

An Asymmetric Theory of Korean Ditransitives: Evidence from Idioms

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Ditransitive constructions have received much attention in the generative literature. One of the representative analyses, Harley's (2002) small clause theory, treats both the pre(or post)positional dative and the double object frames as involving a PP small clause; the postpositional dative (1a) has a locative structure headed by P_{loc} (2a) and the double object frame (1b) has a possessive structure headed by P_{have} (2b). I refer to Harley's approach as a *symmetric theory* since it posits an identical structure for each frame. Harley's (2002) account makes a convincing case for the meaning difference between the two frames, and has been extended by a number of works (e.g., Bleam 2003 on Spanish, Jung and Miyagawa 2004 on Korean, Rimrott 2007 on German).

However, two sets of novel evidence from the ditransitive idioms and nominalizations of ditransitive constructions in Korean show that the symmetric theory encounters difficulty. Alternatively, I propose an *asymmetric theory* (following Bruening 2010, building on ideas in Marantz 1993), which posits a different structure for each construction. In the postpositional dative (3a) the dative PP and the accusative NP are the arguments of the ditransitive verb within the VP; and in the double object (3b), the first accusative NP is introduced by an applicative head. In conjunction with the asymmetric theory, Bruening (2010) proposes idiom-as-selection principles (4), which provide constraints of what can be idiomatically interpreted in the syntax. In what follows, I argue that the asymmetric theory explains the asymmetries between the double object and the postpositional dative constructions in Korean.

The first asymmetry is nominalization. First, the postpositional dative can be nominalized as in (5a), however the corresponding double object frame in (5b) cannot. This fact follows from the asymmetric theory (Bruening 2010). In the double object frame (3b), the null morpheme, the Appl head, prevents further derivations such as nominalization. In the corresponding postpositional dative (3a), the null applicative head is missing and so nothing can prevent additional derivations. In contrast, a Harley-type symmetric theory (2) cannot accommodate such asymmetry; since the heads of PP, P_{have} in the double object and P_{loc} in the postpositional dative block further derivation of nominalization, the nominalization should not be possible in the postpositional dative frame.

The second type of asymmetry is the existence classes of ditransitive idioms in Korean. As shown in (6) and (7), in the postpositional dative frame, all of the classes are extensively attested; these forms are fixed and do not alternate in the double object frame. In contrast, in the double object frame only Class 4 exists, and these idioms alternate with the postpositional frame. Furthermore, Class 5 and Class 6 are systematically missing. Bruening's (2010) idiom-as-selection principle in conjunction with the asymmetric theory offers a straightforward account of such asymmetries regarding idioms. First, the existence of Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4 follows from the asymmetric account. By satisfying the conditions (4) the verb and its selected arguments are interpreted idiomatically. For example, in Class 3, the verb selects the dative PP, and so they receive idiomatic interpretation. Second, the fact that some of the idioms in Class 4 alternate with the postpositional dative frame is explained. In Class 4, only the second NP and the verb is part of the idiom; the idiom does not include the Appl head. So they can appear as part of either the double object or the postpositional dative frame. Third, Class 6 is correctly captured as systematically missing. Following (4), the Appl head selects the first accusative NP and the verb, but the verb is a lexical category, and thus all of its selected arguments must be interpreted idiomatically. This means that the second accusative NP is also part of the idiom. Hence, it is not possible to exclude the second accusative NP out of the idiom in Class 6.

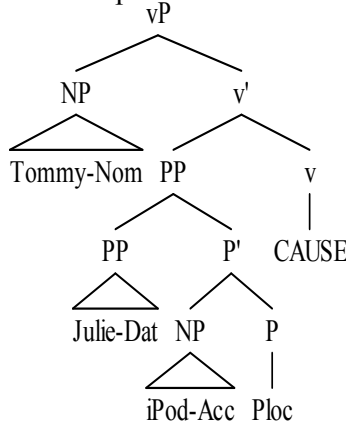
On the other hand, the symmetric theory fails in dealing with such idioms. For example, the existence of Class 3 is problematic; the combination of the dative PP and the verb should involve obligatorily the non-idiomatic argument, the accusative NP. Moreover, under the symmetric theory idioms should not alternate because they are fixed expressions associated with certain lexical heads P_{loc} in the postpositional dative and P_{have} in the double object. The alternating idioms, Class 4, constitute a puzzle. Finally, I point out the lack of Class 5 idioms in both Korean and English ditransitive idioms, and argue that semantic constraints restrict the occurrence of double object idioms, therefore Class 5

idioms are not problematic for the asymmetric theory.

