

Cognate Objects and the Transitivity Requirements in Kenyang

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Abstract

In the generative framework, all finite clauses must project an external argument (a subject) in satisfaction of the EPP. The availability of an internal argument (an object) is constrained by the Transitivity Requirement (TR) hypothesis (Cummins and Roberge 2004, 2005). Accordingly, the object position is obligatorily present in a VP irrespective of the lexical semantics of the verb and unparalleled morphosyntax. In consequence, both transitive and intransitive verbs should project an object position which can be realized overtly or null. Intransitive verbs of complete predication (for example, the fisherman drowned) do not require complements to convey the meaning of the verb. In contrast, intransitive verbs of incomplete predication (such as he died a sudden death) need extra information supplied by the complements to be fully interpretable. Many intransitive verbs of incomplete predication have been shown to display unergative and unaccusative properties in virtue of subcategorizing for postverbal constituents so-called cognate objects whose semantic concept is wholly embedded in the semantics of the verbs it governs. Cognate objects of both unergative and unaccusative verbs have been analysed as rhematic complements or adjuncts (Ramchand 2008) rather than true arguments/part of the thematic grid. The argument adjunct disjuncture or both is well documented (Massam 1990; Hale and Keyser 1993; Jones 1988; Mittwoch 1998; Kuno and Takami 2004; Nakajimi 2006, etc.) This paper investigates the pattern of cognate objects in Kenyang, a poorly documented language spoken in South West region of Cameroon. It identifies the cognate verbs and their derived cognate objects, the semantic properties of the cognate objects in parallel constructions in the language and their relevant syntax in typical Kenyang constructions.

Key Words: cognate object, unergative, transitivity requirement, unaccusative, Kenyang

Introduction

Typologically, verbs have been classified as transitive and intransitive depending on their valence and subcategorization frame. To this end, a verb can subcategorize for an argument, cognate object, adjunct or both in its immediate postverbal position. While the NP objects of transitive verbs are interpreted as arguments, the interpretation of these NPs in corresponding position for intransitive verbs lacks consensus. The object NPs of intransitive verbs have been analysed as cognate objects (COs) which display argument properties (Massam 1990; Hale and Keyser 1993; Pham 1998) or adjunct properties (Jones 1988; Moltmann 1990; Mittwoch 1998) or both (Pereltsvaig 2001; Nakajima 2006) based on whether the verb is unergative or unaccusative (cf Permuter 1978). In the literature, cognate objects are construed as noun forms which are etymologically related to the verb in form and function by virtue of incorporating the action or state translated by the verb that governs it in the clause (cf Jones 1988; Yuko 1996). Cognate objects are inextricably linked with intransitive verbs particularly unergative verbs (Quirk et al 1984; Keyser and Roeper 1984; Jones 1988; Massam 1990; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Macfarland 1995; Mittwoch 1998; Felser and Wanner 2001, etc.). The intransitive verb combines with a noun phrase whose head noun is morphologically, syntactically or semantically cognate as illustrated in the following:

- a. Bill sighed a weary sigh
- b. John laughed a heavy laugh
- c. Harry lived an uneventful life

(Jones 1988:89)

We notice in (1) that the unergative verbs *sighed*, *laughed*, *lived*, and the following object complements *sigh*, *laugh* and *life* have the same root. This explains why the *surrogate* object complement and valence of the input verb carries a referential index identical to the verb (Horrocks and Stavrou 2010) in (2):

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- a. Bill sighed a weary smile
 b. John laughed a heavy laugh;

In contrast to (1) and (2), the COCs in (3) which include unaccusative verbs are considered ungrammatical and thus unacceptable:

- a.*The glass broke a crooked break (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:40)
 b.*The ship sank a strange sinking (Keyser and Roeper 1984:404)
 c.*The actress fainted a feigned faint (Levin and Rappaport 1995:40)

Judging on the interpretability of (1) and (2) against (3), many researchers posit that COCs can be captured with unergative verbs only. This selectional restriction appears to be immaterial to some researchers in the analysis of COCs. In this connection, Kuno and Takami (2004) maintain that COs can also be subcategorized by unaccusative verbs as illustrated in the following:

- a. The tree grew a century's growth within only ten years
 b. The stock market dropped its largest drop in three years
 c. The apples fell a short fall to the lower deck, and so were not too badly bruised
 (Kuno and Takami 2004: 116)

