

CASE AND AGREEMENT IN KHORTH α *1

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Abstract:

The interrelationship of case and agreement is a well-known fact in the languages of the world. It is this interrelation of the case and agreement that creates the space for post-/pre-position to pitch in between the two and show some alternative function of case vis-à-vis agreement and the post-/pre-position and agreement. Das (2006) has shown as to how this relationship can lead to the single Vs. dual system of agreement in different languages of the world, in particular languages of India. The present paper is an attempt to analyse some such relevant issues of case, agreement and postposition in a language called 'K^hor^t^h α ' which is spoken in Santhal Pragana, Chotanagpur region called Madhupur and its surrounding areas. This language embraces many unique linguistic features which have always surprised researchers in linguistics. Das (2013) has shown how this language has a full-fledged system of 'ergativity' while the dominant languages spoken inside and outside of the area don't have any sign of ergativity. In this paper, I want to explain some very important points regarding case, agreement and post-position in K^hor^t^h α which can motivate the researchers in linguistics to rethink about the established stereotype concepts of case and agreement in Indian languages.

1. Introduction:

The 'systems of agreement in natural languages' can be explained as those phenomena that exhibit the property of specific morphological form of a word appearing in a sentence with respect to the presence or absence of some other words elsewhere in the sentence. This is probably why Lehmann (1988:55) prefers to call 'agreement' to be referential in nature. It is referential because it helps to retrieve the referent(s). Agreement does this by encoding the information of grammatical

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properties for its referent(s) (i.e. the NPs) into the morpheme(s) that appear(s) with the verbal element in the sentence. In other words, it deals with the distribution of an inflected word (i.e. the verb) with respect to the properties of other words (i.e. the PNG³ of the Sub/Obj NP_s) in the sentence. Agreement helps us to explore and explicate how languages have been structured. There are a number of definitions that have been put forward to account for the phenomenon. A commonly accepted definition of ‘agreement’ in the literature can be summed up (adopted from Lehmann (1988: 57) with some modifications) as:

2. Definition of ‘Agreement’:

Constituent $Y_{(verb)}$ agrees with constituent $X_{(NP)}$ (in a category Z) iff the following conditions hold true:

- a. There is a syntactic relationship between X and Y .
- b. X belongs to a subcategory z (the nominal inflections) of a grammatical category Z (the verbal inflection), and X 's belonging to z is independent of the presence or nature of Y .
- c. There is a mutual sharing of the grammatical features/values between the nominal and verbal inflections in the clause.
- d. z is expressed on Y (as some verbal inflections i.e. Z) and forms a constituent with it (i.e. VP).

Table-1

We could interpret the above definition in the following way, the verb (i.e. Y) agrees with an NP (i.e. X) in a category Z (i.e. the bound

³ PNG is a commonly accepted abbreviated form that refers to Person, Number & Gender. It is also known as \emptyset -features (or phi features). For example, ‘the boy’ will get the PNG value as 3MS (i.e. 3Person Masculine and Singular).

morpheme(s)⁴). The first condition is very clear that there exists a syntactic relationship between the verb and the NPs in the sentence. The condition (b) demands that there is an underlying relationship between the phi-features (i.e. the PNG represented as ‘z’ here) and the noun phrase in the sentence and this relationship is independent of the nature or kind of the verb (i.e. verb being transitive or intransitive etc.). The implication of condition (c) entails that the ‘z’ (the nominal inflection) is a subcategory of the grammatical category ‘Z’ (the verbal inflection) and there is a mutual sharing of these features when agreement is mediated between nominal and verbal elements in the sentence. The last condition entails about the formation of a constituent (i.e. the VP) and this happens when the bound form(s) or the null marker of agreement feature appear(s) with the verb with regard to its relation with the subject or object or sometimes both in the sentence.

2. Distribution of ‘Agreement’:

If we understand the detailed explanation of the definition of agreement by Lehmann (ibid) and try to apply the definition, it will give us the following flow-chart of the agreement-system that can be attested by the languages of the world. Let’s see the flow-chart and then we will explain each of the sub-system one by one:

⁴ Bound morpheme in case of languages other than Isolating type of languages. Morpheme could be more than one in case of languages where the ‘agreement markers’ are more than one and they show agreement with SUB and OBJ both. Maithili is one example in the present work that requires more than one bound morphemes to encode the agreement with SUB and OBJ.

