

Reanalysing Hindi Split-Ergativity as a Morphological Phenomenon

1. **Main Claim** The present proposal treats the distributional patterns of the ergative marker *-ne* and the empty absolutive marker (commonly called *nominative*) in Hindi-Urdu (HU) as the mere result of rules of referral with an invariant ergative/absolutive pattern in the syntax. *-ko* is invariantly analysed as a dative marker. This analysis thus lies within the tradition of Anderson (1992), which treats apparently syntactic phenomena in the area of grammatical function as actually morphological in nature.
2. **Theoretical Background** The following outline is primarily presented in the framework of Paradigm Function Morphology (Stump 2001), but can be expressed in other realisational theories such as Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993, 1994) as well. I assume a distinction between *abstract case* and *m-case* (Bobaljik 2006, Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2007), with abstract case being the syntactic feature, whereas m-case is determined on the basis of the actual word form. Mismatches between the two arise as a consequence of underspecification or rules of referral/impooverishment rules.
3. **Empirical Evidence** Split ergativity in HU has been studied extensively (including but not limited to Butt & King 2004, Davison 2004, Kachru 2006, Mahajan 1990, Mohanan 1994, Montaut 2004), mostly presupposing an incremental approach to inflectional markers. The ergative marker *-ne* only shows up on external arguments of perfect sentences ((1)), yielding an interpretation of volitionality, cf. (2). External arguments in non-perfect sentences as well as “basic” internal arguments (Montaut 2004) are not marked, cf. (3a). A subclass of verbs, however, also allows the marker *-ko* on its object if it is human or definite, further semantic refinements apart (3b–d). *-ko* is also used to obligatorily mark the indirect object of a ditransitive clause, in which the direct object must generally be unmarked despite its semantic features ((4)). Therefore, a widespread assumption is that *-ko* actually is ambiguous between a dative and an accusative marker. There is no connection between the appearance of *-ko* and the aspect of the verb.
4. **Analysis** I agree with Davison (2004) in analysing the ergative as a structural case. Zero-marked subjects of apparently intransitive clauses are treated as objects of hidden transitives (cf. Bittner & Hale 1996). The realisational rules yielding the appropriate forms are:

$$\text{RR}_{\{\text{ergative}\}, \text{N}}(\langle X, \sigma \rangle) =_{\text{def}} \langle Xne', \sigma \rangle$$

$$\text{RR}_{\{\text{dative}\}, \text{N}}(\langle X, \sigma \rangle) =_{\text{def}} \langle Xko', \sigma \rangle$$

$$\text{RR}_{\{\text{absolutive}\}, \text{N}}(\langle X, \sigma \rangle) =_{\text{def}} \langle X', \sigma \rangle$$

The distribution of *-ko* (and thus the m-case DATIVE) can be accounted for by employing a rule of referral stating that for nouns with the features [–definite, –human] the dative takes the form of the absolutive, which can be seen as having the function of differential object marking. Verbs allowing for *-ko* to show up on their complement assign abstract dative case, verbs never allowing *-ko* absolutive case. Hence, only one lexical entry for *-ko* is necessary and the apparent semantic impact of *-ko* as well as the lexical idiosyncrasy that some verbs allow *-ko* and others do not is accounted for. That *-ko* is a lexical case marker receives further evidence by the fact that it prevails in the passive in certain dialects, cf. (5). The distributional pattern of *-ne* is explained by positing another rule of referral: In non-perfect contexts the ergative takes the form of the absolutive. Thus I consider perfect clauses to be the standard case from a purely synchronic perspective and clauses in non-perfect to be derived, contrary to e.g. Anderson (1992). The analysis outlined above is not dependent on Paradigm Function Morphology but can be easily translated into other theories such as Distributed Morphology. Here the (abstract) cases are decomposed to ERGATIVE: [–obl, +sub], ABSOLUTIVE: [–obl, –sub] and DATIVE: [+obl] (cf. Bierwisch 1967, following the Jakobsonian tradition). The inflectional markers bear the features (/ne/, [–obl, +sub]), (/ko/, [+obl]) and (/∅/, []). To account for the distribution of *-ko* I assume the following impoverishment rule:

$$[+obl] \rightarrow \emptyset / [-\text{definite}, -\text{human}]$$

As for *-ne*, the following impoverishment rule yields the correct output:

$$[+sub] \rightarrow \emptyset / [-\text{perfect}]$$

5. **Consequences** The classical argument of Mohanan (1994) in favor for treating unmarked subject and object as instantiations of the same case loses much of its force if a distinction is drawn between abstract and m-case, ergo if a realisational theory of morphology is adopted. The empirical phenomena she gives can easily be explained with reference to m-case while still keeping to different features of subject and object on the level of abstract case. Analysing split ergativity in HU in morphological terms naturally makes the prediction that HU lacks syntactic ergativity. This prediction is in fact borne out (cf. Kachru & Pandharipande 1976).

- (1) a. raam-ne ravii-ko piṭṭaa
 Ram-ERG Ravi-ACC beat.PERF
 ‘Ram beat Ravi.’
 b. raam ravii-ko piṭṭaa hai
 Ram.NOM Ravi-ACC beat.IMPERF be.PR
 ‘Ram beats Ravi.’ (Mohanani 1994: 70)
- (2) a. raam-ko acaanak šer dik^haa. vah/ *us-ne cillaayaa
 Ram-DAT suddenly lion.NOM appear-PERF he.NOM he-ERG scream-PERF
 ‘Ram suddenly saw a lion. He screamed.’
 b. us-ne/ *vah jaan buuj^hkar cillaayaa
 he-ERG he.NOM deliberately shout-PERF
 ‘He shouted deliberately.’ (ibid.: 72)
- (3) a. ilaa-ne yah k^hat / *is k^hat-ko lik^haa
 Ila-ERG this.NOM letter.NOM this.NONNOM letter-ACC write.PERF
 ‘Ila wrote this letter.’ (ibid.: 81)
 b. ilaa-ne ek bacce-ko / *baccaa uṭ^haayaa
 Ila-ERG one child-ACC child.NOM lift/carry.PERF
 ‘Ila lifted a child.’
 c. ilaa-ne ek haar / *haar-ko uṭ^haayaa
 Ila-ERG one necklace.NOM necklace-ACC lift-PERF
 ‘Ila lifted a necklace.’ (ibid.: 79)
 d. nadya=ne gari / gari=ko cula-yi / -ya he
 Nadya.F.SG=ERG car.F.SG.NOM car.F.SG=ACC drive-PERF.F.SG -PERF.M.SG be.PRES.3SG
 ‘Nadya has driven a car/the car.’ (Butt & King 2004: 161)
- (4) ilaa-ne maā-ko yah haar / *is haar-ko diyaa
 Ila-ERG mother-DAT this.NOM necklace.NOM this.NONNOM necklace-ACC give.PERF
 ‘Ila gave this necklace to mother.’ (Mohanani 1994: 85)
- (5) anil-ko (raam-se) uṭaayaa jaaegaa
 Anil-ACC Ram-INSTR carry.PERF go.FUT
 ‘Anil will be carried (by Ram).’ (ibid.: 94)

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