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Object Specificity and Agreement in Hindi/Urdu

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1. Introduction

The existence of object agreement in languages like Urdu/Hindi² has received a number of differing treatments in the literature (for Hindi/Urdu alone see Gair and Wali (1989), Davison (1988, 1990, 1991), etc.). One of the most recent and intriguing theories of object agreement for Hindi is formulated in Mahajan (1990, 1991). This theory makes use of the postulation of an agreement projection (AgrP) in X-bar syntax (Chomsky 1991; Pollock 1989), and also explores a possible connection between object specificity and object agreement. In particular, the theory of agreement formulated in Mahajan (1990) proposes that specificity is a semantic consequence of object agreement.

I show that although object specificity indeed requires two distinct object positions, as proposed originally by Mahajan (1990), this difference cannot be correlated with agreement: in Urdu/Hindi both specific and non-specific objects can in fact agree with the verb. Instead, following Ramchand (1993), I propose that the semantics of specificity interact with the assignment of Strong and Weak Case as proposed by de Hoop (1992), so that nonspecific objects can only appear as complements to a V, while specific objects are generally situated in the Spec of VP.³ Finally, after having demonstrated that a treatment within an AgrP projection, as proposed by Mahajan (1990), cannot account for all the facts, I present an alternative account of agreement, based on Davison (1991). This account does not associate agreement with object specificity, but instead achieves object, as well as subject, agreement in terms of ϕ feature percolation. Arguments carry ϕ feature specifications, which are percolated upwards along with a theta-grid (Speas 1990), but are blocked by the appearance of morphological case.

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²Urdu is spoken primarily in Pakistan and Northern India. Hindi is spoken in large parts of India. The two languages resemble each other closely and could be described as dialects of one another, were it not such a historically and politically explosive issue.

³Generally following Mahajan (1990), I assume that subjects are base-generated VP internally, not in the SPEC of IP. More specifically, I adopt the existence of an AspP argued for in Ramchand (1993) and posit that, as in Bangla, the subject in Urdu/Hindi appears in the SPEC of AspP.

2. Mahajan's Proposals

2.1. Specificity and AgrP

Mahajan (1992) uses the pair of examples in (1) to illustrate the facts of object agreement.⁴ The sentence in (1a) contains a perfective participle, which is taken to be non Case assigning. Objects of non Case assigning participles must move to Spec of Agr_o in order to receive structural Case within Mahajan's system. The verb *par^h-ii* 'write' in (1a) thus agrees with the object *kitaab* 'book'. On the other hand, future forms can assign Case, so the object *ek kitaab* 'a book' in (1b) does not move and does not trigger verb agreement: *par^h-egaa* 'will read' agrees with the masculine subject *Ram*.

- (1) a. raan=ne kitaab par^h-ii
 Ram.M=Erg book.F=Nom read-Perf.F.Sg
 'Ram read the book.'
- b. raam ek kitaab par^h-egaa
 Ram.M=Nom one book.F=Nom read-Fut.M.Sg
 'Ram will read a book.'

Based on the kind of data shown in (1), Mahajan (1990) proposes a theory of agreement that interacts with a theory of Case assignment. Nonspecific objects receive structural Case under government by the verb, while specific objects receive structural Case by moving to the Spec of Agr_o. Mahajan (1992) suggests that since Agr is a pronominal, it is specific. An NP Case-marked by a pronominal Agr must match Agr in specificity features. A consequence of this theory is that both specificity and agreement are mediated by AgrP: only specific objects can appear in Agr, and an object which agrees with a verb is predicted to be necessarily specific. That this cannot be true in Urdu/Hindi is shown in (2). The context of (2a) ensures that the object in (2b) must be interpreted as both indefinite and nonspecific. In (2b) the object *murvii* 'chicken' of the non Case assigning perfect participle *xariid-ii* 'bought' is nonspecific, and yet agrees with the verb.

- (2) a. adnaan aaj raat=kii salen ke-lye
 Adnan.M=Nom today night.F=Gen.F curry for
 murvii cah-taa t^haa
 chicken.F=Nom want-Impr.M.Sg be.Past.3rd.Sg
 'Adnan wanted chicken for tonight's curry.'

