oblique main arguments as localizing predications in Hindi/Urdu
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1. Introduction: split subject properties and subjecthood

The terms of dative or ergative subject, less often genitive subject, are currently used in Indo-Aryan languages to design the term which is generally in the first position in the sequential chain, and which generally controls coreference, whereas the coding properties are attached to another term in the sentence. The more important among the subject properties, which according to Keenan & Comrie (1977) are the coding properties (case marking, agreement), are thus very often attached to the non ‘subject’, the ‘subject’ being only endowed with most of the semantico-referential properties. That led some scholars (Saxena 1985) to argue that agreement is a purely formal rule in Hindi/Urdu, having nothing to do with semantics or even syntax. Since then, extensive work in the generativist frame has given various syntactic explanations of agreement (Davison 1991, Mohanan 1994), without challenging the relevance of the very category of subject for Indo-Aryan languages. Yet a number of studies have convincingly argued that, if subject is to be defined as a universal notion, it dilutes into a plurality of properties of various levels (about thirty in Li & Thomson 1976) which makes its use problematic when these properties are not attached to a single term. It has since been claimed that the notion of subjecthood is not a universal category (Li & Thomson 1976, Hagège 1978, Martinet 1985, Lazard 1994, Kibrik 1997, and, with reference to Hindi, Montaut 1991) and should not be imposed on languages where it is not relevant. It seems that Hindi is such a language.

1.1. Methodological and theoretical assumptions

Since subjects where they are easily discernable do not have a unique notional correlate but encode semantic, communicative and deictic dimensions, it is necessary to take into account these three dimensions. Languages can encode them separately or cumulatively, exhibiting “separatist” or “cumulative” strategies (Kibrik 1997). Semantic roles is the dimension better studied, from the pioneering work of Tesniere (1965) on actancy to the definition of hyperroles (Foley & Van Valin 1984) or protoroles (Dowty 1989). This is the first dimension encoded by languages (in this way we can say that the nominative alignment is subject prominent, whereas the ergative alignment is patient oriented). The second dimension is what Kibrik calls the communicative status, that is, how the information-flow or “flow dimension” is mapped in a sentence: topic/comment, theme/rheme, given/new, focus, empathy, viewpoint, play a crucial role in the grammatical structure. The third dimension is that of speech-act anchoring, opposing speech-act participants to others, what Kibrik refers to as the “deictic dimension”. The separate coding of each of these dimensions occurs in what he calls “separatist” languages, and, as well as the absence of coding devices (isolating languages), which rules out grammatical categories like subject: “the syntactic relation of subject only ensues from the cumulative principle of coding, when one marker syntagmatically co-expresses several relevant features of NPs” (Kibrik 1997: 295). Tsunoda’s paper in this volume also assumes that syntactical relations do not prevail in all languages, and that languages which tend to systematically mark semantic roles are better analysed by describing the properties of casual morphology than by forcing syntactic relations on it. According to Kibrik, subject oriented languages behave as highlighting one or two central argument positions (subject and object), the subject being the core argument without any specific semantic role attached to it -- almost any argument can be promoted to the subject position, the highest ranking argument -- and tend to have a fixed word order with a partly flexional morphology. Subjectless languages on the other hand tend to prefer agglutinative morphology and free word order, exhibiting no hierarchy of arguments -- for instance active languages have two equally core roles, Undergoer and Actor. Subject
oriented languages are clear examples of a “non separatist” strategy, the subject being at
the same time the highest role and the topic. Langacker (1990: 247)’s trajectory model of
transitivity is a convenient metaphor for opposing this “dovetailing” to a “diverging”
strategy: the action head is the natural starting point in the causal chain, and languages
often map it into a subject (grammatical head), in the first position of the sentence
(sequential head), with clear subject and object categories. “Each starting point (word
ordering, grammatical subject, action head) represents the initial step in assessing a
complex structure in a cognitively natural sequence. These alternate paths in a clause can
either dovetail or diverge, and their interplay is an essential aspect of grammatical
structure”. Only if they dovetail can we consider the category of subject as relevant, that
is, when a given language uses a cumulative strategy for encoding the main entity at the
various levels of linguistic expression (coding of semantic roles, of the flow of
information, deixis or speech-act anchoring). But some languages may also map the
causal chain differently, and make the endpoint a subject for instance (ergative pattern:
the grammatical starting point, subject, is the patient, the sequential starting point is the
agent). The surface differences relate to radically distinct cognitive scenario, since
marking the main argument in an oblique case, semantically loaded, maps a different
representation of the event than a transparent grammatical case. Whatever the cognitive
relevance of this metaphor, it shows that natural languages do not all highlight one central
argument to which should be attached the properties of various levels (mainly role and
flow properties).

1.2. Aim of the study

Hindi clearly encodes semantic roles in a rather separatist way for most of its elementary
statements (agents of perfect transitive processes, experiencers, possessors are coded
distinctively). Its morphology is fairly agglutinative. As for the flow dimension, it is
mostly coded by the sequential position, the topic occurring first without morpho-
syntactic modifications. It is well known that a 3 word sentence allows all the 6 possible
combinations SOV, SVO, OSV, OVS, VSO, VOS (Dvivedi 1994: 95, Mohanan &
Mohanand 1994: 169-70). The first only is considered as unmarked (hence Greenberg’s
claim that Hindi is a rigidly SOV language), but others are in no way deviant (hence the
opposite affirmation in Mohanand (1994) that Hindi is a free word order language). Yet
Hindi cannot be deemed a purely role dominated language, since agent for instance may
be coded in the ergative or in the nominative (unmarked), and in a limited number of
sentence patterns there is a clearly identifiable subject, endowed with subject properties
pertaining to various linguistic levels irrespective of its semantic role (intransitive patient
or agent, transitive agent in non perfect tenses, experiencer with adjectival predicates,
etc.). Besides being a mixed language, as most natural languages, Hindi presents a variety
of sentence patterns which are typical of subjectless languages. I intend to show here that
such patterns, where subject properties are distributed on more than one entity, amount to
various diatheses, in the literal meaning of the term (Greek “disposition”), although verbal
morphology is less crucially distinctive than verbal semantics here. The ergative
alignment is only one of those patterns which differ from the nominative-accusative
alignment and questions the validity of such categories as subject and object. A parallel
hypothesis is that the stricter is the encoding of semantic roles, the looser is the
grammatical status of the argument: ergative for instance is less semantic (less “colored”
in Langacker’s terms) and behaves more as a subject (section 2) than experiencers (3) or
other localizers like instrumental agents (4). A causal model derived from transitivity with
a clear opposition subject/object, is certainly too concretely iconic to account for the
diversity of the various morpho-syntactic configurations of Hindi elementary statements,
in a language which tends to map as the main figure the less cognitively salient participant
in asymmetric relations.