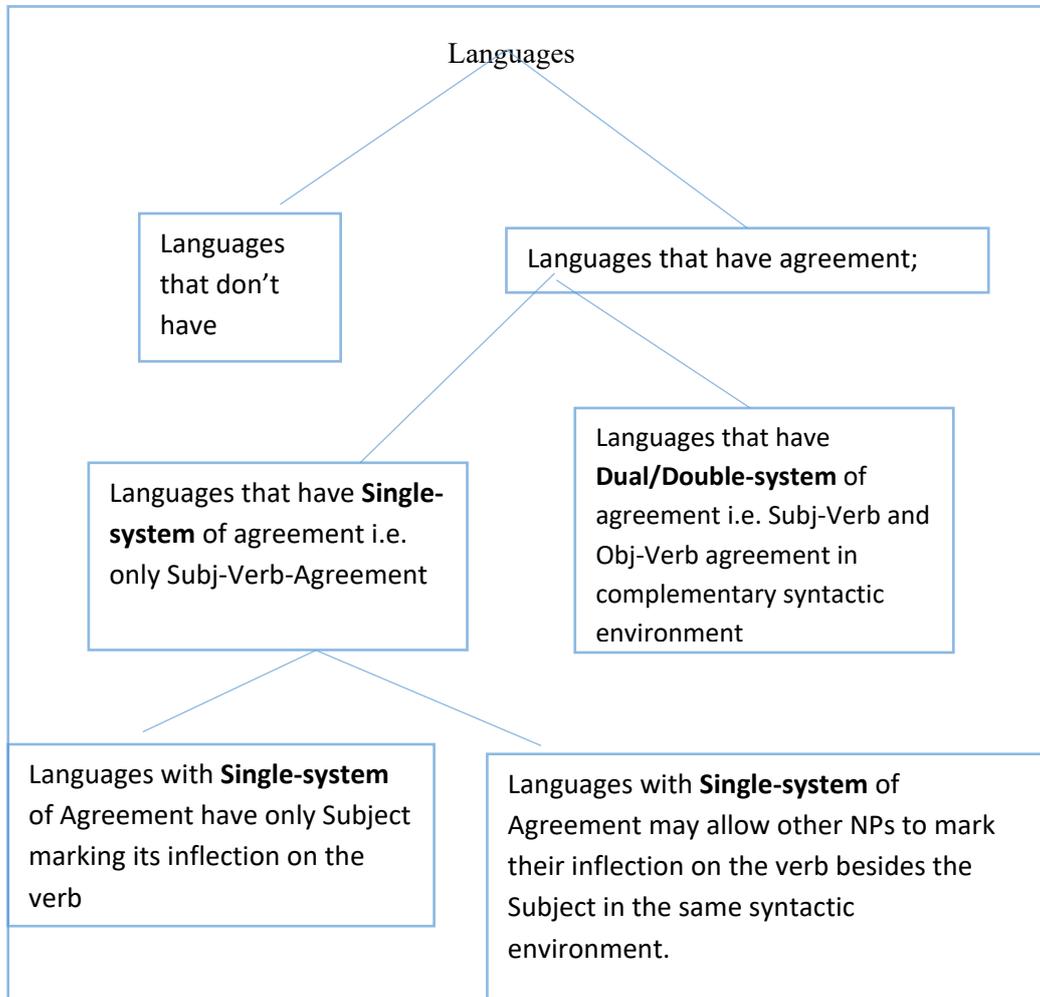


Table-2

The explanation of the above flowing-chart that shows how different systems of agreement are distributed in languages of the world and how they embody different system of agreement as the structural properties at different levels of morpho-syntax. The first bifurcation of the languages with regard to agreement as a feature takes place into two type; type one which puts languages together in which there is absolutely no agreement of any phi-features of the subject to the verb, while other type

enumerates the languages in which there is at least one or all phi-features of the subject that is (are) matched on the verbal element at the time of conjugation. The first type of languages such as Korean, Liangmai, Bodo, Karbi, Deori etc. may have the TAM (i.e. tense, aspect and mood) properties on the verbal element but there is no marking of PNG of the subject/object on the verbal element. The counterpart type of languages may have either one or all the phi-features of subject NP marked on the verbal element besides the TAM that is expressed on the verb. Majority of the languages of the world fall into the latter type, for example while English, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Magahi etc. may have only number and (or) person feature(s) marked on the verb, whereas languages like French, Spanish, German and Italian etc. mark all phi-features (i.e. PNG⁵) of the subject NP on the verb in their sentences.

The second bifurcation of languages into different types with regard to agreement takes place when some languages show up only 'subject-verb-agreement' while others display not only the 'subject-verb-agreement' but also the 'object-verb-agreement.' Das (2006) has called these two types of languages as 'languages with single-system of agreement' and 'languages with dual-system of agreement.' The motivation for such single and dual system is primarily to care about the term 'system' which is created on the basis of mutual exclusiveness of the syntactic environments where one system of agreement competes with another. For example, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Awadhi etc. would be classified as languages with single-system of agreement i.e. 'subject-verb-agreement.' However, languages like Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Nepali etc. would be classified as languages with dual-system of agreement i.e. having both the 'subject-verb-agreement' and 'object-verb-agreement' and their syntactic environments in which they mediate agreement with either subject or object are so well classified that they compete each other in a complementary distribution, which means, in a syntactic environment wherever one system i.e. Subj-V-A occurs, the other one i.e. Obj-V-A can never occur. Thus, the languages mentioned above show two different systems of agreement i.e. 'subject-verb-agreement' and 'object-verb-agreement' and these two systems have to be explained

⁵ PNG is commonly known in linguistics as Person, Number and Gender features of NP.

with different grammatical rules and syntactic environments where ‘case-marking⁶ on the NPs’ plays an important role.