Their argument rests on the fact that intransitive verbs (unergatives and unaccusatives) must represent an activity or event involving a temporal process (2004:129) and that the verbs *grow*, *drop* and *fall* in (3) characterise the temporal process experienced by the unaccusative subjects *tree*, *stock market* and *apples*. The subjects do not exert energy or volition in the process. Like many others, Jong Bok and Jooyoung (2012:4-5) argue for a distinction between unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs based on such syntactic properties as the form of modification of COCs for unergative and unaccusative verbs, and the processes involving the passivization, pronominalization, etc. of COs. In other words, given sentences (5) and (6) below, involving the modification of the cognate objects,

- a. Bob grinned a sideways grin (Horita 1996:224)
 b. The wolf howled a long howl (Kuno and Takami 2004:105)
 The apples fell a smooth fall (Levin and Rappaport 1995:148)

the COCs in (5a) and (5b) are grammatical because the adjectives *long* and *smooth/sideways* modify unergative verbs *howl* and *grin* while the ungrammaticality of (6) rests on the fact that the cognate noun is modified by the adjective *smooth* in unaccusative (*fell*) construction.

Cross-linguistically, COs exhibit syntactic properties that both relate to and distinguish them from genuine transitive objects. Cognate objects are considered low in transitivity compared to the prototype objects of their transitive counterparts. They are said to be low in transitivity because they are not targets of activities but rather supplementary material/information to characterise the activities denoted by the verbs. In this connection, the presence of cognate objects in a clause is optional (cf Kim and Lim 2012 and Kari 2017). The issue of low transitivity accounts for the distinction of two types of COs: Eventive-COs and Referential-COs by Jong-Bok and Jooyoung (2012). In line with Langacker (1999), they maintain that COs of unergative verbs are arguments while those of unaccusatives are adjuncts because the COs in the former are construed as affected objects in their interactions with other participants as is the case with passivization, for example. Phenomenal differences between both can be captured in constructions that require the CO to undergo passivization, pronominalization, topicalization, wh-question, etc. (Massam 1990; Matsumoto 1996; Real-Puigdollars 2008; Shin-ya-Iwasaki 2007; Lavidas 2014).

- (7) a.*An uneventful life was lived by Mary (Jones 1988)
 b.*A sad laugh was laughed by Mary at the meeting (Kuno and Takami 2004)
 c.*Fred smiled a silly smile and Sandy smiled it too (Jong Bok and Jooyoung 2012)
 d.*What did Fred smile? (Jong Bok and Jooyoung 2012:4)

Although the sentences show some parallelism in morphology, syntax and semantics with the clausal verbs, the analysis of this parallel relationship, it has been observed, fails to be captured satisfactorily from a single theoretical approach. In the generative framework, for instance, cognate objects are characterised as arguments and captured within the case theory (Massam 1990) and modifiers (Jones 1988). In contrast, cognitive grammar lays emphasis on the cognitive structure of verbs that includes frame semantic meanings. The assumption is that the lexical meaning and encyclopaedic knowledge form a continuum. This provides a frame rich with world and cultural knowledge (see Jong-Bok (2012) for a usage-based model in the analysis of cognate objects (Yuko 1996).

In this paper, I investigate the morphosyntax and semantics of cognate objects and their transitivity in Kenyang, an under-described Niger-Congo language spoken in the South West Cameroon.

The study will type the kind of verbs that can co-occur with COs. It further investigates the syntactic properties of COs that distinguish them from genuine transitive objects comprising the forms of modification, processes such as passivization and pronominalization and discourse related process like topicalization, wh-questions, among others. To capture these properties, a detailed classification of 50 verbs that occur in COCs in the Kenyang language constitutes the relevant data presented in the analysis. The verbs are characterised based on two conceptual parameters: the COs that are morphologically related to the verbs, and the COs that are semantically but not morphologically related to the verbs. An overview of the Kenyang clause structure and transitivity is presented in Section 2. This is followed by the classification and discussion of the form and function of cognate objects in the clause in Section 3. A comparison of the transitivity of cognate objects and their non-cognate objects is the discussion of Section 4. The last section wraps up the paper.