2. Ergative agents

2.1. Traditional and non traditional views

A structure is considered ergative (Dixon 1979, 1994) when it treats the patient (the
‘object’) of a transitive verb similarly as the single participant of an intransitive verb (1),
whereas the accusative (or nominative) structure treats the agent (subject) of a transitive
verb as the intransitive subject (2):

(1) laRke ne apnii kahaani likhii / likhii.hai / likhii.thii
    boy-ms-obl erg refl-fs story-fs write-past-fs / write-pft-fs /write-ppft-fs
‘The boy wrote / has written / had written his story’

(2) lāRkāa apnī kahaanī likhtaa.hai / likhegaa
   boy-ms refl-fs story-fs write-ms pres-3 / write-fut-3ms

‘The boy writes / will write his story’

In (1) the predicate agrees with the patient (kahaanī) throughout the accomplished aspect, with similar endings for the nominal class and the predicate (ms: -aa, fs: -ii), whereas in the unaccomplished system (present, imperfect, future) the predicate agrees with the agent (2). This opposition is generally assumed to be strictly grammatical, (1) representing simply an inversion of (2), without cases having any specific semantic meaning: the couple ERG-ABS does not represent any semantic role and is as strictly ‘grammatical’ (or ‘colourless’, semantically and pragmatically unmarked) as is the couple NOM-ACC, both couples encoding a transitive process, within the same natural logic: transitivity establishes a direct relation between a source and a goal. In one case the starting point is the source, in the other case, as a mirror image of the first case, it is the goal, with the same deep structure. This was claimed by Kachru & Pandharipande (1977, 1979) because the “syntactic pivot”, as in a wide number of ergative languages, remains the agent, even if morphologically the patient dominates the ergative alignment. In both alignments, the agent controls the reflexive (1, 2), controls and undergoes the conjunctive participle reduction (3) and other tests of equi NP-deletion (Montaut 1991), although the patient has subject coding properties:

(3) lāRke    ne pen  lekar    ek kahaanī  likhii
   boy-ms-obl erg pen   take-CP one story-fs write-s.past-fs

‘The boy took a pen and wrote a story’

Whether the agent in the ergative alignment has then been equated with the syntactic subject (Dixon), or the patient (Schuchart 1905, Plank 1979), this mirror image of the accusative alignment does not question the relevance of the category of subject in the ergative pattern.

However, the reasons claimed in order to account for a double (opposite) treatment within the spatial frame of transitivity cast some doubt about the similarity of the cognitive operation which underlies them. If the trajectory is reversed (goal first and not source) in the ergative alignment when there is an aspectual split, it is due to the prominence of the patient, being affected by the result of the process in the accomplished aspect, as shown by Delancey (1981). Aspectual semantics requires the viewpoint to be associated with the result (hence the goal) and not with the source at the “natural” origin of the process, which is encountered secondarily (hence marked), upstream. Hence the pragmatic properties attached to the patient, which led Kachru (1987) and Montaut (1991, 1996) for instance to acknowledge that the ergative subject behaves less as a subject than the nominative subject. But if we follow Delancey’s logic, the source no longer remains in the same relation with the process and its goal, which means that the ergative case is not a simple grammatical marker used to reverse the same trajectory. As Langacker (1999: 35) puts it, ERG encodes an altogether different relation, involving a different perceptive strategy, thus being rather a semantically significant case and “only incidentally associated with grammatical relations”. (1) only profiles the last part of the clause as “onstage” (the “trajector” and main figure being the patient), in an autonomous way (not dependent on the source), whereas (2) profiles the full path (the “trajector” and main figure being the agent), building the relation as dependant on the source. (1) is then more like an intransitive structure, corresponding to what Langacker calls a thematic relation (“the ice melted”, profiling only the end part of the action chain, whereas ‘Bob melted the ice’ profiles the whole chain). As a thematic relation, “it enjoys a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the agent and the flow of energy, even for inherently energetic processes” (Langacker 1990: 245-8). It is a starting point with conceptual autonomy from the source, a reason why “the path involved is more abstract and of lesser cognitive salience”. Both structures are thus shown to differ more deeply than at the morpho-syntactic level, the ergative marker (Hindi ne) is more than a grammatical ‘colourless’ case. Even if such cognitive scenario have only a metaphoric value, they help understanding non-traditional views (Kibrik 1997), according to which ergative alignment is not a symmetric replica of the accusative alignment, for the reason (among others) that there is no cumulation of coding devices on any NP.

2.2. Ergative as a thematic predication with stative affinities

The profiled figure for (1) is kahaanī, the patient. Irrespective of its semantic prominence, the agent is only a secondary figure: in the ergative “the second distinct participant is encountered outward from the nucleus, hence upstream along the action chain” (Langacker 1990: 247). The ergative case then, unlike a strictly grammatical case,
fully ‘means its role’ which amounts to transforming the profiling of the action head. The action head may besides be omitted, thus resulting in a kind of intransitive structure like impersonal passives: likhāa hai (write-pft-3ms) “it is written”. But unlike the passive, ergative patterns exhibit a nominal polarity, and strong stative affinities, as shown in series (4a-b) : possible presence of the stative marker huaa (‘: huii), nominal relator (genitive: kaa/ki), for adverbial precisions and for the agent in participialization, both impossible with passive equivalents (4c):

(4) a aanaaKeN muunNd lo! - maiNne kaab kii munNdi.huii haiN
   eyes close take! - I-erg when gen close-pft-3fp+hua’
   ‘close your eyes ! I have closed them long ago’ (TP)
   (have been keeping them close for a long time)

(4) b aakkii pahle kii likhii.huii kavitaa
   you-gen before gen written-fs+hua’ poem-fs
   ‘your long before written poem’ : the poem you wrote long ago

(4) c ramesh ke.dvaaraa /*kii pahle /*kii likhii.gaii /*huii kavitaa
   Ramesh passive-ag /*gen before (*gen) write.passive-fs (* hua) poem-fs

Such affinities with the nominal class are synchronically meaningful: despite their perception as processes, such predicates share some properties of states, which is congruent with the formation of perfects by means of static components (Cohen 1989 : 59-66, 108-113). The result is what Langacker (1999: 30) views as “ an absolute construal which we can conceive in isolation, independently of causation or the transmission of energy from another part ”, in concord with the historical origin of the structure in Indo-Aryan.

