

# Microvariation in verbal *rather*

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## Abstract

This paper uses survey results to analyze patterns of judgments across different versions of the non-standard verbal use of the word *rather*, which can take participial morphology, as in *rathered*. Across numerous possible instantiations of the construction, there appear to be in fact a quite limited number of grammars, which are generated by an implicational hierarchy of functional heads, along with the availability of a silent verb HAVE. The overall picture supports several broader conclusions. First, bare-infinitive–selecting verbs are nearly “closed class” because they have special syntactic properties that go beyond semantic or even syntactic selection: they must value the temporal verbal features of the embedded verb, or else provide a structural context for such valuation. Second, silent verbs can be licensed by head-moving to a modal head in the extended projection. This movement is freely available, but silence demands recoverability, which limits its application only to certain verbs, and certain uses/meanings of those verbs. Third, in addition to previously known configurations for building parasitic participle constructions, movement of a lower verb to a higher verb can extend the phase of the lower verb and lead to its silence. Fourth, the distribution of *rather* suggests that volitional meaning is not a primitive, but is constructed from smaller primitives. Finally, microvariation reveals a tight connection among logically distinct functional heads, suggesting that they are not acquired independently of each other, but interact in significant ways.

## 1 Introduction

Verbal *rather* refers to uses of the word *rather* that seem to have some properties of a verb, such as in the examples shown below in (1) (see Juge 2002, Klippenstein 2012, Van Linden 2015).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. I would have **rathered slept** in a bed because,  
in all honesty, his lap was not very comfortable. (Wood 2013:59)
- b. I would have **rathered dance** with my friends to these songs  
than watch the performers do it.<sup>2</sup>
- c. I would **rather him** call me by my first name than be called Mom. (Wood 2013:63)
- d. I would **rather** (that) he call me by my first name.

In (1a–b) *rather* looks like a verb in that it takes the participle *-ed* ending; in (1c) *rather* looks like a verb in that it appears to license an embedded subject under ECM, and that it cannot be omitted; and in (1d) *rather* looks like a verb taking a CP complement, and it cannot be omitted.

<sup>1</sup>For discussion of the material in this paper, I would like to thank Raffaella Zanuttini, Matt Tyler, Oddur Snorrason, Sigríður Sæunn Sigurðardóttir, Jackson Petty, Randi Martinez, Lydia Lee, Greg Johnson, Larry Horn, Bob Frank, and Enoch Aboh, along with the members of the Yale Syntax Reading Group and the Yale Grammatical Diveristy Project and the participants at a New York University syntax seminar, where this work was presented. Thanks also to the *Linguistic Variation* editors and reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions, which greatly improved the paper.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.yelp.com/biz/the-awesome-80s-prom-new-york>, verified April 18th, 2023.

In this paper, I use the results of an acceptability judgment survey to investigate several intriguing aspects of the morphosyntax of verbal *rather*. First, the results support a view of verbal *rather* in which it is able to be assigned verbal inflectional features before it is able to assign such features of its own. This raises the question of what it means to be a verb in the first place, and suggests that bare-infinitive-selecting verbs are closed class in English because they need to have an extra property that verbs do not necessarily have. Second, the results strongly support the proposal that ECM uses of *rather* involve a silent verb HAVE. I propose that HAVE is silent when it raises by head movement to a volitional modal head ( $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ ). Third, this head-movement puts the embedded verb in the same phase domain as *rather*, similar to a restructuring configuration, which may feed a parasitic participle construction (where two or more perfect participles are licensed by one auxiliary), which is otherwise quite rare in English.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I provide an overview of the syntactic properties of verbal *rather* that make it unique in English. In section 3, I discuss the structure of verbal *rather* that serves the basis of the present study, along with some details about the study itself. In section 4, I discuss the survey results in detail, showing how they reveal certain empirical generalizations that motivate specific refinements of the syntactic analysis, leading to a more restrictive system overall. In section 5, I discuss further points of microvariation and where in the analysis they might be localized. Section 6 concludes.

## 2 Overview

The use of verbal *rather* is subject to substantial variation (Wood et al. 2020) that goes far beyond simple lexical variation. That is, it is not simply a matter of an ordinary verb existing in some dialects and not others. In fact, its syntactic properties are of substantial interest. In the following subsections, I discuss a few of the syntactic properties of verbal *rather* that make it particularly intriguing.

### 2.1 Licensing of silent verbs

Wood (2013) shows that there is reason to think that verbal *rather* in some uses licenses a silent light verb HAVE, in particular the ECM sentences where *rather* seems to license an accusative embedded subject, as in (1c) above. This proposal is nicely illustrated by the attested sentence in (2a), which, according to the present analysis, really has a silent verb HAVE as indicated in (2b), and it is this HAVE that licenses the embedded subject.

- (2) a. Would you rather break up with someone... or have them break up with you? [...]  
I would rather him break up with me.<sup>3</sup>
- b. Would you rather break up with someone... or have them break up with you? [...]  
I would rather HAVE him break up with me.

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<sup>3</sup>Attested example cited in Wood (2013:63). The url no longer works as of May 3rd, 2023.

The conditions that allow silent HAVE thus contribute to a broader picture of the licensing of silent elements, verbs in particular (van Riemsdijk 2002; Harves 2008; Kayne 2009, 2011, 2014; Harves and Kayne 2012; Den Dikken 2010; Harves and Myler 2014; Tyler and Wood 2019; Snorrason 2022). In this paper, I will show in some detail how several important points of variation with verbal *rather* are directly accounted for by assuming the presence of silent HAVE in the ECM constructions.

## 2.2 Nearly closed class kind of verb in the first place

If *rather* is a verb, it is a verb that (in some cases) takes a bare infinitive complement—with no *to*—at least for some speakers. This is very restricted in English. For ECM constructions, there is a small set of specific verbs that take an infinitive without *to*, such as those in (3).

- (3) a. Causative verbs: *have, make, let*, but not *\*cause* or *\*force*
- i. They {had/made/let} me fix the car.
  - ii. They {caused/forced} me \*(to) fix the car.
- b. Perception verbs: *see, hear, feel, watch*, but not *\*detect, \*sense, or \*observe*.
- i. They {saw/heard/watched} me sing.
  - ii. \* They {detected/sensed/observed} me sing.
- c. *help* but not *\*assist* or *\*aid*
- i. They helped me fix the car.
  - ii. \* They {assisted/aided} me fix the car.

For non-ECM verbs, there is an even smaller set, such as the verbs in (4).<sup>4</sup>

- (4) a. *help* but not *\*assist* or *\*aid*
- i. They would have helped fix the car.
  - ii. \* They would have {assisted/aided} fix the car.
- b. The auxiliary *dare*

*Dare* is discussed further in section 2.3 below. For now, note that other auxiliaries (even auxiliary *need*) are different, in that they cannot take agreement inflection (third singular *-s*) or be embedded under *have*.

- (5) a. She dares not say it out loud.  
b. She wouldn't have dared say it out loud.
- (6) a. She {need/\*needs} not say it out loud.  
b. She {needs/\*need} to say it out loud.

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<sup>4</sup>Here I only concentrate on verbs that can be embedded under auxiliaries such as *have* or *do*, and take infinitive complements without *to* in those contexts. Auxiliaries such as *will, would, must, shall*, etc. also take infinitive complements without *to*, but they are syntactically distinct in ways that go beyond the points of interest here, even in dialects with double modal constructions (see e.g. Hasty 2014).

- c. She wouldn't have needed \*(to) say it out loud.

(6a) shows that when *need* behaves as an auxiliary—it precedes negation and takes a bare infinitive complement without *to*—it cannot take the 3rd singular agreement marker *-s*. (6b) shows that when *need* behaves as a main verb, taking a *to*-infinitive complement, it must take the singular agreement marker *-s* (for varieties that normally require it). The verb *dare* is different in that it can behave as an auxiliary—it precedes negation and takes a bare infinitive complement without *to* in (5a)—but nevertheless takes agreement. (5b) shows that it can be embedded under the auxiliaries *would* and *have*, and still take an infinitive complement without *to*. I return to *dare* briefly in the next section, but mostly leave it for future research. The point here is that verbs that take bare infinitive complements, whether the ECM type or not, are not very common, and perhaps for this reason alone worthy of special attention from a morphosyntactic standpoint.

### 2.3 Parasitic participles

As seen in (1a), verbal *rather* constructions sometimes allow two participles with only one auxiliary *have*. This is (nearly) unique in English, to my knowledge, and once again, for that reason alone, warrants further study. This phenomenon is found in other varieties of Germanic, where it is known as a “parasitic participle” construction (Den Dikken and Hoekstra 1997):

- (7) Han har **velat**        **åkt**        till Spanien.  
 he has wanted.PRF gone.PRF to Spain  
 ‘He has wanted to go to Spain.’ (Wiklund 2001:211) (Swedish)
- (8) Han hevði **viljað**        **lisið**        bókina.  
 he had wanted.PRF read.PRF book.the  
 ‘He would have wanted to read the book.’ (Wiklund 2007:191) (Faroese)

In the literature on parasitic participles in other varieties of Germanic, some authors have argued that the distinction between two participles and one has a semantic effect, either directly or indirectly (Sandøy 1991, 2001, 2003; Julien 2003; Eide 2011; Snorrason 2022), while others have argued that the distinction is semantically vacuous, involving the manipulation of uninterpretable features only (Anward 1988; Den Dikken and Hoekstra 1997; Wiklund 2001, 2007; Wurmbrand 2010, 2012b,c); see Larsson (2014) for an overview and further references. I have been unable to find any semantic effects of the distinction between two participles and one in English (see Wood 2013:82–83 for some discussion), but since there is a lot of speaker variation in this area, it is possible that such effects do exist for some speakers. For the purposes of this article, I assume that there are no such effects, since I do not have any evidence for them, and build my account on an analysis that does not directly manipulate semantically interpretable features.

Given the existence of parasitic participles with verbal *rather*, the question arises why English does not have parasitic participles more generally. The answer in Wurmbrand (2012c) is the following:

“A precondition for licensing [Parasitic Participles] is that the language allows constructions of the form AUX–MOD–V. Since these constructions are independently excluded in English (English modals can never be embedded), [Parasitic Participles] are not found in English.” (Wurmbrand 2012c:161)

The prediction is that if English develops AUX–MOD–V constructions, parasitic participles become possible. Verbal *rather* appears to bear this out, if we understand *rather* to be an embedded modal in the relevant sense.

As mentioned in the previous subsection, there is actually one other auxiliary that can take inflection and be embedded under auxiliary *have*, and that is *dare*.

- (9) a. She dared not leave class early.  
b. She didn't dare leave class early.  
c. She wouldn't have dared leave class early.

The word order in (9a) shows that it is an auxiliary which shares distributional properties with modals (it precedes negation and takes an infinitive complement without *to*), but in (9b), we see that it can appear lower (suggesting that it actually originates lower) and still take the bare infinitive complement. (9c) shows that it can be embedded under yet another auxiliary, the perfect *have* (following the modal *would*). Even under *have*, *dare* may take a bare infinitive complement, suggesting that it is still an auxiliary.

And in fact, consistent with Wurmbrand's prediction, parasitic participles turn out to be possible with *dare* as well, at least for many speakers, as illustrated by the constructed example in (10a) and the attested examples in (10b–e).