⁴Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows. F = feminine; M = masculine; Erg = ergative; Nom = nominative; Gen = genitive; Dat = dative; Acc = accusative; Inst = instrumental; Loc = locative; Inf = infinitive; Obl = oblique; Perf = perfect; Impr = imperfect; Fut = future; Stat = stative; Pres = present; Sg = singular; Pl = plural; pron = pronominal; '-' indicates morpheme boundaries, while '=' is used for clitics.

- b. us=ke xansaame=ue bazaar=se murvii
 pron=Gen.Obl cook.M.Obl=Erg market.M=from chicken.F=Nom
 xariid-ii
 buy-Perf.F.Sg
 'His cook bought a chicken from the market.'

If it is true that only objects in the Spec of Agr_o may agree, then nonspecific objects like *murvii* 'chicken' in (2b) must also be able to appear in this position. Conversely, the unambiguously specific *ko* marked object in (3) does not agree with the verb.⁵ I argue below that the accusative case clitic *ko* in Urdu, as in Turkish (Enç 1991) is a marker of specificity and that specific, *ko* marked, NPs can never trigger verb agreement.

- (3) xansaame=ne bazaar=se murvii-ko xariid-aa
 cook.M.Obl=Erg market.M=from chicken.F=Acc buy-Perf.M.Sg
 'The cook bought a particular/the chicken from the market.'

Thus it is not only the case that nonspecific objects in Urdu/Hindi can show object agreement, but it is also precisely those NPs unambiguously marked as specific, which can never show object agreement. Not only is the correlation between object specificity and object agreement proposed in Mahajan (1990) untenable, but the original intuition that specificity and agreement are somehow linked runs counter to the data. In actual fact, specificity is linked to position and the morphological case marker *ko*.

Moreover, notice that the examples provided by Mahajan in (1) actually appear to be making a distinction between definites and indefinites. Could therefore definiteness, rather than specificity, be at issue? Mahajan seems certain that the relevant notion is specificity, but does not discuss the issue in any detail. On the other hand, other research on Hindi takes for granted that the relevant notion for some of the phenomena discussed in Mahajan (1990, 1991) is definiteness and not specificity (see Singh 1993, T. Mohanan 1992). In light of proposals made by Enç (1991), I show that specificity is indeed the relevant notion, but that it interacts with definiteness. Before that, however, some background on object agreement and its interaction with structural and semantic case marking in Urdu/Hindi is needed.

2.2. Case and Agreement

The basic facts of Urdu/Hindi agreement are most easily summarized by the following generalization (see Gair and Wali 1989, T. Mohanan 1990).

⁵The *chicken* in (3) must refer to some particular chicken, which has already been specified in previous discourse. As such, (3) cannot be used within the context of (2a). This point is returned to later on.

- A verb can only agree with one of its own nominative arguments (agreement is clause-bound).
- If the subject is nominative, the verb agrees with it.
- If the subject is non-nominative, but the object is nominative, the verb agrees with the object.
- If there is no nominative argument, the verb carries the 'default' masculine singular morpheme *-aa*.

Nominative case in my terms, following T. Mohanan (1990), is the one case in Urdu which is phonologically null. All other cases (ergative, accusative, dative, instrumental, etc.) have an overt realization as a case clitic.⁶

As virtually any case clitic is possible on subjects in Urdu/Hindi (see T. Mohanan 1990), there are many situations in which the subject is non-nominative. The generalization about the interaction between case marking and agreement thus is that a verb cannot agree with a direct argument which bears an overt case clitic. Whenever the subject of a given sentence is overtly case marked, object agreement becomes possible. This is illustrated in (4).