2.3. The ergative alignment : a locative predication

2.3.1. Origin of the ergative pattern

It is a nominal form of the verb (‘verbal adjective’ or past passive participle: ita>aa) which has given rise in classical Sanskrit to the will-be ergative structure of new Indo-Aryan languages, as evidenced by a wide literature, from Bloch (1906, 1965) to Breunis (1990), Montaut (1996) and Peterson (1998):

(5) mayaa / maana tat kritam
   I-instr / I-gen that-nom-ns done-nom-ns
   ‘I did that’ (Skt)

(6) a susai (yah baat) kahii
   hare-ms-obl (this thing) said-fs
   ‘The hare said (this thing)’ (Braj, from Kellogg)

(6) b eben mai bujhila
   now l-instr understood-ns
   ‘now I have understood’ (Old Bengali, from Chatterji)

This nominal origin is still obvious in the Hindi morphology of the simple accomplished form (base + gender number). The reinforcement of the oblique case by a specific marker (ne, of obscure etymology) is recent and absent or optional from some neighboring languages.

If in the course of times, the meanings associated with this form, which got soon grammaticized as the only way for expressing a past transitive process, shifted from resulting state to the inclusion of the event at the origin of this state and later on to the event itself (then a new form developed for including the resulting state such as likhii hai, written is, ‘has written’). This shift is quite ordinary in the history of perfects (Cohen 1989 : 98, 108), well-documented for Sanskrit (Bloch 1906, Breunis 1996) and Persian (Kurylowicz 1960: 104-8). But the Hindi morpho-syntaxis still reminds us of this stative core.

After and against the traditional interpretation of such patterns as “ passive ”, the new classical analysis of such structures argues for a ‘possessive’ meaning : Benveniste (1966: 176-86) has convincingly shown that the old Persian structure (quite similar to (5) in Sanskrit) is intrinsically possessive in its meaning, and is analogous with the Roman periphrastic perfects in late Latin (mihi id factum, me-DAT this done), which replaced the old synthetic perfect facti before being transformed into an active transitive form with “ have “ (habeo id factum) mihi filius est, “ I have a son = me-DAT son is” with a “ possessive ” dative, is structured in the same way as mihi id factum “ I have done it = to me this done ”. I have given elsewhere a detailed argumentation for the interpretation of such a structure as a predication of localization (Montaut 1996, 1998). Since in Indo-Aryan the construction clearly shows an instrumental case which is also the case marker of the passive agent, it is hardly arguable that a passive interpretation is ruled out, as Benveniste claims for Avestic and Persian. Plank (1979) and Comrie (1979) convincingly
trace the origin of aspectually split ergative structures to passives in a variety of languages, as does Breunis and Bloch for Indo-Aryan, and Tiwari (1961) for Hindi. A less precisely semanticised interpretation may then better account for the Indo-Aryan facts: the predication is located in relation with its source, whereas the patient (result) only is represented as internal to the predication, the externality of the agent being congruent with the aspectual semantics of the accomplished.

2.3.2. The similar origin of the modal future
Interestingly, at the same time in the history of Indo-Aryan languages, another passive participle happened to be used in a predicative way, with the same construction, later grammaticized into a future: the obligatory passive participle in –tavya is the historical origin of the synthetic form of futures in –b-, common in Eastern languages like Bengali (see Chatterji 1986) and Eastern Hindi (for Awadhi, see Tiwari 1966: 169-71, for Bhojpuri, Saxena 1972). Originally obligatory, this form lost its modal meaning in the course of time and acquired a simple temporal meaning, still retaining its oblique agent and unmarked (nominative) patient with which it agreed:

(7) a na kSeptavyaa brahmavaadinaa nacaavamaanyaah
neg neglect-oblig-P-nom-mp brahma-logist-nom-nom-nom-mp
‘Knowers of Veda should not be neglected nor contemted’ (Skt, from Bubenik & Paranjape 1996)

(7) b tribhir yaatavyam
three-instr go-oblig-P-nom-n
‘the three will go’ (lit. should be gone by the three) (Skt, from Bloch 1906)

(7) c gharma kaise pariThaba maï
house how enter-b I-obl
‘How should I / shall I enter the house now?’ (Old Awadhi)

(7) d maï dibi piricha
I-instr give-b-fp question-fp
‘I will ask questions’ (Old Bengali)

Series (7) shows the Sanskrit origin (a, b) of the Eastern Hindi (c) and Bengali (d) futures, both transitive and intransitive: in the latter the agent is in the oblique and the predicate, which otherwise agrees with the patient, shows default agreement. The parallel with the pre-ergative and ergative structure in the past is striking, as illustrated by the following statement by Asoka (2nd c. BC, from Bloch 1950) involving first past then future forms:

(8) iyam dhammalipi devaanampriyena dem-nom-fs law-writing-nom-fs god-gen-mp-beloved-instr-ms priyadassina raññaa lekhaapitaas.
friend-look-instr-ms king-instr-ms written -nom-fs
idha na kimci jivam aarabhitpaa prajuhitavyam
here neg.som life-nom-nskill- CP sacrifice-oblig.P-nom-nms
na ca samaajo kattavyo
neg and assembly-nom-ms do-oblig.P-nom-ms
‘The friendly looking king beloved by the gods has written this law-edit. Here one shall not kill and sacrifice any living thing nor hold assembly’ (‘here no living thing is to be sacrificed by killing and no assembly is to be done’)

To-day Eastern Hindi speeches as well as Bengali or Oriya language have a nominative structure both in future and past. But up to the 14th-15th centuries both were of the ergative type, presenting past sentences like (9), from Chatterji, quite comparable to (7d):

(9) kona puraane sunili kaahini
series which myth hear-l-fs story-fs
‘In which myth did you hear this story?’

The morpheme –l-, which is to-day reanalyzed in Eastern IA as a past tense marker (accomplished) is originally a nominal enlargement suffix. As for the personal endings, added when such statements were restructured with a nominative agent, and transformed into active structures (Chatterji 1986: 808), both involve the same paradigm, distinct from the present personal endings. This fact is an argument for a deep similarity between future and perfect, a formal symetry emphasized by Kurylowicz (1965) for Roman languages on account of the similar history of their periphrastic formation. The ‘have’ future (French infinitive –ai, -as) originates from the same type of periphrastic renewal as the perfect: mihi colenda est virtus (to me is to be cultivated virtue, “I shall cultivate virtue”) with a verbal adjective agreeing with the patient and a dative agent), replacing the old synthetic future, has in its turn been replaced by the nominative-accusative structure (ego) habeo coleri virtutem with an infinitive and ‘have’. As shown in Montaut (1996),
we may equate the Bengali innovation (additional personal endings and case restructuration) with the Roman innovation, in the absence of a verb ‘have’.

