

# SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE WANT-DP CONSTRUCTION IN BE-LANGUAGES\*

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## 1. Introduction

It has been a popular claim that WANT-DP constructions, such as (1a), have a concealed possessive clause. As can be seen in an analysis of the type given in (1b), the claim is that *want* may take a clausal complement containing a phonetically null predicate, which is semantically equivalent to *have*.

- (1) a. I want a car.  
b. I want [ $\emptyset_{\text{HAVE}}$  a car]

There is ample empirical evidence, mainly from English, for the existence of such a concealed clause with null HAVE (Montague 1969, McCawley 1974, Ross 1976, den Dikken, Larson and Ludlow 1996, Larson, den Dikken, Ludlow 2006, Harley 2004, and references in them). The analysis presented in (1b) consists of two components. (I) the WANT-DP construction is biclausal; and (II) the unpronounced predicate in the embedded clause is possessive HAVE. One initial motivation for the first claim comes from intensionality phenomena, which are typically found with clausal complement constructions (Frege 1892, Montague 1969, Larson and Segel 1995, among others). Consider the examples in (2). Suppose that Bill is a dancer and singer and that Mary met him. (2ai) is true under this scenario. When *a singer* is substituted for *a dancer*, the truth value of the new sentence remains the same: (2aii) cannot be false. However, when such substitution applies within a sentential complement, the two sentences could have different truth values. Take the “WANT-S construction,” exemplified by (2b). Observe that (2bii) does not have to be true under a situation that makes (2bi) true. We can imagine a situation in which Mary wants to meet Bill, while she has a wrong belief that he is a dancer but not a singer. In this particular scenario, (2bi) can be uttered truthfully whereas (2bii) could be false.

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- (2) a. i. Mary met a dancer.  
 ii. Mary met a singer.  
 b. i. Mary wants [to meet a dancer].  
 ii. Mary wants [to meet a singer].

Thus sentential complement constructions like the WANT-S construction behave differently from simple transitive constructions with respect to substitution tests of these kinds.

Now turn to the WANT-DP construction. Consider the following pair of sentences:

- (3) a. Mary wants a dancer (in the movie).  
 b. Mary wants a singer (in the movie).

Suppose that Mary wants it to be true to have Bill as a dancer in the movie while believing that he is not singer. Under this scenario, (3a) is accepted as a true statement while (3b) does not have to be. Namely, preservation of the truth value is not observed with the WANT-DP construction. Based on intentionality phenomena like this, Quine (1960) and Montague (1969) suggest that this construction, despite its appearance, has a clausal complement structure.

There is also evidence that the predicate in the concealed clause is possessive HAVE. Ross (1976) observes that *have* and *want* have the same selection restrictions, as shown in (4) (cited from Larson, den Dikken, Ludlow 2006):

- |        |        |   |   |    |        |   |   |
|--------|--------|---|---|----|--------|---|---|
| (4) a. | I have | { | a cold<br>a sister<br>freedom<br>a driveway<br># sentencehood | b. | I want | { | a cold<br>a sister<br>freedom<br>a driveway<br># sentencehood |
|--------|--------|---|---|----|--------|---|---|

The selection restrictions of *have* are carried over to the WANT-DP construction. This fact is explained if the possessive HAVE is covertly present in the WANT-DP construction.<sup>1</sup>

The present squib is concerned with such a null predicate-based analysis of a WANT-DP construction found in so-called “BE-languages,” where possession is productively expressed by copula BE, rather than HAVE. In particular, we discuss data from Hindi and Japanese, both of which are well-known BE-languages.

In Hindi, the copula *hona* is found in a possessive construction, as shown in (5):

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<sup>1</sup> See den Dikken, Larson and Ludlow 1996, Larson, den Dikken and Ludlow 2006, and Endo, Kitagawa and Yoon 1999 for further arguments. See also Harley 2004 for a wider range of data concerning selection and a treatment of them.

- (5) Mer-i ek gaaDii thii.  
 I-GEN one car be.PST  
 ‘I had a car.’