- (4) a. *naadyaa xat lik^h-tii hai*
 Nadya.F=Nom letter.M=Nom write-Impf.F.Sg be.Pres.3rd.Sg
 'Nadya writes a letter.'
- b. *naadyaa=ne xat lik^h-aa hai*
 Nadya.F'=Erg letter.M=Nom write-Perf.M.Sg be.Pres.3rd.Sg
 'Nadya has written a letter.'
- c. *naadyaa=ne ciṭṭ^h-ii lik^h-ii hai*
 Nadya.F'=Erg note.F=Nom write-Perf.F.Sg be.Pres.3rd.Sg
 'Nadya has written a note.'
- d. *naadyaa=ne ciṭṭ^h-ii=ko lik^h-aa hai*
 Nadya.F-Erg note.F=Acc write-Perf.M.Sg be.Pres.3rd.Sg
 'Nadya has written a (particular) note.'

In (4a) both the subject *Nadya* and the object *xat* 'letter' are nominative. The verb here agrees with the feminine subject *Nadya*, and not with the masculine object *xat* 'letter'. In the perfective sentences in (4b) and (4c) the subject is marked with the ergative case clitic. The verb therefore agrees with the masculine object *xat* 'letter' in (4b), and with the feminine object *ciṭṭ^h-ii* 'note' in (4c). Finally, (4d) illustrates the situation in which both the subject and the object have an overt case clitic. The verb can agree with neither the

⁶The locative forms an exception. It is possible to have a locative argument not marked with an overt case clitic. For the purposes of this paper, this issue is not relevant.

subject nor the object and therefore carries the 'default' masculine singular agreement morphology *-aa*.

Mahajan (1990, 1991) proposes an analysis of these facts in terms of Spec-Head agreement within AgrP. Agreement between NPs and the verb is mediated by two distinct positions within AgrP: Spec of Agr_s and Spec of Agr_o. All the arguments of a verb are initially base-generated VP-internally. As Urdu/Hindi has relatively free word order, NPs are allowed to move to various Spec positions for various reasons. A very good reason to move is to receive structural Case in one of the Spec of Agr positions.

Mahajan divides the Hindi/Urdu verb system up into three categories: Case assigning forms, optionally non Case assigning forms, and non Case assigning forms. This classification has little to do with the kinds of verbs there are (transitive vs. intransitives, for example), but depends on the particular aspect/tense morphology on a given verb in a given sentence. Case assigning forms are imperfective participles and future forms of verbs. Optionally non Case assigning verbs are mainly represented by infinitives. Non Case assigning verbs consist of perfective participles and psych verbs.⁷ Table (5) shows a summary of the factors involved.

| (5) Verb Type | Case Assigning | Non-nom. Subject | Object Agr. | Object Specificity |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Imperfective | ✓ | No | No | No |
| Future | | | | |
| Perfective | No | Possible | Possible | ✓ |
| Psych Predicates | | | | |
| Infinitives | Optional | | Possible | Possible |

Although it is not quite clear why imperfective participles should be able to assign Case, while perfective participles can never do so, the above classification of verb forms, as well as the particular partitioning of Case which Mahajan assumes, is essential for an expression of the crucial generalization that verbs will only agree with a nominative, unmarked, argument.

Mahajan (1990) proposes that a given NP can have either inherent or structural Case, or both. Structural Case is represented by nominative and

⁷Ergative subjects generally appear in transitive perfective sentences, while dative subjects are usually associated with psych verbs. However, ergative subjects also appear in some intransitive perfective constructions, some perfective complex predicates, and with the *desire infinitive* in the dialect of Urdu spoken in Lahore. Dative subjects also appear in complex predicate constructions (see Butt and King (1990) for details). Given this wider range of constructions, it is not clear that Mahajan's system of Case assigning vs. non Case assigning verbs actually takes care of all the various situations in which non-nominative subjects can occur.

accusative, as is usual, while inherent Case refers to datives and ergatives.⁸ A particular feature of Mahajan's system is that he takes the case clitic *ko* to be representative of only the dative. In the bulk of the literature on Hindi/Urdu (see Comrie 1981, T. Mohanan 1993, for some detailed discussion) two homophonous, but differing, case clitics are posited: dative *ko* and accusative *ko*. The dative *ko* obligatorily appears on indirect objects (goals), while the accusative *ko* optionally appears on direct objects. It has long been noted that direct object NPs describing humans require the accusative *ko*, while it is optional on inanimates (Comrie 1981).⁹ Thus, although the dative *ko* and the accusative *ko* are homophonous in Urdu/Hindi, they appear on different grammatical functions and are governed by differing semantic conditions.

