

# A Contrastive Analysis on Agency in English and Korean\*

Kyungyul Kim  
(Kangwon National University)

**Kim, Kyungyul.** *A Contrastive Analysis on Agency in English and Korean.* *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 16(1), 151-173. This study examines some differences between English and Korean with respect to the questions of how far and in what ways the linguistic realization of 'agency' notion can be varied in terms of semantic extensions. As for the language-specific factors that characterize the difference in the notion of agency between English and Korean, it is proposed that the concept of agency in English can be more easily extended to include inanimate entities than it can be in Korean. Thus, English extends the notion of agent to a wider range of situations than Korean, hence allowing non-prototypical agents to be construed as agents (or expressed as subjects). A general typological difference between English and Korean in relation to the notion of agency is that English is more permissive than Korean in the way in which non-prototypical agents are realized as agentive subjects through a wider range of the semantic extension of agentivity. Finally it is suggested that different language coding system and structural variations between English and Korean lead to different linguistic manifestations in the notion of agency.

**Key Words:** agency/agentivity, language-specific factors, prototypical agents, semantic/metaphorical extensions

## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, agency ('agentivity' or 'agenthood') has been defined with reference to a matter of relations initiated by a particular entity when it becomes involved in an action in terms of semantic features

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\* This paper was supported by Kangwon National University Research Fund in 2007

(e.g., consciousness, intentionality, and responsibility, etc.) From a linguistic point of view, agency refers to the linguistic marking of different perspectives in which an agent is viewed as conducting an intentional action in events. However, languages typologically offer different lexical and semantic choices for the agency notion, and by use of such choices speakers signal different perspectives in terms of more versus less agentivity. In this way, languages exhibit some degree of variation in how the semantic features of agency are encoded and as to the degree of the semantic extension of agency in a given event. Thus, cross-linguistic diversity arises in part as a result of language-specific restrictions on the notion of agency.

In other words, the degree to which the semantic features of the ultimate cause (i.e., intention, volition, responsibility on the part of the agent) play a role in language expressions varies from language to language. In this respect, languages differ in the way they deal with the concept of agency in prototypical and non-prototypical causative situations. English and Korean, for example, might exhibit a considerable amount of variation not only in how the agency notion is expressed in causative situations, but even as to the language-specific characterization of agency with respect to semantic features and semantic extensions. This study examines how the notion of agency is reflected in English and Korean causative expressions, and discusses the different manifestations of agency in the two languages, focusing on the conceptual features and the cross-linguistic treatments of the semantic extension of agency.

## 2. The Semantic Features of Prototypical Agency

Many attempts have been made to characterize the notion of 'agentivity' or 'agenthood.' Fillmore (1968: 24) defines agentive as "...the case of the typically animate perceived instigator of the action identified by the verb". However, there has been widespread agreement that Fillmore's restriction on the relationship between agentivity and animateness is too strong in the sense that English allows so-called

natural agents (i.e., inanimate agents), such as storms, rain, heavy snow, etc., to appear in the subject position in sentences: e.g., "The storm swept the village," "Heavy snow blocked all the roads." Cruse (1973) suggests that the agentivity of nouns in the subject position needs to be examined on the basis of the assumed relationship between agentivity and the doer's action (i.e., 'doing'). According to him, agentivity carries four semantic features 'volitive,' 'effective,' 'initiative,' and 'agentive,' which make a notion of agentivity detectable or variable contextually. He further argues that inanimate objects can acquire a temporary agentivity by virtue of their kinetic (or other) energy. This implies that the energy inherent in an object may enable it to operate on its own as the initiator of the action, contributing to its having a higher degree of agentivity. Direct support for the claim that agency and inanimate objects are closely related comes from Van Oosten's (1977) observation regarding so-called 'patient-subject' constructions, as exemplified in (1):

- (1) a. The wine drinks like it was water.  
 b. The trailer pulls easily.  
 c. A good tent puts up in about two minutes.

(Van Oosten 1977, p. 459)

In (1) the inanimate objects which are semantically the patients of the verb (i.e., the things to which things are done) are expressed as subjects. The acceptability of the constructions lies in the fact that the inanimate NPs 'the wine,' 'the trailer,' and 'a good tent' in (1) take on a typical semantic property of the agent, which Van Oosten (1977) calls 'responsibility,' when they occur in the subject position. This responsibility feature makes the patient-subjects responsible for the occurrence of the action of the verb, even though they are not volitional agents with intentions to do things. This explains why the frequent occurrence of inanimate subjects in English sentences allows English native speakers to interchange readily the prototypical agents and the inanimate agents (i.e., less prototypical agents; non-agentive entities) according to pragmatically-motivated actions and events.