Such future and perfect, both originating from a possessive or localizing predication, share a common morpho-syntactic evolution, echoing their common difference from the present: as Benveniste (1965) puts it, they are not really actions, but views on action from the present. The result in one case, the aim in the other case, are viewed from the present of utterance, as something (a state) reached at or aimed at by the ‘subject’. This type of ‘oblique subject’ should not be considered in Indo-Aryan as constrained only by aspect, since modality too may trigger a specific coding of the first argument in two place predicates, mapping the statement into a predication of localization which has little to do with the canonical transitive statement, and consequently with the syntactic categories of subject and object derived from such canonic mappings of the source-goal transmission.

3. Dative experiencers

3.1. Alternance between dative and ergative

We have seen that ergative-like patterns are structured as possessive or localizing patterns and do not necessarily involve anteriority nor transitivity since modal futures historically followed the same path. This historical parallel between ergativity and modality also exists in modern 1A languages: whereas standard Hindi expresses obligation with the dative of the main participant, and agreement with the patient of the infinitive verb if it is transitive, in some substandard Delhi variants, the dative is substituted by the ergative marker ne irrespective of transitivity (10):

(10) a maiNne jaanaa hai
    I-erg    go-inf   be-pres-3s
‘I must go.’ (Delhi Hindi)

(10) b maiNne sabzi      kharidnii hai
    I-erg  vegetable-fs buy-fs  be-pres-3s
‘I must buy vegetables.’

Whether or not this substandard use represents influence of Punjabi, the analogy has been integrated, showing that the reanalysis of ne as a localizer (besides marking ergative agents of past transitive verbs) is possible, as well as the reanalysis of the obligation structure as a similarly locative predication. This means that the analogy of dative (experiencer marker, obligation, etc.) and ergative is perceptible enough to account for such alternations, although the experiencer is supposed to mean a non-agent (devoid of control) whereas ne is supposed to mean a controller. Apart from the radically different semantic roles attached to both markers and the absence of Tense-Aspect constraints on the experiential structure, both structures are strikingly similar at the morpho-syntactic level in standard Hindi: (11) can be compared to (1).

(11) a mujhko angrezii nahiiN aatii
    I-dat English-fs neg   come-pres-3fs
‘I do not know English.’

(11) b hamko yah film   bahut pasand aaii
    we-dat dem film-fs much  taste   come-s.past.fs
‘We liked this film very much.’

(11) c use    uuNce  pahaaR     diikh.rahe.the
    he-dat  high   mountain-mp  appear-progr-impft-mp
‘he saw (could see) high mountains.’

Whereas in standard Hindi only dative can mark the subject in deontic statements, with a predicate unrelated to the historical evolution summarized in 2.3, standard Marathi provides still better evidence: not only does it exhibit an alternation of DAT/ERG for obligation (13) such as the non standard Hindi (10), but verbal modalities directly derived from the old obligation participle (-tavya>av/aw) may still retain their original constructions (14). The standard ergative marker of agents (12) is also used as a localizer for modal statements, irrespective of their transitivity (examples from Pandharipande 1997):

(12) tyaaNne gaaNii   mhaTlii
    he-erg song-np sing-s.past.-np
‘He sang songs.’

(13) a tyaaNne /tyaalaa patra lihii    paahidzet
    he-erg /he-dat letter-np written-np oblig-pres-np
‘He should write letters.’

(13) b tyaaNne /tyaalaa ghari    gela    paahidze
he-erg /he-dat home-loc gone-ns oblig-pres-ns
‘He must go home.’

(14) a tyane ghari yaave / to ghari yaava
he-erg home-loc come-opt-ns / 3ms-nom home-loc come-pot-3s
‘He should come home.’

(14) b tyane kaama karaawit
3ms-erg job-np do-pot-np
‘He may do the jobs.’

3.2. The dative of the experiencer

Both in Hindi and Marathi, the dative of the first participant is the typical case for the “experiencer subject”, required for the expression of subjective states of mind or feelings. The dative argument controls reflexivation, equi NP-deletion and conjunctive participle reduction, but unlike ergative agent it does not undergo conjunctive reduction (Kachru 1991: 64-65, Montaut 1991: 155-169). The statement is a localizing predication of the Hindi type in (11), the state or feeling being localized in relation to the experiencer. Hindi examples are followed by the Marathi equivalents on the second line:

(15) a anuu ko mohan acchaa lagtaa.hai
anuulaa mohan aawaDto
Anu-dat Mohan-ms good seem-pres-3ms
‘Anu likes Mohan.’

(15) b anuu ko krodh aayaa
anuulaa raag aalaa
Anu-dat anger-ms come-s.past-ms
‘Anu got angry.’

The embarrassment of Langacker (1990: 239, 253) in treating the experiencer is significant: even in the dative case, the experiencer is “thought of as the source of the mental or perceptual path” yet not profiled on the onstage domain, as opposed to the nominative EXP in the main figure and starting point of the path. In both patterns, the experiencer is considered as the head of the perceptual chain (“upstreams” then, belonging to the source domain), a representation which accounts for the analogy of structures with ERG or DAT marking for first participants, but does not really reflects the semantic specificity of the cases, since experiencer is intuitively as well as cross-linguistically collapsed with patient in the hyperrole of Undergoer.

In Hindi, the semantic role is strictly coded, and the fact that experimenters sometimes occur in the nominative always means a change in role. As it will appear in the next subsections, the specific coding of the semantic role EXP (in the dative), irrespective of the information flow, makes the category of subject irrelevant for such alignments.

3.3. The degree of consciousness: a relevant feature for the Hindi dative experiencer and a problem for the causal model

The uneasiness in dealing with EXP seems to be related to the assumption of the action model as the paragon for all linguistic statements. The action chain, causal by nature, is constrained by directionality. The reason why EXP is taken as a source (fully profiled or not) is that it is the locus of cognitive activity, a metaphoric actor, able to initiate a mental path. But in Hindi, such metaphoric actors, more or less endowed with volition and control, are never coded as dative EXP. Alternations as (16a-b), show that (b) in the nominative involves more volition and control than (a) in the nominative, and for the same reason imperative statements, involving volition, require the shift from dative alignment to nominative alignment, with a transitive light verb like ‘do’ instead of ‘be’ in the predicat (17):

(16) a mujhe yah film bahut pasand aaii
I-dat this film-fs much taste come-s.past-fs
‘I liked this film very much.’