Mahajan's collapse of the Hindi/Urdu accusative and dative into a single dative *ko* therefore does not accurately capture the case system of the language. An accurate characterization can, however, be achieved quite simply within Mahajan's proposal. One could posit two differing inherent Cases: a dative and an accusative (which might be labeled as something else so as not to cause confusion with the structural accusative Case, which has no overt realization, i.e. is phonologically null and is glossed as nominative here). This Case system, in conjunction with movement to AgrP, is now still able to account for Urdu/Hindi object agreement. Only NPs which have either not been assigned structural Case, or which do not have an inherent Case, must move to the Spec of AgrP in order to receive structural Case. The NPs overtly marked with a case clitic by definition have an inherent Case, so they are never obliged to move to Spec of AgrP. In effect, then, the only kinds of NPs which can move to Spec of AgrP are those which do not have an overt case clitic. As a verb can only agree with an NP which is not overtly marked with a case clitic, Mahajan successfully captures the descriptive generalization for verb agreement given at the beginning of this section. However, note that while the generalization for object agreement can be stated quite simply at a morphological level, it is merely instantiated as a side effect of Mahajan's intricate structural account.

⁸The idea that a given NP may have both structural and inherent Case simultaneously is argued for in lexicalist approaches to Hindi/Urdu as well, though under a different guise. T. Mohanan (1990) and Butt and King (1991) argue that the assignment of case to a given NP must make reference to both syntactic and semantic information: grammatical function information (subject, object, etc.) as well as semantic factors such as volitionality, animacy, and goalhood interact in determining the case on a given NP. This division into grammatical function vs. semantic information corresponds roughly to the distinction between structural vs. inherent Case.

⁹The term 'inanimate' includes animals in Urdu/Hindi as well. The distinction is usually made in terms of 'animacy' because many South Asian languages seem to make reference to some kind of animacy hierarchy (Masica 1976). However, they tend to differ in terms of how the hierarchy is divided up. In Malayalam, for example, elephants seem to be able to be 'animate', while mice cannot be (K.P. Mohanan, p.c.). See T. Mohanan (1990) for some discussion and a more detailed listing of relevant references.

The instantiation of an inherent 'accusative' Case also throws light on a significant complication with regard to the claims made as to the correlation between object agreement and object specificity. As mentioned, I argue that the accusative *ko*, as in Turkish (Enç 1991), is actually a marker of specificity. As these specific, *ko* marked, NPs can never trigger verb agreement, the correlation between object specificity and object agreement proposed in Mahajan (1990) cannot hold. The account of object agreement in terms of AgrP should thus be abandoned in favor of an account, such as Davison (1991), which makes direct use of the relevant morphological information.

3. Accusative Case Marking and Object Specificity

Enç (1991) has worked out the distinctions between specificity and definiteness in some detail. The range of issues surrounding the semantics of specificity and definiteness is, of course, quite broad and as yet not completely resolved. I confine myself to a brief discussion of the insights which I adopt from Enç, and which seem relevant for the issue at hand.

Enç (1991) essentially argues that the notion of specificity is related to, but distinct from, the notion of definiteness. She proposes to extend Heim's (1982) theory of definiteness. In Enç's framework, definites must always be specific, while indefinites can be either specific or nonspecific. Definite NPs refer to already known discourse referents. Names, pronouns and definite descriptions are always definite NPs. For indefinite specific NPs, the discourse referent must be distinct from, but included in, previously established discourse referents. The requirement on discourse referents for indefinite nonspecific NPs is stronger than that for indefinite specific NPs – here the discourse referent must be completely unrelated to previously established referents.

Enç also shows that in Turkish the accusative case marker is a marker of specificity. Indefinite objects in Turkish are always unambiguously specific or nonspecific. If an indefinite object is marked with the accusative case, then it must be specific. If not, then it is an indefinite nonspecific object. I propose that the Urdu/Hindi accusative *ko* can similarly be analyzed as a marker of specificity. This is shown in (6). However, as (6a) illustrates, objects which are not marked with the accusative *ko* are not unambiguously nonspecific indefinites as in Turkish.