In line with this, Schlesinger (1989) notes that animacy is not a good criterion for distinguishing agents from instruments because inanimate objects (i.e., instruments) have the feature ‘cause’ in common with prototypical agents, and this feature causes inanimate objects in the subject position to be represented as agents, as illustrated in (2):

- (2) a. Carol hit the horse with the stick. → The stick hit the horse.  
 b. Carol cut the wood with the axe. → The axe cut the wood.

The naturalness of sentences with inanimate subjects in (2) can be explained by two Naturalness Conditions proposed by Schlesinger (1989), in which a natural-sounding sentence is created through the instrument’s movement into the subject position.

- (3) a. Naturalness Condition 1: When the event is not instigated by a human agent, or when the agent is unknown or no longer on the scene, the instrument by means of which the action is performed or which is involved in the event may be naturally expressed as the subject.  
 b. Naturalness Condition 2: To the extent that attention is drawn to the instrument by means of which an action is performed and away from the instigator of the action, the former will be naturally expressed as the sentence subject.  
 (Schlesinger 1987, pp. 190-191)

Given that the occurrence of instrument objects in the subject position satisfies the Naturalness conditions, the sentences in (3) will sound natural. These conditions, according to Schlesinger, also explain why the English transitive constructions with inanimate agents are preferable in certain contexts or discourse, despite their low degree of membership in the prototypical agent category. In terms of the scope of agency, Schlesinger (1987) states:

- (4) The Agent is a category admitting of varying degrees of membership. Not only natural forces but also other inanimate

objects can under certain circumstances figure as Agents, though not prototypical ones.

(Schlesinger 1987, p. 206)

Schlesinger (1987) further argues that the properties of agents should be characterized by a set of non-criterial features, each having a certain value, rather than being defined by necessary and sufficient features. Accordingly, the noun phrases referring to an inanimate entity in (4), which serves as instrument of the action, are eligible for membership in the agent category to the extent that certain Naturalness Conditions are satisfied.

In a similar vein, DeLancey (1990) points out that an understanding of the role of agentivity in syntax must be based on an understanding of the cognitive structure and the semantic categories which are reflected in the morphosyntax of language. He writes:

- (5) Like other semantic categories, agentivity behaves, in terms of its linguistic expression, like a prototype category, that is, there is evidence for degrees of agentivity. The semantic content of the Agent category is intensional. Agentivity is not an objective phenomenon of the real world; it is a relation which can be predicated of particular participants in particular reports of particular events. An argument "is" an Agent only in a particular clause; it makes no sense to say, without reference to a particular clause, that some entity in some event objectively "is" or "is not" an Agent. (DeLancey 1990, p. 141)

### **3. The Notion of Agency in English and Korean**

As mentioned earlier, the notion of agency can be construed as a matter of semantic roles and relations which represent how a particular entity is involved in the situation or event created by a predicate. Thus, the prototypical agent is typically a human being acting consciously and volitionally and controlling the event because consciousness and volition are typically human attributes (i.e., animacy). The agent's action then causes the patient to undergo a change and thus to be in a different

state after the event. From a cognitive perspective, Schlesinger (1995) points out that the three features 'cause', 'control', and 'change' appear to be very good candidates for the status of universal cognitive concepts; the feature 'cause' is considered as encompassing any source of an activity, event, or situation, referring to entities affecting other entities. The notion 'control' bears some affinities with those of intention and volition.

These two notions, however, conceptually differ in the sense that the notion 'cause', which can be a feature of inanimate entities, does not imply volition, intention, or purposefulness. The feature 'change' is assigned when motion is involved, or when there is a change of state. In that sense, whether a particular type of change is a typical occurrence is associated with the presence or absence of a source of action (i.e., an outside force/entity) giving rise to the change. In terms of prototypes, typical types of change are in the normal course of events perceived as being brought about an outside entity or force, based on our experience of the world. Given that the agency is a notion which is commonly associated with a decision on the part of the agent to perform an act that causes a event or result, the cognitive structure of prototypical causation with respect to the agency concept can be described as follow:

(6) Agency           → Action       → Event/Result  
       (Source of action)

The cognitive structure in (6) tells us that the agency concept should be captured in relation to the feature of the typically animate perceived instigator of the action who/which is referred to by a particular entity. This prototypicality (i.e., the agency-action-event schema) can be projected onto states or events which are not inherently prototypical, and which deviate from prototypical agentivity through metaphorical or metonymical extensions. Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. *I* approach the city. (agent/actor)  
       b. *He* heard the song. (experiencer)