The possessor argument occurring in possessive constructions of the relevant sort is generally marked with genitive.<sup>2</sup> Note also that Hindi allows a WANT-DP construction. The experiencer argument is realized as dative, as in (6a).<sup>3</sup> One may ask whether the latter construction can be analyzed in terms of a phonetically null BE in a way parallel to what is happening in the English WANT-DP construction. Such an analysis would propose that (6a) be analyzed as in (6b), where the null possessive copula is referred to as  $\emptyset_{BE}$ .

- (6) a. Mujh-ko ek gaaDii caahiye thii.  
 I-DAT one car want be.PST  
 ‘I wanted/needed one car’
- b. Mujh-ko [ek gaaDii  $\emptyset_{BE}$ ] caahiye thii.  
 I-DAT one car want be.PST

The significance of the question of whether this type of analysis is empirically correct or not becomes clearer when we consider a recent understanding of the relationship between HAVE and BE. According to the influential Freeze-Kayne approach to possessives (Freeze 1992, Kayne 1993), HAVE is decomposed into BE and P(re- or postposition). HAVE being allowed to be null entails that its subcomponents are allowed to be null. If this reasoning is valid, it is expected that the WANT-DP construction in Hindi behaves as though it has a complement clause whose main predicate is null BE. In what follows, we address one empirical puzzle that may arise with this ‘null BE’ analysis of the Hindi WANT-DP construction. The puzzle is concerned with object agreement. The facts that we will observe in the following section make it look rather difficult to maintain the ‘null BE’ hypothesis. Nevertheless, we will argue that there is a way to accommodate the relevant facts while preserving the core insight of the hypothesis in question. The proposal relies on a recent view of Hindi restructuring, proposed by Bhatt (2005) (cf. Boeckx 2004). It is argued that the complement in the WANT-DP construction, though it is clausal, is smaller than that in the WANT-S construction. We will also discuss the Japanese WANT-DP construction, which poses virtually the same theoretical issue as its Hindi counterpart does. We will show that the

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<sup>2</sup> This is an oversimplified picture. The possessor argument may be realized as a PP (see Freeze 1992). We focus here on the genitive construction. For issues on the case of possessor or experiencer arguments, see Sanyal (2007) (for Hindi, Bengali and English) and Menon (2007) (for Malayalam).

<sup>3</sup> See Chaturvedi (2006) and Sanyal (2007) for discussions of experiencer (and possessor) constructions in Indo-Aryan languages. Although we assume that the experiencer argument of the WANT-DP construction, as well as the possessor argument of the possessive construction, is the external argument of a clause, this is not an uncontroversial assumption; see Jayaseelan 2004 and Amritavalli 2004 for relevant discussions based on Dravidian data.

device that we introduce to account for the Hindi fact works for the Japanese fact, too.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the data illustrating the puzzle mentioned above. Section 3 proposes a possible solution to it. Section 4 examines the possessive and WANT-DP constructions in Japanese. Section 4 concludes the paper.

## 2. The Puzzle

Let us begin by looking at the following pair of sentences (cited from Bhatt 2005), which shows that, in Hindi, when the underlying subject is marked with oblique and the object bears no case marker, the predicate must agree with the object (7a). Default agreement (i.e. [3MSG]) is simply not allowed (7b).

- (7) a. Rahul-ne kitaab parh-ii thii. (object agreement)  
 Rahul-ERG book.F read-PFV.F be.PST.F  
 ‘Rahul read the book.’
- b. \*Rahul-ne kitaab parh-aa thaa. (default agreement)  
 Rahul-ERG book.F read-PFV.MSG be.PST.MSG

Let us add examples of a simple possessive construction.

- (8) a. Mer-i do gaaRiyaan thiin. (object agreement)  
 I-GEN two cars be.PST.PL  
 ‘I had two cars.’
- b. \*Mer-i do gaaRiyaan thii. (default agreement)  
 I-GEN two cars be.PST.SG

Again, object-verb agreement (for number in this particular instance) is obligatory.