- (6) a. adnaan=ne roṭii paka-yii
 Adnan.M=Erg bread.F=Nom cook-Perf.F.Sg
 'Adnan made bread.'
 'Adnan made the/a bread.'
- b. adnaan=ne roṭii=ko paka-yaa
 Adnan.M=Erg bread.F=Acc cook-Perf.M.Sg
 'Adnan made a particular/the bread.'

In (6a) the bare NP object *rotii* 'bread' can be interpreted either as a definite, a generic, or even an indefinite, depending on the context (Dayal 1992).¹⁰ However, the *ko* marked object in (6b) must be interpreted either as a specific indefinite (a particular bread), or as a definite (the bread).

As already mentioned, the accusative *ko* in Hindi/Urdu is obligatory on a class of nouns that has roughly been classified as 'animates', where it is not necessarily clear exactly what counts as an animate and what does not. Personal names of people, however, unambiguously count as 'animate'. As (7) shows, the accusative *ko* is obligatory on names in object position.

- (7) adnaan=ne naadyaa=ko/*naadyaa bazaar=me
 Adnan.M=Erg Nadya.F=Acc/Nadya.F=Nom market.M=in
 dek^h-aa
 see-Perf.M.Sg
 'Adnan saw Nadya in the market place.'

I propose that Urdu is exactly like Turkish (Enç 1991) in that if a given item describes AN unambiguously definite (and therefore specific) entity, the accusative *ko* is obligatory. Names, pronouns, and definite descriptions must therefore always be marked with the accusative *ko*. This is illustrated in (8).¹¹

- (8) a. zainab=ne ali=ko/us=ko/us mez=ko dek^h-aa
 Zainab.F=Erg Ali.M=Acc/him=Acc/that table=Acc see-Perf.M.Sg
 'Zainab saw Ali/him/that table.'
 b. zainab=ne *ali/*vo/*vo mez dek^h-aa
 Zainab.F=Erg Ali.M/him/that table see-Perf.M.Sg
 'Zainab saw Ali/him/that table.'

The obligatoriness of the accusative *ko* in certain instances is thus explained best not in terms of an animacy hierarchy, but in terms of referents which must be given unambiguously definite interpretations.

I have already demonstrated in a previous section that nonspecific objects are able to trigger agreement. It cannot therefore be true that all agreeing objects must necessarily be specific, as proposed by Mahajan. In light of the above discussion, it must rather be assumed that the specific reading of an object is correlated with the accusative *ko*, and not with agreement. Consider again the sentences in (9), which make this point very clearly.

¹⁰Dayal (1992) and Porterfield and Srivastav (1988) analyze bare singular NPs as being either referential definites or generics. Within the generic interpretation, however, an NP may receive a derived indefinite reading.

¹¹The demonstrative *us* is the oblique version of *vo*. The use of a case clitic is obligatory with the oblique *us*.

- (9) a. adnaan aaj raat=kii salen ke-lye
 Adnan.M=Nom today night.F=Gen.F curry for
 muryii cah-taa t^haa
 chicken.F=Nom want-Impf.M.Sg bc.Past.3rd.Sg
 'Adnan wanted chicken for tonight's curry.'
 b. us=ke xausaame=ne bazaar=se muryii
 pron=Gen.Obl cook.M.Obl=Erg market.M=from chicken.F=Nom
 xariid-ii
 buy-Perf.F.Sg
 'His cook bought a chicken from the market.'
 c. #us=ke xausaame=ne bazaar=se muryii=ko
 pron=Gen.Obl cook.M=Erg market.M=from chicken.F=Acc
 xariid-aa
 buy-Perf.M.Sg
 'His cook bought a particular chicken from the market.'