(16) b tum kyaa pasand karoge
you interr taste do-fut-2
‘What will you chose?’

(17) a mujhe cintaa ho rahii hai
I-dat worry-fs be progr-fs pres-3
‘I am worrying’

(17) b (tum) cintaa mat karo /*(tumheN) cintaa mat ho
(you-nom) worry-fs neg do-imper-2 *(you-dat) worry-fs neg be-imper-2
‘Do not worry’
Besides, quite a few facts in Indo-Aryan go against the directionality (source/EXP -> goal) of the trajectory in experiential statements. First, the motion verbs which occur frequently instead of the static ‘be’ as predicate in (16a) or (17a) above, like “touch/reach” (lag), “come” (aa) in (18a), or vector verb “come” (aa) used foraspectual information in (18b), indicate a move from the experienced object (the stimulus) towards EXP (see ex.11).

(18) a mujhe Dar lagaa
I-dat fear-mstouched
‘I was afraid’

(18) b uska baahar jaane kii icchaa ho aaii
3s-dat out go-inf-obl gen desire-fs be come-s.past-fs
‘He felt like going out.’

Case marking itself finally suggests that EXP belongs to the target domain, the dative involving benefit and allation for the main argument as well as for a second argument (“feed somebody-DAT”) or third argument (“show something to somebody-DAT”).

Besides, the cognitive activity of the experiencer is crucial for equating it to a causal head in a trajectorial model. But Hindi shows that, on the contrary, the dative marking emphasizes lack of consciousness and reflexive activity, as in (19a), whereas in (19b), with a cognitively active experiencer, the head is in the nominative, and (20) only allows a dative EXP because lack of consciousness is explicit:

(19) a laRke ko ThaND mahasuus ho.rahi.thii
boy dat cold-fs feeling be-progr-impft-fs
‘The boy was feeling cold.’

(19) b laRkaa ThaND mahasuus kar.raha.thaa
boy-nom cold-fs feeling do-progr-impft-ms
‘The boy was feeling cold.’

(20) us vaqt tumheN mujhse irSyaa thii /*/tum mujhse irSyaa karte the
that time you-dat I-of jealousy was /*you-nom I-of jealousy did-mp
magar tumheN iskaa bodh nahiiN thaa
but you-dat this-gen awareness-ms neg was
‘At that time you were jealous of me but you were not aware of it’

The conscious perceiver of the experienced state is in the nominative, represented as the initiator of the path, a plausible analog to the starting point of the action chain schema: experiencer as a locus of cognitive activity in Hindi is collapsed into the hyperrole Agent by the feature reflexive consciousness, even if it lacks volition and control. But dative experiencer is simply the animate localizer of the predication with no active or conscious implication.

3.4. Subjecthood in active alignments?

What is crucial then is the semantic role: if the dative EXP exhibits a number of subjectal properties like nominative subjects (or ERG agents), it is because of its topic position and communicative status (ranking first in the information flow) in a given statement. This does not mean it behaves as a subject: the casual morphology encodes a semantic role, not a syntactic function. To behave as a subject, it takes more than such referential properties as control of reflexivation or of conjunctive reduction, as convincingly argued by Moore & Perlmutter (2000) who discuss the Russian data: among the two classes of dative first arguments in Russian, those like the Hindi experiencer are not considered as possible subjects, but only those triggering some features of agreement (in infinitival clauses). In Hindi, as soon as the topicality of the dative EXP decreases, so does its ability to trigger reflexivation, irrespective of the direction of pronominalization, which is not the case with ergative: (21a) has backward pronominalization and still EXP controls reflexivation, whereas in (21b-c) EXP does not control reflexivation:

(21) a apnii aavaaz kii corii kaa khyaal mujhe us samay nahiiN ayaa
refl voice of theft of thought I-dat that time neg came
‘At that time I did not think of the theft of my voice’ (KBV)

(21) b hamaarii cazii hameN mil gaii.hai
our (pro) Chazi-f we-dat be-found go-pft-3fs
‘We have found our Chazi’ (BhS)

(21) c mere beTe kaa.skuaTar zareuur use mil jaega
my(pro) son of scooter surely he-dat be-found go-fut
‘My son will certainly find back his scooter’ (BhS)
What accounts for (21a) reflexivation is also the use of first person, ranking first in the hierarchy of persons, which makes the speech-act anchoring (third dimension in Kibrik’s view) prevail upon the other two dimensions (role and information-flow).

Clearly in Hindi information-flow and semantic roles are coded separately, and the language is largely of the “separatist” type. The distinct coding of non-agent participants in the same fashion for one-place and two-place predicates evokes what has been called the active alignment. Such an alignment is defined by Klimov (1974) as having a distinctive coding for single arguments: some of them are similar to agent-like arguments and others to patient-like arguments of two-place predicates. The Hindi marker for EXP is also the marker for animate patients (ko). In active alignments it is nearly impossible to decide what NP is the subject (Kibrik 1997: 285, Durie 1987) and it has often been argued that ‘active’ languages lack syntactic categories and relations. Hindi is of course not a purely active language, but presents active-like alignments as well as ergative alignments. The Hindi experiential alignment amounts to a specific diathesis (semantically close to middle voice), distinct both from active and ergative, involving an affected participant, devoid of control, volition and reflexive consciousness. In contrast, reflexive awareness is characteristic of the active and ergative diathesis, even in the absence of the other two features (see “to find”, a +erg verb, paanaa, as well as “to consider”, maannaa).

