the interlocutor. As discussed in section 4.1, the central *voilà* construction was historically an imperative, which may also account for the origin of the lack of an explicit subject.

The central *voilà* case also does not allow indirect objects, thus behaving like a strict transitive verb (10).

- (10) (a) *Regarde-moi ce livre.*  
See (look at) this book for me.
- (b) \**Voilà-moi ce livre.*  
\**Me voilà ce livre.*  
There’s that book for me.
- (c) \**Il m’y a ce livre.*  
There is this book for me.

We claim that this constraint, with respect to which *voilà* acts neither like a declarative nor like an imperative, derives from the semantics of the Pointing-Out ICM (☞). In French, most constructions can acquire indirect objects via the well-documented benefactive/adversative construction, exemplified in (10a) (Smith 1997). The semantics of these indirect object adding constructions, however conflicts with the propositional content of *voilà*, which describes a state of affairs. The same is true for *il y a*, the French existential construction (10c, see also section 5.1), which in essence describes a state of affairs with no intention ascribed to any participant.

Another way in which the pragmatics of the Pointing-Out ICM surfaces is that speakers tend not to use the first person as the direct object in the Central Deictic, unless it is in a different mental space (in a picture, movie, narrative, etc...) (Fauconnier 1994), where the first person is not the speaker but a representation of the speaker (11a & b). This contrasts with normal imperatives, which can take a first person direct object (11c).

- (11) (a) *Me voilà l’été dernier* [pointing to a picture].  
There I am last summer.
- (b) ?*Me voilà/voici.*  
There/here I am.
- (c) *Regardez-moi!*  
Look at me!

Note that the questionable sense we mean in (11b) is not the case where it indicates the recent arrival of the speaker, which we discuss below as the Now Deictic, but the case where the speaker is present, has been present, and indicates his or her location to the interlocutor. English “there” shows the same distribution; this constraint may derive from the pragmatics of the ICM: *voilà* presupposes that both speaker and hearer know the location of speaker and hearer. Therefore, if the location of the speaker is not known, which would be presupposed by *me voilà* “here I am”, *voilà* is incompatible with the speech context.

### 2.2.2. Embedding

Like other verbs expressing propositions, *voilà* can be embedded in a relative clause, modifying its subject, direct object, or indirect object (12). The meaning of this combination of constructions is predictable from their compositional semantics, namely, the relativized main clause NP is in the speech context and is pointed out parenthetically.

- (12) (a) *L'homme que voilà est mon amant.*  
The man (who is) there is my lover.
- (b) *Mon frère a vu l'homme que voilà dans un quartier riche.*  
My brother saw that man (who is) there in a rich neighborhood.
- (c) *J'ai parlé à la femme que voilà.*  
I talked to that woman (who is) there.

This is another way in which the central *voilà* construction patterns with declaratives, as imperatives can not be placed in relative clauses:

- (13) (a) *\*J'ai vu l'homme que regarde!*  
I saw the man who look (imperative) at him!
- (b) *\*Je l'ai donné à l'homme que frappe!*  
I gave it to the man who hit (imperative) (him)!

Other cases where the verb does not express a proposition, such as questions and exhortations also defy relativization:

- (14) (a) *\*J'ai vu l'homme que connais-tu?*  
I saw the man whom do you know?
- (b) *\*J'aime sa gueule que qu'il ferme!*  
I don't like his face that why doesn't he shut!

All of this is evidence that (1) *voilà* is acting as a verb with a direct object in terms of relative clause structure, and (2) that it expresses a proposition.

### 2.2.3. Negation and Questions

There are certain ways, however, in which *voilà* does not act like the simple expression of a proposition. Because of its link to the Pointing-Out ICM, *voilà* does not permit simple negation, at least not its central, spatial, sense (15a). However, interr negatives, which in French are negative questions where a positive response may or may not be expected, are possible (15b & c).<sup>7</sup> The strange behavior of forms like that in (15c) are the subject of this section.

- (15) (a) \**Ne voilà pas ton frère.*  
There isn't your brother.  
(b) *Ne voilà pas ton frère?*  
Is that your brother there?  
(c) *Ne voilà-t-il pas ton frère?*  
Isn't that your brother there?

The form in (15c) is reminiscent of interrogative forms of verbs in general with the impersonal pronoun *il* and the phonosyntactic “analogical” clitic *-t*, which is interposed between a verb form ending in certain vowels and the subject where inverted (in both positive and negative questions) (16).

- (16) (a) *Aime-t-il se promener au jardin?*  
Does he like to walk in the garden?  
(b) *N'aime-t-elle pas se promener au jardin?*  
Doesn't she like to walk in the park?

The alternation between affirmative *voilà* forms (which as we have said above are subjectless) and the interr negative ones, as in (15c), where an impersonal pronoun is present is a characteristic completely unique to *voilà*. This is perhaps less surprising, however, when we consider that *voilà* is the only syntactically subjectless verb form which is an available input to interr negative inversion. The reason for this is that all “semantically subjectless” verbs take the syntactic impersonal pronoun subject *il* (17), and that the only verbal mode where subjects can be omitted, the imperative, is not semantically coherent with interr negativization.

- (17) (a) *Il y a une blonde dans la salle d'attente.*  
There's a blonde in the waiting room.  
(b) *Il faut deux kilos de beurre.*

- Two kilograms of butter are needed.
- (c) *Dans le film il s'agit d'un grand homme blond.*  
The film is about a tall blond man.

The impersonal *il* can also be found with certain verbs in order to avoid complicated subjects (18), as in English. However, this is likely not the source of the impersonal pronoun in form (15c) as *voilà* takes no subject, much less an unwieldy one.

- (18) (a) *Partir tôt lui convient.*  
Leaving early is convenient for him.
- (b) *?Partir par le train de dix heures ce samedi lui convient.*  
Leaving on the ten o'clock train this Saturday is convenient for him.
- (c) *Il lui convient de partir par le train de dix heures ce samedi.*  
It is convenient for him to leave on the ten o'clock train this Saturday.

Rather, we claim that the entire *-t-il* complex in *voilà* interronegatives (15c) is created through analogy with other interronegative forms of the phonological shape of *voilà* (ending in /a/, which takes *-t*) and in particular, *il y a* and *il existe*, the existential forms (19), with which it shares some semantics. Namely, this shared semantics, as described in Lambrecht (1981) is that of presentation of a new element into some space, either the space of the present context (deixis) or of encyclopedic knowledge (existential).

- (19) (a) *N'existe-t-il pas une telle librairie?*  
Doesn't such a bookstore exist?
- (b) *N'y a-t-il pas un pilote dans l'avion?*  
Isn't there a pilot in the airplane?

Additionally, despite Grévisse's (1970) claim to the contrary, *il* (which is identical to the masculine third person subject pronoun) in *voilà-t-il* is in fact an impersonal pronoun, as shown by (20), where there is no normal semantic pronoun choice. This also supports the claim that the analogy is based on impersonal presentationals (existentials).

- (20) (a) *Ne voilà-t-il pas un homme?*  
Isn't that a man there?
- (b) *Ne voilà-t-il pas une femme?*  
Isn't that a woman there?
- (c) *\*Ne voilà-t-elle pas une femme?*  
Isn't that a woman there?

In terms of synchronic behavior and historical development, the *voilà* construction displays aspects of imperatives, others associated with declaratives, and some that are entirely unique. We have shown above that the distribution of these aspects is non-random but rather is based on pragmatic and semantic factors, which account for the particular syntactic properties.

### 2.3. The Event Deictic

*Voilà* can also be used to point out an event, rather than an object. Syntactically, in this construction, *voilà* is followed by *que* (a complementizer) and a finite clause (21).<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, an NP infinitival phrase indicates an event or action (22c & d).

- (21) (a) *Je savais que Marie embrassait Paul.*  
I knew that Marie was kissing Paul.  
(b) *Voilà que Marie part.*  
There's Marie leaving.  
(c) *Voilà que Jean embrasse Marie.*  
There's Jean kissing Marie.

In French, the event expressed as the direct object of *laisser* “to leave”, and verbs of perception can alternatively be an infinitival phrase (22a & b). *Voilà* patterns with verbs of perception (22c & d) either because it is preserving formal aspects of *voir* or because the “pointing out” part of its semantics has to do with perception. However, the *que* + finite in (21) seems to be preferred by speakers, perhaps for functional reasons: (1) they are identical to simple declaratives; and (2) they are less restricted than their infinitival counterparts and appear more frequently in the language in general (in part because they are not restricted to perceptual verbs).

- (22) (a) *Paul a vu Marie partir.*  
Paul saw Marie leaving.  
(b) *Paul a laissé parler le Président.*  
Paul let the President speak.  
(c) *Voilà partir Marie (Marie partir).*  
There's Marie leaving.  
(d) *Voici venir le temps des enfants.*  
Here's the children's hour coming.<sup>9</sup>

The semantics of the Central Deictic relates to a peripheral aspect of the Pointing Out ICM that also surfaces in English: pointing out an object can implicitly indicate an event it is taking part in. This is a characteristic not only of the Pointing-Out ICM, but rather of expressions of perception in general, as is the case for English.