The third and the last major bifurcation of different types of languages that takes place with regard to the agreement is what has been shown in table-2 at the bottom. There are languages such as English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Awadhi etc. in which subject NP alone marks either one or all phi-features on the verb, and there are no circumstances or contexts where any other NPs of the sentence can show or mark its referent on the verb. Thus, these languages have only subject-verb agreement and are thus classified as having ‘single-system of agreement.’ However, there are many languages such as Maithili, Khorṭ^{hα}, Kurmali, Hmar and Manda etc. (languages spoken in India⁷), Nez Perce (spoken in Idaho, USA), Mapudungun (spoken in Chile), Mangarayi (an Australian language) and Burushaski⁸ (a language spoken in the Himalayas) where the verb primarily takes the phi-features of the subject NP to show its agreement in the sentence, nevertheless, some other NPs can also mark their referents on verb due to some pragmatic requirements of the sentence. Das (2006) has termed such phenomenon as ‘simultaneous marking of subject and object agreement’ on the verb. The word ‘simultaneous marking’ helps to separate this kind of agreement from other existing and well-defined systems of agreement for subject and object where the syntactic environments are complementary to each other i.e. their syntactic environments are mutually exclusive to each other.

But, in case of simultaneous marking of agreement, there is no mutually exclusive syntactic environment. Thus, whether such simultaneous marking of subject and object NPs on the verb should be called ‘subject-verb-agreement’ and ‘object-verb-agreement’ or not, this certainly remains a topic of further research in linguistics. Baker (2103) has rightly observed, ‘....*some putative instances of object agreement could have quite a different source: they could be phonologically weak pronouns that are attracted to the verb (“cliticized”), not true agreement on par with finite verb agreement and adjectival agreement.....I simply note that the topic is important because such*

⁶ See Das (1997) ‘Agreement in Hindi-Urdu’ for a detailed account of such phenomenon.

⁷ See Subbarao (2001) ‘Agreement in South Asian languages and minimalist inquiries: the framework’ for further details.

⁸ See Baker, Mark C. (2013) for further details.

clitics may easily be mistaken for true object agreement (and vice versa), and learning to distinguish between clitics and agreement is important if we are to have realistic chances of identifying universals of agreement’ (Baker, 2013; Pp. 15). Since, Khorṭ^hα (a language spoken in Choṭa Nagpur, Santhal Pragana, Jharkhand) has similar simultaneous marking of subject and object NPs on the verb, it befits to analyze the ‘agreement in Khorṭ^hα’ in this research paper. But before we start discussing the agreement pattern in Khorṭ^hα, let us see the distributions of ‘tense and aspect’ in Khorṭ^hα. This would help us to refer to some unique morphological properties of subject and object NPs and their marking on the verb respectively.

4. Tense and Aspects in Khorṭ^hα :

The tense and aspect markings in Khorṭ^hα follow a regular pattern and the present research paper is not about the TAM system in Khorṭ^hα, so, I would like to give a tabulated version of tense and aspect marking in Khorṭ^hα and continue with the discussion of system of agreement afterwards.

Let us see the tabulated version of different tense markings in Khorṭ^hα:

Tense markers in Khorṭ ^h α			
verb: ‘k ^h elel’, ‘to play’			
Person	Present tense	Past tense	Future tense
1 st P.S/Pl (ham/ham səb)	k ^h el-e-c ^h -I-ye	k ^h el-ə-l-I-ye	k ^h el-b-e
2 nd P.S/Pl (tḍ / tḍ səb)	k ^h el-e-c ^h -ī	k ^h el-ə-l ^h -ī	k ^h el-b ^h -ī
2 nd P.S.Hon (tḍhḗ)	k ^h el-e-c ^h -o	k ^h el-ə-l ^h -o	k ^h el-b ^h -o
3 rd P.S/Pl (u / u səb)	k ^h el-e-c ^h -e	k ^h el-l-e	k ^h el-t-e
3 rd P.S.Hon (un ^h ī)	k ^h el-e-c ^h -ē	k ^h el-l-ē	k ^h el-t-ē

Table-3

The table given above show the distribution of tense morpheme in Khorṭ^hα language. The distribution is very symmetrical and shows a neat pattern of an agglutinating type of language where morphemes are evenly distributed for their semantic targets. The present paper also doesn't concern itself much with the aspectual marking on the verbal element in the language and thus, it would be better that we put some more tables here for aspects in Khorṭ^hα and then move on with the main discussion of agreement facts in the language.

Aspect markers in Khorṭ ^h α (Present)			
verb: 'k ^h ε-y-el', 'to eat' / 'k ^h ε-l' in the fast speech			
Person	Present indefinite	Present continuous	Present Perfect
1 st P.S/Pl (hām/hām səb ^h ī)	k ^h ε-c ^h -I-ye	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h I-ye	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h i-ye
2 nd P.S/Pl (tō / tō səb ^h ī)	k ^h ε-c ^h -ī	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h -ī	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -ī
2 nd P.S.Hon (tōhē)	k ^h ε-c ^h -o	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h -o	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -o
3 rd P.S/Pl (wē / wē səb ^h ī)	k ^h ε-c ^h -e	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h -e	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -e
3 rd P.S.Hon (un ^h ī)	k ^h ε-c ^h -ə-t ^h ī	k ^h ε-rəhə-c ^h -ə-t ^h ī	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -ə-t ^h ī