- (10) a. She wouldn't have **dared left** class early. (My judgment)  
b. I don't think he would have **dared given** dad a hug six months ago,<sup>5</sup>  
c. ... opening my eyes to things I wouldn't have **dared eaten** before<sup>6</sup>  
d. ... and he would never have **dared left** a drink in her secret sanctum.<sup>7</sup>  
e. I wouldn't have **dared left** Hallen at 4 months old, so I am feeling a twinge of guilt for leaving Hazel this early.<sup>8</sup>

Informal conversations with native speakers suggest that this parasitic participle construction with *dare* is widely accepted, but not at all universally. As far as I know, this phenomenon has not been researched before, and should be looked into further. I will, however, set aside *dare* for the time being, only noting that parasitic participle constructions do seem to be possible under the right

<sup>5</sup><http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004235.html>, verified May 3rd, 2023

<sup>6</sup><http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004235.html>, verified May 3rd, 2023

<sup>7</sup>*Dark Bites: A Short Story Collection* By Sherrilyn Kenyon, retrieved on Google Books. Available at <https://allnovel.net/fear-the-darkness-dark-hunter-10-5/page-2.html>, verified May 3rd, 2023

<sup>8</sup><https://www.dearnovemberdays.com/2017/06/26/spit-up-with-a-side-of-guilt/>, verified May 3rd, 2023

conditions in English, but that they are rare, so verbal *rather* provides a rare opportunity to study them.

## 2.4 Restricted distribution

For many speakers, verbal *rather* is only possible in the context of another modal, usually *would*.<sup>9</sup>

- (11) a. I would rather them leave early.  
b. I would {want / prefer} them to leave early.
- (12) a. \* I generally rather them leave early.  
b. I generally {want / prefer} them to leave early.
- (13) a. I would have rathered leave early.  
b. I would have {wanted / preferred} to leave early.
- (14) a. \* In the past, I have always rathered leave early.  
b. In the past, I have always {wanted / preferred} to leave early.

A reviewer points out that this property seems to be true for adverbial *rather* as well, providing the following examples.

- (15) a. Last night, I would rather have gone to a pub.  
b. \* Last night, I rather had gone to a pub.

I take (15a) to involve adverbial *rather* because *rather* occurs above the perfect auxiliary *have*. The contrast between (15a) and (15b) shows that even in this use, a modal seems to be necessary. The same reviewer also points out that verbal *rather* also inherits from adverbial *rather* the requirement to occur in irrealis contexts.

- (16) a. I preferred to go to a pub, but John and Mary preferred to go to the movies, so we went to the movies.  
b. \* I would rather have gone to a pub, but John and Mary would rather have gone to the movies, so we went to the movies.

(16b) is unacceptable because *John and Mary would rather have gone to the movies* is incompatible with the continuation that says that they went to the movies. (16a) shows that the verb *prefer* is not like this, at least in the simple past tense.

For many speakers, even when *rather* “becomes” a verb, it retains these properties of adverbial *rather*. This shows that something special is going on, beyond just “becoming” another lexical verb

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<sup>9</sup>There is some speaker variation in the range of modals that may license verbal *rather*, and some speakers appear not to require a modal at all. For such speakers, *rather* may be closer to an ordinary verb meaning ‘prefer’. Still, at least some of these speakers also seem to accept examples with parasitic participles, so these varieties should be studied more closely in future research. Do we find parasitic past tense marking, for example? This dimension of variation is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present paper; see Wood (2013) for examples and some preliminary discussion.

meaning something like ‘prefer’. Ultimately, this raises the question of what it means to “be a verb” in the first place, a question I return to below. Explaining these restrictions on adverbial *rather* goes beyond of the scope of the present paper, but note that according to the analysis I propose, verbal *rather* is essentially built from adverbial *rather*, and nothing in the mechanisms that do this would lead us to expect that the properties of adverbial *rather* would automatically go away.

In this paper, I do not have much to say about the modal requirement, except that it is unlikely to be due to direct c-selection, because the modal requirement holds past the Perf head, as can be seen in (11)–(14). The modal is not always *would*, though it usually is, and it is almost never a deontic modal.

- (17) a. (?) I might rather go to a small school.  
b. ?? I must rather go to a small school.  
c. \* I should rather go to a small school.<sup>10</sup>

I would like to tentatively suggest that the modal has some function in constructing the volitional meaning in the first place. To illustrate the idea, consider how verbs such as *like* or *love* have experiencer meanings in the present, past, and present/past perfect, as illustrated in (18).

- (18) a. I {love/loved} to take long walks.  
b. I {like/liked} to take long walks.  
(19) a. For a long time, I {have/had} loved to take long walks.  
b. For a long time, I {have/had} liked to take long walks.

In these sentences, *like* and *love* describe an experience, but not a desire or volition; they mean something quite different from *I want to take long walks*. With a modal like *would*, however, the meaning can come much closer to ‘want’, as illustrated in (20)–(21).

- (20) a. I would like to go for a run, even though I do not like to run.  
b. I want to go for a run, even though I do not like to run.  
(21) a. I would love to eat healthy food, but I just don’t love to eat healthy food.  
b. I want to eat healthy food, but I don’t love to eat healthy food.

These sentences are not contradictions, because *would like* and *would love* express volition, not experiences. It is perfectly sensible for one to desire something even if one does not enjoy the experience of that thing (for example if that thing has other positive consequences, it is a requirement of some kind, etc.).

These contrasts, then, might suggest that volitional modality, represented at least in part by the functional head  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  in this paper, is not a primitive on its own, but is constructed from at

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<sup>10</sup>(17c) would be fully acceptable for speakers who allow *should* to have essentially the same meaning as *would* in the other examples in this paper.

least two modal heads. If so, then it is possible that other volitional auxiliaries, cross-linguistically, might be syntactically more complex than they appear. It might also explain what happened over time to English *will*, a future modal that that used to have volitional meaning in earlier stages of the language: part of the complex structure was lost, leaving a modal component behind while losing the volitional component.



## 2.5 Microvariation

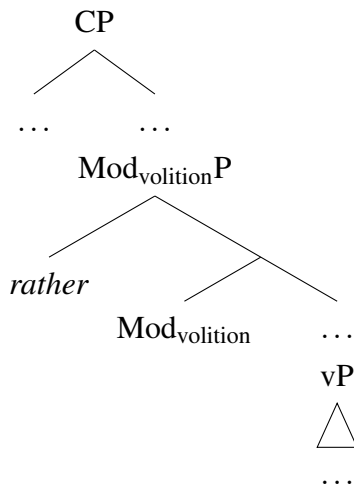
There is a lot of microvariation connected to each of the properties above. Thus, to the extent that those properties are interesting, verbal *rather* provides a way to refine our understanding of them. It also provides a chance to understand the dependence or independence of the microparameters responsible for this kind of variation. All of these properties show that verbal *rather* is not just a matter of lexical variation, where some speakers have a lexical verb *rather* which behaves like an otherwise ordinary verb. Instead, verbal *rather* has a rather unique set of properties that allow us to probe in a special way into the workings of several aspects of grammar. In this paper, I will focus on three properties in particular: the availability of parasitic participles, the availability of participial inflection on *rather*, and the properties of the silent verb HAVE. As a starting point, I will now turn to a discussion of the analysis of verbal *rather* proposed in Wood (2013), which the results and analysis to follow will be built on.

## 3 The structure of verbal *rather*

### 3.1 Wood (2013)

In Wood (2013), *rather* functions as a volitional adverb when it occurs in the specifier of a volitional Modal head,  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , in the sense of Cinque (1999, 2006).

(22) Adverbial *rather*



This configuration is the basic starting point for verbal *rather*. Wood (2013) proposes two ways in which *rather* can take on the formal properties of a verb.

(23) Verb-like properties of *rather*

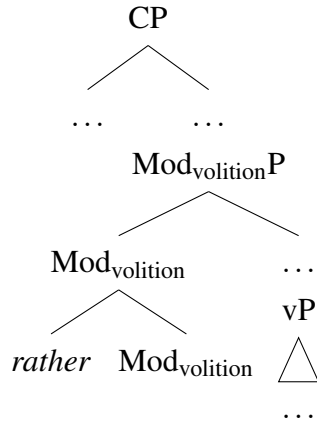
- a.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  licenses a silent verb HAVE.
- b.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  assigns and/or receives verbal features.

In the first case,  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  (and thus *rather*) may or may not ‘be a verb’ in some technical sense. But on the surface, it seems to function as a verb because there is, in fact, a silent verb in the structure. In the second case, I argue, it must be a verb. That is, we may call something a verb if it

assigns or receives verbal features (in the specific sense below). In this way, verbhood is defined *configurationally*, not lexically.<sup>11</sup>

I assume that when  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  assigns and/or receives verbal features, *rather* head-adjoins to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . Diachronically, this looks like a case of spec-to-head reanalysis (van Gelderen 2004).

(24) Verbal *rather*



Wood (2013) proposes that the rebracketing from the structure in (22) to the structure in (24) takes place in PF as M(orphological)-Merger, in the sense of Matushansky (2006).

Beyond the two properties in (23), silent HAVE itself may or may not assign verbal features.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we have at least four microparameters associated with verbal *rather*.

(25)

Head	Property	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	$\pm$ licenses HAVE	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	$\pm$ receive verbal features	$\pm$ assign verbal features
HAVE	+ receive verbal features	$\pm$ assign verbal features

However, Wood (2013) proposes that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  does not technically “receive” verbal features at all. Verbal features of the relevant sort are a property of an inflectional functional head Asp. So the real parameters are actually closer to (26).

(26)

Head	Property	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	$\pm$ licenses HAVE	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	$\pm$ combines with Asp	$\pm$ assign verbal features
HAVE	+ combines with Asp	$\pm$ assign verbal features

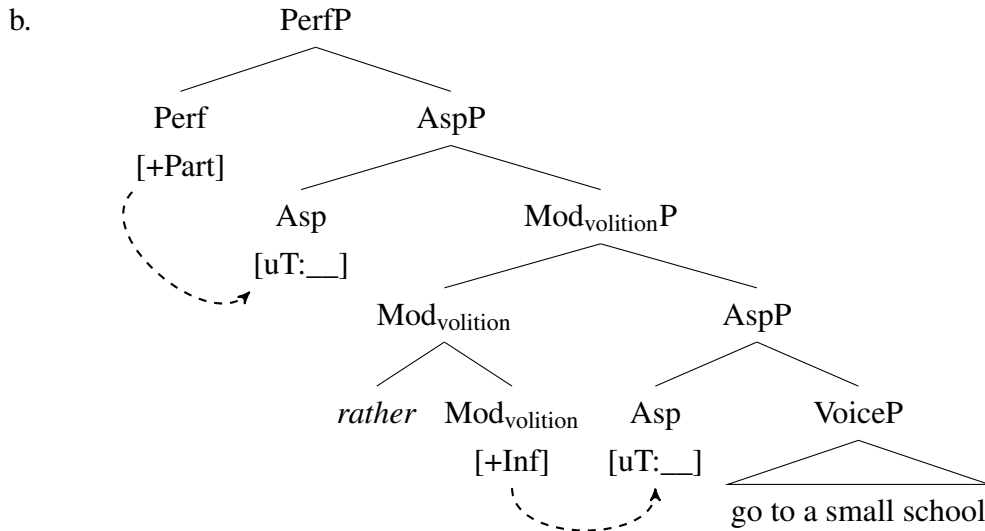
By “verbal features” I refer specifically to inflectional features like [Inf] and [Part], which determine whether a verb is realized as a bare infinitive or as a participle (Wurmbrand 2010, 2012a,b,c). For both HAVE and  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , the verbal features in question are [Inf]. So if a verb is [+Inf], it assigns the [Inf] feature to any lower head with an unvalued tense feature, notated as [uT:\_\_\_]. Likewise, I will abbreviate a head H that can combine with Asp as H[+Asp], although this

<sup>11</sup>This shift in thinking about verbhood is more than just terminological; the point is that independent of syntactic distribution, or the presence/absence of argument structure, we can identify a syntactically natural class of elements that assign and/or receive these features.