Theoretical Implications

In the generative framework, the transitivity properties of the verb have been translated by the Case Theory and the Theta Theory. Case features are intrinsic to V and T: NPs are licensed nominative case in T and accusative case in V. NPs that co-occur with the verb must be assigned case either structurally or inherently in satisfaction of the *Case Filter*. Structural case is materialized in a probe/goal relation (Spec-head relation) through AGREE ([Spec, Agrs] by T for external arguments and [Spec, Agro] by V for internal arguments) while inherent case is associated with theta roles (Chomsky 1981, 1993, 1995). Unaccusative constructions, however, are exceptions to this assumption. The external arguments of unaccusatives are base-generated as the internal arguments of the verb. This explains why it must raise to Spec Agrs rather than Spec Agro to check its case feature as the external argument in conformity with the case filter. Unergatives are transitive constructions with a covert object. Like all transitive construction, unergatives are assumed to allow a double VP structure. When V raises overtly to a light verb *v*, the result is a light verb complex *vP*. The subject raises from Spec V and merges with Spec *v*. It is in this *v-VP* configuration that the subject receives the external theta-role.

2. Some preliminary notes on Kenyang grammatical relations

Structurally, Kenyang has many of the morphosyntactic features commonly associated with Niger-Congo languages: noun class system to encode number and agreement, pro drop, verbal extension, etc. In Kenyang, three grammatical relations hold between the verb and co-occurring NPs to indicate the unmarked sentence structure SVO: (i) subject, (ii) direct object and (iii) indirect object/oblique. The construction in (8) illustrates these relations:

Tabi à kwù èkátì ntáh Besong
 Tabi 3sg.Perfbuy book for Besong
 “Tabi bought a book for Besong”.

In sentence (8), *Tabi* is the subject, *èkátì* the direct object, and *Besong* the oblique. The subject precedes and conditions agreement with the subject marker *à* which is in turn directly followed by the verb. The direct object immediately follows the verb and the oblique object if present comes after. Oblique objects in Kenyang can be overtly marked with a preposition as illustrated in the preceding example in which the expression *ntáh* “for” contributes to case mark *Besong* as oblique. The notion of oblique can also be expressed covertly without a preposition. In this case, the verbs take two nominal complements without marking either one with a preposition as in (9) below:

Tabi à kwù Besong èkátì
 Tabi 3sg.Perfbuy Besong book
 “Tabi bought Besong a book”.

When the oblique object is not preceded by a preposition, there is alternation of syntactic position between the direct object and the oblique. The oblique object occupies a position more local to the verb while the direct object follows the oblique as illustrated in (9). This allows both (8) and (9) to be invariant semantically. However, if the syntax is otherwise as in sentence (10) in which the oblique object that occupies a position remote from the verb (it follows the direct object instead of the verb) is not preceded by a preposition as in (8), the result is a grammatical sentence that shows no semantic correspondence with (8) and (9).

(8) Tabi à kwù èkátì Besong
 Tabi 3sg.Perfbuy book Assoc M Besong
 “Tabi bought Be song’s book”.

The structure in (10) is an associative construction in Kenyang. The associative interpretation is denoted by a floating tone that appears between the direct object *èkátì* and the oblique *Besong*.

Transitivity requirement as illustrated above allows the verb to be preceded and followed by nominal expressions. Depending on their valency, transitive verbs can be monotransitive, ditransitive, and trytransitive. Intransitive verbs, in contrast can be unergative or unaccusative. The dichotomy between unergative and unaccusative constructions is illustrated in the following constructions:

(11)a. ènòq é syèbé(unaccusative construction)
Stick 3Sg-SM-Perfbroke
“The stick broke”

b. *ènòq é syèbé nèsyèbè(unaccusative as unergative)
Stick 3Sg-SM-Perfbreak a break
“The stick broke a breaking”

(12)a. mbwépă fòk nèfí (unaccusative construction)
Wind 3Sg-SM-Imperf blow outside
“The wind is blowing outside”

b. *mbwép ă fòk nèfòk nèfí (unergative use)
Wind 3Sg-SM-Imperf blow blowing outside
“The wind is blowing the blowing outside”.

3. Corpus finding and analysis

This section consists of the presentation and analysis of cognate objects in Kenyang. The methodology of my analysis included a collection of fifty COs objects which have to some extent corresponding morphosyntactic and semantic relationship with the lexicalised verb in the Kenyang clause.