An interesting difference between the object Central Deictic and the Event Central deictic is that the object case will serve as a source for many of the extensions from the central Deictic discussed below. In the metaphorical extensions, the metaphor that selects the source domain takes some aspect of the spatial domain with reference to objects, and not to events. In the next section, we discuss extensions from the Central Deictic in detail.

### 3. Extensions

Radial categories (Lakoff 1987, Brugman 1980, Lindner 1981) are polysemy networks where connections between senses are created through metonymy, metaphor, and other cognitive processes. The rest of the senses of *voilà* discussed in this paper will be shown to extend directly or indirectly from the Central Deictic and so, as per the Invariance Hypothesis (Lakoff 1993), will preserve or adapt most of the conceptual and linguistic structure we have discussed above. Our observations will confirm Moore's (1998) claim that deictic structure is retained in metaphorical extensions.

We will make use of the notion of *inheritance* when speaking of the relations between related constructions. Various formal theories incorporate this notion. Most of these, for example Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995) and canonical HPSG, see inheritance as complete: whenever a construction includes the entirety of another construction plus additional particularities, it can be said to inherit it. In a partial view of inheritance, however, an extension is said to inherit aspects of another construction when either some significant part of its structure is shared by some other construction, or their structure is related through some altering mechanism, such as metaphor or blending. This latter notion of inheritance is the one we will assume, although the theoretical implications for this choice are beyond the scope of the present work.

#### 3.1. The Discourse Deictic

An important extension from the Central Deictic is to the domain of discourse. The Discourse Deictic inherits the syntactic structure of the Central Deictic, with restrictions that derive from its particular pragmatics. This extended sense of *voilà* is mapped through the metaphors: DISCOURSE SPACE IS PHYSICAL SPACE, DISCOURSE ELEMENTS ARE ENTITIES, DISCOURSE IS MOTION ALONG A PATH, IMMEDIATELY PAST DISCOURSE IS IN OUR PRESENCE AT A DISTANCE FROM US, and DISCOURSE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS MOVING TOWARDS US. These are attested elsewhere both in English and in French (23).

- (23) (a) *Quand est-ce qu'on va arriver à la partie intéressante de l'histoire?*  
When are we going to **get to** the interesting part of the story?

- (b) *Je n'ai pas pu suivre la discussion.*  
I couldn't **follow** the discussion.

As has been previously shown for other languages (Lakoff 1987, Fillmore 1997), the proximal form, *voici*, is used to indicate discourse elements that will occur in the near future (24a), whereas the distal form, *voilà*, points to discourse elements that occurred in the recent past (24b). Note that although the central deictic allows a somewhat free exchange of the proximal and distal forms (section 1.1), here a semantic distinction is maintained. This is most likely related to the continued presence in French of the contrast between locational clitics *-ci* (and *ici*) “here” and *-là* (and *là*) “there”.<sup>10</sup>

- (24) (a) *Tu m'as demandé de te donner deux exemples. Les voici...*  
You asked me to give you two examples. Here they are...  
(b) *Tu m'as demandé de te donner deux exemples. Les voilà.*  
You asked me to give you two examples. There they are.

It should be noted that the use of these metaphors is not unique to the domain of discourse. *Voilà* and *voici* can be used in a similar way with other domains which involve sequences of events occurring over time, such as events in movies or games (25).

- (25) (a) *Voici la partie du film dont je t'avais parlé.*  
Here's the part of the film I told you about.  
(b) *Voilà le point crucial du jeu.*  
There was the crux of the game.

It is not the Central Deictic or even this embedded use of *voilà* that is the most common in spoken French, but rather an interjective use of the same sense. A preliminary search for instances of *voilà* in the Barnes Corpus shows that in a recorded conversation scenario, the most frequent cases of *voilà* are *voilà* on its own and *voilà, c'est ça* “There, that's it.” In both cases, *voilà* points to discourse elements in the recent past and is often used as a turn-shift marker (26).

- (26) E: ... [Tu as deux chambres?] Tu as deux chambres, une euh cuisine  
[You have two rooms?] You have two rooms, one...uh...kitchen...  
M: *une grande salle à manger*  
one big dining room  
E: *une grande salle à manger une cuisine et une salle de bains.*  
one big dining room, one kitchen, and one bathroom.  
M: **Voilà c'est ça.** Et puis la chambre d'invités est quand même grande notre  
*chambre est immense à nous.*

**That's right.** And the guest bedroom is actually pretty big our room is immense for us.

As we will show in (24) below, the Discourse Deictic belongs to a class of extensions with the particular property of retaining a binary semantic distinction between *voilà* and *voici*. We discuss this class in detail in section 4.2.2. below.

### 3.2. The Central Time Deictic

Another minor extension of the central deictic is what we refer to as the Central Time Deictic. This sense is mapped by the metaphors TIME IS SPACE and POINTS IN TIME ARE POINTS IN SPACE. It is used to refer to points in time with the same structure that we use to refer to objects in space. This metaphor is also common in other constructions throughout the French language.

Because the structure of the Central Time Deictic is so closely tied to the ICM of pointing out, some interesting restrictions apply. Recall that the Central Deictic is used to point to elements within the field of vision of the speaker and hearer. The metaphors TIME IS SPACE and POINTS IN TIME ARE POINTS IN SPACE map the location of the speaker and hearer onto a one dimensional “time line,” thus the only elements, or instants, that are within their field of vision are those points on the line that the speaker and hearer occupy (27a, b, & c). We find that this metaphor only works for present points in time, not spans of time (27d), or instants at a time other than that of the utterance (27e).

- (27) (a) *Voilà l'instant que nous attendions tous.*  
Here's the moment we've all been waiting for.
- (b) *Voilà le moment de la journée que je préfère.*  
This is the time of day that I like the most.
- (c) *Voilà le jour que j'attendais.*  
Here's the day [unit] I've been waiting for.
- (d) \**Voilà la journée que j'attendais.*<sup>11</sup>  
Here's the daylong I've been waiting for.
- (e) \**Voilà l'instant quand tu vas arriver.*  
There's the instant when you will arrive.

Due to the pragmatic restrictions on this construction, pronominalization of the NP and unmodified NPs are possible but pragmatically dispreferred. This results from the fact that in order to pronominalize or use an unmodified NP, both the speaker and hearer must be previously aware of this referent. This contradicts the function of the construction, which calls the interlocutor's attention to the period.

### 3.3. The Now Deictic

Another time-related extension of the central deictic is not a metaphorical mapping, but one that is derived through construcional grounding (Johnson 1998). The Now Deictic is the sense of *voilà* that we translated in (1) as “now”. It has a particular intonation pattern in many cases, with a rise in pitch across the word *voilà* (see spectrogram in Figure 6, appendix). The clause is often preceded by *et* “and” or *mais* “but”, to emphasize the consequentiality of the clause.

When we point an element out to an interlocutor, who was previously unaware of it, this is often because the element has recently arrived in our field of vision, and was not present there a moment ago. The fact that two states of affairs (i.e. presence and arrival) are commonly co-associated with this construction, which is frequently ambiguous between the two senses, can give rise to a secondary meaning. Other works (Sweetser 1990 and C. Johnson 1998) discuss this process more thoroughly. Proof that this is indeed an independent sense from the Central Deictic and not merely implicit in it comes from its divergent syntax and pragmatics.

The Now Deictic, as opposed to the Central Deictic, requires the locational complement to be specified, whether pronominalized (28a) or not (28b). (The sentences in 28 might be uttered by a tour guide.)

- (28) (a) *Nous voilà au labo.*  
Now here we are in the lab.  
(b) *Nous y voilà.*  
Now here we are.

That this sense is different from the Central Deictic is shown by the possibility of referring to an object or event that is not necessarily in the perceptual realm of the speaker, but when the state described by the NP is expected to obtain at a certain time (29).

- (29) (a) ***Voilà mon prof au labo.***  
**Now** my prof is in the lab [looking at watch].  
(b) ***Voilà que mon frère part.***  
**Now** my brother’s leaving.

Recall that in the Central Deictic, the use of first person was uncommon, due to conflicting presuppositions of the context and the potential construction. The first person is commonly used in the Now Deictic (28), however, another indication that the construction has a different set of presuppositions from the Central Deictic, as it is an independent sense of *voilà*.

### 3.4. Stative Deictic

Not all extensions of a radial category must be directly extended from that central case; they can also be extensions from other extensions. While this phenomenon has been discussed for lexical polysemy networks (Lakoff 1987, Brugman 1980) and for subjecthood (Van Oosten 1986), the idea that families of constructions might also display this behavior is, to our knowledge, a novel one (although inheritance of inherited constructions is discussed for the SAI construction in Fillmore 1998).

