

A short note on the English-specific character of *have* + infinitival ECM

Richard S. Kayne
New York University

May, 2022

1.

English allows matrix verb *have* with an ECM-like infinitive in the following sentences, taken from Myler (2016, 266, 281):

(1) Neil had something wonderful happen (to him) today.

(2) I had Jim bathe his dog.

Myler calls the first of these an instance of experiencer *have* and the second an instance of engineer *have*, and he is certainly correct to distinguish the two.

In this paper I will not pay particular attention to the difference between these two subtypes of *have*-sentences. I will rather be interested in one surprising property they have in common, namely that both (1) and (2) are not, as far as I know, found in any other Germanic language, nor in any Romance language.

2.

Before stating my proposal, let me note in passing that it is only infinitival ECM that will be at issue in this paper, insofar as a participial counterpart of some sentences akin to the experiencer case of (1) can be found elsewhere than in English. For example, consider:

(3) The poor guy had his car stolen (from him) last night

This experiencer-type sentence has a close counterpart in French, with a participle:¹

(4) Le pauvre a eu sa voiture (de) volée la nuit dernière. ('the poor has had his car (of) stolen the night last')

The fact that participial ECM with matrix verb 'have' is more widespread than infinitival ECM with matrix 'have' is almost certainly related to the fact that small clause ECM is generally more widespread than infinitival ECM, too, as can be seen again in French:

(5) Je crois Marie intelligente. ('I believe M intelligent')

(6) *Je crois Marie être intelligente. ('I believe M to-be intelligent')

The small clause ECM example in (5) is fine, as opposed to the infinitival example in (6).²

¹Example due to Jean-Yves Pollock.

²French infinitival ECM with verbs like 'believe' is acceptable if the infinitival subject is wh-moved, in a way comparable to what is seen in the English pair (cf. Postal (1974, 304ff.):

i) *I assure you John to be the best student in the class.

ii) John, who I assure you to be the best student in the class,...

For discussion in terms of the notion 'Case into Comp' (which needs to be updated), see Kayne (1980) and Pesetsky (2021, sect. 2.5.2); for a finer-grained discussion of the French facts, see Pollock (1985).

English engineer-type sentences with a participle such as:

3.

As a first step toward an analysis of the fact that infinitival ECM with 'have' is limited to English within Germanic plus Romance,³ we can note that some English has the following:⁴

(7) a. Just recently, I had an aunt to come from Texas.

b. They'd have a thrashing machine to come in and thrash it.

in which the infinitival verb is preceded by *to*. This suggests the possibility that other English has a silent counterpart of *to* (capitals will indicate silence), i.e. that the following:

(8) We had them arrive early.

should be taken to be as in:⁵

(9) we had them TO arrive early

This suggested alternation between *to* and TO recalls, even if inexactly, pairs like:

(10) We wanted them to arrive early.

(11) We wanted for them to arrive early.

which show an alternation between *for* and FOR. This in turn makes one wonder if the examples in (7) might not have a silent FOR, as in:

(12) they'd have FOR a thrashing machine to come in

4.

If they do, then a key question arises as to whether FOR might not also necessarily be present in cases like (1) and (2), in addition to TO, for example:

(13) he had FOR something wonderful TO happen (to him) today.

(14) they had FOR Jim TO bathe his dog.

This possibility is of interest insofar as English seems to be the only language within the set of Romance and Germanic languages to have a complementizer *for*/FOR that is able to license an infinitival lexical subject.⁶

iii) They had him arrested.

appear not to have any word-for-word counterpart in French (cf. Kayne (1993, note 16) and den Dikken (1997, note 1 and sect. 6.3)), which suggests that (iii) may contain a silent infinitival BE.

³The analysis to be proposed further on leads to the expectation that (within the set of languages having 'have') infinitival ECM with 'have' as the matrix verb will be cross-linguistically rare, just as with matrix 'want'.

⁴These examples are from Wolfram and Christian (1975, 142/153).

⁵Which in turn recalls the well-known:

i) They made him write another paper.

ii) He was made to write another paper.

Why silent TO is incompatible with overt *for* remains in general an open question:

iii) For there *(to) be another meeting would be a good idea.

⁶This in turn may be related to English being the only language within these families to lack infinitival suffixes of any kind.

For recent discussion of complementizer-like *for*, see Pesetsky (2021, chap. 5).

In other words, we can account for the limitation of (1)/(13) and (2)/(14) to English, within these two families, if the following holds cross-linguistically:

(15) 'Have' can take an infinitival ECM-type complement only via the intermediary of *for*/FOR'.

5.

The proposal in (15) establishes a partial link between *have* and Postal's (1974, sect. 4.16) W-verbs, one example of which is:

(16) They definitely want for there to be another meeting.