3.1 Methodology

The method adopted here consists of testing the COs of some verbs in Kenyang based on the following parameters: morphology, syntax and semantic interpretation. The analysis of the form and function of cognate objects in Kenyang is derived from a collection of 50 expressions and sentences showing the verb-noun combination in the language. While some COs show morphological relations with the verbs, others do not as illustrated below:

3.1.1 Cognate objects morphologically related to the verbs

(13)	Cognate verb	Gloss	Cognate object	Gloss
	nàṅtì	“to gossip”	ènáṅtí	“gossip”
	kpók	“to grab”	èkpóp	“grabbing”
	Yép	“to steal”	áYép	“stealing”
	kwò	“to borrow”	ákwó	“debts”
	kwàká	“to cough”	èkwáká	“cough”
	bhén	“to dance”	nèbhén	“a dance”
	kwáy	“sing “	nèkwáy	“song”
	kwén	“fell”	nèkwén	“fall”
	kwén	“to be guilty”	békwéné	“guilt”
	nyù	“fight”	nènyù	“fight”
	sàṅ	“to nag”	nèsàṅ	“nagging”
	séy	“to lie”	nséy	“lies”
	ḡáy	“to fear”	bèḡáy	“fear”
	tó	“to send”	ntó	“message”
	bòk	“to tell” mbòk		“story”
	gwù	“to die” nèwú		“death”
	tém	“to hunt”	kètémé	“hunting”
	kàisi	“to think”	ṅkàisi	“thoughts”
	kép	“to take enema”	nèkèp	“enema”
	nìk	“to pray”	nèník(mwét)	“prayer”
	nàk	“to invite”	mànak	“in-laws”
	rwó	“to deceive”	bèrwò	“deceit”
	byóp	“to talk”	kémbyóbhé	“talkative”

bháy	“to marry”	nèbháy	“marriage”
Yáp	“to wander”	tángáp	“wandering”
yàkàrì	“to move about”	nèyàkàrì	“moving about”
nìḡé	“to beg”	mènìḡé	“begging”
wènè	“to scramble for”	kéwéné	“scrambling “
nyé	“to eat”	nènyé	“food”
táḡ	“to quarrel”	bètáḡá	“quarrel”
sók	“to insult”	nsók	“insult”
kò	“to prostitute”	nèkò	“prostitution”
tó	“to send”	ntó	“message”
fòk	“to raise”	nfòk	“dust”
ném	“to lose”	ménémé	“a lost/chance/luck”
bhé	“to deliver”	nèbhé	“birth”
sèn	“to fad”	kèsèn	“a fad”
gwò	“to vomit”	kègwò	“vomitus”
ḡéké	“to sneeze”	bèḡéké	“a sneeze”
gwà	“to reproach”	bègwà	“a reproach”
nóp	“to cajole”	mènóptí	“a cajole”.

3.1.2 Cognate objects not morphologically related to the verbs.

(14)	Cognate verb	Gloss	Cognate object	Gloss
	bìk	“to scream”	bàrí	“screams”
	wày	“to laugh”	ámén	“laughter”
	dì	“to cry”	kèḡò	“crying”
	gwàp	“to slap”	nsáp	“a slap”
	wèré	“to sleep”	kènó	“sleep”
	rèm	“to talk”	kèpì	“talk”

Although the cognate objects in 3.1.2 are morphologically detached from their co-occurring verbs above, they are however homonyms to the preceding verbs.

3.1.3 Predicate adjective cognate objects

(15)	Predicate adjective	Gloss	Cognate object	Gloss
	ḡòkòrì	“be mad”	èḡòkòrì	“madness”
	ḡót	“be lazy”	àḡót	“laziness”
	mé	“be sick”	nèmé	“sickness”
	ḡák	“be happy”	màḡák	“happiness”
	ḡém	“be greedy”	mèḡémé	“greediness”

We note from the preceding presentation that the cognate phenomenon is translatable from the extensive verbal prefixes with variation in syllable structure comprising- **V**, **C** and **CV**:

(16)	Verb	Gloss	Derived cognate object	Gloss
	Kwàkà	“to cough”	è-kwàkà	“cough”
(17)	sók	“to insult”	n-sók	“insult”
(18)	gwò	“to vomit”	kè-gwò	“vomitus”

V-CV-CV
C-CVC
CV-CV

These verbal prefixes serve to deverbalize the verbs into nominals.