The Stative Deictic is mapped through the metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS from the Now Deictic. It inherits the structure, the stress pattern, and the tendency to occur with *et* “and” or *mais* “but” from the Now Deictic. Instead of a specified locational complement, however, it requires a stative complement, such as an adjective or the *qui*+verb construction (functionally similar to the gerund in English). The meaning that emerges is that a person is now in a state that they previously were not in.

- (30) (a) *Voilà mon oncle content.*  
Now my uncle’s happy.  
(b) *Le voilà content.*  
Now he’s happy.  
(c) *Voilà mon frère qui pleure.*  
Now my brother’s crying.  
(d) *Me voilà partie.*  
Now I’m gone.

Note that the sentence in (30c) can also have a Central Deictic meaning if the *qui*+verb is acting as a post-nominal modifier, where the speaker is pointing out the crying brother as opposed to some other brother (restrictive). It can also have the central meaning when the *qui*+verb is actually a descriptor of an action being pointed out (non-restrictive). These two uses are distinguished from the Now sense by the fact that in the Now sense the speaker doesn’t have to be pointing at the object performing the action; in fact, the object doesn’t even have to be in the visual field of the speaker or hearer.

The metaphor that gives rise to the Stative Deictic, STATES ARE LOCATIONS, is rampant elsewhere in both French and English (31). In the *voilà* sentences in (30) above, the fact that *voilà* takes a state descriptor in place of the locative descriptor from the Central deictic leads us to believe that this metaphor is present. In the examples below, prepositions and verbal predicates encode this replacement, but this is a general fact about the expression of states in French.

- (31) (a) Elle est **en** colère.

- She's angry.
- (b) Je suis **dans** une fureur.  
I am in a fury.
- (c) Il **est tombé dans** les pommes.  
He passed out. (literally, "he fell in the apples")

### 3.5. Span of Time (SPoT) Deictic

As additional evidence of the phenomenon of second-degree constructional extensions, we present the Span of Time (SPoT) Deictic, which motivates sentences like those in (32).

- (32) (a) *Voilà deux heures que ça sent la vache.*  
Now it's been smelling of cow for two hours.
- (b) *Voilà deux kilomètres que ça sent la vache.*  
Now it's been smelling of cow for two kilometers.

What is particularly striking about the above use is that its syntax seems not to be directly or simply extended from any other uses of *voilà*. Moreover, the use of X NP[span of time] *que* finite phrase only appears in one other construction of French, the Span of Time (SPoT) Construction (33). (We know of no others.) Specifically, X can be realized as either *ça fait* "it's been" or *il y a* "it's been", as in (33).

- (33) (a) *Ça fait deux ans que je vous attend.*  
I've been waiting for you for two years.
- (b) *Il y a deux ans que j'habite dans ce quartier.*  
I've been living in this neighborhood for two years.

This construction picks out a span of time lasting up until the present, during which time the state described by the finite phrase holds true. The semantics of the forms in (32) is extremely similar to that expressed in (33). Additionally, the forms with *voilà* are armed with a direction to the interlocutor to notice that at present the indicated span of time has passed.

We analyze this construction as a blend, a structure that projects two input spaces onto a single, separate space. The resulting "blended space" inherits parts of the structure of the two inputs spaces as well as displaying emergent structure (Fauconnier and Turner 1996). Once *voilà* has acquired the meaning of "now", as in the Now Deictic, it is available to undergo constructional blend with the time constructions in (33) above. This blend takes two input spaces: the SPoT Construction (33) and the Now Deictic of *voilà*, and yields the blended space of the

*Voilà* SPoT Deictic construction. The semantic properties of this blend are the result of the integration of the “now” sense of *voilà*, including the speech act of pointing out, and the sense associated with the SPoT Construction (“it has been X time that Y”), yielding “(Notice that) it has now been X time that Y”. Syntactically, the blended construction is identical to the SPoT Construction, with one exception. The verbs in *ça fait* and *il y a* can be conjugated in the future or past tenses with the SPoT Construction. However, in the blended *Voilà* SPoT Deictic construction, *voilà* is anchored in the time of the utterance: it does not conjugate and cannot refer to present or past reference times (34). We further discuss the particularities of *voilà* and *il y a* in temporal constructions in section 5.1.3.

- (34) (a) *Dans un mois, ça fera/il y aura/\*voilà deux ans qu'on se connaîtra.*  
 In a month, it will be two years that we will have known each other.  
 (b) *Ça faisait/Il y avait/?Voilà deux ans qu'on se connaissait.*  
 It was for two years that we had known each other.

The attentive reader will have noticed from (32) that not only time, but also space, can be used as a measure in this construction. On our analysis, it is not necessary to posit another sense, extended off of the Span of Time sense to the domain of space (which would be theoretically interesting as metaphors are claimed to be unidirectional). This is rather a case of metonymy wherein a distance stands for the time it takes to travel that distance, as in English *We've been singing for thirty miles*.

### 3.6. Paragon

While other senses of *voilà* serve to point out a novel object, event, or abstract entity, the Paragon Deictic serves to evaluate a referent already present in the discourse. It points out an item or set of items and identifies it/them as among the paragon exemplars of the class specified by the following NP (35). The Paragon Deictic also calls the interlocutor's attention to the (re-) categorization of the items in question as not simply members of the NP category, but in fact as paragon(s) of that category. The Paragon Deictic exhibits the syntactic restriction of only accepting partitive NPs, which can be realized either as full NPs (35a,b) optionally in combination with the pronominal *en* “some” (35c).

- (35) (a) ***Voilà*** *une bonne idée.*  
**There's** a good idea.  
 (b) ***Voilà*** *de la bonne littérature.*  
 Now **there's** good literature.  
 (c) *En voilà* *des étudiants!*  
 Now **there are** some students (for you)!

In the Central Deictic and elsewhere in existential statements, the use of the partitive is double: it both introduces an object (by its category name) into the discourse and, by dint of the use of the category name to refer to the object, implies the membership of the object in that category. For example, in English *There's a dog on the porch* both introduces the referent dog into the discourse and assigns this specific dog to the category of dogs. When the partitive is used with the Central Deictic construction, it acquires from the semantics of *voilà* the additional speech act of calling the interlocutor's attention to the referent.

The Paragon Deictic seems to derive through constructional grounding from a subset of the Central Deictic cases with partitive NPs. Constructional grounding occurs when a source construction is simpler to learn than a target construction, and where a subset of utterances instantiating the source construction also exhibits some central properties of the target construction. After learning the basic properties of the source construction, children generalize over the class of utterances constituting the overlap in order to identify the target construction.

How does the subset of cases where *voilà* points out a novel object with an implied categorization become a separate construction, which points out something novel about the categorization of an observed referent? Several possible explanations present themselves. The first scenario is extremely common, and involves a speaker teaching an interlocutor about the world or about a language. In statements like *There's a hippopotamus*, when directed at an interlocutor assumed not to have knowledge of this animal or of the language used to refer to it, the speaker is intentionally providing the name of a class and the membership of this particular entity in that class. Thus, the speaker could intend to make use of the ambiguous semantics of the partitive, intentionally pointing out the implication it makes (the categorization statement) rather than its primary meaning. A slightly less teleological explanation assigns the responsibility for detecting the ambiguity to the interlocutor. In cases where the interlocutor is aware of the presence of the referent, (s)he could falsely interpret the intention of the speaker as pointing to the categorization of the referent rather than to its presence. Either way, the particular semantics of pointing out the categorization of a referent can be seen as associated with the form of a particular set of Central Deictic permutations, specifically, using the partitive.

We have seen that a subset of Central Deictic constructions gives rise to a construction that allows us to refer to the categorization of referents, and not just the presence of the referents themselves. Pointing out a novel categorization of a known referent is particularly useful when a referent is a particularly good (paragon) member of this category or when the referent is a particularly bad (anti-paragon) member of this category. In the former case, this construction is used along with a particular intonation contour.

This construction uses the intonation pattern found in general with the expression of awe or paragon status (marked with a bolded element in the examples), as exemplified in the other constructions expressing awe (36). Instrumental analysis shows that this intonational pattern corresponds to a Low to High pitch contour over the word *voilà*, with a quick drop onto the rest of the low pitch sentence (see the pitch track in Figure 5, in the appendix).

- (36) (a) **Ça** c'est une bonne idée.  
Now, **that's** a good idea.  
(b) Si **Marco** n'y va pas, eh ben, moi non plus.  
If **Marco** isn't going, well then, me neither.

### 3.7. A Radial Category of Constructions

Figure 1 is a graphical depiction of the radial category of constructions we have described in this section. In the next section, we discuss the historical development of *voilà* and *voici* in light of this analysis.