Table-4

The above tabulated form of aspectual markings in Khorṭ^hα indicates that the language seems to fall into the type of what is famously known as 'agglutinative language' according to the morphological typology. Since the language marks only the person feature out of the phi-features, the inflection marking on the verb is not complex, and it is due to this simplicity, each morpheme can be easily matched or identified for its semantic distribution. Let us see the aspect markings of Khorṭ^hα in other tenses:

Aspect markers in Khorṭ^{hα} (Past)			
verb: 'k ^h ε-y-el', 'to eat' / 'k ^h ε-l' in the fast speech			
Person	Past indefinite	Past continuous	Past Perfect
1 st P.S/Pl (hām/hām səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-l-ɪ-ye	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h e-li-ye	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h e-li-ye
2 nd P.S/Pl (tḍ / tḍ səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-l ^h -ī	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h e-l ^h -ī	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h e-l ^h ī
2 nd P.S.Hon (tḍhḗ)	k ^h α-l ^h -o	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h -o	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -o
3 rd P.S/Pl (wḗ / wḗ səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-l-k-e	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h e-le	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h e-le
3 rd P.S.Hon (ʊn ^h ī)	k ^h α-l-k ^h ī	k ^h ε-rəhəl-c ^h e-l ^h ī	k ^h ε-lel-c ^h -ə-l ^h ī

Table-5

Aspect markers in Khorṭ^{hα} (Future)			
verb: 'k ^h ε-y-el', 'to eat' / 'k ^h ε-l' in the fast speech			
Person	Future indefinite	Future continuous	Future Perfect
1 st P.S/Pl (hām/hām səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-b-e	k ^h ε-rəhəl-ho-b-e	k ^h ε-lel-ho-be
2 nd P.S/Pl (tḍ / tḍ səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-b ^h -ī	k ^h ε-rəhəl-hō-b ^h -ī	k ^h ε-lel-hō-b ^h ī
2 nd P.S.Hon (tḍhḗ)	k ^h α-b ^h -o	k ^h ε-rəhəl-ho-b ^h -o	k ^h ε-lel-ho-b ^h -o
3 rd P.S/Pl (wḗ / wḗ səb ^h ī)	k ^h α-t-e	k ^h ε-rəhəl-ho-t-e	k ^h ε-lel-ho-t-e
3 rd P.S.Hon (ʊn ^h ī)	k ^h α-t ^h -ī	k ^h ε-rəhəl-ho-t ^h -ī	k ^h ε-lel-ho-t ^h ī

Table-6

The tables (4-6) illustrate the aspectual markings for different person in different tenses. There is a great deal of regularity in terms of marking different aspects in different tenses in Khorṭ^{hα}.

5. Patterns of agreement in Khorṭ^hα:

5.1 Agreement in intransitive sentences:

In order to understand the patterns of agreement in Khorṭ^hα, we would first discuss the agreement facts in intransitive sentences. Khorṭ^hα, like many Indian languages, marks the person feature out of the phi-features and the honorific property of subject NP in the sentence.

Let us first see the examples given below:

1. hαm g^hor jε- c^h-i-ye
I-1S-Nom house go be-pres-imp-1S
'I go home.'
2. tō g^hor jε- c^h-ī
you-2S-Nom house go be-pres-imp-2S
'You go home.'
3. tōhē g^hor jε- c^h-o
you-2S.Hon-Nom house go be-pres-imp-2S.Hon
'You(Hon) go home.'
4. u g^hor jε- c^h-e
s/he-3S-Nom house go be-pres-imp-3S
'S/he goes home.'
5. u-n^hī g^hor jε- c^h-ə-t^hī
s/he-3S.Hon-Nom house go be-pres-imp-3S.Hon
'S/he (Hon) goes home.'
6. hαm-səb g^hor jε- c^h-i-ye
we-1Pl-Nom house go be-pres-imp-1Pl
'We go home.'

The above examples (1-6) set the basic distribution of agreement-pattern in Khorṭ^hα. As it has been stated earlier that the language only marks

the person and honorific features of subject NP on the verb, this aspect has clearly been shown in the above examples. The number, one of the phi-features, does not play any role here as we can see this clearly by comparing the examples (1) and (6). Unlike Hindi, Khorṭ^hα does not have distinct pronouns for first person plural or third person plural. All pronouns are converted into plural by the use of a numeral adjective - 'səb', 'all.'

5.2 Agreement in Dative subject-construction:

It is interesting to examine the agreement fact of Khorṭ^hα in sentences with dative subject. There is a structural connection between the 'dative subject' and agreement facts in languages that allow both 'subject-verb agreement' and 'object-verb agreement' as two different systems⁹ to take place. If we examine some Indian languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Nepali and Marathi etc. which maintain the distinct grammatical gender for every object, the dative subject sentences will facilitate the object-verb agreement in the sentence. However, if we examine some other Indian languages such as Bhojpuri, Magahi, Awadhi, Bundeli etc. which don't have the grammatical gender as an inherent semantic property of every object, the verb in the sentences with dative subject will show 'default agreement¹⁰.' Let's see some examples from these two types of languages before we discuss the third type of language with unique property of sentences with dative subject in Khorṭ^hα:

⁹ Das (2012 and 2013), while working on 'Agreement in Kinnauri' and 'Ergativity in Khorṭ^hα' respectively has explained how two different linguistic notions i.e. case and agreement have been misconceived by researchers working on Indian languages.

