

Call for papers
18th Southeast Asian Linguistics Society Meeting
Bangi, Malaysia

- (1) Title: “On cognate objects and cognate subjects in East Asian languages”
- (2) Sub-field: Functional syntax
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Abstract

Cognate objects (CO) have been recorded in a number of unrelated languages, including East Asian languages (e.g. Matisoff 1996). CO constructions should theoretically meet the following criteria:

- i. syntactic: verb “ordinarily” intransitive;
- ii. semantic: the object refers to the action itself or to the result of the action (*He slept a troubled sleep* vs. *He smiled a bitter smile*);
- iii. morphological: object noun and verb share the same stem.

This is for typical properties. Now, the notion has been extended in various ways, including objects of intransitive verbs that are not morphologically related (ex. 2, Gougenheim 1964). Following the same line, one could count as a CO the Korean noun *insayng* “life”, with the verb *salta* “live” in (3), which parallels the sequence with a morphological cognate *salm sata* (same meaning); however *salta* “live” is officially recorded as having transitive uses¹. The notion CO has in fact been applied to objects of transitive verbs as well, when they are obligatory “dummy” objects (ex. 4, same stem).

The situation, quite confusing, might appear clearer in the following chart, where the three typical properties of COs are considered separately:

	V ordinarily intransitive	semantic redundancy	same stem
(1) Eng. <i>He smiled a bitter smile.</i>	+	+	+
(2) Fr. <i>Il a pleuré des larmes de joie.</i> 'He cried tears of joy.'	+	+	–
(3) Kor. <i>Ku.nun phalan manhun insayng.ul salassta.</i> 'He lived a varied life.'	–	+	–
(4) Hind. <i>Mai~ khaanaa khaauu~gaa.</i> ² 'I will eat (food).'	–	+	+
(5) Eng. <i>Exiled from Italy, he lives a Bohemian life in New-York.</i> (<i>New York Times</i> , 2008.01.26)	??–	+	+
(6) Kor. <i>Eceyspam isanghan kkwum kkwuessta.</i> 'Yesterday night, (I) dreamed a strange dream.'	??+	+	+
(7) Jap. <i>Kinoo fushigi.na yume.wo mimashita.</i> ³ 'Yesterday (I) dreamed a strange dream.'	–	–	–

Using the same criteria, we shall raise the question of “cognate subjects” in East Asian languages. Being not aware of any impersonal verb construction in those languages, it is doubtful whether cases similar to (1), i.e. a “typical cognate subject”, could be found in the area⁴. However, types (3) and (4) are attested, as respectively exemplified in the following extracts from Korean (“height be_big”) and Thai (“strength be_strong”) pop song lyrics:

	V ordinarily impersonal	semantic redundancy	same stem
(8) <i>Na.n, khi khu.n yeca.ka cohta</i> (Song Chang Yui) 'I, I like tall women'	–	+	+
(9) <i>Gor jai chan man mai koi kaeng raeng tao-rai</i> (Hum) 'Because my heart isn't really so strong.'	–	+	–

Type (4) seems so pervasive across Asian languages that it could prove very interesting from the perspective of areal linguistics.

¹ See the *Big Dictionary of the Korean Standard*, in the sense “endure, experience”. Alongside with the sense “live”, this “second” meaning matches perfectly with the more “typical” construction *salm salta in pwulhaynghan salm.ul salassta* ‘(He) lived/endured a life of misery’.

² Example from Elena Bashir.

³ Japanese does not seem to have productive CO constructions. See however *odori.wo odoru* “dance a dance”.

⁴ Cf. Romance languages: Sp. *Este año han llovido lluvias tan copiosas, que ...* “This year so copious rains have rained that ...” (in Zaefferer, 2002: 44), or this Italian example found on the web: *Non scenderò nei posti dove nevicava la neve grigia* “(lit.) I shall not go down into the places where the gray snow snows” (www.nntp.it/arti-scrivere/800278)

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