\*\* Insert Figure 1 here \*\*

## 4. On the historical development of *voilà* and *voici*

### 4.1. Historical Syntax

The central, and the historically original, senses of *voilà* and *voici* are explicitly imperative ones that call the attention of the interlocutor to some element in the present location of the conversants by telling them to look at a thing at a location. Indeed, historically, these enigmatic words are composed of the imperative of *voir* “see” and the locational adverbs *là* “there” and *ci* “here”:

[...] les deux prépositions se sont formées progressivement. *Vois ci* (deuxième moitié XIII s.) qui s'est figée en *voici* (1485) a supplanté l'ancienne forme de *veiz* "vois", utilisée seule pour montrer puis dans *veiz ci* (v. 1175). L'ancien français opposait *veiz mi ci* (1170) "vois moi ici" et *veiz me ci* (1080) "voyez moi ici" selon que l'on s'adressait à une ou plusieurs personnes. Les deux éléments se sont réunis à la fin du XIII sous la forme notée *veeschi*; on relève ensuite les formes figées *vecy* (XIV) *vezci* (XV) et, par ailleurs, la réfection du verbe en *voiez ci* (1430), la séparation des deux termes étant encore attestée au XVI (1534 Rabelais, *voyez ci*). Parallèlement, mais plus tard, *ves la* (1283), *vez la* (XIV), s'est figé en *vela* (1342) et *voilà* (1538). Les formes *vez la*, *vela* se sont

maintenues dans la prononciation aux XVI et XVII; on les retrouve dans la prononciation populaire *v'la*, attestée à la fin du XVII. (Picoche 1992)

Both prepositions were formed progressively. *Vois ci* (second half of the XIII century), which was fixed as *voici* (1485), supplanted the archaic form *veiz* “see”, used exclusively to point something out, then *veiz ci* (c. 1175). Old French distinguished between *veiz mi ci* (1170) “see (s.) me here” and *veiz me ci* (1080) “see (pl.) me here” depending on whether one was addressing one or several people. These two forms were unified at the end of the XIII as in the attested form *veeschi*, we subsequently find the fixed forms *vecy* (XIV) *vezci* (XV) and, incidentally, the restoration of the verb in *voiez ci* (1430), the separation of the two terms being once more attested in the XVI (1534 Rabelais, *voyez ci*). Similarly, but later, *ves la* (1283), *vez la* (XIV), was fixed as *vela* (1342) and *voila* (1538). The forms *vez la*, *vela* were maintained in prononciation in the XVI and XVII; we find them in the popular prononciation *v'la*, attested at the end of the XVII.

The imperative is the only verbal mode in French which permits its direct object pronoun to appear after the verb. *Voilà* and *voici*, despite deriving historically from an imperative, pattern with all other verbal modes, only allowing direct object pronominals to precede them (recall the examples in (7)).

This change can be analyzed as deriving from a morphosyntactic reanalysis of the location pro-forms as clitics. We will show that this position essentially reduces to a case of semantic change driving corresponding syntactic change.

The locational pro-forms *ci* and *là* evolved from clitics to morphological elements of *voilà* or *voici*. This conventionalization and morphosyntactic reanalysis must emerge from situations in which the verb was directly followed by the locations pro-form. Before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this was the case if the direct object was expressed as a full NP (37b), but not if it was expressed with a pronoun (37a). In order for the locational pro-forms *ci* and *là* to be reinterpreted as part of the verb preceding it, cases of type (37b) must have been particularly more common or salient than those of type (37a). This assumption might be justified on the grounds that indicating or presenting a new entity into the frame or the awareness of the interlocutor is the central function of this use of *voilà* and *voici*.

- (37) (a) *veiz mi ci...* (1080)  
See (imper.) me here.
- (b) *Veez ci vos chival...* (Simon de Pouille 1225)  
See (imper.) here your horse...
- (c) *Les voici, les serpens, les pestes...* (Robert 1579)  
There they are, the snakes, the pests...

Once this cliticization occurred, *voilà* and *voici* lost a slot for the direct object pronoun directly after the verb. One could argue that synchronic word order constraints generated a shift in the placement of the direct object pronoun. Specifically, two independent constraints would give rise to the pre-posed direct object pronoun that we find in (37c) above.

Constraint 1: for all verbal modes, the direct object pronoun must precede *là* or *ci*.

Constraint 2: the direct object must immediately follow imperative verbs.

The two ordering constraints conflict when the locational pro-form becomes fixed directly after the verb, or when the predicate is not so clearly a verb. The development shown in (37c), where the direct object pronoun surfaces before the predicate, suggests that constraint 1 wins out over constraint 2. This kind of ranking of constraints, or optimization of word-order, shares with Optimality Theory (OT) conflicting, relatively ranked, violable constraints (Archangeli and Langendoen 1997). However, here the constraints are claimed to be language-specific surface structure guidelines instead of universal and innate constraints.

The argument presented above, however, is incomplete because the verb in this construction had already lost its imperative status even before the situation in (37c) arose. We find evidence for this from the shift in Old French forms between *Li Quatre Livre des Reis* (QLR) (1170) and *La Mort le Roi Artu* (Artu) (1230), both of which date from before the conventionalization of *voici* and *voilà*. In Old French, the “strong” first person pronominal form *mei* (used with imperatives) alternates with the “weak” form *me* (used with indicatives). In the QLR, *mei* always follows imperative uses of the verb *voir* (*veez mei {la, ci}*). However, in Artu “the verbal form and the adverbial particle form an idiomatic unity that entails the use of the unemphasized form *me*” (de Kok 1985), as in *veez me {là, ci}*. In other words, instead of taking the standard “strong” object pronoun *mei*, alongside imperatives, in Artu, *voilà* and *voici* as non-imperative units take the “weak” object pronoun, *me* as they did even before becoming a single lexical unit. At the point when Artu was written, *veez \_\_ {la, ci}* must have been (at least in the dialect of the author) a discontinuous idiomatic unit.

If these forms were semantically already indicatives, then there is no need to posit that (37b) was particularly frequent or common to get the morphosyntactic reanalysis of the locational pro-form or the pre-position of the direct object pronoun. Instead, both of these syntactic changes fall out from the re-classification of *voilà* and *voici* as indicatives. The direct object pronoun was placed directly in front of the inflected indicative verb, since this was (and still is) the canonical placement of direct object pronouns with indicative verbs. Given this change, the locational pro-form *là* or *ci* would always directly follow the verb, lending itself to cliticization.

Essentially, the morphosyntactic reanalysis-driven story is subsumed by a semantically-driven account. The indications given above provide evidence that the synchronic syntactic properties of central *voici* and *voilà* derive historically from changes in their semantics.

## 4.2. Usage development

### 4.2.1. ARTFL data

Despite their common origin, the modern forms, *voici* and *voilà*, have not developed in parallel. To illustrate their evolution, we consider corpus evidence taken from the ARTFL database, a literary corpus extending from the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ending in the 1960's. Although it does not show the most recent trends of spoken French, it is an excellent source for the historical development of these forms over the last five centuries. In Figure 2, the number of tokens of *voilà* and *voici* out of 10,000 tokens is plotted by century.

\*\* Insert Figure 2 here \*\*

*Voilà* and *voici* seem to have appeared in their deictic usage at about the same time, and at approximately the same frequency in literature. From around 1600 on, *voilà* demonstrated more frequent usage both relative to *voici* and in relation to the total number of words (tokens), until the 20th century, when it experienced a sharp decline in absolute occurrence. A possible explanation for this is that in both written and spoken language, for 300 years, *voilà*'s usage expanded to the semantic territory previously held by *voici*, while the use of both was on the rise. In the 20th century, the use of *voici* plateaued possibly because it was not extended to the new senses that *voilà* acquired.

In Modern French, especially among younger speakers, *voilà* is generally preferred over *voici* in the central case. This is part of a larger trend in French of distal spatial deictics taking over the uses associated with their proximal counterparts (Smith 1995). For example, speakers use the deictic locative adverb *là* "there" in the place of *ici* "here" even when the reference place is explicitly encoded elsewhere in the utterance as referring to the location of the speaker (38).

(38) *Viens là, Lulu, que je te mouche!*

Come here, Lulu, so I can blow your nose! (lit. "Come there")

What we observe here for *voilà* and *voici* follows a cross-linguistic trend for binary deictic systems to develop usage asymmetries (e.g. English, German, French, and Russian). The explanation for the primacy of the distal form, *voilà*, over the

proximal form, *voici*, in previous literature is based essentially on the concept of markedness. (Lakoff 1987, Greenberg 1966, Chomsky & Halle 1968, Bierwisch 1967). This literature fails, however, to explain why one or both elements of a binary pair will appear in different radial category extensions (Plauché and Bergen To appear). Nor does the general trend displayed in the ARTFL data presented above show how the asymmetry plays out in each of the senses described in sections 2 and 3. For some extended senses, only *voilà* is used (type 1 extensions), while in other extended senses, *voilà* and *voici* maintain distinct semantics (type 2 extensions). There are no extensions using only *voici*. Type 1 includes Paragon, Now, and extensions of Now: SPoT and Stative. Type 2 involves Discourse, Central Time, and Event Deictics. This phenomenon is explained in 4.2.2 below by the incorporation of the pragmatic functions of particular senses as deriving from the particular expressive requirements of the target domain.