The object *muryii* 'chicken' must be interpreted as a nonspecific indefinite in order for (9b) to be felicitous within the context of (9a). Notice that the verb agrees with the object, despite the fact that it is nonspecific. Furthermore, when the object is marked with the accusative *ko*, as in (10), a felicitous reading of the sentence is not possible within the context of (9a). This follows directly from the fact that the accusative *ko* is a marker of specificity and that a specific interpretation of the object *muryii* 'chicken' is not possible within the context of (9a). Notice furthermore that although the object in (10) is specific, the verb cannot agree with it because of the presence of the case clitic *ko*. The correlation between specificity and object agreement as predicted by Mahajan is thus not tenable. Not only are the non-agreeing *ko* marked objects in fact specific, but agreeing objects as in (9b) must also not be necessarily specific.

The table in (10) summarizes the facts connected with agreement, specificity, definites, and case marking established so far.

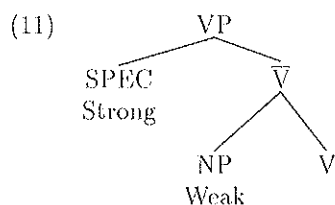
| (10) Object Type | Object Agreement | Definite (specific) | Nonspecific Indef. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Nominative (NP= \emptyset) | Possible (if subject non-Nom.) | Possible | Possible |
| Accusative (NP= <i>ko</i>) | No | ✓ | No |

A nominative (not overtly marked) NP can have several interpretations, including a nonspecific indefinite reading. It is always possible for the verb to agree with a nominative object, whatever its precise interpretation may be.

When an object bears the accusative case clitic *ko*, on the other hand, it must always be interpreted as specific and can never agree with the verb. It is clear that object agreement and object specificity cannot be directly correlated in Hindi/Urdu, although they do interact in the sense that when objects are marked as specific through *ko*, they block object agreement.

4. Specificity and Phrase Structural Position

The pattern of object specificity in Urdu/Hindi can be accounted for elegantly under the approach in Ramchand (1993). Ramchand (1993) provides evidence from Scottish Gaelic and Bangla for two distinct object positions which correspond to the Strong and Weak structural Case assignment possibilities in de Hoop (1992). She argues that Weak structural Case in both Scottish Gaelic and Bangla is assigned in the complement position of the verb, while Strong structural Case is assigned to objects in the Spec of VP. The phrase structure she assumes for Bangla is head-final and has both Infl and Asp projections. A skeletal structure for the VP is shown in (11).¹²



De Hoop (1992) makes the following distinction between Weak and Strong structural Case: Weak Case describes a *predicate-modification* relation, while Strong Case represents the relationship between a predicate and a truly referential argument. A predicate-modification relation does not take the Weak Case marked NP as a 'true' argument. Strong Case is thus exemplified by *read a book*. Weak Case gives rise to a *book-reading* event interpretation, where the *book* is not a 'true' argument of *read*. Ramchand (1993) works out the semantics of the interaction between specificity and Weak and Strong Case in some detail. The generalization is that objects in the Strong structural Case position, Spec of VP, are always interpreted as specific, while only the Weak Case position (complement of V) may be interpreted as nonspecific.¹³

The pattern predicted by Ramchand (1993) is clearly instantiated in Hindi/Urdu. Dayal (1992) and Porterfield and Srivastav (1988) examine both

¹²Note that the Spec of VP in (11) is not a derived object position. Under Ramchand's (1993) proposal, objects are base-generated in either as complements of V, or in Spec of VP.

¹³The relationship is actually a little more complicated. In Scottish Gaelic specific interpretations of Weak Case marked objects are also possible under certain circumstances. However, this is not relevant in terms of the data in this paper.

singular and plural bare NPs in Hindi in some detail. In particular, they show that the Hindi bare singular object can be interpreted either as a referential definite, *the book*, or as an indefinite, *a book*, which is derived from a more basic generic reading, *books*. When the bare singular in object position has an indefinite reading, as in the first reading of (12), it is analyzed as an instantiation of a kind-level interpretation ('book-reading'). When the object is definite, on the hand, an individual-level reading of (12) is instantiated.

- (12) *anu kitaab paṛh rah-ii hai*
 Anu.F=Nom book.F=Nom write Stat-Perf.F.Sg be.Pres.Sg
 'Anu is reading a book/books.'
 'Anu is reading the book.'

