How are Events Encoded?: Differences Between Japanese and Korean

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1 Introduction

This paper aims to investigate some differences between Japanese and Korean in terms of how they encode events, and to explore the theoretical implications arising from these differences.

Conveying who does what to whom—in other words, the representation of events or states of affairs—is a vital aspect of communication. Such matters can be described in language by breaking them down into a compositional set of discrete elements, such as participants, actions, and circumstances. However, each language follows its own conventionalized patterns in how these elements are structured and expressed, even beyond questions of grammar. In (1), each language adopts a different structure for delivering the same idea originally represented by (1a).

(1) a. 'What do they look like?' (from *Arrival*)

b. Gaiken-wa?
appearance-TOP
'(What about) the appearance?'

c. Ettehkey sayngky-ess-cyo?
how appear-PST-Q
'How do (they) look?'

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(1b), a nominal, is a mere fragment rather than a sentence. By contrast, (1c) takes the form of a verbal predicate sentence, similar to (1a). Of course, these are not the only correct translations and both languages have some other options, including calquing the other, which is acceptable in many cases. However, some options are awkward, even if they may be perfectly grammatical. By examining these habitual phrasing tendencies in Japanese and Korean, we can better understand the underlying typological distinctions between these two languages that seem similar on the surface, and glean some insights into the broader implications for linguistic theory.

2 Background and Premises

The topic of event encoding and differences among languages has long attracted attention, due to diversity in how different languages tend to express events, beyond matters of grammaticality (Talmy 1985, 2000, Slobin 2004, Ikegami 2015). In Japanese and Korean, which are structurally similar, researchers have observed specific characteristic differences between them in how events are encoded (Kim 2003, Horie 2009).

One typologically significant question here is what kind of information is verbalized and how. For the sake of the present study, I divided the elements constituting an event into four groups. Most salient are ENTITIES, various players such as humans, other organisms, objects, and so forth, which participate in an event, and HAPPENINGS, information about actions, states, or changes of state. In addition, we see RELATIONS, which concern how each entity relates to other entities within an event, or how each event relates to time, and INCIDENTALS, additional details about entities or events, such as how an entity looks or the manner in which it performs an action. These various types of information can be represented using diverse forms, manifesting morphosyntactic differences between languages. For instance, HAPPENINGS can be encoded either in a verbal form, which is more typical cross-linguistically, or in a nominal, as illustrated by the Japanese examples in (2).

(2) a. Korekara sinsenryaku-wo kentô-suru-zo
from.now new.strategy-ACC consideration-do-FP
'From now on, (we/I) will consider a new strategy.'

b. Korekara sinsenryaku-no kentô-da
from.now new.strategy-GEN consideration-COP
'From now on, (it is) the consideration of a new strategy.'

In this situation of announcing the contemplation of various aspects of a new strategy, the speaker can use a verbal predicate *kentô-suru*, or adopt a nominal form *kentô* for representing the same action. Please note that each sentence, in accordance with which option is chosen, encodes other associated information in different ways, such as marking an object *sinsenryaku* 'new strategy' with the possessive marker *no* in (2b), instead of the object marker *wo*.

In a similar vein, you have at least two options for the encoding of INCIDENTALS, by attaching them either to ENTITIES or to HAPPENINGS.

(3) a. Hutukayoi-no gakusei-ga ukkari isu-wo kowasi-ta
hangover-GEN student-NOM carelessly chair-ACC break-PST
'A hungover student accidentally broke a chair.'

b. Gakusei-ga hutukayoi-de isu-wo kowasi-tesima-tta
student-NOM hangover-INS chair-ACC break-AUX-PST
'A student, due to a hangover, accidentally broke a chair.'

In (3a), the underlined *hutukayoi-no* and *ukkari* are realizations of INCIDENTALS of the described situation. The former, representing the physical state of the student, is a modifier to the following noun *gakusei*, and the latter, representing the student's unintentionality about what happened to the chair, is attached to the predicate *kowasu* as an adverb. Meanwhile, (3b) shows different encoding of the same pieces of information. Here, *hutukayoi* is realized as an adverb,[1] tied to the predicate, and the student's unintentionality remains attached to the predicate, now as a coverb.