Default agreement becomes possible when the matrix verb takes a clausal complement, as Bhatt (2005) observes.

- (9) a. Ram-ne [kitaab parh-nii] chaah-ii. (LDA)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.F want-PFV.FSG  
 ‘Ram wanted to read a book.’
- b. Ram-ne [kitaab parh-naa] chaah-aa. (default agreement)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.M want-PFV.MSG

In (9a), *chaah* ‘want’ occurs with a clause headed by an infinitive marker and agrees long distance with the object in the embedded clause with respect to gender and number. Note that long distance agreement (LDA) of this kind is optional, i.e. it does not have to take place, as

in (9b) (Bhatt 2005).

All things being equal, the ‘null BE’ hypothesis predicts that default agreement is allowed as an option in the WANT-DP construction because under the analysis, there is a hidden clause embedded under WANT.<sup>4</sup> In reality, however, default agreement is not possible in this environment. The pair given in (10) illustrates the fact:

- (10) a. Mujh-ko ek gaaDii caahiye thii.  
 I-DAT one car.F want be.PST.F  
 ‘I wanted a car.’
- b. \*Mujh-ko ek gaaDii caahiye thaa.  
 I-DAT one car.F want be.PST.MSG

Obviously, the attested pattern of agreement *is* something we may expect if the Hindi WANT-DP construction, unlike the English counterpart, does *not* have a concealed clausal complement. For this reason, the data given above may pose a problem for the ‘null BE’ hypothesis. Namely, the data point may suggest that the ‘null BE’ analysis of the WANT-DP construction does not apply to BE-languages like Hindi, a surprising conclusion from a Freeze-Kayne perspective.

### 3. A Preliminary Solution

This section aims to propose a solution to the puzzle discussed above, though we will not attempt to provide a full analysis of the possessive construction or the WANT-DP construction. Accepting the core proposal of Bhatt 2005, we make the following assumptions about object agreement (cf. Boeckx 2004):

- (11) (i) Object agreement takes place when the local T successfully enters into a checking relation with an object DP for  $\phi$ -features. (The exact mechanism of checking is left open: it may be via a long distance agreement operation like Agree or via covert or overt phrasal movement of the object to the local domain of the agreeing head<sup>5</sup>);
- (ii) Default agreement arises when such feature checking fails;
- (iii) PRO blocks feature checking when it intervenes between the agreeing head and a DP; and
- (iv) NP-traces do not count as interveners.

With these assumptions made, the unacceptability of the simple ergative sentence in (7),

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<sup>4</sup> All things may not be equal here. Notice that the form of WANT used in (6)/(10), namely *caahiye*, is different from the one used in (9). We eventually claim that a certain difference between *caahiye* and *caah* causes the puzzle under discussion.

<sup>5</sup> See Chandra 2006 for relevant discussion.

repeated as (12), can be accounted for. There is no PRO and therefore the association of T and the embedded object DP does not fail. Hence, default agreement is not allowed:<sup>6</sup>

- (12) \*Rahul-ne kitaab parh-aa thaa.  
 Rahul-ERG book.F read-PFV.MSG be-PST.MSG

In this analysis, the ergative subject raises to Spec TP from a predicate-internal position, which makes it possible for the object DP to enter into a  $\phi$ -feature checking relation with T under the assumption about the invisibility of NP-traces.

The remarkable difference between local and long distance agreement with respect to their optionality is accounted for in the following manner: According to Bhatt, the optionality of LDA is reduced to the optionality of restructuring. He proposes that in the WANT-S construction, the PRO subject of the embedded nonfinite clause in sentences like those in (9), repeated as (13), may or may not show up:

- (13) a. Ram-ne [kitaab parh-nii] chaah-ii. (LDA)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.F want-PFV.FSG  
 ‘Ram wanted to read a book.’
- b. Ram-ne [kitaab parh-naa] chaah-aa. (default agreement)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.M want-PFV.MSG