Some of the cognate objects presented above are not concrete objects but rather concepts that can be visualized and contextualized relative to the community in question. It can be argued however that the concept of èḡòkòrì ‘madness’ can be visualized but the concept of tóntó ‘send a message’ is neither concrete nor visualized. The subjects of the cognate verbs host causative and experiencer properties as indicated in the following:

- (19) Etaka ǎ kò Besongm̀bàŋ nè m̀bàŋ (Caus reading)
 Etaka 3Sg-SM-Imperf walk Besongplace to place
 “Etaka makes Besong to move from place to place”.
- (20) Eta ǎ bhòkòrí èbhókórí (Experiencer reading)
 Eta 3Sg-SM-Imperfis mad madness
 “Eta is mad”.
- (21) Tabi à tó ǹtó ǹtáh Egbe
 Tabi SM-Perf send message to Egbe
 “Tabi sent a message to Egbe”.

3.2. Forms of cognate objects in Kenyang

Given the data presented above, we can identify three different forms of cognate objects in Kenyang: the cognate objects which are morphologically related to the verb, and the cognate objects which are intrinsically homonymous with the cognate verb, and adjectives/prepositions qualifying the cognate noun understood:

Cognate nouns derived directly from the verb

- (22) Eyongǎ tém kètémé èntíkì ñŋwòp
 Eyong 3-SM-Imperf hunt hunting every day
 “Eyong does hunting everyday”.

- (23) Etaka ǎ yé́p áyé́p m̀bò má yí
 Etaka 3-SM-Imperf steal stealing like mother his
 “Etaka steals like his mother”.

- (25) Besong à tó ǹtó ǹtáh ñ̀gòré yí
 Besong 3-SM-Perf send message to wife his
 “Besong has sent a message to his wife”.

Cognate verbs with homonymous objects

- (26) β̀ò bá wè̀rè kènó
 children 3-SM-Imperf sleep sleep
 “The children are sleeping”

- (28) Ako ǎ dì kèβ̀o
 Ako 3-SM-Imperf cry cry
 “Ako is crying”.

- (29) Ashu ǎ wày ámén
 Ashu 3Sg-SM-Imperf laugh laughter
 “Ashu is laughing”.

An adjective /preposition qualifying the cognate noun understood

- (30) Tabi à ñ̀ ǹ èfòk
 Tabi 3-SM-Perf fight with strength
 “Tabi fought with strength/fiercely”.

Sentence (30) can be paraphrased as “Tabi fought the fight of his life”. By appearing immediately after the verb, the preposition phrase *ñè èfòk* “with strength” seems to have absorbed the postverbal position that would have been filled by the cognate object. In this position, the PP/AdjP is doubly interpreted as a cognate object and a modifier.

- (31) bàyòré bá kwáy èyú
 women 3Pl-SM-Perf sing breath(best/sweet melodies)
 “The women sang their best”.

- (32) β̀ò bã β̀én ñ̀sóńó
 children 3Pl-SM-Imperf dance best/marvellous
 “The children are dancing their best”.

In general, when the cognate verb is modified by an expression translatable as the cognate verb in Kenyang, the cognate object is banned from co-occurring with the modifier. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of sentences (33) and (34), the equivalents of sentences (31) and (32) respectively:

- (33) *bàγòré bá kwáy nèkwáy èyú
 (34) *βò bá βèn nèβέν ñsòḡó

Accordingly, *nèkwáy* ‘‘song’’ and *nèβέν* ‘‘dance’’ are cognate objects which are followed by expressions which themselves are cognate and compatible with the unpronounced or null cognate object.

3.2.1 Semantic/pragmatic properties of Kenyang cognate verbs

Kenyang cognate objects are both concrete and abstract nouns which serve to translate an activity or event. The duplication of the verb through nominalization in the postverbal position serves to intensify and thus modify the meaning of the activity / event encoded in the verb. Intensification renders the activity / event more emphatic. The preverbal prefix changes the grammatical category of the verb into a noun. The derived verbal noun is a *latent* referent object of the preceding verb by virtue of still carrying inherent characteristics of the co-occurring verb. When the cognate object is substituted for a corresponding adjective that qualifies the cognate noun, the cognate construction is interpreted idiomatically. To this end, sentence (33) above repeated here as (35) is an idiomatic construction in Kenyang. These expressions indicate the manner in which the activities / events are spelled out in the language:

- (35) bàγòré bá kwá èyù
 Women 3Pl-SM-Imperf sing breath/sweet melodies
 ‘‘The women sang their best’’.

On the basis of their semantics, Kenyang distinguishes between two types of cognate objects comprising: emphatic/intensifying, and modifying cognate objects.