Dayal (1992) refers to these types of constructions as 'incorporated bare singulars', which refer to a general event of 'book-reading'. This analysis bears a strong resemblance to the predicate-modification analysis of de Hoop: when an object like *kitaab* 'book' in (12) has a kind-level reading, it can be said to enter into a predicate modifying relationship with the verb. I argue that in Urdu/Hindi, just as in Bangla, such predicate-modifying objects appear as a sister to the V. When a bare singular is used to refer to an individual book, on the other hand, the object *kitaab* 'book' appears in the Spec of VP, where it receives Strong structural Case, and must be interpreted as specific.

Two distinct phrase structure positions for objects in Urdu/Hindi not only provide a nice account for differences in interpretations of bare singular object NPs, but also make sense of some other syntactic facts. Dayal (1992), Mahajan (1990), T. Mohanan (1992), and Singh (1993) notice that indefinite nonspecific objects cannot scramble away from the verb. This is illustrated by (13). Again, (13a) sets up a context which requires that the object *muryii* 'chicken' be interpreted as nonspecific and indefinite in order for the sentence to be felicitous. Because the object *muryii* 'chicken' can only be interpreted as specific when it is scrambled as in (13b) (T. Mohanan 1992, Singh 1993), the sentence in (13b) is bad within the context of (13a).

- (13) a. *adnaan aaj raat=kii salen ke-liye*
 Adnan.M=Nom today night.F=Gen.F curry for
muryii cah-taa t^haa
 chicken.F=Nom want-Impl.M.Sg be.Past.3rd.Sg
 'Adnan wanted chicken for tonight's curry.'
- b. *#us=ke xansaame=ne muryii bazaar=se*
 pron=Gen.Obl cook.M.Obl=Erg chicken.F=Nom market.M=from
xariid-ii
 buy-Perf.F.Sg
 'His cook bought a chicken from the market.'

If nonspecific objects are sisters of the V in a structure such as the one in (11), while specific objects are in the Spec of VP, then the scrambling facts fall out. According to de Hoop (1992:139), Weak Case is only licensed in the complement of V position, both at D-structure and at S-structure. For an object to be interpretable as nonspecific, it must remain in the complement of V position. Specific objects, on the other hand, are able to scramble because Strong Case need only be assigned in the Spec of VP at D-structure.¹⁴

Another type of evidence for two distinct object positions comes from the contrast in (14). Here the adverbial *jab b^hii* 'whenever' is used to explicitly differentiate between the two distinct object positions. In both sentences, the object *gaarii* 'car' agrees with the predicate.¹⁵ In both sentences the context requires that the object *gaarii* 'car' have a nonspecific reading. However, only (14a) is wellformed. Here the object *gaarii* 'car' is adjacent to the verb, assigned Weak Case, and is therefore able to have a nonspecific reading. In (14b) the adverbial *jab b^hii* 'whenever' intervenes between the object and the verb. The object here cannot be interpreted as nonspecific, as required by the context, because it is in the Spec of VP. The sentence is therefore meaningless.

(14) a. muj^e jab b^hii gaarii calaa-nii paṛ-tii
 I.Dat when emph car.F=Nom drive-Inf.F.Sg fall-Inf.F.Sg
 hai, m̄ai kaalii calaa-tii h̄u
 be.Pres.3rd.Sg I=Nom black.F drive-Inf.F.Sg be.Pres.1st.Sg
 'Whenever I have to drive a car (car-drive), I drive a black one.'

b. #muj^e gaarii jab b^hii calaa-nii paṛ-tii
 I.Dat car.F=Nom when emph drive-Inf.F.Sg fall-Inf.F.Sg
 hai, m̄ai kaalii calaa-tii h̄u
 be.Pres.3rd.Sg I=Nom black.F drive-Inf.F.Sg be.Pres.1st.Sg
 'Whenever I have to drive a (particular) car, I drive a black one.'

The proposals in Ramchand (1993) clearly allow an insightful account of Urdu/Hindi object specificity. In particular, although Ramchand posits Spec-head agreement for Scottish Gaelic and Bangla, the proposal is not necessarily tied to Spec-head agreement, and in fact distances itself from the necessity of an AgrP projection. Thus, although both Ramchand and Mahajan posit two distinct object positions to account for specificity effects, the proposals differ in that Mahajan mediates object agreement via the same structural position as object specificity, and therefore does not arrive the correct generalization for Hindi/Urdu.