<sup>12</sup>I assume that since silent HAVE is always a verb, it will always receive verbal features.

is really a statement about the combinatorial syntax rather than the feature content of that head.<sup>13</sup> Thus, “fully” verbal *rather* in the absence of HAVE will have the structure in (27b) (omitting the subject) for the sentence in (27a).

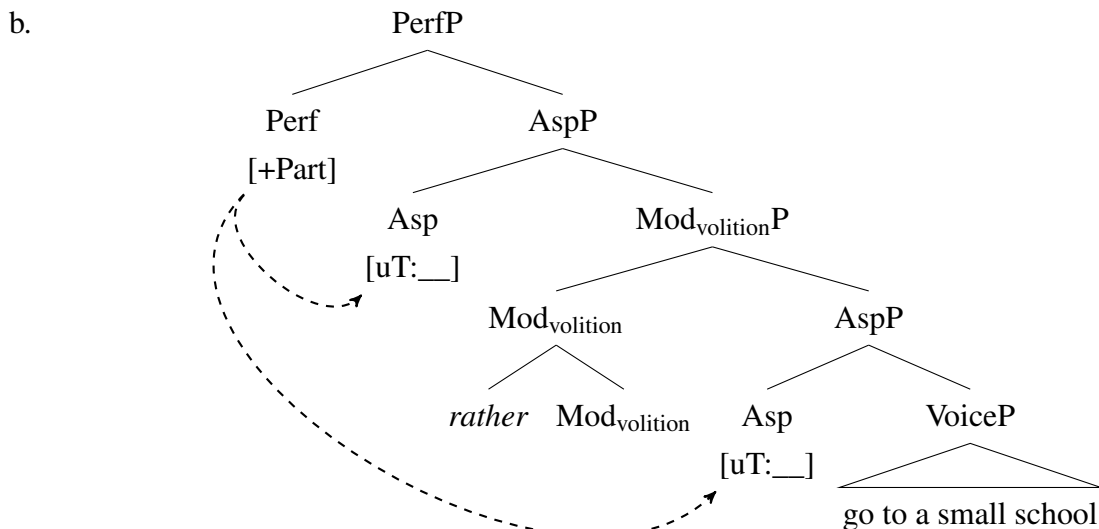
(27) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.



The feature [Part] will be assigned to the higher Asp, and [Inf] will be assigned to the lower Asp.

Here, just as in Wurmbrand’s analysis, parasitic participles arise if two heads have unvalued Tense features (here this means that two heads project Asp), because the higher one is merged before the lower one’s Tense features get valued. So if  $Mod_{volition}$  is not [+Inf], but projects Asp, the result will be the structure in (28b), which underlies the sentence in (28a).

(28) a. I would have rathered gone to a small school.

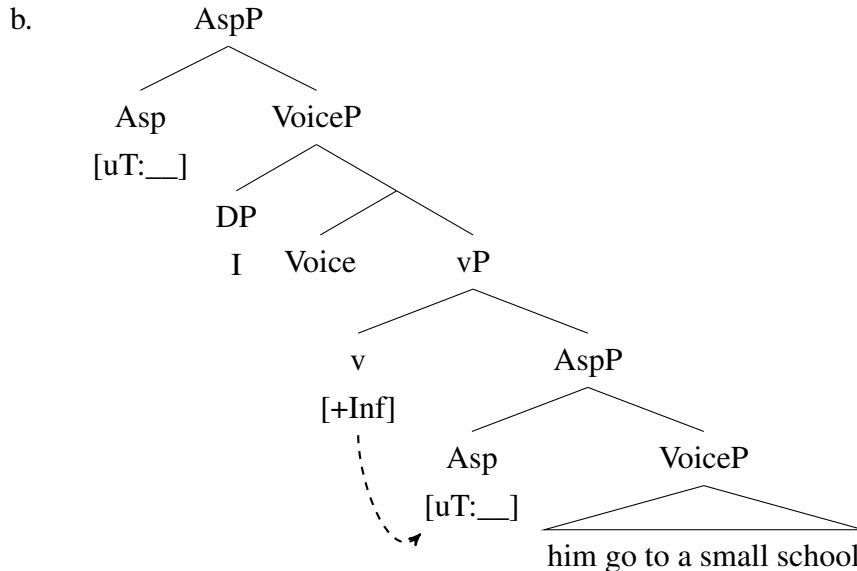


<sup>13</sup>It could, for example, be thought of as a property of Asp rather than  $Mod_{volition}$ :  $Mod_{volition}$  is just on the list of elements that Asp may combine with.

In this case, the feature [Part] will be assigned to both Asp heads.

Now consider silent HAVE. I assume following Myler (2016) that the overt English verb *have* is the realization of a little v head in the context of a transitive Voice head. With ECM *have*, the vP embeds a VoiceP.<sup>14</sup> I assume that this v may also generally have a [+Inf] feature, and that Asp combines with the VoiceP projected by v (so it is always [+Asp]). (See Johnson 2014:35ff. for support from Appalachian English.)<sup>15</sup> The structure of ECM *have* is shown in (29b) for the sentence in (29a).

(29) a. I had him go to a small school.



In (29), transitive Voice licenses the embedded subject. The lower Asp head is assigned [Inf] by v (which may ultimately be realized as *have*), while the higher Asp will eventually be valued [Past] by T. Naturally, this structure can be embedded under verbal *rather*, generating (30a), when Mod<sub>volition</sub> is [+Inf], or (30b), when it is not.

(30) a. I would have rathered have him go to a small school.

b. I would have rathered had him go to a small school.

However, this *have*[+Inf] can also be silent. Wood (2013) proposed that *have* is silent when v raises by head-movement to Mod<sub>volition</sub>, via Voice and Asp, forming a complex head with these heads by successive adjunctions. I illustrate this in the tree in (31b) for the sentence in (31a).

<sup>14</sup>In certain experiencer *have* constructions, according to Myler, v actually takes a FreeP complement, where Free is an Applicative-like head that introduces experiencer semantics and takes a VoiceP complement.

<sup>15</sup>Specifically, Johnson (2014:35ff.) discusses the fact that Appalachian English allows infinitival *to* in experiencer/causative *have* sentences:

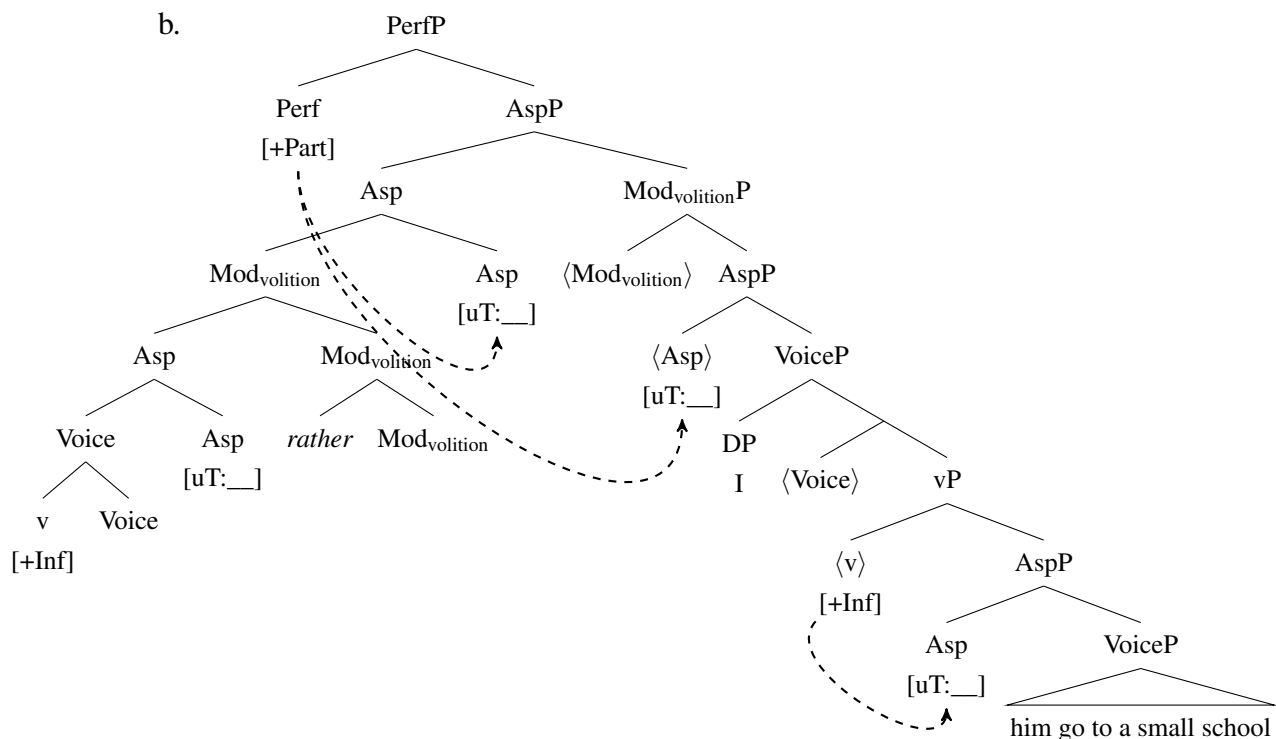
(i) They had glasses **to** break (on them).

(Appalachian English)

Johnson (2014) argues that this *realizes* the Asp head, which is not pronounced in other varieties of English. Perhaps the verb head-moves to Asp in these other varieties, but not in Appalachian English.

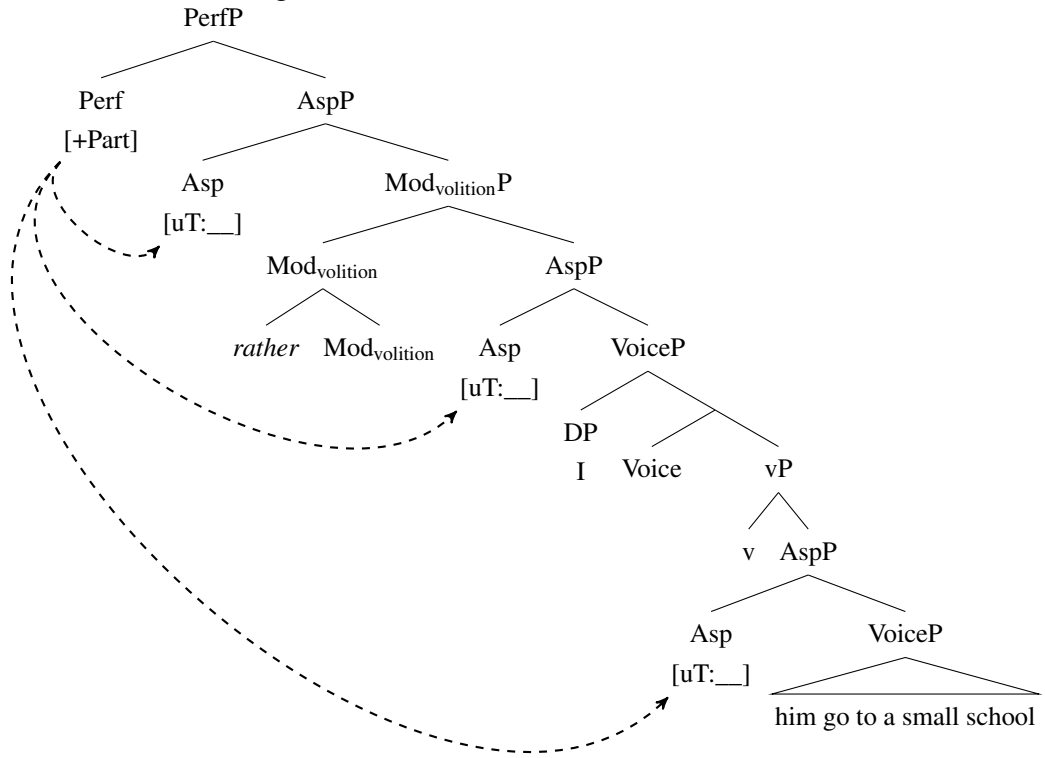
(31) a. I would have rather him go to a small school.

b.