This study aims to elucidate and contrast how different types of information are thus preferentially encoded in Japanese and Korean. In pursuit of this aim, I compared Japanese dubbed translations and Korean subtitle translations[2] from seven American movies released in both countries from 2015 to 2023, with a focus on verbal predicate sentences as typical forms of event encoding.

3 Analysis

From the data, Japanese shows some distinct patterns less frequently seen in Korean, even in semantically and functionally corresponding expressions. Three such types of cases will be introduced below with some examples. In each case, the corresponding Korean translations show a more cross-linguistically typical verbal predicate structure. In addition, if these Japanese examples were calqued into Korean, they would often be ungrammatical or at least the phrasing would be considered awkward.

The first type involves a verb predicate with a structure that is more complex than a single verb form.

(4) a. 'It doesn't work like I thought it did.' (from *Arrival*)

b. Omotte-mo mi-na-katta hataraki-wo suru
think.GER-even see-NEG-PST work-ACC do
'(It) does functions that I didn't expect.'

c. Nay sayngkak-kwa-nun talu-key hulle-ka
my thought-COM-CONTR different-ADV flow-go
'(It) flows differently from my thoughts.'

In (4), ignoring the different choices of lexical items and solely focusing on predicate structure, it can be seen that (4b) uses the complex form of a combined nominal and function verb, *hataraki-*

[1] Such differences between attributive forms versus adverbial forms have been thoroughly analyzed in Okutsu (2007).
[2] In the case of Japanese, it is dubbed dialogue, not subtitles, that is more suitable for the present study. This methodological asymmetry centers on the following reasons: an issue of information volume and some stylistic factors. Japanese subtitles show a distinctive laconic style and convey less information than their voiceover equivalents, with approximately 80 percent of the information of their Korean counterparts (Youn 2021b). Korean subtitles are closer to daily speech and do not differ significantly from their voiceover counterparts in terms of information volume. Dubbed versions are much less frequently produced in Korean than in Japanese, necessitating the choice of Korean subtitles for analysis in the present study.

wo suru, instead of a single verb *hataraku*. The Korean equivalent in (4c), by contrast, adopts a single lexical verb *hulleka-*[3] 'to flow', and it is highly unnatural to nominalize it and follow it with a function verb as in Japanese.

While complex predicates such as light verb structures, which are typically combinations of a verbal noun (VN) and a function verb (cf. *sippitu-suru* 'write'), exist in both languages, a characteristic of Japanese is the diversity and wide application of nominal forms preceding the function verb in these constructions. These also include verbal stems or *ren'yôkei* (e.g. *hataraki* 'work'), as well as noun-verb (NV) compounds (e.g. *ômu-gaesi* 'parroting'). Such structures are not absent in Korean but are not as prevalent as in Japanese. In this pattern of encoding, HAPPENINGS are mainly packed into the nominal components, and RELATIONS into the following function verbs and accompanying conjugations. This separate encoding is a characteristic of Japanese translation, which will be discussed later in Section 4.2.

The second type involves complex verb predicates similar to the first type, but which exhibit a certain level of morphosyntactic incompleteness. For example, light verb predicates containing nominals may omit *suru* entirely or substitute it with other function words. This substitution of *suru* with other function words (e.g. *da*, *ka*, etc.) is frequently observed in Japanese (Kageyama 1993, Shinya 2014, etc.). Due to this truncation or substitution, nominals without *suru* face some restrictions in terms of the application of various conjugation forms.

(5) a. 'Were you up again all night writing?' (from *Little Women*)

b. Mata tetuya-de sippitu-ne.
again all.night-INS writing-FP
'Again, all night writing, eh?'

c. Tto pamsay kul sse-ss-ci?
again all.night stuff write-PST-Q
'Again, all night (you) wrote stuff, eh?'

c′.?Tto pamsay cipphil-i-ney.
again all.night writing-COP-FP
'Again, all night writing, eh?'

(6) a. 'Well, congratulations. You're a parrot.' (from *Arrival*)

b. Ômu-gaesi-ni seikô-ka.
parrot-repetition-DAT success-Q
'Success in parroting back?'

c. Ayngmusay nolus-man ha-sy-ess-kwun-yo.
parrot role.N-only do-HON-PST-EXCL-POL
'(You) did only parrot playing.'

[3] Technically speaking, the verb *hulle-ka-* is a complex verb composed of two different verbs *hulle-* 'flow' and *ka-* 'go', forming one lexical item.

c′.?Ayngmusay nolus-ey sengkong-i-nka?
parrot role.N-DAT success-COP-Q
'Success in parroting back?'