4. Instrumental non-canonical agents

4.2. Inadvertent actors

An agent devoid of control and conscious responsibility is represented in the instrumental case (the case for inanimate cause and non-initiator agents of causative verbs), specially for the sake of denying his own participation and responsibility. It is made into an inadvertent actor rather than an agent, not clearly controlling conjunctive reduction (22b). Such a construction, both with medio-passive (22a,b,d) and with stative verb-nominal predicates (22c), is the canonical representation of a person denying her personal involvement in a process, while admitting her participation, by mistake, like in (22c), during a trial. Example (22d) answers an accusation of fruit stealing, by saying that the fruit detached spontaneously in his hands:

(22) a mujhse gilaas gir gayaa
   I-instr glass fall go-s.past--ms
   ‘I let the glass fall by mistake’

(22) b baRhiiya kaaNc kaa gilaas mujhse girkar TuuT gayaa
     wonderful glass gen glass I-instr fall-CP break go-s.past-ms
     ‘I break a beautiful glass by mistake.’ (NKK)

(22) c tumhiiN ne uskaa khuan kiyaa
    you-emph erg he-gen blood do-s.past
    - saaab maiNNe khuan nahiiN kiyaa. mujhse ho gayaa
      - Sir I-erg blood neg do-past I-instr be go-s.past
    khuan maiNNe jaanbuujhkar kiyaa.thaa. vah to mujhse ho gayaa
      blood I-erg deliberately do-ppf that but I-instr be go-s.past
      ‘You killed him. – Sir, I did not kill, it happened (by me). Could I kill
      consciously? No, it happened by me.’ (A)

(22) d yah Daftar kaa kaTahal hai. mujhse galii hii
    this office gen jackfruit-ms is I-instr mistake-fs be-s.past-fs
    Daftar ke ahaate meN lagaa.thaa, mujhse TuuT gayaa
      office gen yard loc be-planted-ppft-ms I-instr break go-s.past-ms
      ‘This is a jackfruit from the office. I made a mistake. It was planted in the
      office yard. I plucked it (inadvertently)’ (NKK)

With the shift of the agent from ergative or nominative to instrumental, the action becomes a non-action process: the verb is the intransitive counterpart of the transitive factive. Instead of a real agent (prototypically a human controller), the main participant is made into a non-volitional actor, a kind of reluctant (unbelieving) spectator of what happened. The result is acknowledged, but the source denied as such, along with the action chain. The absence of the feature <conscious assumption> for an actor rules it out of the class of agents in Hindi, and triggers a non-nominative coding (instrumental), in the same way as the absence of the same feature <conscious assumption> for an experiencer triggers the non-nominative coding (dative).
The same diathesis with the instrumental case marking of the main participant also occurs with passives (specially intransitive (24a, 24c), but transitive too (24b)) and medio-passive intransitives (23a-b) or stative verbo-nominal expressions (23b), in a negative or paranegetic (23b) context. Inefficient agents control reflexivation and conjunctive reduction (24b). The meaning is always modal, conveying incapacity in both cases, and the instrumental encodes the ‘non canonical agent’ of the negated predicate as its first or single role:

(23) a darvazaaz khaa kskar rakho! mujhse sankaal nahiiN khol rahii hai
   door pull-CP hold-imper I-instr chain-fs neg open progr-pres-fs-3
   ‘Hold the door pulled! I can’t manage to open the chain’ (NKK)

(23) b mujhse jo. kuch banaa kiyaa. ab mujhse nahiiN hoga
   I-instr whatever was-made did now I-instr neg be-fut-3ms
   ‘Whatever I could do, I did. Now I won’t be able to make it.’

(24) a mujhse uThaa nahiiN gayaa
   I-instr get-up neg passive-s.past
   ‘I was totally unable to get up / I could not bring myself to get up’

(24) b prayaas karke bhii usse paRhaa nahiiN jaataa
   effort do-CP even she-instr study neg passive-pres-mss
   ‘In spite of his efforts he could not study’

(24) c lekin mujhse jaayaa nahiiN gayaa. pair maanoN jam.gae.hoN
   but 1-instr go neg passive-s.past-ms feet as-if freeze-subj-pft
   ‘But I could not make a step. My legs had become like frozen.’ (TP)

However there is a difference between periphrastic passives (24) and intransitives (23) in such constructions: (23) refers to disabling conditions (physical or external) which make the agent inefficient (he cannot make it), whereas the passive of (24) refers to an inner repulsion, which eventually can be overcome. Davison (1980) for instance suggests a possible continuation for (24) type in the form of ‘however he did’.

In order to better understand the difference, let us first look at some contrasts involving the same verb root (cognate intransitive and transitive pairs). A dialogue in a train in the pre-partition context exhibits in the same sequence both uses of the incapacitive structures, one on the intransitive base (uTh ‘get up, lifted’: 25a), the other on the transitive base (uThaa ‘lift’: 25b). Both statements (25a) and (25b) can be translated by “be unable to lift” (the luggage from the rack in the compartment):

(25) a biibii, terii gaThrii maiN uThaa luuNgaa. is guuNge se nahiiN uThegii
   lady your bag I lift take-fut this mute instr neg get-up-fut
   ‘Woman, your bag, I’ll take myself, this mute is not able to take it’ (GHZ)

(25) b mujhse apnaa Trank nahiiN uThayaa jaaga, na hii ghi kaa Tiin
   I-instr refl suitcase neg lift passif-fut neg just ghee of box
   ‘I could not (bring myself to) take my suitcase, nor even the box of ghee’

But (25a) suggests that the agent (the mute boy) is not able to lift the luggage -- is too weak or egoistic -- and one should not rely on him. (25b) suggests a strong reluctance on the agent’s part, frightened by the threatening appearance of his compartment neighbor: he intends to shift but feels psychically unable to take his suitcase, and even his tin (which weighs less than two pounds). Similarly (26) in the passive, which contrasts with (23a) with intransitive above, requires a context where the speaker for instance is horrified by the experience or the sight he will be confronted with (his wife with her lover, a burglar in the house, an exam jury, etc.):

(26) mujhse darvazaaz kholaa nahiiN gayaa
   I-instr door open-tr neg passive-s.past
   ‘I could not bring myself to open the door’

The intransitive statement with kholnaa ‘be open’ in (23a) above only means that the door resists or that the speaker is inefficient, unable for some reason to perform the job, whereas the passive of the transitive cognate base (kholnaa) in (26) suggests the agent is reluctant. The semantic difference is correlated to the morphosyntax of the construction, which itself is correlated to the argumental structure of the verbal base. Passivable verbs, whether they have one or two arguments, always contain an agent (sometimes in the wider meaning of subject of consciousness: see 3.3-4), and the agent is dominating on the patient: the negation, which allows the weaker implicature alone to be retained (Davison 1980), bears on the relation of the predicate and the agent, the main role, so that a non initiated process obtains because of agent’s inhibition. With an intransitive predicate, the patient (hyperrole Undergoer) is the main role, corresponding to the single argument, or to
the main argument if a second argument is added (instr. NP). If a second argument adds to a single place predicate (like ‘be lifted’, ‘be opened’), it cannot get the features of a typical agent, since an argumental structure agent-patient would constrain the selection of the transitive verbal base: medio-passive verbs usually only tolerate an inanimate cause in the instrumental as an optional second role. If this position is filled by a human entity, it stands as the simple localization of an ability, determining the conditions of feasibility of the process and not its cause (since a human cause is a responsible volitional agent). Negation, which allows the weaker implicature to be retained, bears on the feasibility of the process and its result, that is, on the relation patient-predicate, resulting in a non effective process associated to an inefficient actor.