In (31b), even though *have* is silent, it may assign the [+Inf] feature to the lowest AspP. Note that in general, I will not show the complex head structure in what follows, for expositional clarity, but I assume that it holds when silent HAVE is present. One more aspect of silent HAVE that is special is that unlike its overt counterpart, it may lack the [+Inf] feature. In such a case, if Mod<sub>volition</sub> also lacks [+Inf], Perf may assign [+Part] to all three Asp heads. This is illustrated in the tree in (32b) for the sentence in (32a). In what follows, I will discuss further why “have” is special in being able to undergo this movement, and how that connects with the fact that it can lack the [+Inf] feature.

- (32) a. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.  
 b.



### 3.2 The present study

The present study is based on a recent survey of the Yale Grammatical Diversity Project (YGDP) (Zanuttini et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2020). Like other YGDP surveys, this was administered on Qualtrics through Amazon Mechanical Turk, entirely online. In this survey, participants judged the sentences in (33)–(40). I boldface the sequences with *go* that will be used as representative of each construction.

- (33) a. I would have **rathered go** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered sleep on the couch.  
 c. We would have rathered stay in bed.
- (34) a. I would have **rathered gone** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered slept on the couch.  
 c. We would have rathered stayed in bed.
- (35) a. I would have **rathered him go** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered him sleep on the couch.  
 c. We would have rathered him stay in bed.
- (36) a. I would have **rathered him gone** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered him slept on the couch.  
 c. We would have rathered him stayed in bed.

- (37) a. I would have **rather go** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather sleep on the couch.  
 c. We would have rather stay in bed.
- (38) a. I would have **rather gone** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather slept on the couch.  
 c. We would have rather stayed in bed.
- (39) a. I would have **rather him go** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him sleep on the couch.  
 c. We would have rather him stay in bed.
- (40) a. I would have **rather him gone** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him slept on the couch.  
 c. We would have rather him stayed in bed.

The survey included filler sentences, which tested other phenomena, and control sentences. Ungrammatical control sentences were intended to be unacceptable for all participants, and grammatical control sentences were intended to be acceptable for all participants. We used the controls to make sure that we only included data from participants who understood the acceptability judgment task in the way that we intended for them to understand it. The surveys also gathered geographic and other demographic information from the participants.

The basic results for each sentence, including maps and demographic information, are reported in Wood et al. (2020).<sup>16</sup> There were some minor geographic patterns for some of the sentences, but no major recurring or robust geographic patterns. Although the effect of other demographic categories has not been analyzed in detail, there were no obvious recurring effects of age, gender, education, race, or population density, so we set these things aside for the time being, and focus on speaker variation in syntactic properties.

I now turn to the results as they pertain to the present study. For each speaker, I calculated their median judgment of the three sentences for each construction. So if I say that a speaker found a sentence “acceptable”, it means that they judged at least two sentences of the three sentences to be a 4 or a 5 (on a scale of 1–5). If I say that a speaker rejects a sentence, it means they judged at least two of the three sentences as a 2 or 1. The discussion below will be based entirely around the (a) sentences as representative of their class. Thus, the microvariation studied in this survey revolves entirely around eight constructions represented by the following eight sentences in (41)–(42).

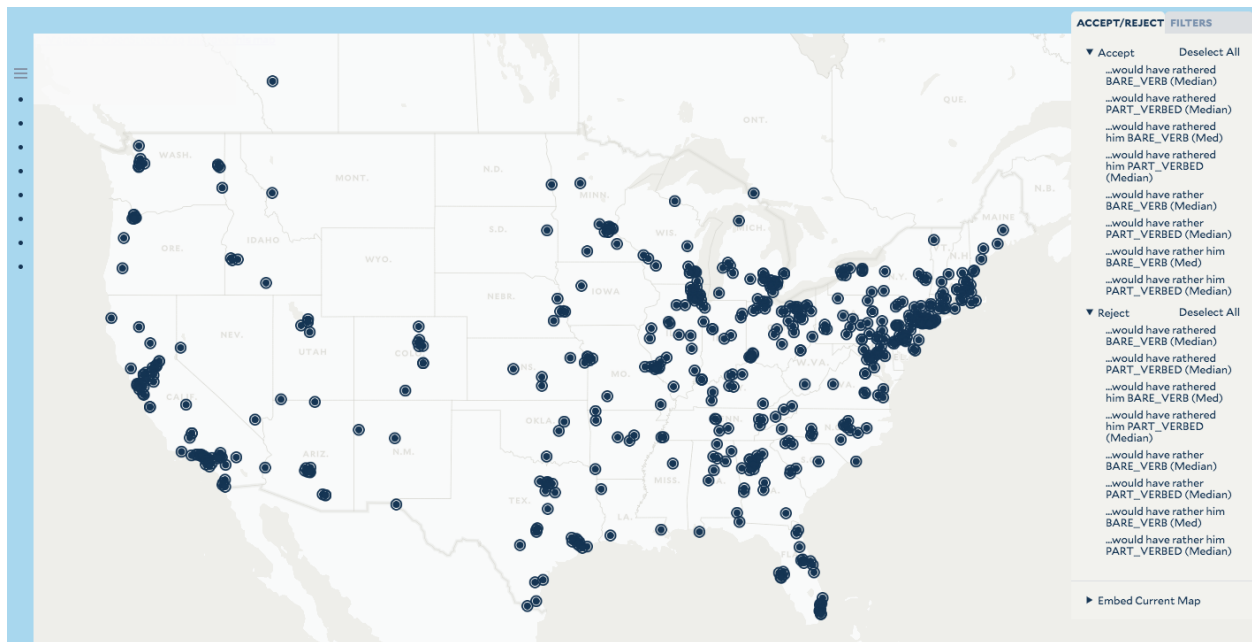
- (41) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered gone to a small school.

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<sup>16</sup>Note that the number of participants reported there is slightly different from the present results because of changes in the way that the data were processed once all the surveys were complete. For comprehensive details of the survey methodology and results, see Wood et al. (2020).

- c. I would have rathered him go to a small school.
  - d. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.
- (42)
- a. I would have rather go to a small school.
  - b. I would have rather gone to a small school.
  - c. I would have rather him go to a small school.
  - d. I would have rather him gone to a small school.

The results were imported to the YGDP mapping tool, so that the distribution of different grammatical systems and correlations could be studied. The full distribution of 578 participants (who passed the controls) is shown here in Figure 1.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 1.** Full distribution of participants

The discussion below is based on the predictions made by the theoretical analysis, and therefore involves specific, complex patterns of judgments of these sentences. Before presenting that, however, I provide in (43) the judgments for all constructions. Each row shows the number of speakers who gave the sentence in question each judgment, on a scale of 1–5.

<sup>17</sup>Since geographic patterns, or lack thereof, do not play any role in what follows, we will not show further maps based on the mapping tool, but see Wood (2022) for numerous maps of the contrasts discussed in this paper.



(43)	1	2	3	4	5
a. I would have rathered go to a small school	180	129	109	84	76
b. I would have rathered gone to a small school	148	122	88	89	131
c. I would have rathered him go to a small school	112	113	94	122	137
d. I would have rathered him gone to a small school	145	110	113	100	110
e. I would have rather go to a small school	177	176	132	57	36
f. I would have rather gone to a small school	16	20	47	92	403
g. I would have rather him go to a small school	65	87	118	146	162
h. I would have rather him gone to a small school	68	83	122	133	172

Some aspects of the raw patterns of judgments stand out already. For example, we see that few participants accept (43e), and that the vast majority of participants accept (43f).<sup>18</sup> We can also see that with *rathered*, two participles (43b) is more accepted than one (43a) in the absence of ECM, while one participle (43c) is more accepted than two (43d) in the presence of ECM. We will discuss cross-tabulations of some crucial pairs of these sentences in section 4.4 and show how the analysis developed in section 4 accounts for one- and two-way correlations in the judgments. However, the most theoretically interesting patterns come from correlations among collections of judgments that are not so easily presented in tabular form. I turn to this in section 4, after discussing the microparametric space in more detail, which will allow for a precise formalization of the empirical generalizations lurking behind the data in (43).

#### 4 Microvariation and the parameter space

To review, there are basically four parameters doing the work to derive the constructions above:

(44)	Head	Property
	Mod <sub>volition</sub>	± licenses HAVE
	Mod <sub>volition</sub>	± combines with Asp   ± assign infinitive
	HAVE	+ combines with Asp   ± assign infinitive

Note that “±” is not being used in a technical sense in (44). It can be read as “has (=+) or lacks (=−)” the property in question. Though the parameters are distinct we must consider whether these parameters independent of each other, or if there dependencies among them. Certain parametric combinations may be more attested in the grammars of individual speakers than others. Each setting corresponds to an independent functional item that a speaker could possess. There are thus eight varieties of Mod<sub>volition</sub> and two varieties of HAVE.

<sup>18</sup>One reason for the widespread acceptance of (43f) is that it is the only sentence of the eight that can be generated without having any form of verbal *rather* at all. It can simply be an adverb, with *gone* being the only verb in the sentence. In every other sentence, there is either an ECM subject that needs to be licensed, an infinitive verb that needs to have had its uT feature valued, or overt participial morphology. For this reason, I mostly stay away from discussing correlations connected with (43f), although I mention it in passing where it is relevant.

- (45) a.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$  e.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$   
 b.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Asp] \}$  f.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp] \}$   
 c.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Inf] \}$  g.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Inf] \}$   
 d.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE] \}$  h.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$
- (46) a.  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$  b.  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$

For now, we set aside the fact that this system of heads cannot operate independently. They are active when *rather* is in  $\text{SpecMod}_{\text{volition}}\text{P}$ , but not necessarily with just anything there (e.g. *preferably*; though see below on *sooner*). So some of the  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  heads must be sensitive to what is in their specifier. But even with this caveat, we must ask if they are independent or bundled. In fact, we find at least three generalizations, leading me to propose the four grammars in (48).

(47) Generalizations

- ❶ A grammar with  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Inf]$  has  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Asp]$
- ❷ A grammar with  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Asp]$  has  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+HAVE]$ .
- ❸ A grammar with either  $\text{HAVE}$  has both of them.

(48) Sets of grammars

- a. **Grammar A:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]) \}$
- b. **Grammar B:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]), [+Asp] \}$
- c. **Grammar C:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]), [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}$
- d.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$

The notation in (48) uses parenthesis as a shorthand notation—anything in parenthesis is only optionally present.  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}$  is short for  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$  and  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp][+Inf] \}$ . Notice that the position of the parenthesis is such that  $[+Inf]$  is only present if  $[+Asp]$  is there as well.

#### 4.1 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Inf] \rightarrow \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Asp]$

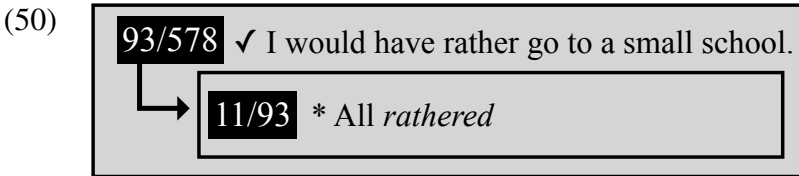
In this section I discuss the first generalization, namely that a grammar with  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Inf]$  has  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Asp]$ . We can diagnose the presence of  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+Inf]$  whenever *rather* takes a bare infinitive complement in the presence of auxiliary *have*, *outside* an ECM setting, as in (49) below.