In (5b), the Sino-Japanese noun *sippitu* 'writing', without *suru*, works as a verbal predicate just as *sippitu-suru* does.[4] To contrast this with its Korean counterpart, you can see that (5c) takes a single finite verb *ssu-* 'writing'. In type two, the same structure calqued into Korean is often unnatural, as in (5c′).[5] In the Japanese translations, the absence of the function verb limits the use of various grammatical forms such as tense, aspect, or voice, which means that this RELATIONS information is stated less explicitly.

In (6), another case of the second type, the function verb is replaced by *ka*. Despite not maintaining a verbal predicate form caused by this substitution, the underlined predicate in (6b) takes *ni*, which is a case marker for the verb *seikô-suru* 'succeed', not for the noun *seikô* 'success'. The use of some function words in a similar position to *suru*, attached to nominals, is frequently observed in Japanese. Its structure is similar to that of a verbal predicate, but with less information compared to its Korean counterpart. Korean uses a finite predicate with the function verb *ha-* 'to do' and past tense, providing more RELATIONS information than (6b).

Type three is where a predicate lacks a verb. This absence of verbs, as well as associated grammatical forms, is illustrated in (7).

(7) a. 'He's got a book.' (from *Joker*)

b. Nôto-da.
note-COP
'A notebook.'

c. Kongchayk-ul kacye-wa-ss-ney-yo.
notebook-ACC bring-come-PST-EXCL-POL
'(He) brought a notebook.'

(7b) simply says 'a notebook', so it does not even look like a verbal predicate. The difference in phrasing from the Korean example in (7c), which uses the verb *kacyeo-* 'bring', is striking. (7b) does not mention what is specifically done with the notebook, whereas (7c) does. In other words, the Japanese example leaves out the encoding of the HAPPENINGS information itself, entrusting inference to the listener. This means that Japanese translations tend to contain less informational content about actions for a given scene than their Korean equivalents. The following examples show this tendency in a similar vein.

(8) a. 'There is mercury dripping from the ceiling into holes in the ground.' (from *The Mummy*)

[4] The noun *sippitu* is followed by the final particle *ne*, but, without *suru*, past tense information cannot be added with *ta*.

[5] Note that the copula *-i-* is present in (5c′). Unlike the Japanese final particle *ne*, the Korean counterpart *ney* requires the copula to be applied to a noun for the predicate to be grammatical.

b. Tenzyô-kara sitatarioti-ta suigin-wa zimen-no ana-e
ceiling-SRC drip.fall-PST mercury-TOP ground-GEN hole-ALL
'Mercury that dripped from the ceiling into holes in the ground.'

c. Chencang-eyse swuun-i ttelecye-se yele kay-uy kwumeng-ulo
ceiling-SRC mercury-NOM fall-CONN several unit-GEN hole-ALL
hulletuleka-nta.
flow.enter.go-PRS
'From the ceiling, mercury falls and flows into several holes.'

(9) a. A: 'Where's Big Green?' B: 'The kitchen, I think.' (from *The Avengers*)

b. A: Midori-no ôotoko-wa? B: Kittin-da, tabun.
green-GEN big.man-TOP kitchen-COP probably
'(Where is) the green big man?' '(It is) the kitchen, probably.'

c. A: Noksayk kein-un eti iss-e? B: Cwupang-ey iss-ulkel?
green giant-TOP where exist-PRS kitchen-LOC exist-SUPP
'Where is the green giant?' 'Maybe (he) is in the kitchen?'

(10) a. 'Mother doesn't say anything about Beth.' (from *Little Women*)

b. Besu-no byôki-no koto-wa nani-mo
Beth-GEN illness-GEN matter-TOP anything-NEG
'(Mother doesn't say) anything about Beth's illness.'

c. Emma-ka peysu yayki-n an hay-yo.
mom-NOM Beth story-TOP not do-POL
'Mom doesn't say anything about Beth.'