3.2.2. Syntactic Properties of Kenyang Cognate Objects

Cognate objects seem to display syntactic idiosyncrasies with co-occurring constituents in a clause. As earlier indicated, the syntactic analysis of cognate objects rests on two schools of thought within the generative procedure: the CO seems to display both adjunct and argument properties. The cognate objects in both schools display typical properties of the syntactic object depending on the lexical semantics of the verbs. The lexical semantics of the verb accounts for the distinction of two types of cognate objects: event-Co and referential-Co. The cognate objects are said to translate a resultant state or the activity of the process in question. Given *Transitivity Requirement*, cognate objects are ‘genuine’ syntactic objects. They are the internal arguments that receive case and/or a theta role from the co-occurring verb (Hale and Keyser 1987, 1993; Massam 1990).

In the event-Co construction, the main verb which apparently functions as a light verb merges with the object to form a complex predicate. The subject of the cognate object constructions may play the role of a causer or an experiencer. Contrary to TR, some linguists posit that cognate objects are adjuncts with a manner-adverb type of function that serves as modifiers (Jones 1988; Moltmann 1990, etc.). In fact, phenomenal differences between adjuncts and arguments have been captured in constructions that require the CO to undergo pronominalization, passivization, topicalization, wh-expression, etc. It has been observed that prototypical cognate objects are incompatible with such constructions in some languages. Cognate verbs of event-Co represent an event whereas the CO of referential-Co denote an individual. The latter is said to host canonical object properties which are compatible with the above constructions. This explains why the referential-Co but not event-Co can be passivized, pronominalized, topicalized, Wh-questioned, etc. However, cognate objects of eventive-Co have been analysed as ambiguous for displaying properties of both eventive-Co and referential CO. This section explores the co-occurrence relation between Kenyang cognate objects and syntactic operations such as passivization, topicalization, pronominalization, wh-questions, relativization, definiteness, etc.

3.2.2.1. Eventive-CO

The cognate object of eventive-CO functions as a predicate. The CO characterises an event and this in turn accounts for why it cannot be pronominalized, passivized, topicalized, Wh-questioned in the following Kenyang constructions:

Pronominalization of Cognate Objects

Can Kenyang cognate objects of eventive-CO be substituted by pronominals, for example, *iz*? The (b) counterparts of the following constructions articulate this point:

- (36) (a) Tabi ă yép áyép tě kěmbǒ

Tabi 3Sg-SM-Imperf steal stealing since childhood
 “Tabi has been stealing since childhood”

(b) *Tabi ǎ γέπ wú tě kèmbǒ
 Tabi 3Sg-SM-Imperf steal it since childhood
 nè Ashu ǎ γέπ wú ηkwó
 “Tabi has been stealing since childhood”.

(37) (a) Besong à βέν èríti nèβέν nè ñgósí
 Besong 3Sg-SM-Perf dance beautiful dance in afternoon
 “Besong danced beautifully at noon”.

(b) *Besong à βέν èríti yó nè ñgósí
 Besong 3Sg-SM-Perf dance beautiful it in afternoon
 “Besong danced beautifully at noon”.

(38) (a) bàγòré bá kwày èyú
 women 3Pl-SM-Perf sing breath/sweetest melodies
 “The women sang their best/sweetest melodies”.

(b) *bàγòré bá kwày yó
 women 3Pl-SM-Perf sing it
 “The women sang it”.

The ungrammaticality of the above constructions indicates the impossibility of pronominalizing cognate objects in Kenyang.

Passivization of Cognate Objects

Kenyang has impersonal passives as illustrated in (39b):

(39) (a) Ebot à wày m̀p̀d̀η èyú
 Ebot 3Sg-SM-Perf kill cow yesterday
 “Ebot killed a cow yesterday”.

(b) bá wáy m̀p̀d̀η èyú
 3Pl-SM-Perf kill cow yesterday
 “A cow was killed yesterday”.

Given (39) in Kenyang, let us consider the passivization of the cognate objects in sentences (36a) and (37a) repeated below as (40) and (41) respectively:

(40) (a) Tabi ǎ γέπ άγέπ tě kèmbǒ
 Tabi 3Sg-SM-Perf steal stealing since childhood
 “Tabi has been stealing since childhood”.

(b) bá γέπ άγέπ tě kèmbǒ
 3Pl-SM-Perf steal stealing since childhood

“They have been stealing since childhood/stealing has been carried out by them since childhood”.

(41) (a) Besong à βέν èríti nèβέν nè ñgósí
 Besong 3Sg-SM-Perf dance beautiful dance in afternoon
 “Besong danced beautifully at noon”.