- (49) a. I would have rathered go to a small school. ✓ 160 participants  
 b. I would have rather go to a small school. ✓ 93 participants

The presence of *have* is necessary because a string like *I would rather go* is in principle ambiguous; it could be *would* valuing the uT feature as  $[+Inf]$  (if *rather* is an adverb), or *rather* (in varieties that allow it). In (49), however, the presence of *have* means that it must be something else, such as

*rather*, that is valuing the uT feature as [Inf], because *have* would value such any such feature as [Part], and it would be realized as a participle.

If speakers' grammars allowed Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Inf] without also having Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp], we would expect that all sentences with the form *rathered* would be rejected, and that (49b) would be judged acceptable. (50) shows that of the 93 speakers who accepted (49b) (as a 4 or 5), only 11 rejected all sentences with *rathered*.



Even among these 11 speakers, only 6 fully accepted (49b) (as a 5), and among those 6, only 2 fully rejected all sentences with the form *rathered* (as a 1).

There is thus a very strong generalization that speakers who accept (49b) do not reject *rathered*. Assuming this reflects their grammars, this means that speakers who have Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Inf] also have Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp]. It is striking, then that more speakers accept (49a), where both of these features occur together, than (49b), where only the [+Inf] feature seems to be used. I propose that this is because the [+Inf] feature actually cannot occur in the absence of [+Asp]. If [+Inf] occurred without [+Asp], it would not be embeddable under further verbal structure; the perfect auxiliary *have* would be unable to merge (as would any finite T head), because there would be no unvalued feature for it to value.<sup>19</sup> Rather, it would create a root infinitive, which is perhaps deviant for a variety of reasons. But if this is true, then why did a number of participants actually accept (49b) at all?

One possibility is that in a minority of cases, the morphological form we see is misleading, and that either *rather*, the verb or both are actually a participle in the mental grammars of many of the participants. That is, of the 93 participants, some or even many of them parse (49b) as one of the three examples in (51).

- (51)
- a. I would have rather.PART go.INF to a small school.
  - b. I would have rather.INF go.PART to a small school.
  - c. I would have rather.PART go.PART to a small school.

Christina Tortora (p.c.) stresses to me that apparently “bare” forms used as participles are far more widespread than we generally assume. Johnson (2014:93ff.), for example, discusses the forms in (52).

- (52) Appalachian English (Johnson 2014:94)
- a. We eat cornbread and soupbeans every Thursday. (Present)

<sup>19</sup>Here I follow Wurmbrand (2012a), who builds on Abels (2003), in the proposal that valuing features can only be merged if that leads to “immediate satisfaction of a previously unsatisfiable feature.”

- b. We eat cornbread and soupbeans two hours ago. (Past)
- c. We **had eat** all the cornbread and soupbeans before y'all got here. (Participle)

The one verb which never functions as a past participle in the bare infinitive form is *be*. Thus, if my suggestion in (51) is on the right track, then many speakers who accept (49b) would reject *I would have rather be there*, because (53b–c) would no longer be an option.

- (53) a. I would have rather.PART be.INF be there.
- b. \* I would have rather.INF be.PART be there.
- c. \* I would have rather.PART be.PART be there.

Unfortunately, we did not include a sentence of this kind on the survey, so testing this prediction will have to be set aside for future research.

In sum, in this section I have provided evidence that speakers who allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to assign [Inf] generally also allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to project Asp. I have proposed that this is because the [Inf] feature can only be assigned by something that projects Asp, even within a given derivation. If this is right, it strongly suggests that some speakers project Asp syntactically without Asp being realized as a distinct, overt morphological form.

#### 4.2 Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp] → Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+HAVE]

I now turn to the second generalization, which is that speakers who have Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp] also have silent HAVE in the context of Mod<sub>volition</sub>. We diagnose the presence of Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+HAVE] in a speaker's grammar when that speaker allows the ECM "use" of verbal *rather* in at least one form. Consider what it would look like, according to the present account, if a speaker's grammar allowed Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp] but did not allow Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+HAVE]. For such a speaker, some form of *rathered* would be acceptable, but all ECM uses of *rather(ed)* would be unacceptable. (54) shows that 73 participants rejected all ECM uses of *rather*. These 73 participants, then, appear not to have Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+HAVE] in their grammar (at least in the presence of *rather*).

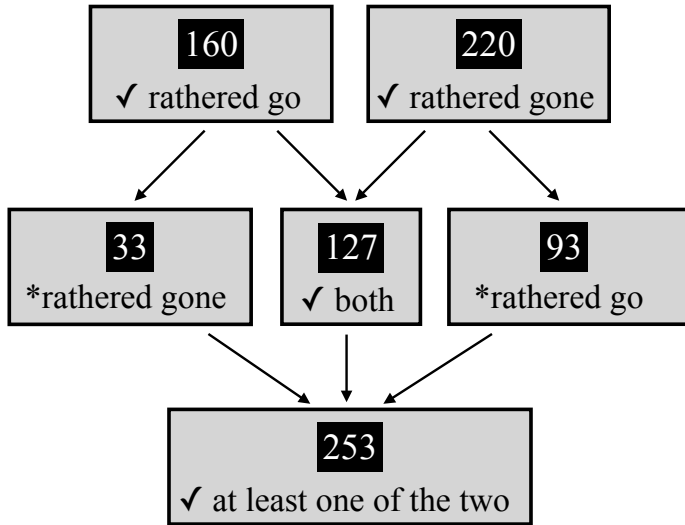
- (54) \* I would have rather(ed) him go(ne) to a small school. 73 participants

We diagnose the presence of Mod<sub>volition</sub>[+Asp] in a speaker's grammar when that speaker allows the participle *rathered*. (55)–(56) show the number of participants who accepted the two non-ECM uses of the participle *rathered*.

- (55) ✓ I would have rathered go to a small school 160 participants
- (56) ✓ I would have rathered gone to a small school 220 participants

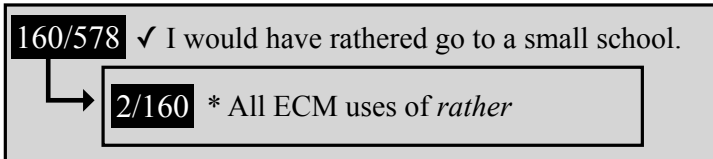
The diagram in (57) shows that among these speakers, 127 speakers accepted both of them. 33 accepted only (55), while 93 accepted only (56). 253 participants accepted at least one of these two sentences.

(57)

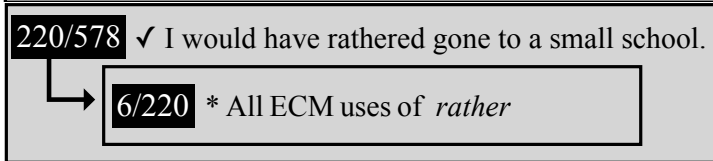


(58) and (59) show the participants who accepted one of the two non-ECM uses of the participle *rathered*, but rejected all ECM uses of verbal *rather*.

(58)



(59)

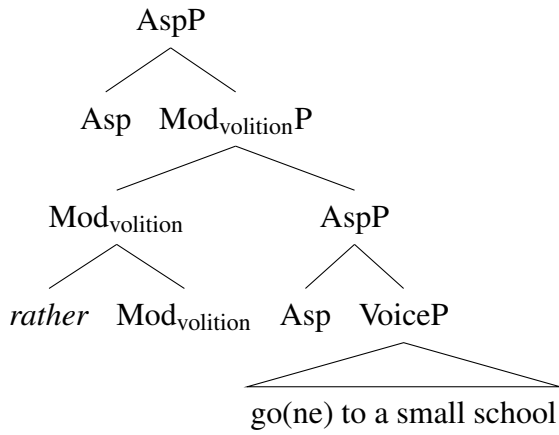


As we can see, very few participants had this judgment pattern. Moreover, neither of the participants in (58) fully rejected all ECM (as a 1) and only two of the participants in (59) fully rejected all ECM (as a 1). Thus, we see that overwhelmingly, speakers who have  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$  (accept *rathered*) also have  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{HAVE}]$  (accept ECM).<sup>20</sup> If this is true, it bears on the question in the previous section as well, where I proposed that speakers who accept *I would have rather go...* have a participle in the structure not reflected in the morphology. If so, we predict that these speakers, too, accept ECM uses: and this turns out to be generally true. In fact, only one participant who accepted *I would have rather go...* rejected the ECM uses of *rather*.

In the context of the present analysis, the correlations established so far indicate that as soon as  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  projects Asp (i.e., becomes a verb), silent HAVE is immediately available. Why is this the case? What is the connection between these two properties? The answer, I propose, comes from a combination of the syntactic combinatorics and the licensing of silent elements. Suppose that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  takes an AspP complement in all verbal *rather* cases embedding a verb phrase.

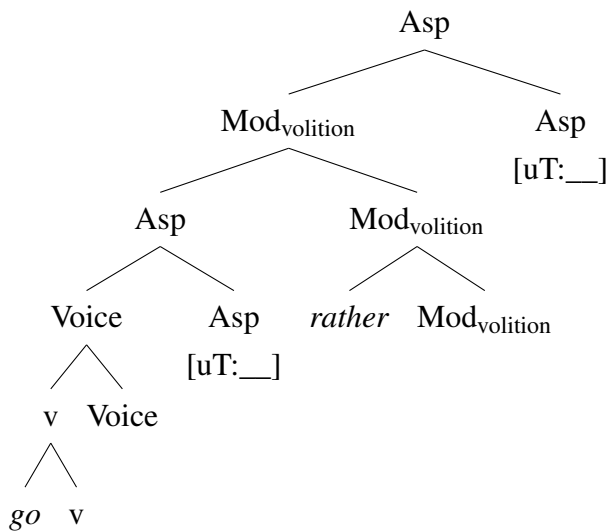
<sup>20</sup>As for the exceptions, it is hard to say much when the numbers are so small, but we might speculate, based on some anecdotal evidence, that some speakers judge the ECM cases as degraded because they prefer finite CP complements, which were not considered in this study.

(60)

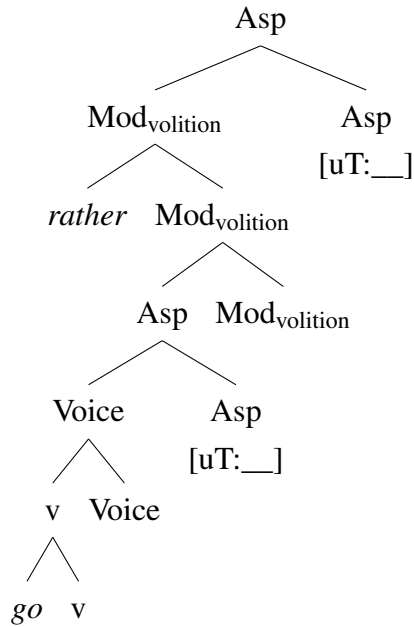


To say that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  “is” [+Asp] is to say that it projects  $\text{AspP}$ , which is to say that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volitionP}}$  combines with an  $\text{Asp}$  head and hence that the grammar allows Merge to combine  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  and  $\text{Asp}$ . Without saying any more, we expect that the head of the  $\text{AspP}$  complement can head-move to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . Before the higher  $\text{Asp}$  head merges,  $\text{Merge}(\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}, \text{Asp})$  can apply to the lower  $\text{Asp}$  head. This, in principle, means that the lexical verb (which raises to  $\text{Asp}$ ) could raise to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , forming a complex head such as the one shown in (61) or (62) (the difference between them having to do with when in the derivation *rather* adjoins to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ ).

