

## Wanting (to have) null verbs: A view from Mandarin and beyond

English *start* and *want* both embed *to*-infinitives (1) and NPs (2).

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|------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| (1a) | Kim started [to eat dinner]. | " <i>start-to-VP</i> " |
| (1b) | Kim wanted [to eat dinner].  | " <i>want-to-VP</i> "  |
| (2a) | Kim started [dinner].        | " <i>start-NP</i> "    |
| (2b) | Kim wanted [dinner].         | " <i>want-NP</i> "     |

Two accounts have emerged of *start-/want-NP* and their relationship to *start-/want-to-VP*: For **Pustejovsky** (1995), (2a) and (2b) both involve coercion: *start* and *want* require an eventive complement which is overtly supplied in (1). In (2), coercion draws on lexical-semantic information in *dinner* to supply an appropriate eventive meaning ('eat/make dinner') for the complement. Alternatively, for **Fodor and Lepore** (1998), neither (2a) nor (2b) instantiate coercion but (2b) is special in introducing a silent light verb  $\emptyset$ have that establishes the right semantics for the construction and maintains a uniform semantics for *want* in (1b/2b) (cf. also den Dikken, Larson and Ludlow 1997 and Harley 2004 on *want*). This paper articulates two novel arguments for the latter view.

**Argument 1: Mandarin NP complements.** Lin and Liu (2004) show that many Pustejovsky coercion phenomena are ungrammatical in Mandarin, including *start-NP* (3a). However, *want-NP* is grammatical (3b).

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|------|--|--------|--------|----------|
| (3a) | zhangsan                               | kaishi | *(chi) | pingguo. |
|      | Zhangsan                               | start  | eat    | apple    |
|      | 'Zhangsan started *(to eat) an apple.' |        |        |          |
| (3b) | zhangsan                               | yao    | (chi)  | pingguo. |
|      | Zhangsan                               | want   | eat    | apple    |
|      | 'Zhangsan wants (to eat) an apple.'    |        |        |          |

If (3a) and (3b) both involve coercion, the split in grammaticality is mysterious. But if (3b) involves  $\emptyset$ have, the puzzle disappears: Mandarin and English differ in the availability of coercion, but both languages have  $\emptyset$ have.

**Argument 2: Embedded subjects.** A robust fact about predicates that tend crosslinguistically to restructure (aspectuals, modals, implicative) is that they disallow overt embedded subjects even in non-restructuring languages like English (4). Cf. propositional and factive predicates (5) — crosslinguistically non-restructuring (Wurmbrand 2001) — which admit overt embedded subjects. These facts suggest (6).

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|------|--------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| (4a) | Kim <b>started</b> (*Sandy) to eat.  | (5a) | Kim <b>believed</b> Sandy to be tall. |
| (4b) | Kim <b>was able</b> (*Sandy) to eat. | (5b) | Kim <b>regretted</b> Sandy leaving.   |
| (4c) | Kim <b>managed</b> (*Sandy) to eat.  |      |                                       |

- (6) **Generalization:** Only non-restructuring predicates admit overt embedded subjects.

Adopting Cinque's (2006) proposal that restructuring verbs realize inflectional heads and the view that inflectional heads cannot introduce arguments, we explain (6): restructuring verbs instantiate monoclausal raising structures, the subject vacating its embedded (vP-internal) position and raising to matrix subject position (7a), whereas non-restructuring verbs instantiate biclausal constructions in which the embedded subject may be overt (7b).

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|------|---------------------------------------|
| (7a) | Kim started [ <del>Kim</del> to eat]. |
| (7b) | Kim regretted [PRO/Sandy leaving].    |

But *want* counterexamples (6): crosslinguistically it restructures, yet also admits an overt embedded subject:

- (8) Kim wanted (Sandy) to eat.

On the view that *want* may embed  $\emptyset$ have, however, (8) is explained:  $\emptyset$ have can embed NP (9a) or CP (9b) (cf. Cinque 2006:61 for a similar suggestion about Italian *volere* 'want'). When *want* embeds  $\emptyset$ have and  $\emptyset$ have embeds CP, an embedded subject is possible.

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|------|--|
| (9a) | Kim want $\emptyset$ have [ <sub>NP</sub> dinner].       |
| (9b) | Kim want $\emptyset$ have [ <sub>CP</sub> Sandy to eat]. |

By postulating  $\emptyset$ have as an available complement to *want* but not to other restructuring verbs like *start*, we resolve the counterexample.