*Chaah* ‘want,’ like other potentially restructuring predicates, may take a restructuring complement or a non-restructuring complement. For Bhatt, a  $v$ P with a PRO subject occurs in Hindi non-restructuring complements while a  $v$ P without it occurs in their restructuring counterparts (cf. Wurmbrand 2001). Due to the optionality of restructuring, i.e. the optionality of PRO, default agreement is possible in the WANT-S construction. (13a) and (13b) are assigned the structures in (14a) and (14b), respectively:

- (14) a. Ram-ne [[<sub>v</sub>Pkitaab parh]-nii] chaah-ii. (LDA)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.F want-PFV.FSG
- b. Ram-ne [[<sub>v</sub>P<sub>PRO</sub>kitaab parh]-naa] chaah-aa. (default agreement)  
 Ram-ERG book.F read-INF.M want-PFV.MSG

In (14b), PRO prevents the matrix T from agreeing with ‘book’.

Now let us turn to the absence of default agreement in the WANT-DP construction. We assume that the clause structure of the possessive construction contains  $v$  on top of BE and

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<sup>6</sup> See Bhatt 2005 for more details of the system, which departs from Chomsky’s (2000) in several respects; e.g. dissociation of case licensing and agreement licensing, the elimination of the activity condition for Agree, and so on.

that the possessor argument is introduced in the specifier of  $v$ : [ $v_P$  possessor [ $v_P$  possessee BE]  $v$ ].<sup>7</sup> Notice that we cannot apply Bhatt’s analysis of the WANT-S construction to the WANT-DP construction as it stands. This is because “LDA” in the latter construction is not optional, i.e. default agreement is barred. If *caahiye* ‘want,’ which occurs in the WANT-DP construction, is no different from *chaah* regarding the complement structure, the present analysis would predict that object agreement should be optional, contrary to fact. (10b) is repeated below as (15).

- (15) \*Mujh-ko ek gaaDii caahiye thaa. (default agreement)  
 I-DAT one car.F want be.PST.MSG  
 ‘I wanted a car.’

To avoid this, we propose that *caahiye*, unlike regular potential restructuring predicates, selects VP, not a complement containing  $vP$ . In other words, we claim that the predicate’s complement is the projection of the null BE. The ban on default agreement in the WANT-DP construction then is reduced to VP-complementation of *caahiye*. This selectional property of *caahiye* eliminates the possibility of a PRO subject appearing in the complement, because it lacks the specifier of  $vP$  in which the PRO subject would be introduced. Hence there is no chance for PRO to block the T-DP dependency. If Bhatt’s analysis of the optionality of restructuring is correct, it makes sense that the WANT-DP construction always undergoes “restructuring”; it always lacks PRO in its complement. The proposed analysis needs to be considered preliminary, though, because quite a few issues on the syntax of the constructions discussed above are left unsettled, e.g. how case is assigned to argument DPs in the WANT-DP construction as well as in the possessive construction. The only point we are making here is that the absence of default agreement in the WANT-DP construction ceases to be a problem for its null BE analysis, if we hypothesize that the hidden complement clause of *caahiye* ‘want’ is always VP, smaller than what regular restructuring complements are in Bhatt’s (2005) theory.

#### 4. A Short Note on the Null BE under WANT in Japanese

Having examined the WANT-DP construction in Hindi, let us discuss the same construction from another BE-language, namely Japanese. According to Kishimoto (2000), the Japanese possessive construction with an overt copula displays definiteness restrictions of some sort.<sup>8</sup> Kishimoto’s observation can be illustrated by the examples in (16) and (17):

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Harley 2002 for a different approach.

<sup>8</sup> Possessive BE in Japanese displays animacy agreement with object noun phrases. Since WANT does not display such agreement overtly, we are not able to compare Japanese animacy restrictions with Hindi object agreement facts. See Kishimoto (2000) and references cited therein.

