The properties of the Multiple Subject Construction (Multiple Nominative Construction, Double Subject/Nominative Construction) — illustrated in (1) below — in Korean and Japanese have been intensively investigated in both traditional and generative studies of the languages.

MSC’s possess a number of unusual properties that seem to defy long-established and repeatedly validated ideas about argument licensing, case-marking, and grammatical relations. For reasons such as these, it has often been claimed that the construction possesses a unique subject despite appearance to the contrary and that the particle that looks like nominative case (-i/-ka in Korean) may not be restricted to a case-marking function. It has also been maintained that there is more than one type of MSC, with different structures and/or derivational histories.

My goals in this talk are to evaluate the existing arguments and defend the position that the MSC is characterized by the presence of more than one subject — that indeed it is a multiple Subject construction, a position that is close to traditional but not generative analyses of this construction. I then proceed to investigate the distribution of subject-referring diagnostics among the multiple subjects in an MSC. I show that subject properties are distributed among the subjects in a predictable manner. The distributed subject properties also bear on the correct analyses of MSCs. Among others, they demonstrate that derivational analyses that derive all or a subset of MSCs from possessive structures cannot be maintained.