



# Cognate Object Constructions in Pakistani and British English Fictions: A Corpus based analysis

Muhammad Shahbaz Arif<sup>1,\*</sup> and Rai Zahoor Ahmed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Administrative and Management Sciences, Government College University, Faisalabad.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Humanities, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Pakistan.

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## ABSTRACT

This study provides a small scale survey of English verbs that can take cognate objects (CO) both in Pakistani and British fictions in English language. Frequencies of the verbs along with cognate object constructions occurring in Pakistani English fiction (PEF) and British English fiction (BEF) have been compared and analyzed using AntConc 3.2.2w (windows) 2008. Several syntactic properties of cognate objects have also been investigated: such as the ability to take modifier, possibility of the cognate objects to be used as pronouns (it – pronominalization) have also been verified in cognate object constructions (COC) in Pakistani as well as in British English varieties. Focus of the study is on the characteristics of English verbs. It has been found that cognate object constructions are used less in PEF as compared to their presence in BEF. Proving the fact that cognate object constructions as the complex sentence structure. As English is not the native language of Pakistan, so the writers usually avoid the usage of cognate object constructions in PEF. The study establishes Pakistani English as an independent variety using its own distinctive linguistic features.

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## Introduction

The world of Englishes is ever expanding and progressing all over the world as an international phenomenon to fulfill the ever increasing communicative needs of the people living around the globe. It is a fact that different varieties of English around the world have different characteristics in several linguistic aspects. Certain words have specific associative meanings and connotations in one variety and another meaning in another variety of English around the globe. English verbs are defined as doing or action words. There are various kinds of English verbs such as transitive, intransitive, stative, dynamic, auxiliary and modal etc. It is also obvious that verbs are an important constituent of sentences in English language and have central position in English sentence. The basic sentence structure of English is:

S – V – O

(Subject – Verb – Object)

For example

I play hockey.

This study addresses the question of what kind of verbs can take cognate objects (COs) and what kind of verbs cannot take cognate object constructions (e.g. She smiled a beautiful smile), both in Pakistani and British varieties of English language. For linguistic analysis a corpus truly representative of Pakistani and British Englishes has been selected.

Furthermore, this study also investigates the syntactic properties of cognate objects (Cos), such as the ability to take modifiers, and it – pronominalization of the cognate objects (Cos) i.e. the ability of the cognate nouns to be used as pronouns. For this purpose five verbs have been selected as a sample to be analyzed through AntConc 3.2.2w (windows) 2008, recognized software to analyze corpus around the world. Few examples of Cognate Object Construction are as following:

She danced a classical dance.

We slept a sound sleep.

You screamed a terrible scream last night.

There is a variety of classification of verbs that occur in cognate object constructions (COCs) on the basis of conceptual factors, grammaticality and demonstrates that this approach can explore the relations between the syntactic properties along with the modification of cognate objects (Cos). There can be various examples of cognate object constructions (COCs) is presented in the following examples:

1. Reema danced a classical dance.
2. Jamshed smiled a happy smile.

It is obvious and can be observed in both the sentences (1 and 2) that intransitive verbs (verbs that do not require direct object to convey their meanings, to be grammatical) take cognate object (CO) whose head nouns are morphologically related i.e. cognate. The study focuses on cognate object (CO), where in head noun is etymologically related to the verb, along with their possibilities and frequencies in both the British and Pakistani varieties of English language. Comparison of both the varieties has been analyzed and presented with AntConc 3.3.2w (window) 2008.

The approach of this research is in accordance with the Cognitive Grammar approach advocated by Langacker (1987, 1990, 1991, and 1999) and it provides the conceptual structures of verbs which are etymologically related to cognate object constructions (COCs), while maintaining that it is important to take into consideration the broad knowledge and characteristics associated with verbs in English language.

## Statement of the Problem

This study investigates and differentiates that what kinds of verbs take (i.e. grammatically permitted) cognate objects and what kinds of verbs can not take cognate objects in grammatical structures of English language, along with their frequencies of occurrence in Pakistani as well as in British varieties of English fiction i.e. in PEF and in BEF. The study presents the occurring

frequencies of the selected verbs and various inflections of verbs present in BEF and PEF.

### Significance of the Study

This study will be helpful in understanding correct cognate object constructions (COC) of English language both in PEF and BEF. So the main focus is on the issue of verbs that can appear in a cognate object construction (COC) and the possibility of cognate nouns to be used as pronouns i.e. it – pronominalization.

### Hypothesis of the Study

It is hypothesized that cognate objects and cognate object constructions are grammatical constructions but their occurrence and usage in Pakistani English fiction is rare as compared to their usage in British English fiction. As it is a complex structure so its use is not affluent in Pakistani English as it is a non native variety of English language, proving that Cognate Object Construction is a complex sentence structure.