In (8b), despite retaining a structure typical of verbal predicate sentences, the sentence lacks a verb, which could be *hairu* 'enter' or something similar. What happens to the mercury is not explicitly encoded—it is left to the listener to infer from what remains, such as from the RELATIONS information about the path it travels (here encoded by the particle *e*). Moreover, as shown in (9) and (10), frequently observed in this type is the omission of existential verbs (*iru*/*aru* 'to be') as well as of CPU[6] verbs. In conversations about the whereabouts of people or objects (ENTITIES), the Japanese versions most often do not use existential verbs as seen in (9), while the corresponding Korean translations use the verb *iss-* 'to exist'. (10b) shows another case of verb omission in Japanese. Here, *iu* 'to say' is omitted, leaving only *nani-mo*, the part that serves as the complement of the verbless predicate.

The absence of verbs observed in the third type is seen much less in corresponding Korean translations, as in (8c), (9c), and (10c), which are representative of translated dialogue in general. This means that in this type, a Japanese translation tends to contain less informational content in a

[6] 'CPU' stands for cognition, perception and utterance. In Japanese, verbs expressing these concepts typically take complements marked with *to*.

given scene, especially regarding HAPPENINGS as well as their associated RELATIONS, than can be found in its Korean equivalent.

4 Discussion

4.1 Differences in Event Encoding Strategies in Japanese and Korean

I have explored the distinct ways predicates are structured in Japanese compared to Korean. To recap, the three types of Japanese predicates discussed above are:

i. Predicates with a complex structure of nominals and function verbs
ii. Similar complex predicates to type one but with some incompleteness
iii. Verbal predicate structures with no verbs

In the first and second types, the nominals preceding function verbs (present or not) are highly versatile, in the sense that they are syntactically nouns yet still contain HAPPENINGS information (and a certain degree of RELATIONS as well),[7] similar to verbs. This in-between status allows them to be combined with function verbs such as *suru* for full potential use as a finite predicate, or conversely to lack *suru* and its accompanying grammatical forms for linguistic economy. In other words, you can truncate just RELATIONS and retain HAPPENINGS, or you can cut off all HAPPENINGS for brevity's sake by omitting the verb itself from a verbal predicate sentence. On the other hand, Korean equivalents typically employ single verb predicates and show constraints in reproducing the structures found in Japanese. From these observations, it can be concluded that Japanese, compared to Korean, tends to eschew encoding of HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS, and has a variety of alternative options that can be used instead of verbs to fulfill the same purpose.

This distinctive encoding style of Japanese is not uncommon in types of texts other than translated dialogue and is not limited to just verbal predicate sentences (Youn 2021b). The following examples from advertisements, comic books, and animated shows, demonstrate how Japanese extensively employs incomplete predicates through the omission of certain elements from predicates, and uses elliptical structures that require contextual inference to be fully understood. This linguistic feature is widely observed regardless of the medium—spoken or written.

(11) a. Kitune-ga kirai-ni? (from advertisements for *Donbei*)
fox-NOM dislike-DAT
'(Have you come) to dislike foxes?'

b. Mugi, honmono-no kêki-wo. (from the animated series *K-On!*)
Mugi real.thing-GEN cake-ACC
'Mugi, (bring) a real cake.'

c. Koku-wo dasu tame-ni-wa kou suru sika.
richness-ACC produce purpose-DAT-TOP this.way do except
(from the comic *Sangatu-no raion*)
'To bring out richness, (there is) no choice but to do it this way.'

[7] Some Japanese suffixes function as nominalizers and add some aspectual information when applied to verbal stems, as mentioned below.

Furthermore, the following specific type of noun predicate sentences also aligns with this argument:

(12) a. Kisyôzyôhô-wa Tanaka-san-desu.
weather.report-TOP Tanaka-HON-COP
'The weather report is Mr./Ms. Tanaka.'

b. Zitensya-ga baiku-nami-no supîdo-da.
bicycle-NOM bike-level-GEN speed-COP
'The bicycle is at motorcycle-level speed.'

These are examples of something often called 'eel sentences' in Japanese. (12a), literally meaning something like 'the weather report is Tanaka', sounds odd because Tanaka is, obviously, a person, not a weather report. The implied meaning here is that this Tanaka person will present the weather forecast. Similarly, in (12b), an equal relation does not hold between *zitensya* 'bicycle' and *baiku nami-no supîdo* 'motorcycle-level speed'. The correct interpretation becomes possible by inferring information that might be encoded by a verb such as *dasu* 'produce', which clearly defines the semantic relationship between these two noun phrases. In eel sentences, the relationship between the two nominals is not explicitly stated but extrapolated based on context.