¹⁰ Default agreement is a form of verbal marker that appears with the verb when there is no NP in the sentence to show the agreement with. In Hindi and many other related languages, the default agreement is third person, masculine and singular i.e. '-α'. The marker may vary in languages but what is understood as 'default agreement form' is a fixed and non-changing static morphological form.

agreement marking in Bhojpuri in different tenses that is given in a tabulated form above (table-7). So, the sentence (8) is a representative sample of language(s) which does not have grammatical gender and has only subject verb agreement, thus, when there is an overt dative case with the subject NP in the sentence, the verb displays the so-called ‘default agreement’ which remains fixed or uninflected with the regard to the change of subject in the sentence.

5.2. c Dative subject in Khorṭ^hα:

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 9. | həmra | b ^h uk ^h | laɣəl | c ^h -e |
| | I-1S-Dat | hunger | seem/feel | be-pres-1S |
| | ‘I am hungry.’ | | | |
| | | | | |
| 10. | tōra | b ^h uk ^h | laɣəl | c ^h -o |
| | You-2S-Dat | hunger | seem/feel | be-pres-2S |
| | ‘You are hungry.’ | | | |
| | | | | |
| 11. | okra | b ^h uk ^h | laɣəl | c ^h -e |
| | S/he-3S-Dat | hunger | seem/feel | be-pres-3S |
| | ‘S/he is hungry.’ | | | |
| | | | | |
| 12. | tōhra | b ^h uk ^h | laɣəl | c ^h -o |
| | You-2S.Hon | hunger | seem/feel | be-pres-2S.Hon |
| | ‘You (Hon) are hungry.’ | | | |
| | | | | |
| 13. | unk ^h ra | b ^h uk ^h | laɣəl | c ^h -e ^h |
| | S/he-3S.Hon | hunger | seem/feel | be-pres-3S.Hon |
| | ‘S/he(Hon) is hungry.’ | | | |

These examples (9-13) from Khorṭ^hα show something different compared to the two types of languages and treatment of dative subject with regard to agreement pattern that we saw earlier. Unlike the earlier two types of languages, where one showed the object-verb agreement in case of dative subject and other showed the default-agreement, the structure of Khorṭ^hα dative subject shows another possibility that the

subject-verb agreement can be retained across the board despite the fact that subject is overtly case marked with dative. This brings in a third type of language¹² where the dative case marking on the subject does not block its agreement with the verb. This is not something utterly unusual, but very rare and which has been noticed by some researchers¹³. However, it is true that the structure of dative-subject adds a third type which entails that the subject can show agreement with the verb even if it is overtly case marked and thus does not have anything like ‘default agreement’ as a system of agreement in this type of languages.

5.3 Agreement in Transitive sentences:

14. hɑm-ẽ ego kəhɑni pəɾ^h-e c^hi-ye
I-1S-Erg one story-3S read-Pres be-Imp-Pres-1P
‘I read a story.’

15. tõ ego ciɽ^hi lɪk^h rəhəl c^h-ĩ
You-2S-Erg one letter-3S write Prog be-Imp-Pres-2S
‘You are writing a letter.’

These examples (14-15) entail similar trait of agreement facts in Khorṭ^hɑ which we observed in case of the agreement patterns in dative subject construction earlier. Das (2013; Pp321) has demonstrated that Khorṭ^hɑ is a fully ergative language and he shows how the appearance of the ‘ergative’ case with the subject NP is conditioned with the ± transitivity of the verb in the language. This is, in fact, what the definition of ergativity articulated by Dixon (1994;Pp 1) explains.

The other point that these examples highlights is the distribution of ergative case¹⁴ i.e. it is marked with all tenses and aspects in Khorṭ^hɑ.

¹² If we find out that the Khorṭ^hɑ type of dative-subject construction is attested in other languages too.

¹³ Subbarao K.V. (2001) discusses the examples from some Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian as well as Indo-Aryan languages where despite the fact that subject NP is overtly case-marked, the subject triggers agreement with the verb.

¹⁴ Das, P. K. (2013) has given a detailed account of how ‘ergativity’ functions in Khorṭ^hɑ. In brief, it is marked by a phonological contrast of ‘nasalization’ ‘-x̃’ if the x is the word ends in a vowel or else there is a suffix -e/-i that is added

took more than three decades for the researchers to realize that these implicational correlations don't intersect even in the languages that have been mentioned above. It was Subbarao (2001) who first reported in his seminal paper that a case marked NP in the sentence can trigger agreement with the verb even in some Indo-Aryan languages.

When Dixon (1994;Pp1) defined ergativity, he makes no reference to agreement phenomenon in his definition of ergativity. His definition reads as '*...The term 'ergativity' is, in its most generally accepted sense, used to describe a grammatical pattern in which the subject of an intransitive clause is treated in the same way as the object of a transitive clause, and differently from transitive subject. The term was first used to refer to the case marking on constituents of a noun phrase; 'ergative' is the case marking transitive subject, contrasting with another case-originally called 'nominative' but nowadays 'absolutive'- marking intransitive subject and transitive object.*' If one pays close attention to the definition, there is no reference that Dixon makes towards agreement in his definition. Thus, one doesn't get a clear picture as to when and who conceived this idea of implicationally correlating the agreement and the ergativity. This has, of course, caused many disadvantages and in fact even harms to the languages such as Mizo, Hmar, Ao, Thadou-kuki etc. spoken in North-eastern part of India and belong to Tibeto-Burman language of family.