Note that the same verb uThnaa “get up”, “be lifted”, used in a medio–passive meaning (25a) with a patient in the main role, is more frequently used as a typical middle with a human subject (patient and agent collapsed, starting point and endpoint collapsed), in which case it is compatible with imperative (uTho! ‘get up’) and allows the capabilitative construction in the passive (24a), which the medio–passive does not. A fixed argument structure then should not be attached to each predicate in the lexicon. What determines the possibility of passivation (modal or not) is the presence of an agent role in the argument structure, whether the predicate is transitive or intransitive. Conversely, what is required for the intransitive capabilitative construction is the presence of a patient in the main role in a negative context. As for the inadvertent constructions of intransitive predicates with instrumental adjunct of an animate NP, this NP takes the only features left available: agentivity is ruled out since the couple agent-patient would require a transitive predicate: the only feature left is negative, - control, - volition, - consciousness, hence the non-intentionality. What is crucial is the presence of a Patient as the first role in a non-negative context: those intransitive predicates which do not have a typical inanimate patient do not allow the inadvertent construction (mujhse cillaayaa gayaa, l-instr scream passive, cannot mean ‘I inadvertently screamed’).

Both representations of the inefficient agent allow volition, as opposed to the inadvertent actor. They do not undergo but control conjunctive reduction as well as reflexivation, yet the three of them lack a characteristic feature of the prototypical agent (either efficiency or volition), which explains that they are not marked as agents in a real action clause but as locutors in a rather descriptive state of affairs. They may be the main participant, but they are coded for their semantic role and not for a syntactic function.

5. Conclusion: a separatist strategy for coding roles echoed by a low degree of subjeecthood

I shall simply mention, for lack of space, the other two major classes of oblique main arguments. Locative arguments (postposition ‘in’ for the possessor of defects and qualities, ‘near’ for the possessor of acquired objects) are clearly localizing predications; they exhibit lower referential properties (do not control conjunctive reduction) and appear to stand at the bottom of the hierarchy as far as subject properties are concerned. As for statements involving genitive possessors (parts of the body, family members), they are absolute construals, which do not even profile the main participant as a secondary figure: they make it part of the predicative relation as a nominal expansion. But when used with verbo-nominal predicates, as in (27), the genitive (underlined) control equi NP-deletion (as well as reflexivation and conjunctive reduction):

\[(27)\] a uskii bahaar juane kii icchaaa huii
\[\text{he-gen outside go gen desire-fs be-s.past-fs}\]
\[‘\text{he felt like going out’}\]

\[(27)\] b apnii baat kii dhun meN sitaa kaadhyaan is taraf nahiN gayaa
\[\text{refl thing gen tune in Sita gen attention-ms this side neg went-ms}\]
\[‘Absorbed in her own world, Sita did not pay attention’\]

Such constructions amount to maximally background the main participant, as well as euphemistic locutions involving a metonymy of body parts to self, which also allow the genitive argument to control reflexivation or conjunctive reduction:

\[(28)\] yahsunkar uske dil meN kritagyataa kii bhaavnaa jag.uThii
\[\text{this hear-CP he-gen heart loc gratitude gen feeling-fs wake-got-up-fs}\]
\[‘Hearing this, he felt a sudden feeling of gratitude (in his heart)’\]

Oblique main arguments are definitely not fully endowed with subjeecthood: they all lack coding properties and their referential properties vary along the following hierarchy: ergative (with all but coding properties is the highest, instrumental non canonical agents (do not undergo conjunctive reduction but control it as well as reflexivation) and
experiencers (same properties, no control of reflexivation if low topicality) come next, then possessors (varying properties according the class of predicate).

Such a hierarchy fits Tsunoda (1981, 1985)'s hierarchy of transitivity, the highest pole of which involves the binary relation of a typical agent with a typical patient, both participants being clearly symmetric, and the lowest pole distributed on less polar roles (experiencer – theme, possessor-possessed) with predicates more stative than active, with often oblique case marking for the main participant. If we agree on considering the various casual markings of the main argument as meaningful, and if we agree that reshaping the argument configuration amounts to a specific diathesis depending on the nature of the predicate, we find 6 basic diatheses in Hindi/Urdu: 1) the nominative accusative diathesis represents action processes, 2) the ergative diathesis represents action processes but viewed from the viewpoint of the result (aspectual split), and not as an action, 3) the dative diathesis describes experiential processes, 4) the instrumental diathesis describes non volitional actions in the affirmative and unfeasible actions in the negative, centered on actors lacking some of the features of the agent, 5) and 6) the locative and genitive diatheses describe states. Only the first one really represents action (as an action chain fully profiled): the action model is clearly marginal. All other predications, with the main argument dissociated from the predication, profile thematic relations and represent autonomous predications in absolute construals: the profiled segment always leaves the cognitively more salient entity in a secondary position, so that the less salient entity is the starting point from the linguistic viewpoint. Hindi indeed shows a clear preference for profiling less salient entities as starting points in asymmetric relations: a patient is less salient than an agent, a stimulus has less cognitive salience than an experiencer. And even a marked patient is no longer a possible starting point in the ergative sentence because it is salient: human or specific patients, that is, atypical patients not clearly opposed to typical agents, require the dative marking, which rules out verb agreement (default agreement: -au, ms), in (29) where none of the arguments are in the masculine singular:

(29) hamne is larkii ko nahiN maaraa
    we-erg this girl-fs dat/acc neg beat-s.past-ms
    ‘We did not beat this girl’