- c. *The lightning* destroyed the building. (natural force)
- d. *This hotel* forbids dogs. (institution)
- e. *The key* opened the door. (instrument)
- f. *My guitar* broke a string. (setting of an event)
- g. *This tent* sleeps six. (scope/location subject as a locative role)
- h. *The book* sold a million copies. (contributor to a successful sale)
- i. *The fifth day* saw our departure. (sentence topic)

(Based on Taylor 1995, pp. 208-217)

Examples in (7) reveal that subjects with non-agentive properties, as specified in brackets, can be construed as metaphorically and metonymically 'agent-like'; non-prototypical agents can function as subjects by virtue of the metaphorical extension of the agent-action-patient pattern. In other words, being coded syntactically as members of the class of the transitive subject, the less prototypical agents in (7a-i) are presented as "agent-like" through metaphorical extensions. In this way, English permits a wide range of subjects, including natural forces and other inanimate objects. Each of the subjects bears its own semantic role according to the relationship between it and the verb, showing multi-functional semantic value (property/role) as an agentive or non-agentive subject. Consider the following English transitive constructions:

- (8) a. *John* opened the door. (agent)
- b. *This key* opened the door. (instrument)
- c. *John* opened the door with *this key*. (agent-instrument)
- d. *The wind* opened the door. (natural force)

(Adapted from Fillmore 1977)

All the subjects in (8) are acting as a transitive subject 'John' in (8a) functions as a prototypical agent whose volitional or intentional agency brings about the occurrence of the action, and 'this key' in (8b) also functions as a subject without being agentive even though it lacks prototypical property of agents. In (8c), 'John' and 'this key' have their own distinct semantic roles, that is, 'agent' and 'instrument' respectively, occurring together in a single sentence. The NP 'the wind' is also

expressed as a transitive subject which causes some change in the object. In this way, NPs referring to inanimate objects, instruments, and natural forces can all be categorized as subject in English transitive constructions. The implication of this kind of wide range of categorization is that English readily permits the grammaticalization of non-agent-like NPs as subject, and in turn allows NPs occurring in the subject position to be assigned various semantic roles according to a given situation.

Givón (1984) also argues that English allows reasonable leeway in assigning non-agentive subjects to prototypically-transitive verbs by analogy to real/true agents:

- (9) a. Liquor killed him.  
 b. Concentration quickened her pulse.  
 c. This loaf will feed a thousand.  
 d. The hammer broke the window.

(Givón 1984, p. 106)

In (9), verbs denoting prototypically-transitive events occur with less-than-agentive subjects, thanks mainly to metaphorical extensions that make it possible to construe the subject semantically as a "causer", and thus be coded syntactically as a agentive subject. In Korean, however, severe restrictions are placed on such metaphorical extensions of agentivity in causative situations. Korean does not easily permit entities that cannot initiate an event willfully to be construed as nominative subject in prototypical causative events, as shown in (10):

- (10) a. Liquor killed him.  
 → \*?sul-i ku-lul cuk-i-ess-ta  
 liquor-NOM he-ACC kill-CAU-PAST-DS  
 'Liquor killed him.'  
 → sul-ttaemue ku-ka cu-ess-ta  
 liquor-because he-NOM die-PAST-DS  
 'Because he drank liquor, he died/Due to liquor, he died.'
- b. Concentration quickened her pulse.  
 → \*?cipcung-i kuny-uy maebak-ul ppaluge-ha-ess-ta  
 concentration-NOM her pulse-ACC quicken-CAU-PAST  
 'Concentration quickened her pulse.'



→ cipcung-ttanune kunyuey maekbak-i ppalac-ess-ta  
 concentration-due to her pulse-NOM quicken-PAST  
 ‘As a result of concentration, her pulse quickened.’

c. This loaf will feed a thousand.

→\*i ppang-i chun myung-ul muk-i-l-kusi-ta  
 this loaf-NOM thousand people-ACC feed-PASS-FUT-DS  
 ‘This loaf will feed a thousand.’

→ i ppang-ulo chun myung-i mukul-su-iss-ta  
 this loaf-with thousand people-NOM eat-can-DS  
 ‘With this loaf, a thousand can eat/A thousand could be fed on this loaf.’

d. The hammer broke the window.

→ \*mangchi-ka youlichang-ul kka-ess-ta  
 hammer-NOM window-ACC break-PAST-DS  
 ‘The hammer broke the window.’

→ (nukunka-ka) mangchi-lo youlichang-ul kka-ess-ta  
 (someone-NOM) hammer-wit window-ACC break-PAST  
 ‘Someone broke the window with the hammer.’

The unacceptability of the Korean equivalents in (10) indicates that most inanimate subjects cannot readily be construed as agents of prototypically-transitive events. In Korean, actors who cannot be assigned any responsibility tend not to be eligible for subjecthood in transitive events. Thus, most Korean speakers would find the examples in (10) unnatural as reports of causative events in which non-prototypical agents performed actions as causers, because such inanimate entities in (10) cannot be construed as being responsible for causing events in Korean.