### Sample of the Study

The verbs selected for analysis appearing in both the varieties i.e. in PEF and BEF are: *dance, dream, laugh, live and smile*. These verbs along with their inflections have been investigated in terms of their occurring frequencies both in BEF and PEF.

### Literature Review

It has been claimed in the English grammatical principles that only the so-called unergative verbs can appear in cognate object constructions – COCs (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 148; Massam 1990; Omuro 1990; Keyser & Roeper 1984). The unergative or unaccusative distinction among intransitive verbs was first proposed by Perlmutter (1978); this distinction was based on the differences in the semantic roles of the verbs' subjects within the framework of Relational Grammar (that classifies verbs and other parts of speech).

As there are several kinds of classification of English verb such as auxiliary, modal, stative, dynamic, transitive, ditransitive and transitive etc. This article will classify intransitive verbs into unergative or unaccusative verbs on a conceptual basis; an unergative verb describes a participant as both a source and simultaneously an energy sink, where as an unaccusative verb declares that a participant does not exert energy but changes its state. According to Dixon (2005) English verbs fall into two broad sub categories, those who require only one role are called as intransitive verbs and those who require two or more roles are called as transitive verbs. This study provides the conceptual structures of a variety of unergative and unaccusative verbs. Unergative and unaccusative verbs are shown in sentences (3) and (4), respectively, as follows:

3a. He laughed a hearty laugh.

3b. The hero sighed a weary sigh.

4a. \*The glass broke a crooked break.

4b. \*The Titanic sank a fatal sinking.

4c. \*She is very tactful and fainted a feigned faint.

On the one hand, the verbs *laugh* and *sigh* in (3a and 3b) and *sleep* and *smile* in (1 and 2) are unergative, and the examples presented in (1, 2) are all acceptable. While on the other hand, the verbs *break*, *sink*, and *faint* in (4a, 4b and 4c) are unaccusative, and all the examples presented in (4) are unacceptable and marked by asterisk. Many researchers like (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 148; Massam 1990; Omuro 1990; Keyser & Roeper 1984) argue that only unergative verbs can appear in cognate object constructions COCs. In the generative grammar approach, the properties of verbs that appear in cognate object constructions COCs have been captured in terms of a Case Theory. Although a cognate object construction COC may include an intransitive verb, a cognate

object is assigned accusative case because the subjects of unergative verbs occupy the specifier position throughout the derivation.

In contrast, if the sentence includes an unaccusative verb, it does not form a cognate object construction COC. Since the subjects of unaccusative verbs occupy the object position at Deep-structure and move to the specifier position of a construction at underlying structure, the object cannot receive an accusative case.

Here are some examples that include unaccusative verbs in a cognate object construction – COC and it would be incorrect to impose the unergative restriction on the COC such as:

5a. Some animals grew a year's growth in six months.

5b. The storm blew its hardest blow at 11PM.

5c. Today the price of cotton dropped its largest drop in last three years.

5d. His father slipped a grave slip in the last rainy season.

5e. The interbank dollar rate slid a surprising 4% slide yesterday.

5f. Wasim Akram bounced a tricky bounce into the gloves of Moin Khan.

5g. The apples fell just a short fall to the lower deck, and so were not too badly bruised.

The verbs *grow, blow, drop, slip, slide, bounce, and fall* in sentences (5a to 5g) are all considered to be unaccusative verbs because the subjects of these verbs do not exert energy and therefore do not have volition as per rules. Based on examples such as in sentences (5a to 5g), Kuno and Takami (2004) reject the distinction between unergative (sub group of intransitive verbs) and unaccusative verbs, proposing that "the intransitive verb must represent an activity or event involving a temporal process" (ibid: 129) in the cognate verb construction – COC. In contrast to their claim, however, this study argues that it would still be meaningful to distinguish between unergative and unaccusative verbs in a cognate verb construction (COC), because of the following two reasons. First, the modification of cognate objects (Cos) is different for unergative and unaccusative verbs, as seen in the contrast between sentences (6) and (7) below:

6a. The lion roared a big roar.

6b. The wolf howled a long howl.

6c. Usually he grins a sideways grin to show his willingness.

6d. The athlete ran a fast and smooth run to the finish line.

7a. The oranges fell a smooth fall in the garden.

7b. The guavas fell a short fall.

7c. The apples fell just a short fall to the lower deck, and so were not too badly bruised.

While the adjectives *big, long, sideways, and smooth* in (6a to 6d) modify each cognate noun and are acceptable in the cognate verb constructions COCs with the unergative verbs *roar, howl, grin, and run*, respectively, the adjectives *smooth* and *short* in (7a to 7c) modify cognate nouns; further, the former is unacceptable and the latter is marginal in the cognate verb construction (COC) with the unaccusative verb *fall*. There is no restriction in the modification of cognate verbs – COs in the cognate verb constructions (COCs) with unergative verbs, unless the adjectives conflict with COs semantically; however, there is such a restriction in the case of unaccusative verbs. As seen in the above observation, there is a difference in acceptability between cognate verb constructions COCs with unergative verbs and those with unaccusative verbs; therefore, it is necessary to distinguish and differentiate between the two verb classes i.e. unergative and unaccusative.