Thus, the term “mismodeling” demands that different grammatical concepts like agreement and post-positions call for separate categorical rethink. Even if these two concepts implicationally correlate to each other, we shouldn't advocate this correlation as a benchmark generalization or a yardstick to evaluate other languages, especially languages from different family.

Let's see some examples and discuss the patterns of agreement in some languages from India and elsewhere too.

5.5 Agreement for discourse marking in languages:

5.5.a Discourse agreement in Maithili

Let us examine the following sentences in Maithili

21. o_i to-rα_j dek^h -əl-t^hu_i -n_j
 he-3S.H.Nom you-2S.NH-Acc see Pst-3S-H 2S-NH
 'He(Hon) saw you(NH).'

22. t̥i_i hʊn-kɑ_j dek^h -əl-hʊ_i -n^h_j
you-2S.NH.Nom he-3S-H-Acc see Pst-2S.NH 3S-H
'You(NH) saw him(H).'
23. həm_i tohər_j bɑbʊ-ji-kə_k dek^h -əl-i_i -əʊ_j -n^h_k
I- your- father- see Pst- 2S.NH 3S.H
1S.Nom 2S.NH 3S.H.Acc 1S
'I saw your(NH) father(H).'
24. həm_i əhã-k_j bɑbʊ-ji-kə_k dek^h -əl-i_i -t^hʊ_j -n^h_k
I- your- father- see Pst- 2S.H 3S.H
1S.Nom 2S.H 3S.H.Acc 1S
'I saw your(H) father(H).'
- (data have been taken from Yadav 1997 (with modified IPA))

These examples (21-24) from Maithili are fantastic pieces of evidence of the cognitional power of human mind. The complex structure of Maithili and its agreement pattern speaks volumes of the complex thinking process of Maithili speakers. The linguistic discourse of Maithili is its complex and rigid honorificity. The honorific markers in the language are structured in such a way that the sentences immediately tell the complex message of who did what and in what context. The social and pragmatic relationship of society is not amicably handled by the markings of honorificity and the language manages this complex task through a linguistic process of encoding the simultaneous marking of different NPs' referents on the verb. There are not just one or two but even three different discourse markings of different NPs possible in Maithili. But, these different referent markers do not create different systems of agreement. Maithili is still known for its predominant subject-verb agreement system, and thus no one calls or terms these instances as 'object-verb agreement' in Maithili.

Let us see some more examples from other languages where the discourse agreement prevails due to some other structural or contextual demands by the speakers of the language:

5.5. b Discourse agreement in Kurmali¹⁶:

25. okə_ri gɪlɑs_j-ɽɑ b^hɑ̃ŋ-l-e_j-i_i
 he-3MS.Gen glass.3FS.Def break-Pst.3FS.3MS
 ‘His glass broke.’

26. ok^hə_ri gɪlɑs_j-ɽɑ b^hɑ̃ŋ-l-e_j-in_i
 he-3MPI.Gen glass.3FS.Def break-Pst.3FS.3MPI
 ‘Their glass broke.’

27. tor_i beɽɑ-ɽɑy ok^hə_rj beɽi-ɽi-ke mɑri de-l-ke_i-in_j
 your son- their-3MPI- daughter- beat give-Pst-
 3MS.Def Gen Acc 2S-3PI
 ‘Your son beat their daughter.’

(Data taken from Mahto 1989 (with modified IPA))

It is interesting to examine the examples (25-27) from Kurmali. There is an interesting phenomenon that exists in this language. The possessor of someone or something is more important in this language than the possessed ones. If we examine the structure of ‘genitive phrase (GenP hereafter)’ i.e. either NP₁-of-NP₂ or NP₁’s NP₂ in most of the languages that we know, the verb in the sentence of such GenP is always sensitive to N₂ i.e. the possessed ones. However, the data from Kurmali shows a different pattern. The verb in above sentences (25-27) show that is the possessors that take the lead in terms of triggering the agreement on the verb. The language, in the absence of such GenP treats the subject and object in normal way. That is, if the GenP is not there the verb primarily agrees with just subject and so the language does not have ‘object-verb agreement’ as a separate system of agreement. Then, how do we explain

¹⁶ Kurmali is an Indo-Aryan language which is spoken in Jharkhand, Assam, Orrisa, Bihar and some part of West Bengal. It is an interesting language from the point of view of structural amalgamations that have taken place between Kurmali and some other link languages such as Santhali, Ho, Bhumij, Kuxuk and Khariya that are spoken in the surrounding area of Kurmali speakers. Very little research work has been done on this language. Mahto (1989) is widely cited in many research work. There is no information available on internet either about the structure of the language.

these examples? My solution is to see it as ‘discourse of agreement’, and this will help us to account for such aberrations, and we can come up with a refined explanation at the cost of nothing. We just have to add this to the system of agreement of Kurmali that, in case of GenP in the sentence, the verb marks both the possessor and the possessed to show the clarity as to who did what to whom and in what context.