Full subjecthood is restricted in Hindi/Urdu to action phrases and single arguments of simple verbs. The category of subject, an amalgamation of properties (coding, topicality, control) attached to a single term, is a historical result in languages which favor it, more a coincidence than a universal category. If various properties, of distinct levels, came to be attached to the same term, a topic tending to acquire coding and syntactic properties and to become a subject, conversely those properties may drift apart, a topic becoming autonomous from the grammatical subject: such a cyclic evolution is described by Hagège (1978), under the significant title 'from topic to topic, going through subject', after Li & Thomson (1976). Hindi is far less subject prominent than was Sanskrit, and the emergence of the ergative pattern out of a passive topicalizing the patient (agent often in the second position) is a good example of this cyclicity, coding and topic properties drifting apart. The modern language presents a stage where subjects are marginal in front of the variety of oblique markings for main participants. The oblique NPs which occupy the first sequential position of unmarked statements are coded according to their semantic role, their position encoding their rank in the information-flow. Here two distinct strategies are used to encode both dimensions (semantic role, information-flow): no wonder if the identification of a subject NP is problematic here, since in “separatist” languages the notion of subject is irrelevant (Kibrik 1997: 295). But Hindi is not a “pure” language although the “separatist” coding of semantic roles is quite extensive. There is a class of statements (nominative main argument) for which the category of subject is relevant, not only because of the morphological coding, but because for such nominative NPs the nominative (unmarked case) does not encode any specific role (it can refer to agents, patients, experiencers: several features are co-expressed, particularly the position in the information-flow (communicative status) and the grammatical function, in a “cumulative” strategy. But other types of statements, which strictly encode semantic roles, depend on a more “separatist” strategy, which allows for a relatively free position in the sequence: marked orders do not require any additional device than the positional shift and that too is characteristic of “separatist” subjectless languages.

The mixed state of modern Hindi probably reflects a transitional phase of its evolution: the role domination (and subjectless feature) has been a gradual process, still very much alive, whereas the ergative structure has largely grammaticized, loosing its semantic motivation and acquiring more subject properties than other oblique arguments (what is semantically motivated is transitivity and not the ergative marking of agents, which surface in the nominative at the required aspect).
References
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written corpus : A: Aparaadhini, Shivani ; NKK : Naukar kii kamiiz, Vinod Kumaar


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1 Since Verma (1976). Word order is an important criterion in languages where it is relatively rigid, that is, in Greenberg’meaning, for unmarked or least constrained statements (including intonational constraints). This does not necessarily mean that the unmarked statements are the most frequent, specially in oral production.

2 Particles also help defining a topic (to) and a focus (hii), but the simple ordering of terms is enough for making a topic of the first entity (and a focus of the pre-verbal entity), the postverbal position generally corresponding to a delayed topic.

3 Tenses morphologically related to the simple past (s.past), perfect (pft), pluperfect (ppft), and subjunctive as well as conditional perfect forms are all built on the accomplished participle. ‘Accomplished’ is preferred to ‘perfective’ since there is also in Hindi a perfective/imperfective opposition comparable to the one in Slavonic languages (see Nespital’s recent Hindi Dictionary of verbal pairs). Abreviations used : m, f, n, stand for the three genders, s, p, for the two numbers. Nom, erg, dat, loc, instr, gen, obl stand for nominative, ergative, dative, locative, instrumental, genitive, oblique cases, ag, for agent (passive). Pres (present), CP (conjonctive participle), P (participle), pot (potential), opt (optative), inf (infinitive), oblig (obligative). Capitals stand for retroflex consonants, and N for nasalized vowels.
Nor do the scholars who advocate an “ambivalent” point of view, basing subjecthood on language specific morpho-syntactic properties of NPs, like Melcuk (1988, 1992), Comrie (1979), Manning (1996).

As the nominal sentence is no longer perceived as a stylistically marked device, it acquires a general meaning and the copulative sentence (past participle + copula) acquires a marked meaning expressing “state” or “condition” (Breunis 1990: 141), and when this “expressive” meaning becomes fully grammatical in association with the copulative construction, the meaning of the non-copulative construction becomes restricted to the event at the origin of the state, excluding the state itself.

All the four roles in Langacker (experiencer, mover, patient and Ø) can be collapsed into the major role Theme, pertaining to the target domain and opposed to the source domain (agent and instrument as respectively active and passive participants). As for the distinction between target and source, it too is based on energy transmission. Target is also equated to recipient.


Significantly, such verbs, which require ergative in the accomplished, can passivize, a transformation which in Hindi requires an Agent as its first (or sole) argument, Agent being understood in terms of the hyperrole (with the feature <reflexive consciousness> as its minimal feature): maiNne siitaa ko akele rote hue paayaa (I-erg Sita-acc/dat alone crying being found), ‘I found Sita crying alone’; siitaa ko akele rote hue paayaa gayaa (Sita acc/dat alone crying being find passive-sp), ‘Sita was found crying alone’.

If we interpret the reduced sentence to be like (22a), then the conjunctive reduction is controlled by the first participant of main clause “I”. If we interpret the reduced sentence to be gilaas giraa, “the glass fell” (gilaas main participant), then gilaas controls the conjunctive reduction.

Similarly the intransitive gir, “fall”, is used for inadvertent processes (22a) whereas the transitive giraa “make fall”, is used if you knock something down or push somebody down deliberately.

See Mohanan (1994) who convincingly argues that the se arguments of such “pseudo-passives” are more “subject-like” in this respect than the agents of true passives.

On the affinity of ‘incapacitive’ passives and descriptive state, see Gaeffke (1967: 39-74).

We of course find frequent overlapping, extension of a diathesis from its prototypical area to adjacent ones, as well as “exceptions” like the well-known class of ergative intransitive (cough, sneeze, etc.) or inactive transitive with ergative main argument (paanaa find).

abstract

the paper examines various sentence patterns with two arguments, including the ergative pattern, and concludes to the non specificity of the ergative pattern, which is simply sensitive to aspectual semantics rather than to the semantics of the predicate itself as other non nominative patterns. Hindi/Urdu can be considered a subjectless language, where the transitive action pattern is very marginal, and which may ultimately be related with cognitive scenari (Langacker) emphasizing not the causal scheme source-goal but a descriptive state of affairs located in relation to a human participant.

L'article examine divers types d'énoncé à deux actants, dont l'énoncé ergatif, et conclut à la non spécificité de ce dernier, qui se caractérise simplement par sa sensibilité à la sémantique aspectuelle et non à la sémantique du prédicat lui-même comme les autres types d'énoncés à prime actant non nominatif. Le hindi/ourdou peut être considéré comme une langue sans sujet (subjectless) où la phrase d'action transitive est marginale, ce qu'on peut envisager d'associer à des scenarios cognitifs (Langacker) qui ne privilégient pas la chaîne causale source-cible mais plutôt des états descriptifs repérés par rapport au participant humain.

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OBLIQUE MAIN ARGUMENTS IN HINDI AS LOCALIZING PREDICATIONS: QUESTIONING THE CATEGORY OF SUBJECT
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