#### **4.2.2. Explaining type 1 and type 2 extensions**

Our first observation is that all of the type 2 extensions involve a target domain in which the passage of time is a crucial element. In each of these extensions, the proximal deictic demonstrative picks out a reference time that is yet to come, while its distal counterpart does the same for a reference time already past, with respect to the time of the utterance. It should also be noted that the Discourse Deictic, while centrally dealing with discourse elements, crucially involves a distinction between future and past discourse elements, which could explain its inclusion in type 2. Type 2 extensions could be hypothesized to encode both elements of the binary pair because their domain inherently encodes a distinction which dictates the properties of mappings to it.

However, upon further inspection, we note that all type 2 senses involve metaphorical mappings with space as the source domain. As metaphors preserve the structure of the source domain when projecting it onto the target domain, metaphors based upon space can be expected to retain the opposition between proximal and distal elements. At the same time, type 1 senses arise through constructional grounding and constructional blends, neither of which necessarily preserves essential distinctions from the source construction. Thus, we might hypothesize that it is the nature of the extension mechanism, rather than domain-specific properties, that is responsible for determining a sense's type 1 or type 2 status.

The two alternatives described above might not be as antithetical as they first appear. From a learning perspective, metaphors arise when two domains are co-experienced, and where structuring knowledge of one in terms of the other is particularly helpful: in other words, where the metaphor is apt (Grady 1997, Lakoff and Johnson 1998). Important target domain distinctions will be picked out by a

metaphor because only apt metaphors will emerge, and the target domains will preserve distinctions that correspond to co-occurring elements of two domains.

Evidence for this joint hypothesis derives from the inclusion of the Now Deictic (whose semantics essentially involves time) among the type 1 senses. If the domain of time requires that both *voilà* and *voici* be mapped, then the Now Deictic, which also pertains to the domain of time, should similarly maintain a distinction. However, since the mechanism for extension is not metaphor, there is no conflated experience which would give rise to the systematic correspondence of target and source domain structures. In other words, the specific character of a sense derives from the intersection of the target domain requirements and pedigree of the extension.

## 5. Comparing French and English

### 5.1. French Existentials

As we have mentioned previously, the French existential has a separate structure from the deictic. The existential is expressed by *il y a* “there is” (literally: “it has there”) and is often subject to reductions from /ilia/ to /ja/, /ija/ and /ilja/. Below, we will give an overview of the historical development of *il y a*, as well as a synchronic analysis of parts of its radial structure. This is not a full syntactic analysis of the various *il y a* constructions, but an effort to lay them out in order to compare how the existential and deictic space is structured in English and French.

#### 5.1.1. Synchronic Perspective.

*Il y a* displays certain peculiarities expected of a radial category structure. Its semantics and syntax can be described in terms of a set of extensions (through metaphor, predominantly) from the central, existential presentative case to a set of more abstract senses, dealing with time and existence. We will look first at the central case, then at the extensions separately, at each point investigating the syntactic variety that is possible, and giving a sense of the semantics and pragmatics associated with the construction.

*Il y a* is a fixed construction made up of an impersonal subject pronoun, *il*, a locational pro-form, *y*, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular inflection of the verb *avoir* “to have.” If its central meaning is one that indicates existence, then we know because of the nature of the components of this construction that there must be metaphorical construal involved. However, when we look at the individual parts separately, we find that different metaphors motivate their presence. *Y* suggests the metaphor EXISTENCE IS LOCATION HERE, which accounts for English *coming into being*, *going out of existence*, and so on (Lakoff 1987). At the same time, the verb *avoir* derives its metaphorical property meaning from the metaphor PROPERTIES ARE POSSESSIONS,

which gives rise to the expression of attributes as objects that are in the control of the entities having those properties (Brugman 1981).

Lambrecht (1981) analyzes the *il y a* or *y'a* construction (39b and c) along with other, specified subject *avoir*-cleft constructions (39a):

- (39) (a) *J'ai ma voiture qui est en panne.*  
There's my car that's broken down.  
(b) *Y'a ma voiture qui est en panne.*  
There's my car that's broken down.  
(c) *Y'a Marie qui a téléphoné.*  
There's Marie who called.  
(d) *\*J'ai Marie qui a téléphoné.*  
There's Marie who called.

In these constructions, *avoir* is syntactically transitive, semantically intransitive, and the subject has the non-agentive semantic case role of theme. Some previously unavailable discourse referent is coded first as a postverbal lexical focus NP in the *avoir*-clause and then as an overt or covert subject pronoun in a subsequent relative clause (*qui*-clause). The difference between *il y a* and *avoir*-cleft constructions with personal pronouns (39a and b) is subtle. It seems to derive from the ability of the personal pronoun and not the impersonal one to serve as the unmarked topic for the entire sentence. This accounts for the asymmetry that all sentences of the type (a) can be expressed with the impersonal *il y a*, but not all sentences of *il y a* (of the type (b)) can be expressed with the personal pronoun (c).

While the *avoir*-clause merely poses the presence of the NP referent in the discourse, the *qui*-clause expresses the semantic role of this referent as a participant involved in some event, state or process. Also, the relationship between the *avoir* clause and the *qui*-clause is significantly different from the relationship traditionally thought to hold between a main and a subordinate clause. Lambrecht says this construction has two functions: the presentational (introducing a brand-new referent into the universe of discourse (40a)) and the event-reporting function (the referent itself is not that important (40b)).

- (40) (a) *Y'a Jean qui a appelé.*  
Jean called (literally "There's Jean who called.")  
(b) *Y'a le téléphone qui sonne.*  
The phone's ringing (literally "There's the phone that's ringing.")

### 5.1.2. The Central Case

The central case of *il y a* functions as an existential, with obvious traces of locational presentation. These traces are found in the continued presence of the locational pro-form, *y* and of the postposed prepositional phrases, indicating the location of the direct object. These indicate that centrally, *il y a* serves to call to the attention of the interlocutor the existence of some thing in some place. This functions similarly to the central case of *voilà*, except for the vital difference that *voilà* necessarily places the referent in the speech context and highlights the act of pointing it out. Thus, for the central case of *voilà*, but not *il y a*, the indicated object must be in the perceptual realm of the interlocutor (see section 2.1). The central existential is exemplified in the following sentence.

- (41) (a) *Il y a un serpent dans le placard.*  
 There's a snake in the cupboard.  
 (b) *Il y a un serpent.*  
 There's a snake (at relevant location).

The metaphor involved in yielding the meaning of existence is EXISTENCE IS BEING LOCATED AT A LOCATION. In (41a), the locative pro-form *y* makes semi-redundant reference to the location also indicated by the postposed prepositional phrase. Unless the location is specified by a prepositional phrase, it is understood to be a location relevant to the discourse (41b). Note that the locational pronoun *y* is not used in this construction as a simple replacement for the distal locative *là*.

We know for sure that we have ventured into the domain of metaphor when no present location is necessarily implied by *il y a* due to the lack of a locational prepositional phrase.

- (42) (a) *Il y a des gens qui croient en Dieu.*  
 There are people who believe in God.  
 (b) *Je crois qu'il n'y a personne dans le monde qui puisse me rendre aimable.*  
 I don't think there's anyone in the world who could make me nice.

(42a) gives both the reading that there are a number of people in the present location who believe in God and the reading that there exist people in general who believe in God. We might be tempted to say that in the case of the latter, *y* refers to *dans le monde* “in the world” or some such collocation indicating physical presence in a delimited area, which happens to be our default large space. We must remind ourselves, however, that this sense is nonetheless different from the case where *y* refers to a relevant location and serves as an existential/locational presentative. Furthermore, locational phrases, such as *dans le monde*, do not literally mean “in the world,” but rather act as locators for a default place where existence is in question.

### 5.1.3. Distance and Time

A predictable extension of the central locational-existential is to indicate distance from one point to another. Just like the English existential, French *il y a* has been conventionalized as a marker of distance and time (along with *cela fait* “that makes” and *voilà*) in three separate constructions. The first is the central distance case where it simply indicates a distance (43a) or a time (43b). In this usage, only the prepositions *de...à...* “from...to...” and *entre* “between”, both of which are prepositions for measuring distances, can appear in the following prepositional phrase.

- (43) (a) *Il y a 40 kilomètres d’ici à Nantes.*  
There are 40 kilometers from here to Nantes.  
(b) *Il y a deux heures d’ici à Nantes.*  
There are two hours from here to Nantes.

The second construction, mentioned in section 3.5, belongs to the same class as the SPoT deictic, and consists of *il y a* + NP(span of time) + *que* + finite clause (44a). A difference between the *voilà* and *il y a* SPoT constructions is that *il y a* can be temporally displaced to a past or future referent time center, while *voilà* anchors the reference time in the present, as we showed in example (34), reproduced in (44).

- (44) (a) *Il y aura/\*Voilà deux ans qu’on se connaîtra.*  
It will have been two years that we will have known each other.  
(b) *Il y avait/?Voilà deux ans qu’on se connaissait.*  
It was for two years that we had known each other.

When the central distance case is extended through the metaphors TIME PASSING IS RELATIVE MOTION and AMOUNT OF TIME BETWEEN TWO EVENTS IS DISTANCE ON A LINE, however, a third construction arises in which *il y a* translates as “ago”. In this construction, no PP is required or allowed (45a). This construction is interesting syntactically because it is possibly a blend, unaccountable for in transformational grammar.

In the second and third constructions, time is measured between a point in the past, whose temporal distance from the present is indicated by the direct object, and a point that is in the present if the verb is in the present tense. For example, in (45a), *il y a* picks out a period of time (*longtemps* “a long time”) between a point in the past and now for which the proposition is true, while (45b) indicates a point in time four days before now at which point the proposition is true.

- (45) (a) *Il y a longtemps que je t’aime.*

- (b) I've loved you for a long time.  
*Je l'ai vu il y a quatre jours.*  
I saw him four days ago.

#### 5.1.4. Other Extensions of *il y a*

We now move on to briefly schematize certain other extensions of *il y a* that will be relevant to our comparison of the distribution of deictics and existentials in English and French (5.2). Just as in English, French has an existential infinitival construction that contains a bound infinitival construction (46). The infinitival construction is made up of a NP (which is the object of the *il y a* construction) and the preposition *à* “at/to” plus an infinitive, whose object is also the NP of the clause. In cases like (46), there is no physical location. Instead, the direct object noun phrase indicates the existence of a referent and the “prepositional phrase” indicates the relevant activity (with null-instantiated subject). In this construction, states are construed as locations, part of the locational branch of the EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR (Lakoff 1993).

- (46) *Il y a trois poules à gagner.*  
There are three hens to win.

The central existential construction is also used for lists of NP's or propositions. This construction is usually accompanied by a particular intonation that is similar to that in English, with stress on each element in the list.

- (47) (a) *Il y a chocolat suisse, chocolat belge, et chocolat mexicain.*  
There's Swiss chocolate, Belgian chocolate, and Mexican chocolate.  
(b) *Il y a parler bien, parler juste, parler aisément, et parler à propos.*  
There's speaking well, speaking correctly, speaking easily, and speaking on topic.

Here, the existence does not have to be in a particular location where there are kinds of chocolate (47a) or ways of talking (47b). Rather it is within metaphorical “chocolate space” or “speaking space” that we are picking out certain entities. That verbal infinitives can be treated as nouns in the way exemplified in (47b) is common in French, as a result of the widespread EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR.

A special case of the previous list construction is one which expresses a prototypicality judgement. It shares with the general list construction almost identical syntax and the same alternation between nouns and verbs in the direct object position, but is marked with stress on the final element of two. In this particular construction, the first item picks out a category, and the second identifies an ideal case prototype of

that category. In essence then, the entirety of the expression reads: “there are typical Xs and then there are ideal Xs.”

- (48) (a) *Il y a champagne et **champagne**.*  
There’s champagne and then there’s **champagne**.
- (b) *Il y a gagner et **gagner**.*  
There’s winning and then there’s **winning**.

A further *il y a* construction is the ontological one, which asserts the existence of and entity.. In the statement form, the verb *exister* “to exist” is more common and bears stress, but *y a-t’il* “is there” is the more common interrogative form.

- (49) (a) *Y a-t’il un dieu?*  
Is there a god?
- (b) *Il y a/Il **existe** un père Noël.*  
There **is** a Santa Claus.

As previously mentioned, the function of existential constructions is to focus the hearer’s awareness on the referent of the noun phrase, or to bring that referent into the mental space of the hearer. If the hearer is already aware of the referent but has forgotten about it or failed to see that it is relevant to the topic at hand, the *il y a* construction can be used as a reminder. In this construction, the noun phrase can be definite and specific, unlike in the central case.

- (50) (a) *Si personne d’autre ne peut venir, il y a toujours Marie.*  
If no one else can come, there’s always Marie.
- (b) *Mais il y a la fête ce soir!*  
But there’s the party tonight!

## 5.2. A Comparison of English and French Deictics and Existentials

Despite significant overlaps in the properties of their various senses, French and English deictics and existentials differ along one major axis. While a single radial category of constructions (*there/here*) covers this broad semantic ground in English, French distributes it over two radial categories of constructions (*il y a* and *voilà/voici*). The set of senses and relations between the English constructions depicted in Figure 3 are borrowed from Lakoff’s (1987) analysis of these constructions.

\*\* Insert Figure 3 here \*\*

The French equivalents of the senses enclosed by bolded borders in Figure 3 are expressed using *voilà* and/or *voici*, and those with gray border are expressed by *il y a*. Although we have not discussed many of the different bolded constructions in Figure 3, the semantic content of each is nonetheless expressed using *voilà* constructions.

In English, the deictic locative phrase corresponding to the central French case explicitly (literally) encodes the location and a proposition describing the location of the object. On the contrary, in French, the directive (the instruction to direct attention towards a location where an entity is located) is explicitly marked. In French, the directive to “see!” is related to the action of directing attention through a metonymy where the resulting state of the performance of the elicited action stands for the action required (Ahlers 1999). This particular metonymy occurs elsewhere in French, as in English:

- (51) (a) *J'arrive!*  
I'm coming! (Lit: I am arriving!)  
(b) *On est parti.*  
We are leaving (Lit: We have left.)

A salient difference between the French and English extensions of the Central Deictic is that in English, extensions from the deictic “there” construction include existential expressions, as in (52).

- (52) (a) There are three pounds of dope on the table.  
(b) There are eight and a half things I have to tell you.

These extensions are describable in terms of the metaphor EXISTENCE IS LOCATION here (Lakoff 1987) or in terms of constructional grounding, where “literal” and “constructional” meaning are related through ambiguities in the signal and context (C. Johnson 1998). Both a constructional grounding account and a metaphor account require that the surface structure of the source expression explicitly mark the domain of spatial presence: otherwise extensions to existence would not be possible.

However, in French, the proposition expressed (that the object is in a location) is only inferentially, not explicitly, conveyed, thus we do not expect to find extensions to the domain of existence: there is no surface ambiguity to which to apply a metaphor. This prediction obtains since French *voilà* constructions are not extended to the domain of existence. Rather, the form *il y a* “there is” (literally “It (impersonal) has there.”) covers the domain of existentials.

In relation to our earlier claim that taking only semantic/pragmatic or grammatical/formal characteristics into account is insufficient, the difference between *voilà*'s and *there*'s extensions are not predictable without considering both kinds of

characteristics. In fact, the situational semantics and surface forms of deictics motivate what extensions are possible and expected.

## **6. Conclusion**

We have presented an analysis of a family of constructions, which are related through cognitive mechanisms (Goldberg 1995). We have found pragmatic and semantic constraints to have effects on the formal aspects of each of these constructions, and these constraints have provided explanations for the variation the constructions show. Analyses that require words to be relegated to strict grammatical categories are unable to capture the range of variation that these items display.

We have argued that divergences in the mapping patterns of binary pairs of deictics emerge from the properties of their extension mechanisms, which ultimately derive from the relation between the source and target domains. Further systematic studies of lexical extension asymmetries will serve to pinpoint the extent to which extension mechanisms dictate target structure, and to what degree the target domains themselves dictate structure.

The differences in explicit versus implicit coding of French and English deictics have been offered as an explanation for their distributional divergences. More cross-linguistic comparisons of radial categories will test this model's capacity to predict, rather than simply explain, radial category structure.

Although we have skirted the issue in this work of the benefit of grounding constructions in neural computational models, we nonetheless recognize that significant aspects of radial categories of constructions can be shown to derive from properties of neural systems. Ultimately, developing highly articulated neural models of constructions and their relations to each other will most likely provide an explanation in the strong sense of why radial categories of constructions would exhibit the properties demonstrated above. They preserve structure, display systematic, motivating mappings to extended senses, and differ from their source constructions only to the extent that divergences are functionally required by the target domain. Optimization of existing neural structures will likely be the fundamental explanatory tool for a predictive version of this model.

## **Appendix: Spectrograms and Pitch Tracks**

**\*\* Insert Figure 4, 5 and 6 here \*\***

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our native language informants: Aline Voldoire, Egidio Marsico, Melissa Barkat, and Aimée Bartosik. Additionally, thanks to our colleagues of the linguistics department at the University of California, Berkeley who provided us with useful feedback on the numerous versions of this paper, especially Eve Sweetser, George Lakoff, Charles Fillmore, Matt Juge, and Kevin Moore, and to Knud Lambrecht for his help with the Barnes corpus.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For those constructions where *voici* displays the same behavior as *voilà*, we will focus on *voilà*. For those cases where they differ, we will make explicit mention of that divergence.

<sup>2</sup> French *allez* ‘go (imp. pl.)’ has similarly lost its clearly imperative function and is not inflected for number or formality in the common collocation “Allez, vas-y!”

<sup>3</sup> In this and all subsequent quotes from French sources, the translations are ours.

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, in Marais Vendéen, all 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present forms take the suffix *-t*, except when followed by a consonant-initial word. *Voilà* /vɛlɑ(t)/ takes this suffix as well (Morin 1988).

<sup>5</sup> We are using the term ‘deictic locative adverb’ for purely presentational reasons. The name is simply a pointer to the category composed only of *voilà* and *voici*.

<sup>6</sup> This sentence would only be felicitous if the speaker were confirming the illocutionary meaning indirectly expressed: “I want you to look at the entity” or “There is some reason to look at the entity”. However, it is not possible to respond affirmatively to the directive itself.

<sup>7</sup> The term *interrnegative* is borrowed from the French tradition where it means a negative question e.g. *Isn’t it lovely today?*

<sup>8</sup> Just as with expressions of objects in the Central Deictic, events are not anchored exclusively to the present perceptual space, but, rather, can exist in alternative mental spaces, such as in a narrative: *Voilà que nous sommes dans la forêt...* ‘There we are in the forest...’

<sup>9</sup> This sentence might be used to introduce a children’s television show during the theme song.

<sup>10</sup> As noted by Charles Fillmore (p.c.), these locative clitic pronouns have somewhat erratic behavior in extensions: in *ces jours-ci* ‘nowadays’, the proximal temporal space includes the recent past, the present, and optionally some part of the future. This is not unexpected, however, as extensions from the spatial to the temporal domain are not isomorphic with those to discourse.

<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, as Eve Sweetser (p.c.) has pointed out, such forms may have existed in earlier forms of French.

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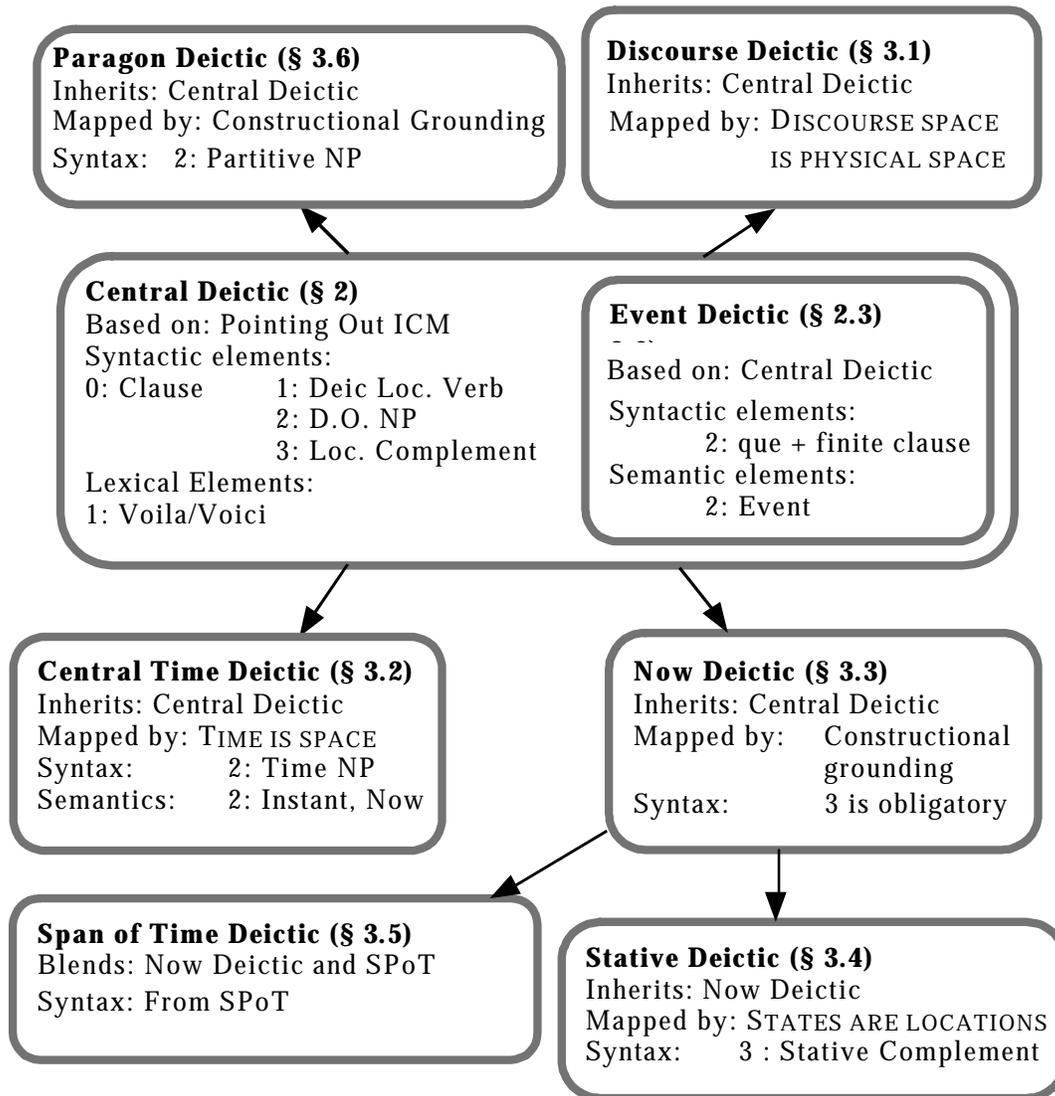


Figure 1: Radial category of *voilà*.