(61)

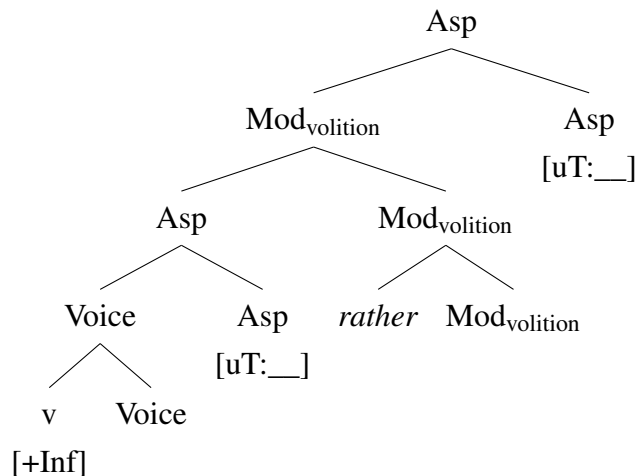


(62)



Now suppose that if Asp adjoins to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , it cannot be pronounced. There are several possible explanations for this. Perhaps when *rather* is in  $\text{SpecMod}_{\text{volition}}\text{P}$ , pronunciation of the verb that has head-moved to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  is banned by the Generalized Doubly-Filled COMP Filter (Koopman and Szabolcsi 2000), which says that a projection cannot have an overt head and an overt specifier. Perhaps there is a PF constraint against multiple prosodic words within a single complex X-head (Tyler 2019). Perhaps it is trapped in a “phasal blindspot” where spellout cannot see it (Kayne 2006). Perhaps it is not linearizable when *rather* is already adjoined to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  (Kayne 1994; Den Dikken 2010). Whatever the reason, we say that if Asp raises to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , any verb that raised to Asp cannot be pronounced. As far as we can tell, however, this result is generally ungrammatical: nothing in the syntax or semantics suggests that lexical verbs can generally be non-overt with verbal *rather*: it is just *have* (represented by the v head in (63)).

(63)



I suggest that the reason only “have” can do this is likely due to some notion of recoverability. For a verb to be silent, it must be possible to recover from surrounding structure what verb it is.

“Have” is special in this sense: it is generally considered to be a meaning component of volition, and it is frequently proposed that transitive “want” contains a silent “have” in its complement (Harves 2008). As discussed by Harves (2008), a structure with a silent HAVE such as (64b) explains the observation by McCawley (1973) that the modifier *until June* in (64a) seems to modify the “having”, not the wanting.

- (64) a. Bill wants your apartment until June.  
b. Bill wants [~~TO~~HAVE your apartment until June ].

As a bonus, the recoverability account may also explain why ECM “have” gets only the experiencer reading, and not the causative or engineer reading: only stative uses of “have” are possible, and the experiencer reading is helped along by the fact that Mod<sub>volition</sub> already has an experiencer meaning. If “have” is overt, the engineer or causer reading becomes available, along with any other lexical verb, because recoverability is no longer an issue.

In sum, as soon as Mod<sub>volition</sub> can combine with Asp, the head of its AspP complement can raise to it. This, however, leads to the embedded verb being silent, which is only acceptable when its content is recoverable. In the context of volition, only *have* is recoverable. This is consistent with proposals according to which transitive verbs of volition, such as *want*, contain a silent “have” in their meaning and structure generally: *rather* is essentially a verb of volition, and behaves like other verbs of volition in this respect.

### 4.3 If you have one HAVE, you have all the HAVEs

Recall that there are two syntactically distinct varieties of silent HAVE, shown in (65).

- (65) a. HAVE {[+Asp],[+Inf]}                      b. HAVE {[+Asp]}

We can tell whether [+Inf] is present or not on the basis of the morphosyntactic properties of its complement. [+Inf] is unambiguously missing in sentences like (66); if it were present, the embedded verb would have to be *go*, not *gone*.

- (66) HAVE without [+Inf], *rather* without [+Inf]  
a. I would have rathered ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.  
b. I would have rather ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.

(67) shows that 169 participants accepted the sentences in (66); (68) shows that 118 participants rejected them.

- (67) ✓ I would have rather(ed) ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.                      169 participants  
(68) \* I would have rather(ed) ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.                      118 participants

However, in order for the 118 participants in (68) to “count” as speakers who lack the specific subcategory HAVE{[+Asp]} (without the [+Inf] property) in a meaningful sense, we have to know



whether they have silent HAVE in the first place. If they do, then they should accept one of the ECM sentences generated when HAVE does have the [+Inf] property, namely those in (69).

- (69) a. I would have rather ~~HAD~~/HAVE him **go** to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather ~~HAD~~ him **go** to a small school.

It turns out that not many of them do: When we restrict our search to participants who accepted one of these sentences, but rejected (66), we find very few speakers indeed, as shown in (70)–(71).

- (70) 

118/578 * I would have rather(ed) him gone to a small school.
→ 6/118 ✓ I would have rathered him go...
- (71) 

118/578 * I would have rather(ed) him gone to a small school.
→ 16/118 ✓ I would have rather him go...

Even among these participants, only 1 “fully” rejects (66) (as 1) and “fully” accepts (69a) (as 5). Only 5 “fully” reject (66) (as 1) and “fully” accept (69b) (as 5). We can safely say, then, that most participants who accepted any ECM sentences allowed HAVE{[+Asp]} (with no [+Inf]). We will return to the exceptions below.

Turning to HAVE{[+Asp][+Inf]}, we can see that [+Inf] is unambiguously present in sentences like (72); if it were not present, the embedded verb would have to be *gone*, not *go*.<sup>21</sup>

- (72) HAVE with [+Inf]

I would have rather ~~HAD~~ him go to a small school.

Sentences like (73) are ambiguous; since *rather* projects AspP and takes the participial form, the infinitive could come from either Mod<sub>volition</sub> or from HAVE.

- (73) HAVE ambiguous, may or may not have [+Inf]
- a. I would have rathered<sub>[+INF]</sub> HAVE him go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered<sub>[+INF]</sub> HAVE<sub>[+INF]</sub> him go to a small school.  
 c. I would have rathered ~~HAD~~<sub>[+INF]</sub> him go to a small school.

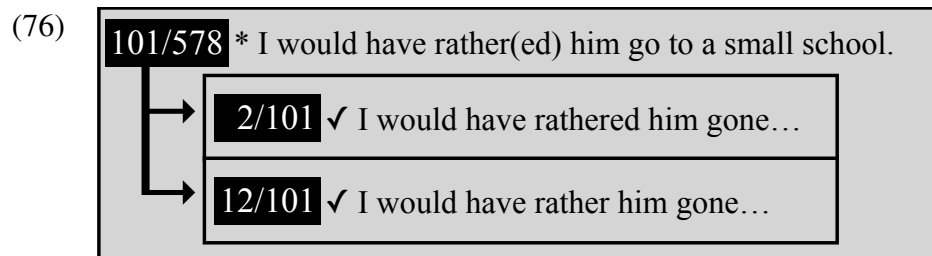
However, for speakers who do not allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to assign [+Inf], only (73c), which unambiguously involves HAVE[+Inf], is an option for generating ... *rathered him go* ...

(74) shows the speakers who accepted both ECM sentences with a bare infinitive; (75) shows the speakers who rejected them.

<sup>21</sup>This is assuming that *rather* cannot assign [Inf] in (72), because it does not have a participial form, so it appears to not project AspP. This assumption is generally supported by the discussion in section 4.1, but the caveats from that discussion about morphological form also hold here. I gloss over these for now, noting that 308 participants accepted (72), which is far more than the 93 who accepted ... *have rather go* ... without ECM HAVE. So the reasoning in this section applies to at least a substantial subset of speakers.

- (74) ✓ I would have rather ~~HAD~~ him go to a small school. 192 participants  
 ✓ I would have rathered ~~HAVE/HAD~~ him go to a small school.
- (75) \* I would have rather ~~HAD~~ him go to a small school. 101 participants  
 \* I would have rathered ~~HAVE/HAD~~ him go to a small school.

Once again, we need to look at the subset of (75) that accepts at least one ECM construction with *rather*, in order to ensure that such speakers have some version of silent HAVE to begin with. When we do this, as shown in (76), we find that very few of them do.



It appears that speakers who reject the sentences generated by  $HAVE\{[+Asp][+Inf]\}$  by and large do not seem to have any evidence for any HAVE at all. Conversely, participants who accepted any ECM sentence seemed to also allow  $HAVE\{[+Asp][+Inf]\}$ . (As before, we will return to the exceptions below.) Combined with the generalization from above, it appears that most speakers either allow both  $HAVE\{[+Asp]\}$  and  $HAVE\{[+Asp][+Inf]\}$ , or they allow neither. This is striking, especially in that we do not (to my knowledge) see overt ECM *have* without [+Inf].

Why is it that once it is possible to license HAVE, both of the subvarieties of HAVE are available, even the one that is not available with overt *have*? We can start with the following observation:

- (77) “Have” can lack the [+Inf] feature only when it is silent.

Given the earlier analysis of silent HAVE, this can be restated as follows:

- (78) “Have” can lack the [+Inf] feature only when it raises to  $Mod_{volition}$ .

But why? Perhaps without a [+Inf] feature, it is defective in some way, and must incorporate to be licensed? This seems unlikely: overt, unincorporated verbs lack this feature cross-linguistically without any problem.

It has been claimed that the “parasitic” property (in the present context, this is understood as a verb lacking [+Inf]) is a feature of restructuring constructions. Suppose that lacking [+Inf] isn’t enough: the higher and lower verb must somehow be in the same phase domain in order to be valued by the same head. By head-moving to  $Mod_{volition}$ , the phase of HAVE is extended (Den Dikken 2006; Wood and Sigurðsson 2014). Without such movement, the higher Perf head would arguably be too far away to value the lower Asp. Wurmbrand (2015) in fact proposes that a special restructuring Voice head head-raises up to the higher v. This puts the lower VoiceP in the higher VoiceP’s domain,

and forces a control-like relation between the two predicates. English, however, does not make use of this option, so in general, we do not have overt (non-auxiliary) verbs with the “parasitic” property. My tentative proposal is that overt *have* could perfectly well lack the [+Inf] feature, except that if it did, the lower predicate would not have its verbal feature valued, because it would not be in the same locality domain. If overt *have* could occur with Wurmbrand’s restructuring Voice, this would put it in the same domain, and it would be fine—but English does not use this option. Therefore, when *have* lacks the [+Inf] feature, the result will only be grammatical if *have* itself raises to the higher head; this movement extends the phase, allowing the lower predicate to have its verbal feature valued, but it also leads to the silence of *have*.

In sum, speakers with either version of HAVE have both versions of HAVE, and this is because from a grammatical standpoint, they have both of the overt *haves* too. However, because English does not use restructuring Voice, the “have” without the [+Inf] feature is only usable if the phase is extended, which requires head-movement, which causes “have” to be silent. The consequence is that “have” without the [+Inf] feature is only possible when “have” is silent.

#### 4.4 Accounting for one-way correlations in judgments

In this subsection, I would like to discuss how the present analysis accounts for some one-way and two-way correlations in the judgments of several key pairs of sentences. I will consider, in turn, non-ECM versus ECM, *go* versus *gone*, and *rather* versus *rathered*.

Starting with non-ECM versus ECM, consider first the pair in (79). (80) shows the correlation of judgments for these two constructions by showing the number of speakers who gave each possible pair of judgments. The boldface numbers represent the cases where the same judgment was given to both sentences. For example, 108 participants gave a 1 to both sentences, and 61 participants gave a 5 to both sentences. What is especially relevant to the present account, however, is that the number of participants to the left of these boldfaced numbers far exceeds the number of participants to the right. That is, among participants who did not give these two sentences the same judgment, the vast majority judged (79b), with ECM, better than (79a), without ECM.

