

On the status and role of Cognate Objects

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The *Cognate Object Construction* (CoC) has received considerable attention in the literature, with the question of the status of the nominal as complement or adjunct at the centre of research. Jones (1988), e.g., argues that the CoC is heterogeneous and that only the DPs in examples like *He smiled an enigmatic smile* are genuine COs, to be treated as adjunct NPs functioning as manner adverbials at LF (cf. Zubizarreta 1982), while cases like *They danced all sorts of dances at that party* involve ordinary objects (cf. Pereltsvaig (2002)). Moltman (1990) and Mittwoch (1998) assume that COs are predicates over the event argument (*E*- argument) of the related verb. Massam (1990) and Mcfarland (1995), echoing Hale and Keyser (1987, 1993), argue that all examples like those mentioned above involve structural (thematic) objects (i.e. are complements). **Our study** takes a novel perspective by placing the focus not so much on the status of the 'object' as complement or adverbial, but on the crosslinguistic asymmetries as regards the presence vs absence of CoCs across languages. We argue that languages like English in fact provide evidence that CoCs may have both an argument-like reading and an adverbial one, while noting that many other languages with COs allow only the adverbial type of reading. The latter are without exception languages (like Greek, but unlike English) that have grammaticalised the opposition of perfective vs imperfective aspect in their verbal morphology. Thus, while distinguishing, in the spirit of Jones and Pereltsvaig, 'real' COs from instances which look like, but are not, COs, we focus on the aspectual properties of the CoC on its argument-like reading, along the lines of Tenny (1994) among others. Examination of the aspectual role of CoCs, however, leads us directly to the unexpected conclusion that COs are in fact always adjuncts, but may, at least in non-aspect languages like English, optionally receive a reinterpretation that makes them appear to be arguments. We therefore propose that COs are introduced not by lexical transitivity of the verbs involved, as standardly assumed by those who take COs to be direct internal arguments (Hale and Keyser (1987, 1993), Macfarland (1995), Massam (1990), but as adjunct phrases that may, again in non-aspect languages only, carry either an aspectual or a manner adverbial function according to the type of meaning assigned to the event noun (: the CO). Interpretation is assigned compositionally through the identification of the event positions in the argument structures of the verbs and (deverbal) nominals concerned (cf. Rapoport (1991) and Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:55) for a similar treatment of depictive adjectives and resultative phrases respectively): any object-like properties of the CO are shown to be linked to the patient-like role that is secondarily assigned as part of the process of combining the 'normal' meanings of the verb and its cognate nominal.

The present approach enables us to combine the advantages of both the argument and adjunct analyses. A major issue in the literature is why COs do not appear with unaccusative verbs; on the argument analysis this follows from the fact that the internal argument slot is already 'taken'. In our analysis, which takes the CO to be an adjunct, this restriction is shown to follow from a violation of the uniqueness requirement of the theta-criterion: the true patient role is assigned lexically to the conventional internal argument and a secondary, pseudo-patient role is then illegitimately assigned to the CO by the compositional interpretation of the verb + CO combination. Furthermore, the adoption of an adjunct analysis across the board allows us to argue that the obligatory marking of viewpoint aspect on verb forms (whether of past tense only, as in Romance, or throughout the verbal system, as in Greek) automatically blocks the use of cognate object constructions with aspectual function in such languages, while any analysis of aspectual COs as true arguments is shown actually to prevent a satisfactory formulation of this important generalisation.