(17) They definitely want there to be another meeting.

With matrix verbs like *want*, some or much English allows (16) with overt *for*, and all English, I would guess, allows (17), arguably with silent FOR. Within Germanic and Romance, (16) with overt *for* is limited to English. Moreover, (17) without overt *for* is also limited to English, in a way that directly supports taking (17) to contain FOR.

Put another way, sentences exactly like (16) and (17) are limited to English as a side effect of only English having a complementizer *for*/FOR. For (17), we should make things more explicit, as in the following, parallel to (15):

(18) 'Want' and similar verbs can take an infinitival ECM-type complement only via the intermediary of *for*/FOR.⁷

We can note in passing that sentences like:

(19) They want to leave.

are widespread with Germanic and Romance, indicating that with 'want' and similar verbs, *for*/FOR is necessary only for ECM reasons, and is not necessary to license the infinitive itself. Similarly from the present perspective, we can note that sentences like:

(20) They have to leave.

are less limited,⁸ within Germanic and Romance, than the infinitival ECM-sentences with matrix verb 'have' illustrated in (1) and (2), with the idea again being that (20) doesn't need English-specific *for*/FOR since (20) is not an instance of ECM.

There is also a connection between ECM 'want' and ECM 'have' concerning passivization. Alongside:

(21) They want there to be another meeting.

(22) They had us prepare the reading list.

we do not have:⁹

(23) *There is wanted to be another meeting.

(24) *We were had (to) prepare the reading list.

6.

⁷As opposed to 'believe'-type verbs. All this will need to be looked into outside Romance and Germanic, too, of course.

⁸Cf. den Dikken (1997, note 1).

⁹With *want* taking a small clause complement, passive is sometimes possible:

i) You're wanted on the phone.

With *have* taking a complement other than an infinitival ECM one, passive is often impossible, but sometimes possible, as Myler (2016, 338) emphasizes.

On the link between infinitival ECM *want* and infinitival ECM *have* in English, we can note in addition that verbs of the *want* class have, at least in my English, the property that the subject of the matrix verb, in ECM contexts, must be animate/human:

(25) We would like there to be a solution to this problem.

(26) *This problem would like there to be a solution (to it).

There is a particularly striking contrast with *need*. With an abstract subject, in a non-ECM context, we can have:

(27) The fact that there's no solution to this problem needs an explanation.

(28) The fact that there's no solution to this problem needs to be explained.

but not (in an infinitival ECM context):

(29) *The fact that there's no solution to this problem needs (for) us to explain it.

Similarly with *mean*:

(30) This paragraph doesn't mean anything about your having to leave.

(31) This paragraph doesn't mean that you should leave.

But this is not possible in an infinitival ECM context:

(32) *This paragraph doesn't mean (for) you to leave.

From the present perspective, these facts about *want*, *would like*, *need* and *mean* fall together with the following fact about *have* with infinitival ECM:

(33) They were angry (at us), so they had us leave early.

But not:

(34) *Their anger had us leave early.

(35) *The fact that they were angry had us leave early.

Similarly:

(36) Because of the freezing weather, his mother had him wear three sweaters.

(37) *The cold weather had him wear three sweaters.¹⁰

The overarching generalization, which is available only if we take *have* + infinitival ECM to necessarily involve FOR, appears to be:¹¹

(38) A verbal complement introduced by complementizer *for*/FOR is only possible if the verb has a human/animate/sentient subject.¹²

We can note, in passing again, that the contrast between *have* and *make* seen in:

(39) Their anger made/*had us leave early.

(40) The cold weather made/*had him wear three sweaters.

indicates that the infinitive embedded under *make* does not require *for*/FOR to license its lexical subject.¹³

¹⁰To be distinguished from the non-infinitival:

i) The cold weather had him wearing three sweaters.

in a way presumably related to the fact that English gerunds license a lexical subject more readily than English infinitives (cf. Reuland (1983)):

ii) Him having said that in public scandalized everybody.

iii) *Him to have said that in public is unbelievable.

¹¹Postverbal subject-like *for*-infinitives are not intended to fall under this generalization:

i) It would be a good thing for there to be another meeting.

¹²Relevant to the choice of modifier here is the status of sentences like:

i) That earthworm doesn't want to be eaten.

¹³On how the lexical subject under *make* might be licensed, see Kayne (1981; 2004) and Pollock (1994).

Returning to (38), we might wonder why it should hold. There may be a link to another instance of infinitival *for*:

(41) The earthquake hit that city in order for the inhabitants to be punished.

(42) The flowers are in the dining room in order for there to be something to talk about over dinner.

The *in order for...to...* phrases here can be associated with an unpronounced agent, but cannot be directly associated with *the earthquake* or with *the flowers*.

7.