- (79) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered him go to a small school.

(80)

<i>Rathered him go</i>	<i>Rathered go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>108</b>	4				112
2	25	<b>64</b>	18	3	3	113
3	17	26	<b>35</b>	11	5	94
4	16	21	35	<b>43</b>	7	122
5	14	14	21	27	<b>61</b>	137
Total	180	129	109	84	76	578

To see the asymmetries or one-way corelations in the judgments, we will focus on the lower-left corner of the table compared with the upper-right corner. In the lower-left corner, we see that 65 participants (16+21+14+14) accepted (79b) as a 4 or 5 while rejecting (79a) as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that only 6 participants (3+3+0+0) showed the opposite pattern, and none of them judged (79b) as a 1. Thus, we see that there is a strong one-way correlation: speakers who accept *rathered go* overwhelmingly also accept *rathered him go*, but speakers who accepted *rathered him go* do not necessarily accept *rathered go*.

In the present analysis, this makes sense, as there are two possible sources for the [Inf] feature on *go* in (79b)—Mod<sub>volition</sub> and HAVE—but only one possible source in (79a), namely Mod<sub>volition</sub>. In general, (79a) will only be accepted by speakers who allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to assign [Inf]. (79b) will be accepted by speakers who allow either Mod<sub>volition</sub> or HAVE (or both) to assign [Inf]. Speakers who allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to assign [Inf] will automatically have a path to generate (79b). But speakers who do not allow Mod<sub>volition</sub> to assign [Inf] may still generate (79b) by allowing silent HAVE to assign [Inf].

(82) shows this one-way correlation even more strongly in the pair of sentences in (81), which are like (79) except that *rather* itself is not inflected.

- (81) a. I would have rather go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him go to a small school.

(82)

<i>Rather him go</i>	<i>Rather go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>57</b>	7	1			65
2	31	<b>41</b>	10	3	2	87
3	25	45	<b>39</b>	7	2	118
4	23	48	47	<b>23</b>	5	146
5	41	35	35	24	<b>27</b>	162
Total	177	176	132	57	36	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 147 (23+48+41+35) participants accepted (81b) as a 4 or 5 while rejecting (81a) as a 1 or 2, but in the upper-right corner we see that only 5 (0+0+3+2) participants showed the opposite pattern. Similar to the explanation of the one-way correlation in (80), the silent HAVE in (81b) provides a source for the [Inf] feature that is not present in (81a). But in addition, we discussed earlier how (81a) should really only be possible for the minority of speakers who allow either *rather* or *go* to be a bare participle. (81b) is possible for speakers who do not allow *rather* or *go* to be a participle, because the obligatory participial inflection can be borne by the silent verb HAVE, which is present in (81b) but not (81a).

When the *rather* and the overt embedded verb are both participles (*gone*), as in (83), we do not find a strong one-way correlation, as can be seen in (84).

- (83) a. I would have rathered gone to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

(84)

<i>Rathered him gone</i>	<i>Rathered gone</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>100</b>	23	6	6	10	145
2	23	<b>57</b>	16	6	8	110
3	12	25	<b>35</b>	25	16	113
4	7	12	22	<b>32</b>	27	100
5	6	5	9	20	<b>70</b>	110
Total	148	122	88	89	131	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 30 speakers (7+12+6+5) accept *rathered him gone* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rathered gone* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 30 speakers (6+10+6+8) show the opposite pattern. This makes sense in the present analysis, because both sentences involve *rathered* having the “parasitic” property, namely the absence of a verbal inflectional feature to assign to a lower verb. In general, if it has the parasitic property, it will have this property in ECM and non-ECM constructions alike. (83b) only requires that HAVE has the parasitic property as well. But this is quite independent of the properties of *rather*. We have already discussed why speakers who have either form of silent ECM HAVE generally have both forms of silent ECM HAVE. So what we expect here is simply a two-way correlation, not an asymmetry, and that is generally what we find.

Compare this result with the results in (79) and (81). In (79) and (81), silent HAVE offered a second way to get infinitival morphology on the embedded verb, so this led to a one-way correlation. In (83), silent HAVE does not offer some “extra way” to get participial morphology on the embedded verb; the participial morphology shows up in (83b) when HAVE lacks the ability to assign infinitive, and it shows up in (83a) when HAVE is not present at all in the first place. The contrast between (79) and (81), on the one hand, and (83), on the other, thus supports the present proposal.<sup>22</sup>

I now turn to the distinction between *go* and *gone*. Consider the one-way correlation we find in (86) for the sentences in (85).

- (85) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered gone to a small school.

<sup>22</sup>See below for discussion of how we might account for some of the exceptions. For now, what is important is the lack of a one-way correlation in (83) of the sort seen in (79) and (81).

(86)

<i>Rathered gone</i>	<i>Rathered go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>124</b>	15	5	1	3	148
2	24	<b>72</b>	17	7	2	122
3	5	16	<b>47</b>	17	3	88
4	6	12	20	<b>39</b>	12	89
5	21	14	20	20	<b>56</b>	131
Total	180	129	109	84	76	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 53 participants (6+12+21+14) accept *rathered gone* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rathered go* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 13 participants (1+3+7+2) show the opposite pattern. This is thus a fairly robust one-way correlation such that acceptance of (85a) implies acceptance of (85b), but not vice-versa.

In the present analysis, this makes sense because (85a) requires a structure with everything that (85b) has (namely, *rather* adjoined to Mod<sub>volition</sub> and projecting Asp) plus an extra [+Inf] feature on Mod<sub>volition</sub>. In general, speakers who allow (85a) will have grammars that can also derive (85b). But some speakers could easily have a grammar that derives (85b) without having the [+Inf] feature on Mod<sub>volition</sub> that is necessary to derive (85a).

The same does not hold with the ECM cases in (87).

- (87) a. I would have rathered him go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

(88)

<i>Rathered him gone</i>	<i>Rathered him go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>94</b>	26	12	7	6	145
2	12	<b>56</b>	22	13	7	110
3	2	22	<b>40</b>	32	17	113
4	1	7	15	<b>53</b>	24	100
5	3	2	5	17	<b>83</b>	110
Total	112	113	94	122	137	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 13 participants (1+7+3+2) accept *rathered him gone* while rejecting *rathered him go*. In the upper-right corner, we see that 30 (7+6+13+7) show the opposite pattern. This is a slight asymmetry, but not nearly as robust as (85), and it goes, if anything, in the opposite direction. This is because assigning the [Inf] feature does not require an extra property of *rathered*; for speakers who do not allow *rathered* to assign [Inf], silent HAVE can do so.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Speakers who show the opposite pattern should, in principle, allow *rathered him gone* according to the present account. The slight asymmetry may be due to speaker preferences, since there are three structures that generate (87a): the [+Inf] feature on Mod<sub>volition</sub>, on HAVE, or on both. There is only one structure that generates (87), the one where neither Mod<sub>volition</sub> nor HAVE has the [+Inf] feature.

The same holds in (89), with *rather* in place of *rathered*.

- (89) a. I would have rather him go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him gone to a small school.

(90)

<i>Rather him gone</i>	<i>Rather him go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>44</b>	9	5	4	6	68
2	6	<b>42</b>	18	10	7	83
3	5	18	<b>55</b>	33	11	122
4	4	14	26	<b>66</b>	23	133
5	6	4	14	33	<b>115</b>	172
Total	65	87	118	146	162	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 28 participants (4+14+6+4) accept *rather him gone* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rather him go* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 27 (4+6+10+7) show the opposite pattern. There is no asymmetry of the sort we saw in (85), because once again, it is not simply a matter of *rather* having some extra [+Inf] property—there is another source for the [Inf] feature (silent HAVE).<sup>24</sup>

Finally, I turn to the contrast between *rather* and *rathered*. I start with this contrast in the ECM sentences in (91) and (93).

- (91) a. I would have rathered him go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him go to a small school.

(92)

<i>Rather him go</i>	<i>Rathered him go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>33</b>	9	9	8	6	65
2	26	<b>33</b>	13	10	5	87
3	16	33	<b>31</b>	21	17	118
4	10	24	25	<b>54</b>	33	146
5	27	14	16	29	<b>76</b>	162
Total	112	113	94	122	137	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 75 participants (10+24+27+14) accepted *rather him go* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rathered him go* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 29 participants (8+6+10+5) showed the opposite pattern. This one-way correlation is accounted for on the basis of the fact that having *rathered* is an extra property, the ability to form a complex head with Mod<sub>volition</sub>

<sup>24</sup>Supporting the supposition in footnote 23, notice that here, there is only one structure that generates (89a): Mod<sub>volition</sub> does not assign [+Inf], and HAVE does. There is also only one structure that generates (89b): neither Mod<sub>volition</sub> nor HAVE assigns [+Inf]. This seems to fit in with the fact that even the slight one-way correlation seen in (89) is not found here.

and project an Asp(ect) head. Participants who do not allow this may still generate (91b) with silent HAVE. The same reasoning holds when the embedded verb is a participle, as in (93).

- (93) a. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather him gone to a small school.

(94)

<i>Rather him gone</i>	<i>Rathered him gone</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>55</b>	5	4	2	2	68
2	21	<b>37</b>	11	8	6	83
3	26	31	<b>42</b>	12	11	122
4	15	24	33	<b>43</b>	18	133
5	28	13	23	35	<b>73</b>	172
Total	145	110	113	100	110	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 80 participants (15+24+28+13) accepted *rather him gone* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rathered him gone* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 18 participants (2+2+8+6) showed the opposite pattern. As above, participants who do not allow *rather* to form a complex head and project Asp still allow (93b) by virtue of silent HAVE.

The only case where *rathered* is more accepted than *rather* is in the non-ECM cases with an infinitive embedded verb, as shown in (95).

- (95) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather go to a small school.

(96)

<i>Rather go</i>	<i>rathered go</i>					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>108</b>	29	14	14	12	177
2	55	<b>57</b>	29	19	16	176
3	10	34	<b>51</b>	25	12	132
4	2	5	12	<b>21</b>	17	57
5	5	4	3	5	<b>19</b>	36
Total	180	129	109	84	76	578

In the lower-left corner, we see that 16 participants (2+5+5+4) accepted *rather go* as a 4 or 5 while rejecting *rathered go* as a 1 or 2. In the upper-right corner, we see that 61 participants (14+12+19+16) showed the opposite pattern. This contrast was discussed earlier. In both cases, *rather(ed)* must be assigning the [Inf] feature, so *rather* is already verbal, and having the participle form is not really an extra property here in the same way as it is in the ECM cases. In fact, *rather go*, in the present account, is only accepted by speakers who allow either *rather* or *go* to be a bare participle, so in a sense, it is this marked morphological option that is extra.



To sum up this section, we have seen by comparing pairs of constructions that each of the properties discussed—non-ECM versus ECM, *go* versus *gone*, and *rather* versus *rathered*—interacts with the others in ways that make sense in the present account. First, the presence of silent HAVE as another way to assign the [Inf] feature to the embedded verb is crucial in accounting for a number of sharp contrasts and one-way correlations. Second, the analysis of the “parasitic property” as being the absence of a feature is crucial for explaining the absence of asymmetries that we might otherwise expect on the basis of other, similar examples. Third, the analysis of the participial form of *rathered* as involving extra mechanisms that not all speakers have accounts for one-way correlations in the ECM cases, which go the opposite way in non-ECM cases (with a bare infinitive embedded verb). In passing, I have discussed some ways to understand the exceptions to these correlations. I wish to emphasize that for the purposes of this section, what is important is the presence or absence of robust one-way correlations versus two-way correlations. I return to the question of further microvariation in section 5.

## 5 Further microvariation

Based on patterns of judgments for the eight sentences in (97)–(98), we have seen evidence for three broad generalizations, which are stated in (99).