¹⁴See de Hoop (1992) for a more detailed discussion of this phenomena.

¹⁵See Butt (1993) for a detailed analysis of infinitive agreement in Urdu/Hindi.

5. An Alternative View of Agreement

Davison's (1991) approach to object agreement in Hindi/Urdu takes agreement to be a case of ϕ feature percolation. Arguments carry ϕ feature specifications, which are percolated upward along with a theta-grid (Speas 1990). Case clitics block ϕ features. If more than one ϕ feature is percolated upward, only the leftmost one results in agreement on the verb. Without invoking Spec-head agreement, this approach captures the essential generalization that verbs can only agree with a nominative (not overtly case marked) argument.

Consider the sentences in (15) again. In (15a) the verb agrees with the subject *Ram*. In (15b) and (15c) the verb agrees with the object *muryii* 'chicken', which is nonspecific in (15b) and specific in (15c).

- (15) a. raam ek kitaab paṛ^h-egaa
 Ram.M=Nom one book.F=Nom read-Fut.M.Sg
 'Ram will read a book.'
- b. xansaame=ne bazaar=se muryii xariid-ii
 cook.M.Obl=Erg market.M=from chicken.F=Nom buy-Perf.F.Sg
 'His cook bought a chicken from the market.'
- c. xansaame=ne muryii bazaar=se xariid-ii
 cook.M.Obl=Erg chicken.F=Nom market.M=from buy-Perf.F.Sg
 'His cook bought a chicken from the market.'

The verb *paṛ^h* 'read' in (15a) takes two arguments, which percolate upwards through a theta-grid. As the argument slots in the theta-grid are satisfied by the sister of the V (*kitaab* 'book') and the NP in Spec of AspP (*Ram*), in its upward journey, the agreement features of the NPs are included in the theta-grid and percolate upwards as well. When it comes time to 'discharge' the agreement features in both Infl and Asp, the theta-grid for (15a) contains ϕ features for both *Ram* and *kitaab* 'book'. Under Davison's (1991) proposal, only the ϕ features on the leftmost argument in the grid, *Ram*, are used to determine verb agreement, so the agreement morphology in both Infl and Asp shows subject agreement. In (15b) and (15c) the theta-grid also contains two argument positions, which are satisfied by the NPs in complement to V for (15b) and Spec of VP for (15c), and the subject NP in Spec of AspP. However, although the theta-grid positions are satisfied by these NPs, the agreement features of the subject *cook* are not percolated upwards with the theta-grid. The ϕ features here are blocked, structurally, by the ergative case-clitic *ne*. Thus, only the agreement features of the object *muryii* 'chicken' are percolated upwards with the theta-grid and object agreement results.

6. Conclusion

Within Mahajan's (1990) theory of agreement, it is predicted that object agreement in Hindi/Urdu can be correlated with object specificity in the sense that objects which agree with the verb must be situated in Spec of Agr_o, and are therefore also taken to be always specific. This paper has shown that it is not only possible to have nonspecific agreeing objects in Urdu/Hindi, but that objects explicitly marked as specific actually never trigger agreement. The postulated correlation between specificity and agreement through a derived object position in AgrP is therefore untenable. Instead, object agreement must be achieved through an analysis like Davison (1991), which does not rely on Spec-head agreement. Mahajan's (1990) essential insight that two distinct object positions are needed at phrase structure, on the other hand, is crucial for a successful account of object specificity. The effects of object specificity in Urdu/Hindi are accounted for independently from object agreement through Ramchand's (1993) proposal, drawing on work by Travis (1991), and de Hoop (1992), that there are two positions in which objects receive structural Case: a complement of a V receives Weak structural Case from the verb, while an NP in Spec of VP position is assigned Strong structural Case. As only NPs which are assigned Weak structural Case may receive nonspecific interpretations under this system, several semantic and structural properties of Hindi/Urdu nonspecifics are elegantly accounted for.

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