Alongside the just discussed similarities between *have* and *want*-type verbs concerning infinitival ECM, there is a sharp difference that we need to reach an understanding of, namely that overt *for* is not seen with ECM *have* in any variety of English (as far as I know), despite its being found with *want*-type verbs, to one degree or another:¹⁴

(43) We want/would like/would prefer/wish/intend/mean for there to be another meeting.

But not:

(44) *He had for something wonderful (to) happen (to him) last week.

(45) *I had for Jim (to) bathe his dog.

As a step toward an account of (44)/(45), we can think of the idea in Freeze (1992) and Kayne (1993), to the effect that *have* in general necessarily involves incorporation involving a preposition.¹⁵ In well-formed *have* sentences with infinitival ECM, such as (33) and (36), the relevant P is arguably silent FOR itself. In (44) and (45) overt *for* has evidently not participated in incorporation,¹⁶ so *have* in (44) and (45) is not legitimate (on the assumption that no other P is available).

8.

In conclusion, *have* + infinitival ECM is specific to English (within Germanic and Romance) because only English can, in that context, provide *have* with the preposition that it needs (there and elsewhere), with that preposition being in this case FOR, the silent counterpart of complementizer *for*, which is itself, in ECM contexts, highly specific to English, as is its silent counterpart.

¹⁴Cf. Postal (1974, sect. 4.16).

¹⁵The execution of this idea will need to be revised if Collins and Kayne (2021) is correct in taking the language faculty to exclude late insertion.

Accounting for the absence of overt *for* with *have* is more natural from the perspective of Freeze (1992) and Kayne (1993) than from that of Myler (2016).

Myler (2016, 290) notes that Romance causatives (cf. Kayne (1975), Rouveret and Vergnaud (1980) and Sheehan (2020) among others) with matrix verb *faire/hacer* ('do/'make') can sometimes correspond closely to English 'engineer' *have*. The text proposal tells us why Romance cannot make use of its 'have' in such causatives. Why English cannot use *do* in addition to or instead of *make* remains to be understood.

¹⁶Whether *want*-sentences with FOR (rather than *for*) involve incorporation of FOR to *want* is left an open question here.

References:

- Collins, C. and R.S. Kayne (2021) "Towards a Theory of Morphology as Syntax", lingbuzz/005693.
- den Dikken, M. (1997) "The syntax of possession and the verb 'have'," *Lingua*, 101, 129-150.
- Freeze, R. (1992) "Existentials and other locatives," *Language*, 68, 553-595.
- Kayne, R.S. (1975) *French Syntax: The Transformational Cycle*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Kayne, R.S. (1980) "Extensions of binding and case-marking," *Linguistic Inquiry*, 11, 75-96.
- Kayne, R.S. (1981) "Two Notes on the NIC," in A. Belletti, L. Brandi & L. Rizzi (eds.) *Theory of Markedness in Generative Grammar. Proceedings of the 1979 GLOW Conference*, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, 317-346 (reprinted in Kayne 1984).
- Kayne, R.S. (1984) *Connectedness and Binary Branching*, Foris, Dordrecht.
- Kayne, R.S. (1993) "Toward a Modular Theory of Auxiliary Selection," *Studia Linguistica*, 47, 3-31.
- Kayne, R.S. (2004) "Prepositions as Probes", in A. Belletti (ed.), *Structures and Beyond*, Oxford University Press, New York, 192-212.
- Myler, N. (2016) *Building and Interpreting Possession Sentences*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Pesetsky, D. (2021) "Exfoliation: Towards a Derivational Theory of Clause Size" (version 3.1), lingbuzz/004440.
- Pollock, J.-Y. (1985) "On Case and the Syntax of Infinitives in French," in J. Guéron, H.-G. Obenauer and J.-Y. Pollock (eds.) *Grammatical Representation*, Foris, Dordrecht, 293-326.
- Pollock, Jean-Yves (1994) "Checking theory and bare verbs," in G. Cinque, J. Koster, J.-Y. Pollock, L. Rizzi, and R. Zanuttini (eds.) *Paths toward Universal Grammar. Studies in honor of Richard S. Kayne*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 293-310.
- Postal, P.M. (1974) *On Raising. One Rule of English Grammar and its Theoretical Implications*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Reuland, E. (1983) "Governing -ing," *Linguistic Inquiry*, 14, 101-136.
- Rouveret, A. and J.R. Vergnaud (1980) "Specifying Reference to the Subject: French Causatives and Conditions on Representations," *Linguistic Inquiry*, 11, 97-202.
- Sheehan, M. (2020) "The Development of Exceptional Case Marking in Romance with a Particular Focus on French," *Probus*, 32, 367-400.
- Wolfram, W. and D. Christian (1975) "Sociolinguistic Variables In Appalachian Dialects", Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia.