

The One Lexical Argument Constraint - A Comparative Study of Japanese and Korean

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Keywords: Japanese, Korean, typology, grammatical relations, iconicity

Japanese and Korean are typologically similar including morphology and syntax. So comparative/contrastive studies on both languages are flourishing in various topics. However, the references realization in argument positions is less studied, especially in terms of comprehensive coding in discourse. In an attempt to investigate the coding of reference in argument positions in written texts of both languages, this paper will focus mainly on the interplay of grammar and cognition, expanding on Givón (2001)'s elucidation and underscoring of the cognitive and communicative underpinning of grammatical universals.

By performing quantitative analysis on the way references are coded in argument positions throughout a certain amount of discourse, the frequent patterns of coding are investigated. In order to achieve this purpose, the written texts in Japanese and Korean languages have been annotated for forms, grammatical relations, and semantic and pragmatic features. In terms of form annotation, lexicality is focused, irrespective of whether a referent is lexically realized or not. Animacy is applied as a binary semantic feature that differentiates between animate referents (human, animal) and inanimate ones. As for the pragmatics annotation feature, it focuses on whether the referent – which is slotted into the subject or object position and is lexically realized – is newly introduced into the discourse or not.

As a result of examining spoken discourse in Sacapultec Maya, Du Bois (1987) demonstrated the 'Preferred Augment Structure', which represents the interaction between the grammatical forms and discourse patterns. In the grammatical dimension, he proposed 'the One Lexical Argument Constraint,' where more than one lexical argument per clause is avoided. He shows the tendency that the argument position capable of carrying new information is not the subject of a transitive verb (A) but the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the object of a transitive verb (O), both of which are lexically realized.

This study shows the following two findings as shown;

(1) The One Lexical Argument Constraint is found to be predominantly applicable to both Japanese and Korean written texts and to be supportive of the comprehensiveness of the constraint. The strategy of reference coding in argument positions is skewed towards a certain combination of grammatical relations, forms and semantic features; A, Ellipsis, Animate/O, Lexical, Inanimate. This should be an unmarked strategy in carrying messages in texts of Japanese and Korean. The lexically realized O indicates a concrete and newly introduced referent. On the other hand, the zero form A represents an abstract and given information in the context. This contrastive set of information coding should be assumed to be associated with the degree of specificity and to be motivated by the concept of 'iconicity' (Haspelmath 2008).

(2) Although both languages show a similar behavior in argument coding, they show a different distribution in S and O positions, as shown in Table 1. The tendency for lexical realization is higher in Korean than in Japanese, thus possibly indicating that the Korean discourse strategy for augment positions is more solid than that of Japanese.

Table 1 Frequency of lexically realization in the position "S" and "O"

Language	S			O		
	N	%	total	N	%	total
Japanese	229	42.0	545	248	57.1	434
Korean	287	49.6	578	382	66.6	573

References

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