(b) bá βέν èríti nèβέν nè ñgósí
 3Pl-SM-Perf dance beautiful dance in afternoon
 “They danced beautifully in the afternoon/A beautiful dance was performed at noon”.

As indicated in (40b) and (41b), cognate objects can be passivized in Kenyang contrary to some claims in existing literature about the incompatibility between both. Impersonal passives lack phenomenal features of passive constructions, for example, there is no promotion and demotion of syntactic objects, no insertion rules, etc.

The substitution of the analytic subject with an exclusive generic pronoun allows the verbal morphosyntax to be spelled out by default. The lack of these intrinsic passivization processes seems to be compatible with cognate objects than otherwise transitive objects.

Topicalization of Cognate Objects

Kenyang topicalized constructions follow the pattern in (42b), the topicalized counterpart of (42a):

- (42) (a) Eware à kwù èβà èkàti
Eware 3Sg-SM-Perf buy bag school
“Eware bought a school bag”.
- (b) èβá èkàti é-ré, Eware à kwù yó
bag school Aug-Top, Eware 3Sg-SM-Perf buy Res-Pron
“As for the school bag, Eware has bought it”.

The topicalization of cognate objects in eventive-CO in Kenyang results to ungrammaticality as exemplified in (43b) and (44b):

- (43) (a) Eware ǎ βòkòri èβókórí
Eware 3Sg-SM-IPerf mad madness
“Eware is mad”.
- (b) *èβókórí é-ré, Eware ǎ βòkòrò yó
madness Aug-Top, Eware 3Sg-SM-Imperfmad it
“As for madness, Eware s is mad”.
- (44) (a) Tabi ǎ γέρ άγέρ tě kěmbǒ
Tabi 3Sg-SM-Imperf steal stealing
“Tabi has been stealing since childhood”.
- (b) *άγέρ á-ré, Tabi ǎ γέρ wú
stealing Aug-Top, Tabi 3Sg-SM-Imperf steal Res-Pron
tě kěmbǒ
since childhood
“As for stealing, Tabi has been stealing it since childhood”.

Cognate objects are incompatible with topicalization as illustrated in the ungrammaticality of (43b) and (44b).

Relativization of Cognate Objects

- (45) άγέρ á-né Tabi ǎ γέρ tě kěmbǒ
stealing Aug-RelTabi 3Sg-SM-Imperf steal since childhood
“The stealing which Tabi does since childhood”
- (46) kěntémé é-kén sé témé m̀myé éyú
hunting Aug-Rel1Pl-SM-Perf year yesterday
“The hunting that was carried out last year”.
- (47) ně̀nù è-nèn Manyi á nù nè èfǒk
fight Aug-RelManyi 3Sg-SM-Perf fight with strength
sé ʈí màṛáq
1Pl-SM-Perf Cop happy
“The fight which Manyi fought with strength surprises us”.

Focusing of Cognate Objects

- (48) *(Chi) άγέρ kè Tabi á kí / γέπέ
It is stealing Foc Tabi 3Sg-SM-Perf do / steal

“It is stealing that Tabi carried out”.

- (49) *(chi) ñsók kè Eta á sók-ó ñtòḡ
 It is insult Foc Eta 3Sg-SM-Perf insult-Fv teacher
 “It is an insult that Eta levied on the teacher”.

- (50) *(chi) èβókórí kè Eware á βòkòrí
 It is madness Foc Eware 3Sg-SM-Perf mad
 “It is madness that has transformed Eware”.

Cognate Objects and Wh-expressions

- (51) *Eta ă βòkòrí yì?
 Eta 3Sg-SM-Imperf mad what
 “What is Eta mad of?”

- (52) *yì Eta ă sòq?
 Who 3Sg-SM-Perf insulted insult
 “What does Eta insult?”

3.2.2.2. Referential-CO

Unlike their eventive-CO, the cognate objects of referential-CO host the referential properties of the matrix NP. The NP in question has the capacity to initiate and execute an act voluntarily or non-voluntarily. This has generated significant differences in the computation of COs in syntactic constructions involving pronominalization, passivization, topicalization, Wh-questions, relativization, focussing, among others. The following constructions are interpretable in Kenyang because the cognate object refers to the individual involved in the act:

Passivization in Referential-CO

- (53) bá βèn nèβén èḡḡḡ
 3Pl-SM-Perf dance dance today
 “They danced today”.
- (54) bá kwáy nèkwáy nè màḡáq
 3Pl-SM-Perf sing song with happiness
 “They sang with the song with happiness”.