It is conceivable therefore that causative events with non-prototypical causers might be viewed in English as the semantic extension of agency and in Korean as unnatural if these causative events are not controlled by human agency. In other words, the tendency to extend the notion of agency (i.e., who/what performs or causes an action) prevails in English, whereas in Korean occurrence of inanimate entities in the subject position is restricted by language-specific constraints, and thus expressed in indirect ways.

In this respect, it can be said that English permits a wide range of options in selecting NPs as transitive subject. In Korean, however, there are limitations on the grammaticalization of non-agent-like subjects due to morphosyntactic constraints. In other words, the unacceptability of the Korean equivalents in (10) tells us that in Korean, the occurrence of non-agentive NP in the subject position of transitive constructions is very limited; for example, in (10e) the instrumental appears in Korean as a typical instrument with the oblique case, realized by the instrumental particle *-lo*. (10a-d) also shows that Korean doesn't easily allow the grammaticalization of natural forces as subject. Thus, one important difference between English and Korean is that inanimate entities cannot occur as transitive subject in Korean as easily as they can in English. This difference comes from the fact that departures from the prototypical features of agency in causative constructions occur principally through semantic extensions. Such metaphoric extensions appear to be a crucial factor explaining the degree of agentivity between English and Korean: the two languages may differ in the extent to which departures from the prototype are allowed in causative events. In general, English appears to be freer than Korean in the degree to which it allows such departures via semantic extensions. In what follows, we offer specific evidence supporting the presence of the difference in the degree of agentivity, exploring further evidence that characterizes the degree of agentivity in English and Korean and identifying other language-specific factors involved in the typological variation between the two languages.

#### 4. Agency and Typological Parameters in English and Korean

Considering the difference between English and Korean, it is highly probable that there will be differences in language-specific notions of agency too, i.e. that there may be differences in the way agency is interpreted. In this section, we investigate an extreme reflection of the above difference between the two languages, namely, cases where inanimate agents (causers) in an English causative expression have no

corresponding inanimate expressions in their Korean equivalents. The analysis also involves different patterns of causative constructions which are prevalent in the two languages in question, in an attempt to identify language-specific parameters characterizing the concept of agency.

To identify language-specific factors determining the choice of subject in causative sentences, we examined (non-prototypical) causative patterns in English and Korean and specifically the occurrence of animate and inanimate subjects in causative constructions. Table 1 compares causative constructions in English and Korean translational equivalents extracted from English (CNN News) and Korean (CNN Korean Translation News) daily newspapers. Table 2 gives the number of animate and inanimate subjects in English and Korean transitive sentences denoting causative events or situations.

Table 1. Agentive and non-agentive subjects in English and Korean

Articles	Agentive subjects		Non-agentive subjects		Total	Examples in English and Korean	
	N	%	N	%		English	Korean translational equivalents
A-1	5	55.6	4	44.4	9	ex) A suicide bombing...killed...20people... → Due to a suicide bombing, 20people died...	
A-2	3	30	7	70	10	ex) Tragic events...solidify...our resolve... → Due to tragic events, our resolve is solidified...	
A-3	5	45.5	6	54.5	11	ex) The rude action...blocked...the way... → Because of the rude action, the way was blocked...	
A-4	5	55.6	4	44.4	9	ex) The political conditions...have left...teams... → Because of the political conditions, teams have been vulnerable...	
A-5	3	30	7	70	10	ex) Friendly jokes...could hold...clues → Because of friendly jokes, clue can be found...	
A-6	4	33.3	8	66.7	12	ex) The scar tissue...reduced...lung capacity... → Due to the scar tissue, lung capacity decreased...	
A-7	7	53.8	6	46.2	13	ex) The fastest growth rate...pushed...poverty levels...	