- (97) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rathered gone to a small school.  
 c. I would have rathered him go to a small school.  
 d. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.
- (98) a. I would have rather go to a small school.  
 b. I would have rather gone to a small school.  
 c. I would have rather him go to a small school.  
 d. I would have rather him gone to a small school.

### (99) Generalizations

- ❶ A grammar with  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Inf}]$  has  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$
- ❷ A grammar with  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$  has  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{HAVE}]$ .
- ❸ A grammar with either HAVE has all of them.

Based on the functional heads in (100)–(101), it was proposed that these generalizations motivated the sets of grammars in (102), which is an abbreviation for the “sets of heads” in (103)–(105).

- (100) a.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$     c.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Inf] \}$   
 b.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE], [+Asp] \}$     d.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE] \}$

- e.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$                       g.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Inf] \}$   
 f.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp] \}$                                       h.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$   
 (101) a.  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$                       b.  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$   
 (102) Sets of grammars (abbreviated)  
 a. **Grammar A:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]) \}$   
 b. **Grammar B:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]), ([+Asp]) \}$   
 c. **Grammar C:**  $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp]([+Inf]) \}, \text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ ([+HAVE]), ([+Asp]([+Inf])) \}$   
 d.  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$

(103) **Grammar A**

$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$   
 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE] \}$   
 $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$                        $\text{HAVE} \{ [Asp], [+Inf] \}$

(104) **Grammar B**

$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp] \}$   
 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE] \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+HAVE] \}$   
 $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$                        $\text{HAVE} \{ [Asp], [+Inf] \}$

(105) **Grammar C**

$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp] \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf] \}$   
 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+HAVE] \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+HAVE] \}$                        $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} \{ [+Asp], [+Inf], [+HAVE] \}$   
 $\text{HAVE} \{ [+Asp] \}$                        $\text{HAVE} \{ [Asp], [+Inf] \}$

However, we have also seen some exceptions to these, and there is further in fact microvariation beyond this. Let us take a brief look at where in the system this kind of variation might reside.

### 5.1 A note on *sooner*

An interesting point of variation with verbal *rather* is the use of *sooner* in sentences like:

- (106) a. I'd **sooner them** make sure it's perfect than release buggy software.<sup>25</sup>  
 b. I'd **sooner them police** the Apps better than make it a free for all.<sup>26</sup>  
 c. Nothing will compensate me for losing this house. I'd **sooner them keep** the money. It's my house.<sup>27</sup>

These clearly resemble the ECM uses of *rather*, and have the same kind of “experiencer *have*” interpretation. However, as far as I know, *sooner* never takes verbal morphology.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup><http://forums.crackberry.com/news-rumors-f40/rim-now-has-80-million-subscribers-up-2-million-last-quarter-746652/index4.html>, link no longer active as of May 4th, 2023.

<sup>26</sup><http://forums.crackberry.com/native-blackberry-os-apps-f152/rim-possibly-others-not-policing-their-app-stores-enough-589084/index2.html>, link no longer active as of May 4th, 2023.

<sup>27</sup><http://streetfightersproject.wordpress.com/multimedia/photofilms/a-kick-in-the-bricks/>, verified May 4th, 2023.

<sup>28</sup>Although I did find one attested example, online, from a person self-described as a 50-64 year old woman from Brentwood (CA?).

(107) \* I would have soonered {go / gone} to a small school.

This suggests that *sooner* can occupy  $\text{SpecMod}_{\text{volition}}\text{P}$ , and allow HAVE to head-move to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . However, *sooner* cannot head-adjoin to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , and so  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  cannot project Asp. This also clarifies why the correlation with Asp is not bi-directional:  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  can project Asp, something can adjoin to it, and once this is possible, Asp can raise to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . But just because something can raise to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  doesn't mean  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  can project Asp, because the head adjunction is a crucial part of the process.

## 5.2 Adjunction to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$

In general, the variation in this paper connected with *rather* is stated in terms of the functional head  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ , not *rather* itself. The claim is that for  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  to act like a verb—to project Asp—something must be adjoined to it (perhaps to be able to bear the Asp morpheme). Notice, for example, that one could be a “Grammar A” with *sooner* but a “Grammar C” with *rather*. One could imagine that *rather* could be sensitive to the feature content of the  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  head it adjoins to. For example, one could imagine that *rather* may only adjoin to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}]\}$ , but not to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}],[+\text{HAVE}]\}$ . A speaker with such a system would accept *rathered*, accept ECM, but would not accept *rathered* with ECM.

In this case, only 3 speakers in our sample have this pattern of judgments, so it is not clear if it is a real reflection of their grammar. We could imagine the converse: *rather* may only adjoin to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}],[+\text{HAVE}]\}$ , but not to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}]\}$ . A speaker with such a system would accept *rathered*, accept ECM, but would only accept *rathered* with ECM. In this case, at least 13 speakers in our sample have this pattern of judgments. If this reflects a genuine option in the grammar, then it may be worth considering in future research what it means for the account of HAVE.

This leads us to my own judgments, reported in Wood (2013) and reproduced in (108):

- (108) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.  
b. I would have rathered gone to a small school.  
c. I would have rathered him go to a small school.  
d. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.
- (109) a. \* I would have rather go to a small school.  
b. \* I would have rather gone to a small school.  
c. \* I would have rather him go to a small school.  
d. \* I would have rather him gone to a small school.

---

(i) They offered us a free dinner but did not include any drinks — tbh we would have soonered that we got the room we paid for as our supplement was more than the free dinner.

The survey data did not provide support for the existence of this grammar; only two participants shared my judgments. Part of the problem might be (109b), which is in fact possible me, but only under a sharply different reading, meaning ‘instead’. This reading can be brought out with the use of a nonvolitional subject, as in:

- (110) a. The kids’ books would rather have been placed on a more accessible shelf.  
b. The kids’ books would have rather been placed on a more accessible shelf.  
c. The bill . . . instead of reducing the price of books, would have rather increased it.

Still, even accounting for this didn’t help—only 2 people who accepted all the *rathered* sentences rejected (109a,c,d). According to the present system, this makes sense. Nothing in the system should prevent  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{ \}$  (without [+Asp] or [+Inf] features) from hosting *rather* in its specifier, or force *rather* to adjoin to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . Nor would it make sense to say that my grammar lacks  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{ \}$  entirely, and only has the more complex varieties, since  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  is used at the very least with other volitional adverbs. What, then, accounts for my own judgments?

For one possibility, consider the fact that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  is higher than  $\text{Asp}_{\text{Perf}}$  in the Cinquean hierarchy. The constructions discussed here involve  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  lower than  $\text{Asp}_{\text{Perf}}$ . This suggests that  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  in the relevant uses “resets” the extended projection, like a lexical verb would. Perhaps my judgments reflect a strong pressure to do this explicitly, by projecting Asp whenever it is lower than  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ . In some sense, this is saying that my grammar is not really unable to generate the sentences in (109), but rather that I have a very strong preference for the sentences in (108).

Quite possibly, other unexpected judgment patterns reflect strong preferences among the set of grammatical sentences rather than aspects of the grammar that rule out the unacceptable sentences. Speakers tend to have preferences when the grammar makes multiple options available without any semantic consequences. For example, recall that the sentences in (83) repeated in (111) were expected to show a general two-way correlation.

- (111) a. I would have rathered gone to a small school.  
b. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

In general, they did, but there were 30 participants who rejected (111a) and accepted (111b), and another 30 who had the opposite pattern. Perhaps some of the participants who rejected (111a) did so because they preferred the infinitive variant *rathered go*, while others did so because they preferred to only use *rathered* in ECM contexts. Perhaps some speakers who rejected (111b) resist silent HAVE, or prefer a finite clause (as in *I would’ve rathered that he went. . .*).

In general, especially when dealing with survey data, it can be difficult to tease out the effects of preferences among grammatical options and task-related noise. Determining whether or not some of the rare, unexpected patterns of judgments reflect real effects of the grammar that have theoretical consequences tends to require more in depth, in person fieldwork (Henry 2005). What large scale

surveys of the present sort do well is bring out larger patterns that should arguably follow from the basic properties of the system, so that has been the primary focus here.

### 5.3 What kind of “have”?

So far we have focused on ECM *have* with a bare infinitive complement. There is further variation in other “kinds” of *have* (my own judgments below).

- (112) a. I would rather HAVE him arrested.  
b. I would rather HAVE him in jail.  
c. ? I would rather HAVE a puppy.  
d. ?? I would rather HAVE a conversation.  
e. ?\* I would rather HAVE a good time.  
f. \* I would rather HAVE to scrub the floor.

Attested examples and informal conversations with speakers reveal that my judgments are not shared by all, and that there is variation in the acceptability of sentences of these kinds. This variation must connect to the licensing of silent HAVE. There a few possibilities for where this variation might fit into the current system:

- Speakers might have different structures for *have*, with only some of them feeding the appropriate head movement.
- Speakers might have different “identification” requirements on silent HAVE.
- Movement to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  might be sensitive to the feature content of HAVE.

The plausibility of the first idea is supported by the fact that some varieties of English allow overt *have* to undergo V-to-T(-to-C) movement, as in *Have you the time?*, while others do not. According to this approach, the possessive *have* is allowed to move to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  in (some subset of) (112c–e) for some speakers but not all. There are also distinctions among them, even with V-to-T movement; some speakers accept *Have you a puppy?* but not *Have you a good time there?*

According to the second possibility, *have* can always move to  $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$  and be silent as far as the syntax is concerned, but it won’t always be identified, so the result may not be grammatical. The third possibility may be a more syntactically grounded version of the second, assuming that different kinds of *have* may be featurally distinct. These possibilities—especially the third—also connect to the issues discussed above. Recall that the generalization that speakers allowing HAVE allow all varieties of HAVE was not quite absolute. Speakers who seem to lack HAVE{ } may lack HAVE{ } entirely, since overt ECM *have* always has the [+Inf] feature. Still, it is unusual, since overt *have* in general (for example, possessive *have*) does not have to have a [+Inf] feature. So the grammar would have to specify specifically that the *have* that takes an AspP complement must have

a [+Inf] feature. Perhaps this is why it is such a marked option, if it's an option at all. Speakers who seem to lack HAVE[+Inf] are more challenging—perhaps there is some reason that only a defective HAVE can move to Mod<sub>volition</sub>, or there is some preference to pronounce HAVE[+Inf]. Still, very few participants actually showed this pattern of judgments, so it is not clear if it reflects a genuine system of grammar or noise in the survey data.

## 6 Conclusion

Despite a lot of microvariation, the present study has revealed a more restricted range of verbal *rather* grammars than we might have otherwise expected. Returning to the interesting syntactic properties we began with, the overall picture supports the following broader conclusions. First, bare-infinitive–selecting verbs are nearly “closed class” because they have special syntactic properties that go beyond semantic or even syntactic selection: they must license the temporal verbal features of the embedded verb, or else provide a structural context for such licensing. Second, silent verbs can be licensed by head-moving to a functional (modal) head in the extended projection. This movement is freely available, but silence demands recoverability, which limits its application only to certain verbs, and certain uses/meanings of those verbs. Third, parasitic participles are possible only when the two unvalued Asp heads are in the same domain. This can be accomplished by: (a) “Restructuring” Voice (not available in English), (b) embedding an inflected auxiliary under another auxiliary (previously observed, but not for English), (c) moving the lower verb to the higher verb (extending the phase, but leading to the lower verb's silence) (novel observation).

The restricted distribution of *rather* suggests suggests that volitional meaning is not a primitive, but is constructed from smaller primitives. The microvariation reveals a tight connection among logically distinct functional heads, showing that they are not acquired independently of each other, but interact in significant ways.

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