This tendency in Japanese is not limited to sentential predicates. Some noun phrase structures in the language are similarly constructed without related event information.

(13) a. Sennen-ni hitori-no bisyôzyo
thousand.year-DAT one.person-GEN beautiful.girl
'a once-in-a-millennium beauty'

a′. Chennyen-ey hanpen nao-l misonye
thousand.year-DAT one.time appear-FUT.ADN beautiful.girl
'a beautiful girl who is likely to appear once in a millennium'

b. Naniyori-no syôko
what beyond-GEN evidence
'the best proof of all'

c. Sekkaku-no Hakone
special-GEN Hakone
'(We) made it to Hakone (… so let's take it easy.)'

The noun phrases in (13) do not state, but rather imply, information about some events centered around the entities. For (13a), Japanese speakers might not feel the need to add information to clarify the meaning. However, if we consider that what this noun phrase actually means is 'a beautiful girl who *appears* once in a thousand years', it becomes conspicuous that the semantic relations among *sennen*, *hitori*, and *bisyôzyo* are not explicitly indicated. However, in Korean, this catchphrase for a famous Japanese idol has been officially translated as in (13a′), where the relations among *chennyen*, *hanpen*, and *misonye* are explicitly expressed using a verb, *nao-* 'to appear'. The

same applies to (13b) and (13c). (13b) actually means 'evidence that is *clearer* than anything else', and (13c) conveys the meaning of '(we) *made it* in Hakone' or something similar. In these cases, nominals representing entities in each noun phrase are loosely connected to each other by particles such as *no* or *ni*, leaving the relations between those entities unencoded, which means that HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS are not stated explicitly here.

4.2 Mechanisms Underpinning Japanese Characteristics

This encoding style in Japanese is facilitated by several linguistic mechanisms of the language. First, Japanese employs a variety of nominalizing devices—such as the use of verbal stems as nominals (e.g. *kaeri-ga osoi*, 'the return is late'); the formation of highly productive NV compounds (e.g. *siri-nugui* 'cleaning up after someone' from a noun *siri* 'butt' and a verb *nuguu* 'wipe'); and the addition of suffixes like *-kake*, *-kkiri*, *-tate*, *-ppanasi*, *-sunzen*, and *-gati*—all of which serve to encapsulate an event.

(14) a. 'Thomas had that all made up.' (from *Joker*)

b. Zenbu Tômasu-no dettiage
all Thomas-GEN fabrication
'All is Thomas's fabrication.'

c. Ta Tômasu-ka kkwumi-n ke-yeyo.
All Thomas-NOM make.up-PST.ADN thing-COP.POL
'That is all a thing Thomas made up.'

(15) a. 'Not long after you got shipped off to the desert (…).' (from *Top Gun: Maverick*)

b. Anata-ga (…) sabaku-iki-ni nat-ta ato-ni
you-NOM desert-go.NMLZ-LOC become-PST after-LOC
'After you got sent to the desert (…)'

c. Tangsin-i (…) samak-ulo ccochkyeka-n cikhwu-ey
you-NOM desert- LOC drive.out-PST.ADN shortly.after-LOC
'Right after you got driven out to the desert (…)'

(16) a. 'It's expensive, and as for…' (from *Bohemian Rhapsody*)

b. Kosuto-ga kakari-sugi-da-si.
cost-NOM incur.exceed.NMLZ-COP-and
'The cost is too high, and (…)'

c. Pissan aylpem-i-eyyo.
expensive album-COP-POL
'An expensive album it is.'

(14b) corresponds semantically to a verbal predicate sentence like *Zenbu Tômasu-ga dettiageta* 'Thomas made it all up', but the action that would typically be expressed with a verb—to make up something that doesn't exist—is conveyed instead with the *ren'yôkei* noun *dettiage*.