						→ Due to The fastest growth rate, poverty levels went down...
A-8	3	60	2	40	5	ex) U.S. attorney's crackdown...resulted in...indictment... → Due to U.S. attorney's crackdown, indictment was made...
A-9	5	71.4	2	28.6	7	ex) Security guards...killed...41people... → Due to security guards, people...died...
A-10	4	50	4	50	8	ex) This cut...will arrest...the slide... → Due to this cut, the slide could be ceased...
A-11	9	81.8	2	18.2	11	ex) This year's strong performance...has lifted...40 million Asians... → Due to this year's strong performance, 40 million Asians got out of...
A-12	5	50	5	50	10	ex) Those reports...prompted...denials from... → Because of those reports, she denied...
A-13	4	66.7	2	33.3	6	ex) Strong demand...has increased...the prices of crude... → Because of strong demand, the price of crude went up...
A-14	5	71.4	2	28.6	7	ex) High oil prices...could result...deceleration in growth... → Because of high oil prices, growth could go down...
A-15	3	27.3	8	72.7	11	ex) The cardinal's support...helped...bring down...Marcos → Because of the cardinal's support, Marcos got kicked out...
A-16	4	36.4	7	63.6	11	ex) The message...inspires...people... → Due to the message, people are inspired...
A-17	7	63.6	4	36.4	11	ex) Rising fuel costs...have hurt...demand... → Due to rising fuel demand, demand got damaged...
A-18	5	62.5	3	37.5	8	ex) The term...made...the image... → Due to the term, the image was damaged...
A-19	2	13.3	13	86.7	15	ex) The trip...worsened...his condition... → Due to the trip, his condition was worsened...
A-20	5	38.5	8	61.5	13	ex) The earthquake...triggered...the tsunami → Due to the earthquake, the tsunami occurred...
A-21	3	20	12	80	15	ex) An examination of her wounds...would reveal...the shark's size... → Due to an examination of her wounds, the shark's size would be revealed...
A-22	8	57.1	6	42.9	14	ex) Bad weather - had hampered...rescuers'

						efforts... → Because of bad weather, rescuers' efforts were blocked...
A-23	4	22.2	14	77.8	18	ex) The explosion...destroyed...25 vehicles... → Because of the explosion, 25 vehicles were destroyed...
A-24	5	71.4	2	28.6	7	ex) Gasolin demand growth...fueled...the price hikes → Due to gasolin demand the price increased...
A-25	6	66.7	3	33.3	9	ex) Overpopulation...spreads...disease... → Due to overpopulation, disease is being spread...
A-26	10	76.9	3	23.1	13	ex) The rainfall...threw...the raffic... → Due to the rainfall, the traffic was paralyzed...
A-27	6	85.7	1	14.3	7	ex) A tsunami warning...had urged...residents... (to move)... → Because of a tsunami warning, residents had to move...
A-28	12	60	8	40	20	ex) The attacks...will embolden...Egypt's effort... → Because of the attacks, Egypt's effort will be encouraged...
A-29	5	71.4	2	28.6	7	ex) Chilly office temperatures...can lead to...tiffs → Because of chilly office temperatures, tiffs can occur...
A-30	8	88.9	1	11.1	9	ex) Strong demand...will proprl...regional exports... → Because of strong demand, regional exports will increase...
A-31	11	78.6	3	21.4	14	ex) The Asian flu pandemic...claimed...7,000 lives... → Due to the Asian flu pandemic, 7,000 lives were victimized...
A-32	10	52.6	9	47.4	19	ex) Smoking...cost...EU states...(100 billion euros)... → Due to smoking, EU states...wasted (100 billion euros)
A-33	10	47.6	11	52.4	21	ex) India's recent decision...has ignited...controversy... → Due to India's recent decision, controversy was heated...
A-34	5	33.3	10	66.7	15	ex) Safety concerns...hinder...investigators... (from reaching)... → Due to safety concerns, investigators cannot reach...
A-35	11	78.6	3	21.4	14	ex) China yuan policy...posed...risk... → Due to China yuan policy, risk was made...
A-36	9	60	6	40	15	ex) The low prices...put...unfair. pressure... (on U.S. manufacturers)

						→ Due to the low prices, U.S. manufacturers are under pressure...
A-37	5	50	5	50	10	ex) The warning...will hold...banks...(from freezing)... → Because of the warning, banks remain...
A-38	8	66.6	4	33.3	12	ex) The operation...prompts...drivers...(to push)... → Due to the operation, drivers can push...
A-39	6	46.2	7	53.8	13	ex) The TV ad...prompted...him...(to launch)... → Due to the TV ad, he started...
A-40	3	33.3	6	66.7	9	ex) The virus...led to...the slaughter of millions of poultry... → Due to the virus, the slaughter of millions of poultry...was made...
A-41	5	38.5	8	61.5	13	ex) The pandemic...will cause...a public health emergency... → Due to the pandemic, a public health emergency will occur...
A-42	3	21.4	11	78.6	14	ex) The security steps...would guard...their livelihood... → Due to the security steps, their livelihood would be protected...
A-43	6	30	14	70	20	ex) The protrusions - could increase...the re-entry temperature... → Because of the protrusions, the re-entry temperature - can go up
A-44	5	41.7	7	58.3	12	ex) New downpours...hindered...cleanup efforts... → Because of new downpours, cleanup efforts were hampered...
A-45	6	75	2	25	8	ex) The crash...halted...services... → Due to the crash, services were suspended...
A-46	7	70	3	30	10	ex) China's demand...will leave...shortfall... → Due to China's demand, shortfall will be made...
A-47	10	71.4	4	28.6	14	ex) The virus...has claimed...12people... → Due to the virus, 12 people died...
A-48	5	38.5	8	61.5	13	ex) A loose cable...snarled...traffic... → Due to a loose cable, traffic was hindered...
A-49	6	66.7	3	33.3	9	ex) Another blast...wounded...two tourists... → Because of another blast, two tourists were wounded...
A-50	9	60	6	40	15	ex) The plan...has generated...anger... → Because of the plan, anger has been made...
<b>Total</b>	299	51.1	286	48.9	585	