5.5. c Discourse agreement in Basque¹⁷:

28. emakume-a-k_i ogi-ak_j ja-ten_i d_i+_j
woman- Det-Erg bread-Det.PL eat-Ipm-3A-Pl 3A-Cont-3E
‘The woman is eating breads.’

29. emakume-a-k_i ogi-a_j ja-ten-go_i d_i+_j
woman- Det-Erg bread-Det eat-Imp-3A-Fut 3A-Fut-3E
‘The woman will eat the bread.’

29. emakume-a-k_i ogi-ak_j ja-n_i d-it-u_i+_j
woman- Det-Erg bread-Det.PL eat-Perf-3A 3A-Pl.Perf-3E
‘The woman has eaten breads.’

(Data taken from Laka Itziar 2006(without any change2006))

Laka’s (2006) work does not focus so much on the agreement. She has mainly discussed about creating a nonconventional ‘split-ergative’ system in Basque in imperfective and future tense. However, I would like to quote from her paper¹⁸; she comments, ‘...Basque displays agreement both with ergative and absolutive, whereas Hindi displays agreement only with absolutive’. Now, I would like to take this opportunity and opine that the simultaneous marking of both the subject and object must bear some reason which I think that it pertains to some discourse factor of the language. Even if we don’t know one, it completely suffices to point out that Basque structurally behaves similar to the languages that we are dealing here. There is another point from

¹⁷ In Basque data, the abbreviations and the font are adopted from Laka I. (2006) such as 3A refers to noun in third person and acting as an agent of the action and 3E refers to a noun in third person acting as an event.

¹⁸ See Laka (2006 ;Pp 178) ‘Deriving Split Ergativity in the Progressive’ for further detail.

Karlos Arregi and Gainko Molina-Azaola¹⁹ (2004; Pp. 110) regarding the multiple marking of the referents on the verb in Basque, and the point can be states as, ‘...the sentence contains a finite T with three Agr morphemes (AgrA, AgrD and AgrE) and an absolutive, a dative, and an ergative DP. Each Agr morpheme targets the corresponding DP, the result being a finite auxiliary agreeing with three DPs. So, I want to close the section by saying that Basque treats case and agreement in fairly similar way that we are discussing the two phenomena here. The case marked NPs can show agreement and there is more than one NP’s referents on the verb, yet there is no ‘object-verb-agreement as a distinct agreement type in different syntactic environment.

5.5. d Discourse agreement in Gujarati:

30. šilaa-e_i raaj-ne_j jagaaD-y-o*_{i/j}√
S.(F)-ERG R.(M)-Acc awake-PF-M
‘Sheela woke up Raj.’

31. raaj-e_i šeela-ne_j jagaaD-y-i*_{i/j}√
R.(M)-ERG S.(F)-Acc awake-PF-F
‘Raj woke up Sheela.’

(Data taken from Mistry 1978(without any change))

The discourse agreement in Gujarati is interesting. The agreement in Gujarati alternates between subject-verb agreement and object-verb agreement. In other word, the verb agrees with the unmarked subject (i.e. subject without case marker), similar to Hindi and other similar languages, and if the subject is overtly case marked, the verb agrees with the direct object in case if it is also unmarked. However, we still find the verbs showing agreement with the direct object even when it is overtly case marked. This is something new compared to Hindi and other related languages. Thus, the absence of ‘default agreement’ in Gujarati is credited to this discourse agreement in Gujarati which is not available in Hindi and similar Indo-Aryan languages.

¹⁹ Karlos A. and G.M. Azaola 2004 "Restructuring in Basque and the Theory of Agreement" WCCFL 23 Proceedings, ed. G. Garding and M. Tsujimura, pp. 101–114. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

5.5. e Discourse agreement in Nez Perce:²⁰

32. In wéet'u 'itúu-ne 'aa-p-sá-qa
1sg NEG INDEF-ACC (1sS+)3sO-eat-IMPF-PAST
'I didn't eat anything.'

(Adopted from Baker 2013; Pp 15 (without any change))

5.5. f Discourse agreement in Mapudungun²¹

33. Llúka-l-ka-ke-fu-fi-y-ngün ti nge-n ruka
become.afraid-CAUS-FAC-HAB- the have- house
PAST-3O-IND-3pS NOML
'They used to intimidate the house owner.'

(Adopted from Baker 2013; Pp 15 (without any change))

The above two examples have been adopted from Baker's work (2013) and the quote that we have seen in the introductory section already speaks volumes about the prevailing doubts and confusion regarding such discourse agreement markings in Nez Perce and Mapudungun. Baker's difficulty in calling such examples as clear cases of 'object-verb agreement' makes these languages similar and close to the languages and their agreement features that we are discussing here. The interesting aspect about these examples is that there is no overt case marker in either of the sentences. This again emphasizes the fact that agreement and case-marker (post-position) are two different grammatical phenomena and thus must be studied and explained with great care and patience. The agreement system under which the verbs in both the languages mark other NPs' referents on the verb besides that of the subject NP, bring these languages close to the languages such as Maithili, Kurmali, Khorṭ^h and others that we have discussed here. The languages that facilitate marking of other NPs' referents on the verb, besides the referent of the subject NP, must do so under certain discourse and pragmatic requirement. Let's finally examine the

²⁰ Nez Perce is a language that is spoken in Idaho, USA. The example has been cited by Deal A. R. (2010:78) in "Ergative case and the transitive subject: a view from Net Perce, but I have come across this example in Baker (2013) which I have put it in the reference.