- (16) a. watasi-ni (takusan-no) bessoo-ga aru.  
 I-DAT many-GEN second.house-NOM be.PRS  
 ‘I have {a second house/ (many) second houses}.’
- b. \*watasi-ni hotondo-no/ subete-no bessoo-ga aru.  
 I-DAT most-GEN/ all-GEN second.house-NOM be.PRS  
 ‘I have {most of, all} the second houses.’
- (17) a. \*Taro-wa [[watasi-ni aru] bessoo]-o sagasita.  
 Taro-TOP I-DAT be.PRS second.house-ACC looked.for  
 ‘Taro looked for the second house that I have.’
- b. Taro-wa [[bessoo-ga aru] hito]-o sagasita.  
 Taro-TOP second.house-NOM be.PRS person-ACC looked.for  
 ‘Taro looked for the person who has a second house.’
- cf. c. Taro-wa watasi-no bessoo-o sagasita.  
 Taro-TOP I-GEN second.house-ACC looked.for  
 ‘Taro looked for the second house that I have.’

All the versions of (16b) have definite noun phrases in the object position. The intended meaning is: most (or all) of the members of the set of second houses that is prominent in discourse are owned by the speaker. They are all worse than the versions of (16a), where the object is indefinite. The examples in (17a-b) both contain a relative clause. While (17b) is acceptable, (17a), which is intended to mean what the acceptable example in (17c) means, is not. Kishimoto observes that examples like (17a) are unacceptable because the gap in the relative clause, which is interpreted as an individual variable and therefore definite, is in the object position of the possessive construction. Such an effect does not show up in (17b), where the gap is in the subject position. Thus, the possessive construction imposes definiteness restrictions on noun phrases appearing in its object position.

Now observe that the Japanese WANT-DP construction does not display definiteness effects. *Hosii* ‘want’ is a transitive adjective that takes an experiencer subject and (superficially) a theme object.

- (18) a. watasi-wa bessoo-ga hosii.  
 I-TOP second.house-NOM want.PRS  
 ‘I want a second house.’

- b. watasi-wa hotondo-no/ subete-no bessoo-ga hosii.  
 I-TOP most-GEN/ all-GEN second.house-NOM want.PRS  
 ‘I want {most of, all} the second houses.’

(18a) is a straightforward WANT-DP construction with a bare object noun phrase. (18b), with a definite noun phrase in object position, is acceptable under the interpretation: the speaker wants it to be the case for most (or all) of the members of the set of second houses prominent in discourse to be owned by him or her. Thus, the WANT-DP construction is contrasted with the possessive construction with respect to the definiteness effect. The same holds for the effect with relativization. Compare the following example with the unacceptable example given in (17a):

- (19) Taro-wa [[watasi-ga hosii] bessoo]-o sagasita.  
 Taro-TOP I-NOM be.PRS second.house-ACC looked.for  
 ‘Taro looked for the second house that I wanted.’

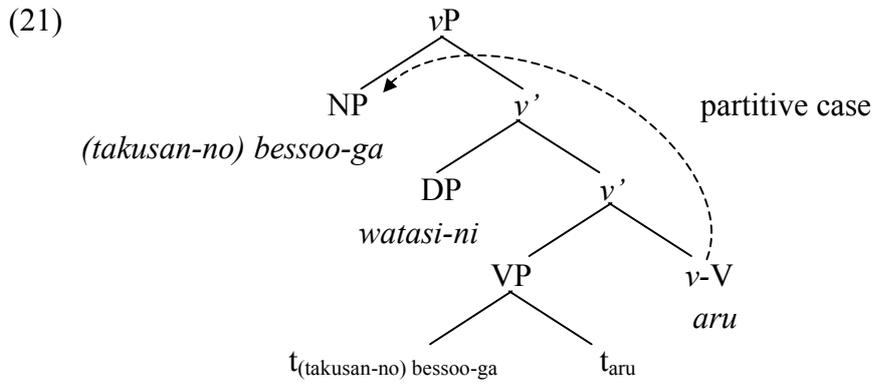
Among the interpretations that the example has, the one relevant to the current discussion is: there is a particular second house *x* such that the speaker wanted to own *x* and Taro looked for *x*. Thus the surface object of WANT is allowed to be definite while that of BE is not.

