

BELIEVE-TYPE AND WANT-TYPE MATRIX VERBS AND THEIR COMPLEMENTS

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The contrast between the sentential complements of verbs like *want* and *believe* has been the subject of much debate. P. Rosenbaum distinguished them as being obligatory / optional undergoers of a ‘pronoun replacement’ transformation [2].

The *want* class are often called *emotive verbs*, or *subject Equi verbs*, or *subject control verbs*. This class includes desiratives like *want* and *wish* as well as *factive-emotive* such as *like*, *love*, *hate* and *fear*.

The *believe* class are sometimes called (*subject to object*) *raising verbs* or *Exceptional Case Marking* (ECM) verbs [3]. *Believe-type* verbs are the members of the verbal lexicon that share:

a) the syntactic characteristic of displaying the alternation between a finite clausal complement and an NP+to-infinitival clause complement (accusative and infinitive) (sentences (1) and (2) below);

b) the semantic characteristic that their (active) subjects say, think, perceive or show something to be the case of the subject of the complement (such a semantic characterization often does not hold in cases like (2b) where there is no active subject).

(1) *Jack believes that Ann is friendly.*

(2) a. *Jack believes Ann to be friendly.*

b. *Ann is believed to be friendly.*

A lot of scholars listed over a hundred verbs that answer both parts of this description. Among them are: *accept*, *acknowledge*, *announce*, *argue*, *believe*, *consider*, *declare*, *expect*, *explain*, *find*, *fancy*, *fear*, *hope*, *know*, *suggest*, *report*, *suppose*, *suspect*, *understand*, *witness* and others [1].

Although, both take nexalcomplements, the complement to a *want-type* verb is interpreted as a *STATE OF AFFAIRS*, while the complement to a *believe-type* verb is interpreted as a *PROPOSITION*, which must ultimately be translated into an information unit. As for J. Bresnan, she listed the major syntactic differences between the two classes as follows: *want-type* verbs allow the complementizer *for*, allow *subject-controlled Equi* (PRO), disallow passive, and disallow reflexivisation. The *believe-type* verbs are the opposite: they never appear with *for*, they disallow *Equi*, they allow passive, and they allow reflexivisation.

- a. *The cossacks {want/*believe} very much for the commissar to dance.*
- b. *The commissar doesn't {want/*believe} to dance.*
- c. *The commissar is {*wanted/believed} to dance poorly.*
- d. *The cossacks {*?want/believe} themselves to dance well.*

When small clause complements are examined, some further differences emerge which distinguish *emotive* from *propositional* verbs. The *want* class behaves similarly with any nexalcomplement, whereas the *believe* class shows marked differences between infinitival and small clause complements.

For differentiation it is necessary to use the terms *believe* class and *believe-type* to refer to those *propositional* or *epistemic verbs* which appear with infinitival complements and the *consider* class or *consider-type* to *propositional* or *epistemic* verbs which appear with small clause complements.

In general, the *believe* class and the *consider* class are coextensive, and can be generally referred to as *epistemic* verbs, but there are a few verbs, such as *regard*, in the *consider* class which are not also in the *believe* class, and a few in the *believe* class which are not in the *consider* class, for example *believe*. This is a result of vagaries of *c-selection*. The semantic interpretation of *consider* is exactly the same in relevant respects as that of *believe*, and any differences have to do with differences in *c-selection*. Since *want-type* verbs have similarly whether they appear with infinitival or small clause complements, they can be referred to generally either as *want-type* verbs or as *emotive* verbs [3].

References

1. Noël, D. (2002). 'Believe-type matrix verbs and their complements'.
2. Rosenbaum, P. (1967). 'The Grammar of English Predicate Complement Constructions'.
3. <http://lingo.stanford.edu/sag/L221a/sven/dnchap2.pdf>