On the complement of the intensional transitive want

In a framework where have, get, and give decompose into a light verb and a \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \)-complement ([vBE/BECOME CAUSE P\_HAVE]), with the \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \) incorporating into the little \( v \), Harley (2004) proposes that apparent want+DP structures do not embed a null verb HAVE/GET, as in McCawley’s (1979)/Ross’s (1976) structure in (1), but just a null preposition \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \) (i.e. not a clausal complement [vBE/BECOME P\_HAVE]), as in (2). We argue, contra Harley (2004), that the nullness is made of more than just a P, namely, of either HAVE or GET (cf. McCawley 1979).

**Prediction:** Assume Harley’s own account of the double object construction [DOC] (Harley 2003, Beck/Johnson 2004), which treats (3) as in (4). If the apparent want+DP and the DOC share the same structure—a verbal element embedding the \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \)—they should behave alike.

**Temporal Adv:** The constructions behave differently with respect to temporal adverbials. Though the DOC allows result-state adverbials, showing that it contains a stative subevent (Piñón 1999), it disallows non-agreeing temporal adverbials, (5a). In contrast, the apparent want+DP structure allows them, (5b). (5b), but not (5a), contains two temporally independent events. If (5a-b) share the structure, the contrast is unexpected. And theoretically, Harley (2004) can only invoke adjunction to PP to account for the possibility of non-agreeing temporal adverbials in (5b), violating the intimate link between the existence of a temporally independent event and a VP/vP (e.g. Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2004).

**Ellipsis:** (6) is ambiguous, presumably since two VPs in the antecedent provide two sites for VP-ellipsis. The fact that (7), with the apparent want+DP construction, is ambiguous in the same way as (6) is expected if its antecedent also contains, covertly, two VPs (Larson *et al.* 1997). If the apparent want+DP is parallel to the DOC, as in Harley (2003, 2004), we would expect (8) to be ambiguous too, which is not the case.

**Intensionality:** The want+DP, but not the DOC, is hyperintensional. While replacing C. Kent with Superman preserves the truth value in (9), the replacement needn’t preserve the truth value in (10). The contrast is unexpected if the constructions are structurally parallel, and theoretically, treating (10) with only a null \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \), as in Harley (2004), precludes one from preserving the stricter, sententialist approach to intensionality (cf. Larson 2002).

**Co-composition:** Harley (2004) shows that compliment is fine under get and want but not under have, (11). Rejecting co-composition (whereby compliment can affect the interpretation of its selecting verb) for theoretical reasons, Harley (2004) states that one can only explain (11a-c) if want embeds not simply a null HAVE but only the part that have and get share: a null \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \) (with no light verb). This conclusion seems flawed. Unlike have, get does combine with compliment, so we can posit a null get (besides a null HAVE; cf. McCawley 1979). Contra Harley, this need not lead to co-composition; the aspectual make-up of the null HAVE/GET (as of the overt have/get) exerts selection restrictions over the aspectual make-up of its complement. Get/get selects compliment, HAVE/have does not. In fact, (11a-c) show precisely the fact that the element under want exhibits aspectual properties in the way that only (extended projections of) V’s, but not P’s, do.

**Proposal:** The ellipsis facts and the temporal-adverbial facts show that want takes a clausal complement, which includes a projection introducing a temporally independent event. With the co-composition objection argued away, we thus claim, with McCawley (1979), that apparent want+DP cases can contain either a null HAVE or a null GET. In fact, positing null versions of both have and get is even more plausible if, as Harley claims, get and have are indeed syntactically non-atomic; if \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \) is null, why should the combination of \( P_{\text{HAVE}} \) and the commonly null vBE/vBECOME be obligatorily overt?

The (resurrected) null-verb account fits in naturally with recent work postulating several semantically basic/primitive null verbs, such as Larson *et al.*’s null GIVE (1997), van Riemsdijk’s (2002) GO, and Marušić & Žaucer’s (2005) null want-like verb of desire.
(1) \([vP \text{Mary}\ [vP \text{wants} [XP \text{PROi} [vP \text{TO-HAVE/TO-GET} [DP \text{a car}]]]]]\)\footnote{\cite{McCawley1979}}

(2) \([vP \text{Mary}\ [vP \text{wants} [PP \text{PROi} [P' \text{PHAVE} [DP \text{a car}]]]]]\)\footnote{Harley 2004}

(3) John gave Mary a book.

(4) \([vP \text{John} [vP' \text{CAUSE} [PP \text{Mary} [P' \text{PHAVE} [DP \text{a book}]]]]]\)

(5) a. * A week ago, John sent/gave Mary the book yesterday.
   b. A week ago, John wanted your car yesterday. \footnote{McCawley 1979}

(6) John wants to have more toys than Ben. \hspace{1cm} \textbf{ambiguous:}
   (i) ‘more toys than Ben has’  \hspace{1cm} (ii) ‘more toys than Ben wants to have’

(7) John wants more toys than Ben. \hspace{1cm} \textbf{ambiguous}

(8) John gave Bill more toys than Ben. \hspace{1cm} \textbf{only} ‘more toys than Ben gave Bill’

(9) I gave/may give C. Kent a cat. \(=>\) I gave/may give Superman a cat. \[both T or both F\]

(10) I want Clark Kent. \(=/=>\) I want Superman. \[one T one F possible\]

    b. John wants a compliment.
    c. \#John has a compliment. \[((11a-c) from Harley 2004: 261]\]

\textbf{References}


Ross, J. R. 1976. To have have and not to have have. In M. A. Jazayery et al. (eds.) \textit{Linguistic and literary studies in honor of Archibald A. Hill}. Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press.