²¹ Mapudungun is a language that is spoken in Chile. The example is cited by Smeets (2008:228) in "A grammar of Mapuche", but I have come across this example in Baker (2013) and I have put it in the reference.

discourse agreement in Khorṭ^hα before we conclude the present research work:

5.5. g Discourse agreement in Khorṭ^hα

34. ham-ě_i tɔ-rɑ_j dek^h-əl-e_i-yo_j
I-1S.Erg you-2S-Acc see-Pst-1S-2S
'I saw you'.
35. tɔ̃_i-ø həm-rɑ_j dek^h-əl-i_i-he_j
You-2S.NH-Erg me-1S-Acc see-Pst-2S-1S
'You (NH) saw Me'.
36. tɔh-ě_i-ø həm-rɑ_j dek^h-lo_i-he_j
You-2S.Hon-Erg me-1S-Acc see-Pst-2S-1S
'You (H) saw me'.
37. ham-ě_i tɔh-rɑ_j dek^h-le_i-hɔ_j
I-1S-Erg you-2S.H-Acc see-Pst-1S-2S.H
'I saw you (Hon)'.

The examples (34-37) from Khorṭ^hα are the last piece of evidence that we want to examine for discourse agreement. Khorṭ^hα is a predominately subject-verb agreement language and there is no object-verb agreement as a system of agreement. However, there is a rare and interesting marking of the 2nd-person singular and 2nd-person honorific when they occur either as a subject or an object in the sentence. Das (2006) has already stated the reason for such deviation in the structure of the agreement in Khorṭ^hα. The explanation can be reiterated as follows; since the pronominal form of 2nd-person (honorific and non-honorific) is similar both in the intransitive and transitive clauses, the verb has to bear the markings (referents) of it to distinguish them as subject and object in the sentence. In other words, the pronominal form of 2nd-person (honorific and non-honorific) is same for both ergative or non-ergative cases, the verb has to bear some information to distinguish them as subject and object in case of a transitive clause. Thus, the language

allows the markings of both subject and object to be placed on the verb simultaneously as it is shown in above examples (34-37). Languages do evolve some strategies to deal with the deviation from regular pattern and structure. A comparison can be done with the displacement of ergativity in Punjabi to prove the point that we are trying to understand here. Let's examine the following examples to understand the ergative marker being present in Punjabi:

5.5. h Discourse agreement in Punjabi:

38. tūsi-ø me-nũ ek kitāb dītā-si
You-2MS-Erg I-1MS-Dat one book-3FS give-Pst-3FS
'You gave me a book'.

39. mē-ø te-nũ ek kitāb dītā-si
I-1MS-Erg you-2MS one book-3FS give-Pst-3FS
'I gave you a book'.

40. oṅā-ne me-nũ ek kitāb dītā-si
he-3SM.H-Erg I-1MS-Dat one book-3FS give-Pst-3FS
'He gave me a book'.

The examples (38-40) show the marking of ergativity in Punjabi. It is a well-known fact that Punjabi follows the 'split-ergativity' as it appears in Hindi and some other Indo-Aryan languages i.e. the split happens in case of past-simple tense and all other perfective aspects with transitive verb. However, Punjabi adds up another condition and it says that the ergative case appears only in case of third person singular and plural NPs and pronouns. Despite this deviation, all the above sentences (38-40) are marked as sentences with ergativity. But, how can we know whether (38) and (39) are ergative sentence or not? The answer that the structure of language gives is the form of the verb. The form of the verb is the same in all the sentences (38-40) as the verb agrees with the direct object 'book' which is a feminine noun in Punjabi. So, despite the fact that an overt ergative case marker is not placed with first person and second person pronouns, the sentences are called ergative as they obey the rule of 'split-ergativity' in Punjabi. So, why the verb in (38) and (39) in Punjabi agrees with the direct object and not with the subject when there is no overt ergative case with subject? The answer can be explained with discourse agreement i.e. though the subject pronouns in

first and second person do not bear overt ergative case marker, the sentence is considered as ‘ergative’ as it follows the regular pattern and deviation and the aberration of displacement of the ergative case is balanced/handled by the discourse agreement in Punjabi.

6. Conclusion:

The present paper is an effort to prove two very simple points. One, we should not mix the two distinct and separate grammatical notions such as case and agreement while analysing and explaining every language. Two, we must pay attention and work hard for the diversity and disparity that the structure of languages brings to research and in order to arrive at the pattern-congruity, we must analyse them very carefully. The paper has fairly demonstrated how we have missed out on such important features in many languages as we have always rushed up for an easy and worked out solution of ‘ergativity and agreement’ and have kept ignoring the pattern-congruity of the discourse and pragmatic phenomena of agreement in different languages.

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