**Table 1.1. Frequency of the verbs and their inflections in BEF and PEF**

S.No	Verb	BEF	PEF	Inflection	BEF	PEF	Inflection	BEF	PEF
1	Dance	77	132	Danced	33	44	Dancing	43	112
2	Dream	177	272	Dreamed	48	30	Dreaming	27	50
3	Laugh	150	332	Laughed	272	458	Laughing	104	216
4	Live	270	493	Lived	246	308	Living	289	307
5	Smile	481	582	Smiled	532	568	Smiling	254	232

### Methodology and Data Collection

As mentioned earlier that only five verbs along with other forms of their inflections have been selected as the sample of this small scale study about the cognate object constructions available in BEF and PEF. Here is a tabular display of the abovementioned verbs (along with their inflectional forms) regarding their occurring frequencies in PEF and BEF. It has been analyzed and displayed with the help of AntConc 3.2.2w (windows) 2008.

#### Examples of COC in BEF

##### Dance

1. You are dancing together in unending dance.
2. They were dancing the twist.

##### Dream

1. She dreamed the same dream.
2. She dreamed the same dream of blood.

##### Laugh

1. He was still laughing an awkward, wheezing laugh.
2. I laughed and it was the first real laugh.

##### Live

1. We were feeding and lived our lives together.
2. I am here with a life to live.

##### Smile

1. The woman smiled the chilliest smile.
2. He smiled his graveyard smile.

#### Examples of COC in PEF

As hypothesized earlier in this study COC in PEF is very rare in use as compared to COC available in BEF.

##### Dance

Only COC was found in PEF such as:

1. Dance of the dancing girls.

##### Dream

No Cognate object construction was found with verb 'dream'.

##### Laugh

There was no cognate object construction (COC) found in PEF.

##### Live

1. He lived his life by principles.
2. Raza had been living two lives.

##### Smile

Only two COCs were present in PEF with 'smile' as compared with eleven COC observed in BEF (examples mentioned above in BEF). Such as:

1. Then she would look across at Masood and smile her smile of congratulations.
2. She just smiled that smile of hers which once made a rose burst into bloom.

#### Characteristics of Cognate Objects

1. Following examples consider whether COs require modification through some sort of modifier or not. We can distinguish the COs that do not need modification from the ones that do, as follows:

- 8a. She sang a nice song.
- 8b. Reema danced a hilarious dance.
- 9a. We cannot live our life forever.
- 9b. I dreamed a romantic dream.

So it is clear that cognate nouns such as: *song, dance, life,* and *dream* etc can take modifiers.

Second Assumption: it – Pronominalization.

Now the study will examine the manner in which *it*-pronominalization i.e. the use of cognate objects COs as pronoun (it).

10a. She sang a nice song. She sang it (i.e. the nice song) to cheer him up.

10b. Reema danced a classical dance. She danced it (the beautiful dance) like an expert.

11a. My father lived a happy and trouble free life. He lived it easily as my mother took care of all the issues to live a happy family life.

11b. We dreamed a romantic dream. We dreamed it because of our true love.

As seen in sentences (10, 11), it is proved that cognate nouns *song, dance, life, dream,* live, smile and laugh can undergo *it*-pronominalization.

#### Conclusion

This study, as mentioned earlier as a small scale survey, has investigated the verbs that appear in cognate verb constructions COCs on the basis of three conceptual factors: the force of energy of the subject, a change of state of the subject, and the objectivity of the cognate noun. Moreover, it has shown that by assuming these parameters, we can capture the relation between the syntactic properties and the modification of cognate objects (COs). With respect to a change of state of the subject, the cognate objects COs do not need modification if the subjects do not change their state, that is, the COs are seen and viewed as a thing. Further, the objectivity of the cognate noun is related to the *it*-pronominalization of the CO.

The advantage of this analysis is that it can capture the relations between the syntactic properties and modification of COs by hypothesizing conceptual structures. Although Nakajima (2006) and Kuno and Takami (2004) discuss the implications of syntactic tests in terms of COCs, their analyses do not explain the fact that syntactic tests depend on the type of verbs as well as the modification of COs. This study has also shown that cognate object construction (COC) is very rare in Pakistani variety of English as compared with the native variety of British English. As these are complex and to some extent ambiguous constructions, so they are more common in native English variety as compared to a non native variety like Pakistani English i.e. BEF has more COCs as compared to PEF. The analysis in this study sheds new light on the properties of a cognate verb construction COC both in PEF and BEF that can be exploited more in future investigations as further researches would be more exhaustive surveys and an expansion in this regards.

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