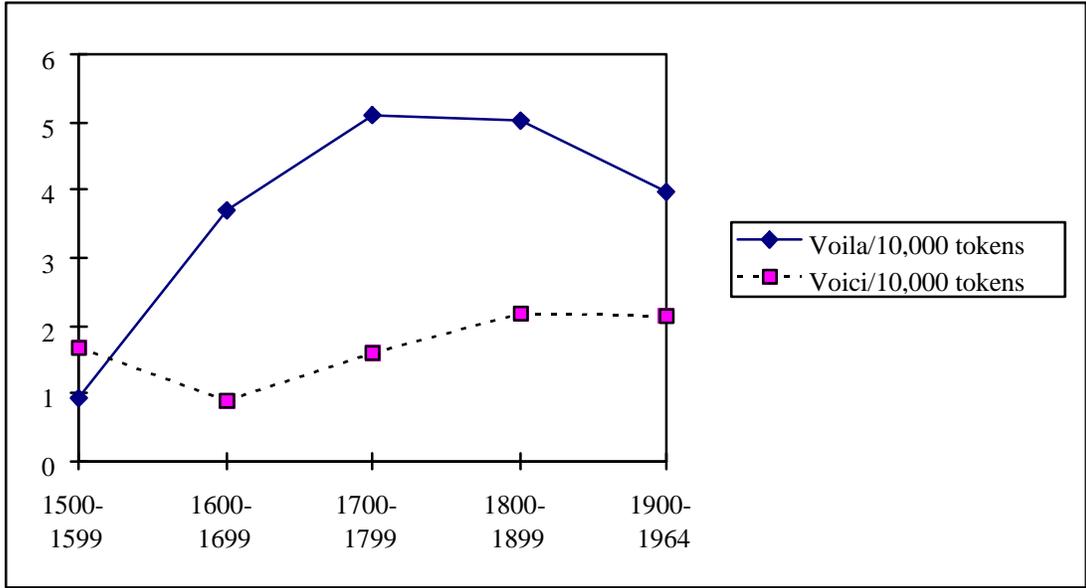


Figure 2: Occurrences of *voilà* and *voici* over time

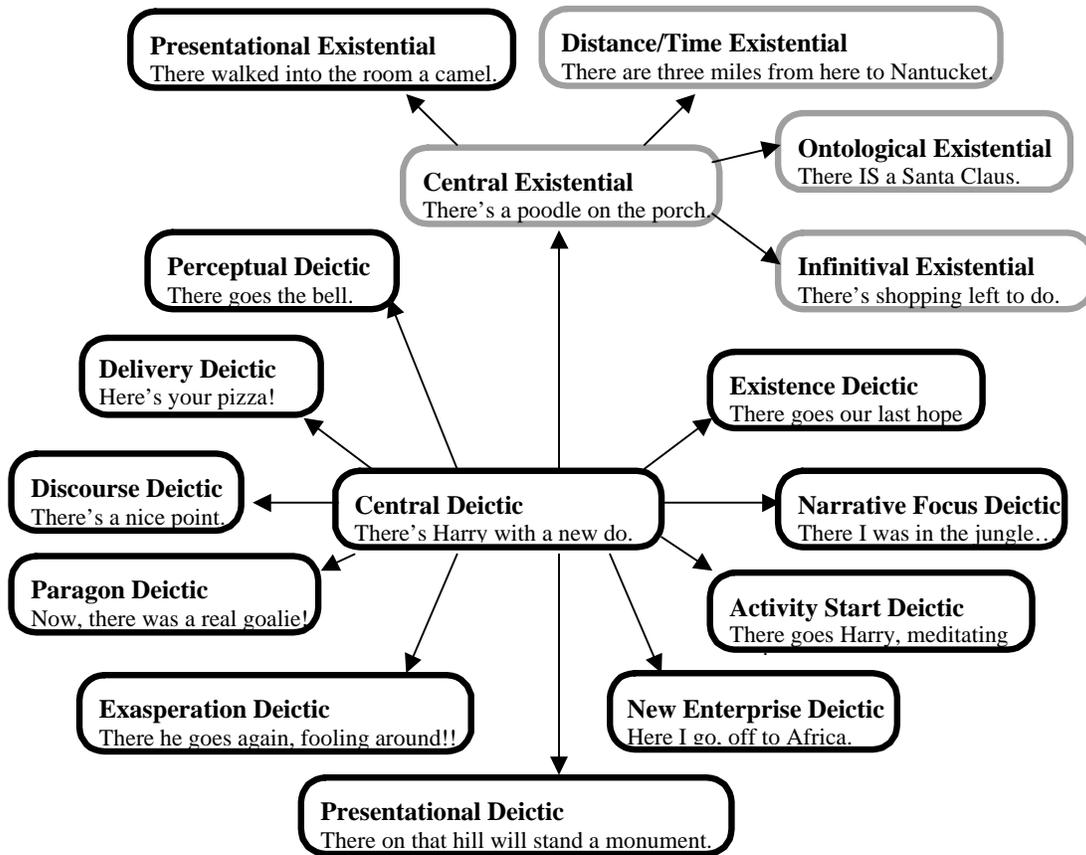


Figure 3: Radial category of English *there/here* construction

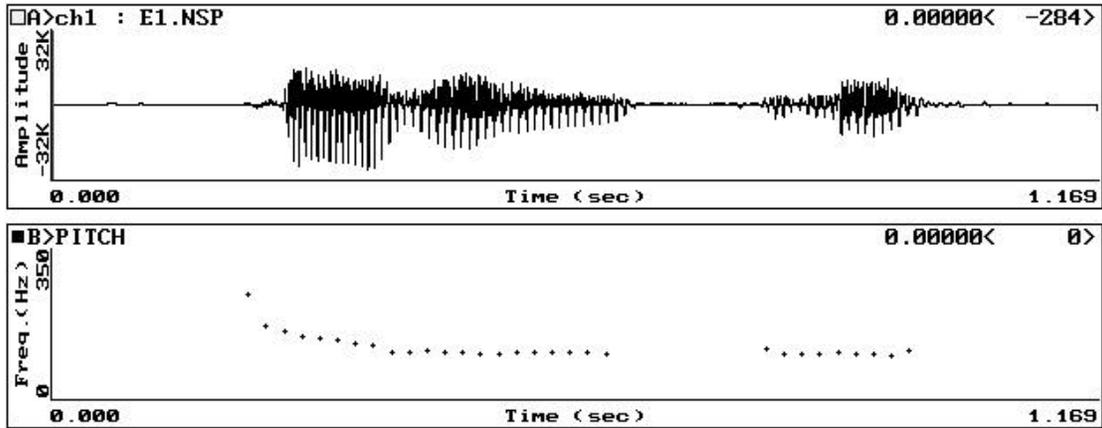


Figure 4: Central Deictic. *Voilà un stylo.* “There’s a pen”

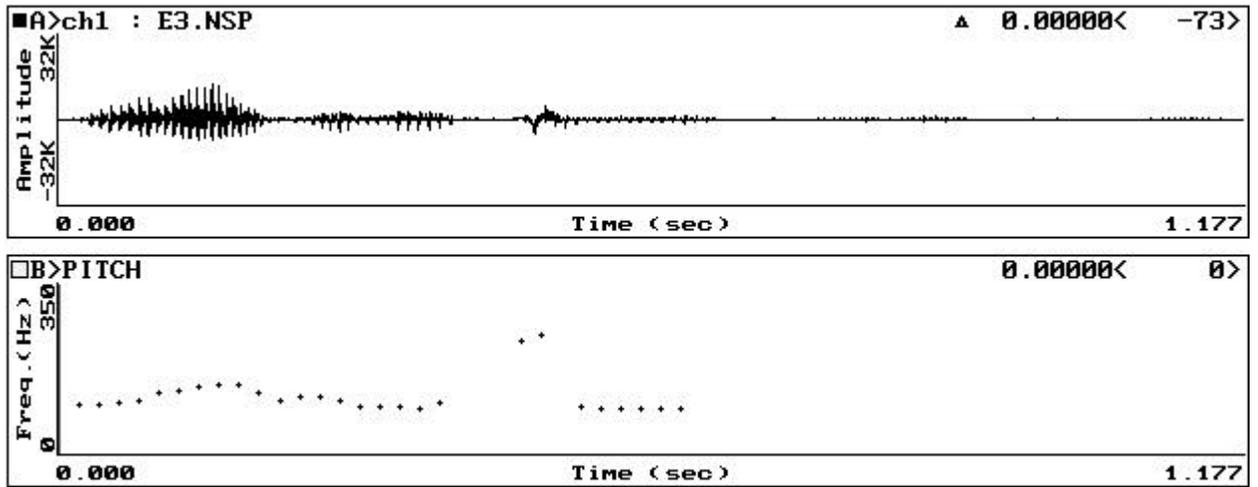


Figure 5: Paragon Deictic. *Voilà de la bonne littérature.* “There’s good literature (for you).”

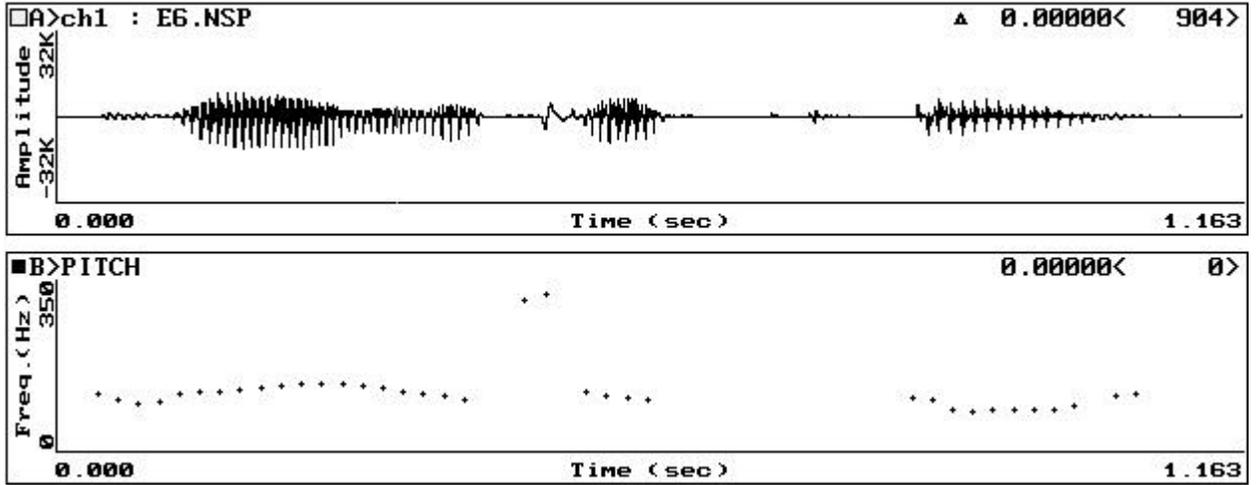


Figure 6: Now Deictic. *Voilà mon frère qui part.* “Now my brother’s leaving.”

## **Abstract**

This study is a cognitive semantic analysis of the different senses of French *voilà* “there is” and *voici* “here is”. Their range of semantic and syntactic variation defies classical categorization in terms of grammatical or discourse elements. We demonstrate that their syntactic behavior is best explained by the semantic and pragmatic function of each of their senses. We analyze the motivated nature of relations between senses in terms of radial category theory (Lakoff 1987). Finally, we compare French and English deictic demonstrative constructions with special reference to their extensions to existential constructions.