As shown in the English causatives and their Korean equivalents, inanimate causers in the subject position in English are suppressed in Korean equivalents. In addition, objects in English are realized as subjects in Korean and transitive verbs in English turn into intransitive verbs in Korean. Furthermore, the total number of inanimate subjects (299 tokens out of 585 51.1%) in English causative sentences reveals a major difference between English and Korean in frequency of the occurrence of human agents in causative situations, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Agentive and non-agentive subjects in English data

Total number of subjects in transitive sentences:	Agentive subjects	Non-agentive subjects
585 tokens (100 %)	299 tokens (51.1 %)	286 tokens (48.9 %)

What is noteworthy in Table 2 is that the ratio of inanimate subjects versus animate subjects in transitive sentences is almost equal in English data; 299 tokens out of 585 are inanimate (51.1%) and 286 tokens out of 585 are animate subjects (48.9%). In addition, it should be noted that the inanimate subjects (299 tokens) in English transitive sentences are suppressed in Korean translational equivalents by virtue of the language-specific restriction that Korean cannot easily assign the agent role (i.e. causer) to inanimate subjects of transitive verbs. This contrast means that the use of inanimate subjects in causative sentences is more frequent in English than in Korean. The proportion of inanimate agency in English is much greater than in Korean. In other words, the data show that the subjects of causative sentences in Korea are mostly human or animate and that Korean tends to avoid the occurrence of inanimate causers (e.g., natural force subjects, instrument subjects, and abstract cause subjects, and so on) which lack the semantic features of responsibility, intention, volition, etc.

The above data also reveal that the two languages employ different

structural strategies in order to express agency in causative events; English tends to rely on canonical transitive structures, showing the structural pervasiveness of inanimate subjects in transitive events, while Korean is heavily dependent on morphosyntactic devices (i.e., passive structures, lexical intransitive verbs, or inchoative forms) to express causative events. This contrast suggests that agency is one of the most crucial factors responsible for the preference for the variable constructions such as ‘lexical intransitive verbs’, ‘passive voice verbs’, and ‘inchoative verbs’ in Korean over the canonical causative construction ‘SCAUSER - V<sub>TR</sub> - O<sub>RESULT</sub> (NP<sub>AGENT</sub> → Action → Event/Result)’ in English. These structural variations in Korean are language-specific phenomena which indicate that the concept of agency (i.e., the subjecthood of inanimate entities) can significantly affect the structure of language, as shown in (11).

## (11) Examples of structural variations in Korean

a. *Transitive sentence in English* → *Passive structure in Korean*

ex) China’s demand for crude oil will leave a shortfall of 6.2 million barrels per day in 2005.

→ China-uy           wonyu-etaehan   yoku-uy    kyulkwalo  
 China-POSS       crude oil-for     demand-   as a result of  
 ichunonyun-e     halu-tang       yukukichunman   barrel-uy  
 2005-in           day-day         6.2 million      barrel-POSS

pucokhyunsang-   palsaeng-toy-l-kusi-ta  
 shortfall-NOM   make-PASS-FUR-DS

‘As a result of China’s demand for crude oil, a shortfall of 6.2 million barrels per day in 2005 will be made.’

b. *Transitive sentence in English* → *Lexical intransitive in Korean*

ex) The virus has claimed 12 people from Thailand.

→ pyungkyun-ulo   inhae   yul tu-myung-i   samangha-ess-ta  
 virus-due to       12-people-NOM   die-PAST-DS  
 ‘Due to the virus, 12 people died.’

c. *Transitive sentence in English* → *Inchoative form in Korean*

ex) The bird flu virus on Thursday brought the regional human death toll to 60.



→ mokyoil-e horyoo tokkam-ulo inhae ciyukcuk  
 Thursday-on bird flu-due to regional  
 amangca-ka yuksip myung-i toy-ess-ta  
 death toll-NOM 60people-NOM become-PAST-DS  
 'Due to the bird flu on Thursday, the regional human death toll became 60.'