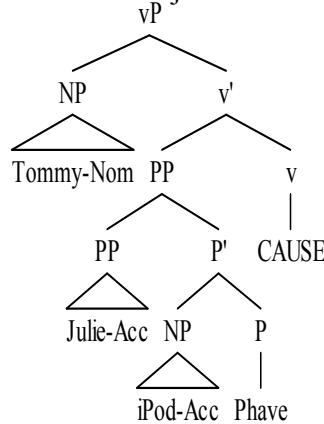
- (1) a. Tomi-ka cyulli-eykey aipatu-ul cwu-ess-ta. Postpositional Dative
 Tommy-Nom Julie-Dat iPod-Acc give-Pst-Dec [Dat-Acc]
 ‘Tommy gave iPod to Julie.’
 b. Tomi-ka cyulli-lul aipatu-ul cwu-ess-ta. Double Object
 Tommy-Nom Julie-Acc iPod-Acc give-Pst-Dec [Acc-Acc]
 ‘Tommy gave Julie iPod.’

(2) The symmetric theory

a. Postpositional Dative

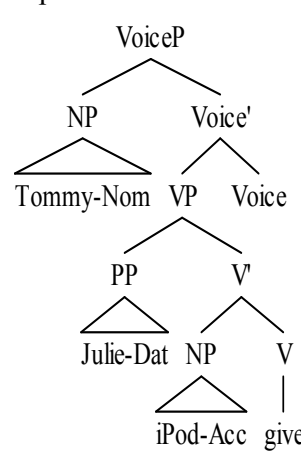


b. Double Object

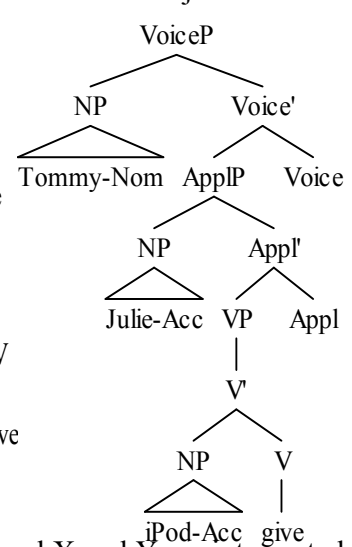


(3) The asymmetric theory

a. Postpositional Dative



b. Double Object



(4) Bruening's (2010) idiom-as-selection

- a. The Principle of Idiomatic Interpretation:
 X and Y may be interpreted idiomatically only if X selects Y.
 b. Constraint on Idiomatic Interpretation: If X selects a lexical category Y and X and Y are interpreted idiomatically, all of the selected arguments of Y must be interpreted idiomatically as well.

(5) Nominalization

- a. Swu-eykey-uy mapep-uy kaluchim.
 Sue-Dat-Gen magic-Gen teaching
 ‘The teaching of magic to Sue (by someone)’
 b. *Swu-uy mapep-uy kaluchim.
 Sue-Gen magic-Gen teaching
 ‘Sue’s teaching of magic (by someone)’
 Grammatical: ‘Teaching of magic of Sue’

(6) The list of logical possibilities for the idiomatic forms in Korean ditransitives*

Postpositional Dative	Existence	Double Object	Existence
Class1 [PP _{Dat} NP_{Acc} Verb]	existent	Class4 [NP _{Acc} NP_{Acc} Verb]	existent
Class2 [PP_{Dat} NP_{Acc} Verb]	existent	Class5 [NP_{Acc} NP_{Acc} Verb]	non-existent
Class3 [PP_{Dat} NP _{Acc} Verb]	existent	Class6 [NP_{Acc} NP _{Acc} Verb]	non-existent

*Note: the idiomatic part is bolded.

(7) Examples of ditransitive idioms in Korean

- a. Class 1: *chim-ul* (needle-Acc) *nohta* (put) ‘put a needle to X’
 b. Class 2: *mok-ey* (throat-Dat) *him-ul* (power-Acc) *cwuta* (give) ‘give a power to throat’
 c. Class 3: *sonakwi-ey* (webbing-Dat) *nehta* (put) ‘put X to a webbing’
 d. Class 4: *nukcwul-ul* (rope-Acc) *cwuta* (give) ‘give a rope to X’, ‘give X a rope’

Selected references: Bleam, T. 2003. Properties of the double object constructions in Spanish. *A Romance Perspective of Language Knowledge and Use*, 233–252. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Bruening, B. 2010. Ditransitive asymmetries and a theory of idiom formation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 41(4), 519-562. Harley, H. 2002. Possession and the double object construction. *Linguistic Variation Yearbook* 2, 29-68. Jung, Y. J. & Miyagawa, S. 2004. Decomposing ditransitive verbs. *Proceedings of SICGG*, 101-120. Marantz, A. 1993. Implications of asymmetries in double object constructions. *Theoretical Aspects of Bantu Grammar*, Stanford: CSLI Publications, 113–150. Rimrott, A. 2007. On double object and double complement constructions in German. *Proceedings of the 2007 annual conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association*, 1-11.