One significant feature of these nominalizing devices is their high productivity, which not only supports established lexical combinations but also enables the spontaneous creation of ad hoc expressions. For example, in (15b), *sabaku-iki* 'being sent for the desert' is an NV compound made from the noun *sabaku* 'desert' and the verb *iku* 'to go'. However, the noun that combines with *iku* is not lexically fixed, meaning that as long as the selectional restrictions of *iku* are not violated, one can choose a noun freely based on context.[8] Furthermore, V1-V2 compound verbs, such as *tori-kaeru* 'to replace', which constitute a large portion of Japanese verbs, are known for their high productivity as well as for the diverse semantic relationships between V1 and V2 found in these constructions (Kageyama 1993). Especially compound verbs such as *kakari-sugiru* 'to take excessively' in (16b), where the V2 carries aspectual or adverbial meanings (expressing excess in this case), are extremely productive. From an informational perspective, they serve as an effective means of integrating multiple event-related elements and other contextual information into a single verb form. Their ability to appear in the *ren'yôkei* form additionally further contributes to nominalization.

Second, Japanese exhibits greater flexibility than Korean in its use of combinations of nominals and function verbs in verb predicate sentences. This entails that controlling the amount of information is much easier with this separate encoding of HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS. For instance, if we use a complex predicate *seikô-suru* 'to succeed', the function verb *suru* allows for various predicate expressions such as *seikô-sita* 'succeeded', *seikô-sitai* 'want to succeed', or *seikô-siro* 'succeed!'. On the other hand, it is also possible to omit *suru* (e.g. *seikô-wo* '[I wish you] success') to pursue economy of expression. Japanese is a language that actively utilizes the latter strategy.

However, this strategy comes at the cost of making predicates incomplete. Omitting *suru* restricts the means by which RELATIONS information is expressed linguistically, thereby narrowing the range of meanings that can be conveyed. Using *da* or *ka* instead of *suru* is a way to restore some of that lost expressive capacity. Similarly, the substitution of *wo* functions in the same direction (Youn 2022).

(17) a. Kondo-wa zyakku-nuki[9]-de syokuzi-wo (si-masyô).
next.time-TOP Jack-without-INS meal-ACC do-HORT
'Next time, without Jack, (let's do) a meal.'

a′.?Kondo-wa zyakku-nuki-de syokuzi.

b. Zyû-de zisatu-no kyôyô-wo (sita-no-ka)?
gun-INS suicide-GEN coercion-ACC do.PST-NMLZ-Q
'(Did you do) coercion into suicide with a gun?'

[8] In Japanese, function verbs that combine with such nominals are not limited to *suru*; *naru* 'to become' is another example.

[9] Please notice that *zyakku-nuki* 'without Jack' is another example of a Japanese NV compound and shows the high productivity and flexibility of this structure to improvise new forms based on contextual needs.

b′.?Zyû-de zisatu-no kyôyô?

In (17a–b), the verbal noun predicates in each example show the substitution of *suru* with the particle *wo* (my reconstructions of the truncated parts are in parentheses), and it would feel awkward to omit the particle in both of these cases. While (17a′) and (17b′) might potentially be felicitous in some contexts,[10] adding *wo* means that the construction can expand into more diverse forms of verbal noun phrases and take on a wider range of discourse functions compared to the bare verbal noun predicate without the particle. To rephrase, *suru* is absent when using a verbal noun as a predicate, whether that be the bare VN *kyôyô* or *kyôyô-wo*, meaning that RELATIONS information cannot be encoded through conjugation. However, using *kyôyô-wo* allows it to fulfill functions such as commanding, inviting, suggesting, and questioning, without the explicit use of modality markers.

Complex predicates suit these strategies well. By having a predicate be not a single indivisible lexical verb but a combination of a nominal and a function verb, it becomes easy to control how much information is included in the encoding of events as well as the degree of finiteness. Finiteness generally refers to morphological or syntactic features that signal the independence of a clause, often indicated by tense, aspect, or subject-verb agreement (Givón 1990, Nikolaeva 2010).

In the case of Japanese, the grammatical categories that confer finiteness include case particles and conjugation forms, which encode RELATIONS. Structuring predicates as combinations of nominals and function verbs facilitates adjustments to the finiteness level of an entire clause. In complex predicates, by encoding HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS separately, it is possible to lower finiteness by truncating function verb parts while still retaining the more semantically concrete HAPPENINGS information.[11]

Meanwhile, this truncated predicate can restore its predicative potential, to some extent, via the substitution of truncated parts with other function words or with aspectual elements, such as *da*, *ka*, *wo*, or *-chu* ‘in the middle of (some action)’. This process can be understood as ‘re-finitization’ (Givón 2016). A key point to note is that this process differs from nominalization, which syntactically transforms an expression into a noun-equivalent form. Nominalization has been traditionally discussed as a phenomenon affecting finiteness in terms of the continuum between nominal and verbal forms, whereas making predicates incomplete as shown in the previous examples does not necessarily involve changing the syntactic status of the whole expression. In this sense, use of morphosyntactically incomplete predicates can be regarded as a grammatical device in Japanese for adjusting finiteness—one that plays a role in the quantity of RELATIONS information encoded.