It should be noted here that the discrepancy between the simple possessive construction and the WANT-DP construction with respect to definiteness restrictions poses virtually the same issue as the one we have seen with Hindi object agreement. That is, why is it the case that the WANT-DP construction does *not* behave in the same way as the possessive construction? We will show that we can use the ‘bare VP complementation’ analysis proposed for the Hindi data to answer this question.

Belletti (1988) proposes an analysis of the definiteness effect, which has been influential in the literature. She argues that noun phrases assigned what she calls “partitive case” must have an indefinite interpretation. Extending Belletti’s idea, Lasnik (1995) proposes that the associate NP of *there*-existential constructions receives partitive case by being in a spec-head relation with the Agr to which *be* moves into. These processes take place in covert syntax, Lasnik assumes. Proposing that the copula is a partitive case assigner, he analyzes *there is a unicorn in the garden* as in (20):

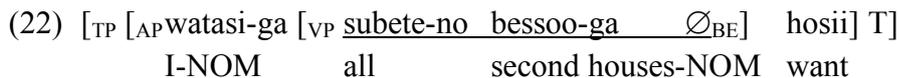
- (20) [<sub>TP</sub> there ... [<sub>AgrP</sub> a unicorn BE-Agr [<sub>t<sub>BE</sub></sub> [<sub>SC</sub> t<sub>a unicorn</sub> [<sub>PP</sub> in the garden]]]]]

It is not implausible to apply the Belletti-Lasnik type analysis to the Japanese case by assuming that *v* in the possessive clause plays the same role as Agr in Lasnik’s system. If BE raises to *v* to license its possessee argument, the derivation of a simple possessive sentence like the one given in (16a) proceeds in the way illustrated in (21).



(We adopt the hypothesis that dative case is assigned by *v*; see Ura 2000 and references cited therein.) The possessive BE *aru* covertly adjoins to the local *v* and assigns partitive case to the outer specifier of *v* occupied by the possessee *(takusan-no) bessoo-ga* ‘(many) second house-NOM,’ which has been raised out of the VP.

One consequence of the Belletti-Lasnik style analysis of the possessive construction is that when *v* is absent from the structure, the case of the possessee DP would not be licensed by partitive case checking. Recall now that our analysis of the lack of the default agreement pattern in the Hindi WANT-DP construction claims that *caahiye* ‘want’ always take a VP complement. If this option is at least allowed for the Japanese WANT *hosii* as well, the lack of definiteness restrictions in the Japanese construction can be understood as a consequence of the interaction of the structure without *v* and the system of partitive case checking. No *v*-projection entails no partitive case assignment. That is, we propose a structure of the following kind for the Japanese WANT-DP construction:



A remaining question is how the nominative noun phrase can have its case licensed. Here we can assume that the adjective *hosii* assigns nominative case to the embedded object long distance (cf. Tada 1992, among others) or that T can assign nominative case to it (cf. Takezawa 1987, among others).<sup>9</sup> The choice between them does not directly concern us here.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examined a ‘biclausal structure’ approach to the WANT-DP construction and discussed agreement facts in Hindi and facts pertaining to definiteness restrictions in Japanese. These properties of the WANT-DP construction are unexpected under its biclausal analysis

<sup>9</sup> Endo, Kitagawa and Yoon (1999), who propose to analyze the WANT-DP construction in terms of a null possessive predicate, observe that the dative possessor may occur with a null BE under the *hosii* construction. If this is correct, it means that the desiderative adjective allows its complement to be a *v*P as well as VP under the current analysis. What should be noted is that this possibility does not undermine the proposed explanation of the lack of definiteness restrictions, since all the present analysis has to say is that *hosii* may take a VP-complement.

and therefore pose a potential problem for the Freeze-Kayne type approach to HAVE and BE; there is no a priori reason to believe that while null HAVE can occur in the complement of WANT in HAVE-languages, null BE cannot in BE-languages. We suggested one possible way to maintain the ‘null BE’ analysis of the WANT-DP construction.

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