In (11a-c), the English causative sentences dissect the causative events into the causers or the agents (i.e., 'China's demand', 'the virus', and 'the bird flu virus') and their action of causing something to happen. The Korean translational equivalents, however, formulate the same causative events in a different way, as shown in the paraphrase of (11a-c) in the Korean edition, where no agency of inanimate causers (i.e., *China's demand*, *the virus*, and *the bird flu virus*) is emphasized, but merely the fact that a certain event happened. It should be noted here that the favorite pattern of causative constructions in English (i.e., an agency-causation pattern) is supported by the extensive use of inanimate subjects as a potential actor in causative events. This means that English and Korean exhibit syntactically and semantically different agency notions with respect to the encoding of participants (i.e., NPs) in non-prototypical causative situations; English easily assigns the agent role (i.e. causer) to inanimate subjects of transitive verbs. In contrast, in the Korean translational equivalents, inanimate NPs corresponding to English subjects (i.e., causers) are realized as indirect causers, since they are marked with adverbial particles (i.e., *-inhae* 'due to', *-ttaemune* 'because of') which refer to a particular semantic role in non-subject position.

'China's demand', 'the virus', and 'the bird flu virus' in (11a-c) are metaphorical agents and can be interpreted as syntactically personified; the agent-causation pattern of clause construction in English is so pervasive that even an inanimate entity can be readily expressed through semantic extensions as if it were an actor or agent on a syntactic level. In Korean, however, personification through metaphorical extensions is not easily allowed; inanimate entities cannot be easily construed as agentive subject through semantic extensions in Korean.

This difference appears to be associated with linguistic preferences for

agency encoding in English and Korean. From a cultural perspective, neither morphosyntactic properties nor a unitary semantic characterization of agency works to explain such preferences between the two languages. In other words, an appeal to morphosyntactic features or semantic markedness alone might fail to account for the discrepancy between English and Korean in the way in which the notion of agency is construed. The English sentences in (11)--the canonical transitive pattern "NP<sub>NOM</sub> + V<sub>TR</sub> + NP<sub>ACC</sub>"--are not natural ways of coding the causative situations in Korean. This means that the semantic features of an animate entity (e.g., intentional action, result, and moral responsibility, etc.) in Korean carry greater weight in expressing NPs as subject than is the case in English, especially when it comes to the expression of causation.

In this way, the restriction of the occurrence of inanimate entities in causative situations results in a narrower range of semantic extension from the prototypical transitive expressions. Thus, it can be said that the higher proportion of animate subjects in Korean transitive sentences is chiefly due to narrower constraints placed on subject in terms of their semantic features. Accordingly, the English causative patterns in Table 1 are unnatural in Korean due to the highly limited semantic extension of inanimate entities in the subject position of causative sentences.

Therefore, it can be argued that English and Korean show two different tendencies with regard to expressing the agent in causative events because the concept of agency is manifested in different ways in the two languages; English tends to highlight the agency of individual entities (including animate and inanimate causers) in the causative event, while Korean tends to suppress specific entities of causation (i.e., inanimate causers) in the causative sentence, hence generating the language-specific causative pattern 'AP<sub>CAUSE</sub>, S<sub>RESULT</sub> + V'. This pattern shows that an inanimate agent is not appropriate as nominative subject in Korean causative constructions, despite the fact that indirect cause expressions such as 'thanks to', 'due to' or 'on account of' do allow the introduction of an inanimate causer; inanimate causers tend to occur in

an intransitive sentences as adjuncts in an instrumental postpositional phrase headed by *-ulo inhae* 'due to, as a result of, because of', as seen in the Korean translational equivalents.

Thus, the indirect expression of causation is the most predominant means of inanimate causer reference in Korean, as can be observed in Korean translational equivalents; in Table 2, 299 tokens of inanimate subjects in English causative sentences are suppressed in Korean translational equivalents. This contrast seems to stem from the tendency of extending agency in English and the tendency of suppressing inanimate entities of causation in Korean. This kind of observation tells us that English tends to be freer than Korean in the degree to which it allows semantic extensions from the prototypical agency

It is also conceivable that an event, for instance, might be viewed in one culture (i.e., in English) as belonging to the category of agent/cause-oriented events being controlled by agency (despite the non-agentive property of the subject) and in another (i.e., in Korean) as realized by effect/result-oriented events which tend to avoid the unidirectionality of control exercised by the agent. In other words, English tends to allow a wider range of semantic extensions of agentive subjects, while Korean tends to ignore the agent, hence resulting in less grammaticalization of agent subjects, as shown in (12).