Pronominalization in Referential-CO

- (55) Ashu à kwáy èrí tí nèkwáy ñtáh βó βì nè
 Ashu 3Sg-SM-Perf sing nice song to children his and
 Ebob à kwáy nò ḡkwó
 Ebob 3Sg-SM-Perf sang it too
 “Ashu sang a beautiful song to his children, and Ebob sang it too”.

Topicalization in Referential-CO

- (56) nèβén é-nèré Tabi à βèn nó
 dance Aug-Top Tabi 3SgSM-Perf dance ResP
 “As for the dance, Tabi danced it”.

Wh-question of Referential-CO

- (57) *yì é-ré Tabi á sòqq-ó nó?
 What Aug-Anap Tabi 3Sg-SM-Perf insult-Fv Def
 “What did Tabi insult?”
- (58) *yì é-éré Enoh á βèn-é nó?
 What Aug-Anaphor Enoh 3Sg-SM-Perf dance-Fv Def
 “What did Enoh dance?”

Wh-expressions can appear sentence initial or sentence final. This means that the wh-particle *yì* “what” in (57) and (58) can appear also in the final positions as in (59) and (60) respectively:

- (59) *Tabi à sòk yí (é-ré)?
 (60) Enoh à βèn yí (é-ré)?

3.2.2.3. Modification of Cognate Objects

Cognate objects in Kenyang can be subjected to different forms of modification comprising adjectives (as in (61)), (62)), adverbs if the CO is an argument (as illustrated in (62)), relative clause as in (63), focusing as in (64), and by PP in (65), etc.

- (61) mbák Ako à kwáy èrítí nèkwáy ǎ
 If Ako 3Sg-SM-Perf sing beautiful song 3Sg-SM
 fuét nèmò (adjectival modification)
 pass exam
 “if Ako sings a beautiful song, he will pass his exams”.
- (62) Eta ǎ tém kèntémé wáwák (adverbial modification)
 Eta 3Sg-SM-Imperf hut hunting rarely
 “Eta rarely does hunting”

Relativization of Referential-CO

- (63) Sé kòŋ bàkwáy á-né Ebai á kwáy
 1Pl-SM-Imperf like songs Aug-RelEbai 3Sg-SM-Perf sing
 “We love the songs sung by Ebai”.

Focusing of Referential-CO

- (64) ʃí nèkwá é-nèn kè sé kwáy mbwéré
 Cop song Aug-RelFoc 1Pl-SM-Imperf sing tomorrow
 “We shall be singing this song tomorrow”.

Modification by Prepositional phrase

- (65) Ako ǎ sé ñsé kè kyèpti àmfk
 Ako 3Sg-SM-Imperf tell lies without blinking eyes
 “Ako tells lies without remorse”.

3.3. Findings and Discussions

As indicated in the preceding discussion, transitivity requirement allows the post-verbal position in some languages to be filled by a lexical object which is morphologically and semantically related to the verb (a cognate object) or an object other than the cognate object. Cognate objects are construed as deverbals (the nominalization of a verb stem). They are more compatible with a class of intransitive verbs: unergative verbs rather than unaccusatives. Unergative verbs allow two types of cognate objects: the event-CO and referential CO. They exhibit different grammatical properties in their syntax within the generative procedure comprising passivization, pronominalization, topicalization, wh-questioning, etc. The study of CO in Kenyang corroborates with the facts on CO in existing literature to a great extent. The language allows COs with verbs that are etymologically related to the cognate verb and with verbs that are morphologically otherwise but semantically compatible with the CO. Depending on its lexical properties, Kenyang COs display both arguments and adjunct features in many syntactic environments. However, cognate objects can be passivized in this language contrary to what is obtained in some languages. There seem to be some compatibility between cognate objects and impersonal passives. Kenyang allows impersonal passives and this accounts for the passivisation of cognate objects in the language.

Conclusion

The paper set out to investigate the form and function of cognate objects in a Niger-Congo language spoken in South West Cameroon. Kenyang, an SVO language, allows cognate objects which can either be morphologically related to the cognate verb or detached from it. The grammatical properties of the COC are constrained by numerous syntactic operations in conformity with the elaborate discussions on cognate objects or contrary to the latter. We note, contrary to the existing template that Kenyang cognate objects can be passivized.

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