By contrast, while similar mechanisms are present in Korean, their use is relatively restricted compared to the flexibility seen in Japanese. For example, constructions combining nominals and function verbs do exist (e.g. *selmyeng-hata*, consisting of *selmyeng* ‘explanation’ and *ha-* ‘to do’), but the omission of function verbs or their substitution with other forms faces more constraints in Korean than in Japanese (Inoue & Kim 1999, Tsukamoto 2012). Korean has NV and V1-V2 compounding as well, but its productivity is relatively low compared to in Japanese, and equivalents to the aforementioned suffixes such as *-kake*, are absent in Korean. In practice, the Korean coun-

[10] They would not be interpreted as a suggestion or as questioning, respectively, as intended in their original contexts.
[11] Please note that this truncation does not work for a single verb and its conjugations. If you compare the case of *hataraku* and *hataraki-wo suru*, the former cannot be cut off in the middle and still function as a verb, as in the latter.

terparts of Japanese sentences in (14), (15) and (16) often make use of verbal predicates with corresponding meanings, or translate using verb phrases or alternative vocabulary and structures that differ from those in Japanese. These constructional constraints lead to the differences in terms of productivity, frequency, and genres of usage discussed above.

5 Conclusions

In this study, I observed some differences between Japanese and Korean in the habitual encoding of information, based on a somewhat crude classification of information types. Japanese translations tend to encode less HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS than Korean translations do. Japanese makes frequent use of a combination of nominals and function verbs in various contexts to express what would typically be conveyed by single lexical verbs in Korean. These nominals, though they may be used as predicates, generally do not explicitly express the dynamics typically conveyed by verbs, leading to a style characterized by a high level of inference required by the listener or reader.

At first glance, the motivations for introducing extraneous complexity via use of these complex predicates may seem unclear, but it offers the advantage of separating HAPPENINGS from RELATIONS, thereby making it easier to prioritize which information is linguistically encoded versus which is omitted for the sake of brevity. This allows, HAPPENINGS, which generally have higher informational value than RELATIONS, to be preferentially encoded. Thus, when the economy of language is prioritized, RELATIONS-encoding function verbs and their accompanying conjugations can be omitted. While this reduction in potential for explicit encoding of RELATIONS comes at a cost, this tradeoff between economy and expressiveness can be mitigated through alternative strategies such as re-finitization (Youn 2021a).

By contrast, Korean tends to explicitly encode event information to a greater degree than Japanese for the same occurrences. Moreover, grammatical mechanisms that convert verbs into nouns are not used as extensively as in Japanese. The so-called ‘noun-oriented’ nature of Japanese (in contrast to the more verb-oriented tendency of Korean), which has been observed in previous research (Kim 2003, Horie 2009), can thus be described as a propensity for Japanese to construct expressions using more noun-based structures while encoding HAPPENINGS and RELATIONS less, supported by a variety of morphosyntactic devices.

Selective retention and deletion of information is a universal strategy to balance the competing needs for efficiency and for clarity. This is especially true in cross-cultural contexts where speakers of different languages may have differing preferences for what kinds of information are encoded versus omitted. In this regard, truncation in predicates as discussed here leads to a decrease in the quantity of informational content communicated and can potentially give rise to communicational misunderstandings. This in turn can lead to stereotypes about cultural differences in communication styles, such as the common perception by Japanese people that Koreans speak very directly, and, conversely, the perception by Koreans that Japanese are notably indirect (Youn 2024).

Differences between languages pertaining to what kinds of information are explicitly stated versus omitted demonstrate the variety and complexity of linguistic encoding mechanisms, and further observation and analysis are required to deepen our understanding of how individual languages differ in this regard.

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Appendix

List of Abbreviations

ADV	adverbial
ADN	adnominal
COM	comitative
CONN	connective
CONTR	contrastive topic
EXCL	exclamative
FP	final particle
GER	gerund
HON	honorific
HORT	hortative
SRC	source of motion
SUPP	supposition