(12) The semantic extension of agency in English and Korean

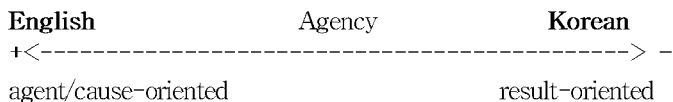
<b>English</b>	Agentivity	<b>Korean</b>
+ <-----> -		

Consequently, a general claim supported by the results of the data analysis in this study is that the notion of agency is reflected differently in English and Korean, especially when it comes to causative expressions; the two languages provide us with two strikingly different manifestations of agency. The common pattern in English causative sentences is an 'agent-oriented' expression which tends to highlight the agency of both animate and inanimate subjects, whereas Korean prefers a 'result-oriented' clause construction where the existence and actions of inanimate entities

tend to be ignored or suppressed in the whole course of a causative event. From a linguistic point of view, overtly expressing the agency of inanimate subject in a causative event is not acceptable or preferable in Korean, since attributions of agency require assignments of responsibility, intention, control over the action, and so on. This presents a striking contrast with the English mode or notion of causation and agency, which tends to highlight both animate and inanimate entities as instigators of causation.

Thus, the language-specific preferences for agent/cause-oriented expressions versus effect/result-oriented expressions should be recognized as an additional factor that may contribute to the differences in the expression of agency between the two languages. These notions, then, could be thought as a language-specific parameter that characterizes the notion of agency in a particular language, representable on a continuum as follows:

- (13) The relation of cross-linguistic parameters and the semantic extension of agency



As shown in (15), given that these two languages provides us with two different manifestations of agency, it is legitimate to argue that English tends to overtly express agency (i.e., agents), focusing on individual entities (both animate and inanimate) in causative events, while Korean is reluctant to verbalize non-agentive elements, covering up their inanimacy by means of indirect expressions and highlighting a result/effect clause. Therefore, it can be said that these different modes of encoding agency in the two languages affect the ways the language speakers conceptualize causative events.

## 5. Conclusion

Languages typologically offer different lexical, grammatical, and semantic choices for agents and causative events and by use of such

choices the language speakers signal different perspectives. In this way, different languages have different coding systems of agents and causative events. The data analysis in this study shows that English prefers an 'agent-action-event/result' structure, while Korean has a strong tendency towards an 'event/result-happen' structure, relying on verbal expressions that do not require less prototypical agents in the subject position. Thus, what is of significant is that there exist language-specific preferences in the realization of the agency notion between English and Korean. Different linguistic preferences involving construal of some entities as a main causative factor (i.e., agentive subjects vs. non-agentive subjects) play a significant role in the conceptualization of agency, thereby leading to differences in the coding of agency between English and Korean. The difference stems from the varying degree of the semantic extension of the notion of agency between the two languages. In English, the concept of agency can be more easily extended to include inanimate entities than it can be in Korean; English extends the notion of agent to a wider range of situations than Korean, hence allowing non-prototypical agents to be construed as agents.

More specifically, the semantic features of prototypical agents in English, such as intention, volition, responsibility, can be freely extended to inanimate causative situations in a greater degree than in Korean. A conclusion we can draw therefore is that the two languages differ in regard to the degree to which the agency involved in the causative events is conceptually extended. For example, in Korean, the typical semantic features of a prototypical agent such as intentional action, result, and responsibility are considered significant factors that place severe constraints on the semantic extension of the notion of agency. In other words, English tends to rely on canonical transitive structures, resulting in the structural pervasiveness of inanimate subjects in transitive events, while Korean is heavily dependent on morphosyntactic devices, such as lexical intransitive verbs, passive structures, and inchoative forms, to avoid the occurrence of inanimate causers which lack the semantic features of responsibility, intention, volition, and so

on. In this respect, a general typological difference between English and Korean in relation with the notion of agency is that compared to Korean, English is freer in assigning a large number of different semantic roles to subjects without requiring concomitant morphosyntactic changes such as passivization and intransitivization.

Therefore, it should be noted that we cannot grasp significant linguistic differences in agency between English and Korean without an understanding of the language-specific aspects of agency, that is, an understanding of how the speakers of a particular language view and express the notion of agency. These aspects involves contrasting construals of the notion of agency between the two languages, such as responsibility, intention, saliency in process and result, behavioural autonomy, the degree of directness in cause and effect, and so on. This kind of understanding from language-specific contexts will help us have an adequate grasp of the cross-linguistically distinguishable aspects of agency in English and Korean.

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Kyoungyul Kim  
Department of English Language & Literature  
Kangwon National University  
192-1 Hyoja-dong, Chuncheon-si,  
Kangwon-do, Korea 200-701  
Phone: 82-033-250-8149  
Email: kimky@kangwon.ac.kr

Received: 30 December, 2007  
Revised: 28 February, 2008  
Accepted: 5 March, 2008