

# Number, Honor, and Agreement in Hindi-Urdu

RAJESH BHATT, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, *University of the Ryukyus*

## ABSTRACT

In Hindi-Urdu, the honorific marker *ji:* can be added to a third person nominal to signal honorification of the nominal referent. The use of *ji:* triggers plural agreement, despite the nominal itself being singular. We propose that the formative that carries the semantics of plurality (\*) and the formative that carries the semantics of honorification (Hon) occupy the same syntactic position, which we identify as Num. These two formatives have the same formal features, which correspond to the features responsible for what is called plural agreement, and make the same selectional demand of their complement, namely that it appear in the oblique form. However the formatives have distinct realizations and distinct semantics. Both can have zero realization or overt realization; for honorification the overt realization can be at least *-ji:*, *sa:b*, *mahoday*, *sir*, *ma'am*, and for pluralization *-ā:*, *-ō*. The two formatives are in complementary distribution; Hon blocks \* and vice-versa; this means that the complement of Hon has no choice but to stay singular. We end by describing the honorific distinctions shown with second-person pronouns, describing additional complexities that their analysis requires.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Number agreement and honorificity: Basic data and starting analysis

The examples in (1) show the basic contrast in Hindi-Urdu number agreement. In these examples, *hē* ‘to be’ is used with the third person singular subject *Mi:na:*, while with the third person plural subject *ve laṛkiyā:* ‘those girls’ the verb is realized as *hē̃*. That is, the presence or absence of nasalization serves as the realization of number agreement, with nasalization signaling agreement with a plural subject.

- (1) a. *Mi:na: lambi: hē*  
Mina.F tall.F be.PRS.3.SG  
‘Mina is tall.’
- b. *ve laṛkiyā: lambi: hē̃*  
DEM.PL girl.F.PL tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
‘Those girls are tall.’

In (2), the third person singular subject *Mi:na:* appears with the honorific suffix *ji:*. Despite still denoting a singular referent, the *ji:*-marked third person subject is no longer compatible with singular agreement, as demonstrated by the ungrammaticality of (2a). Instead, the

adjective and verb must appear with plural agreement morphology, as see in (2b), the same forms that appear with semantically plural subject noun phrases like that in (1b).

- (2) a. \*Mi:na:-ji: lambi: hɛ  
Mina.F-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.SG
- b. Mi:na:-ji: lambi: hẽ  
Mina.F-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
'Mina, who I respect, is tall.'

Based on this pattern, we begin by arguing that the honorific suffix *ji:* expresses the morpheme Hon, attaching to an NP and signaling the speaker's respect toward the NP referent. Hon in turn brings in a formal PL feature which triggers plural agreement. This PL feature, though formally identical to that which is elsewhere associated with semantic plurality, does not in this environment signal semantic plurality. Instead, it seems to mark honorification of the subject.

In §2, we provide evidence pertaining to the location of Hon within the NP structure, showing that it attaches above the head noun and below the demonstrative. The formal PL feature borne by Hon is shown to trigger agreement with higher NP elements, in particular with demonstratives, while simultaneously requiring apparently singular morphology and semantics on its nominal complement. In §3, we introduce a puzzle related to masculine nouns, which seem to appear with plural morphology when combined with Hon, in contrast to feminine nouns, which appear with singular morphology. This apparent contradiction is resolved by arguing that the nominal complement of Hon appears in the singular oblique form, which for masculine nouns results in a syncretism with the plural direct form. §4 offers two alternative analyses of the facts presented in the previous sections, one in terms of contextual allophony (see Wood 2020) and the other based on ambiguity. The basic idea in both analyses is that there is a single PL feature associated with one of two meanings: a meaning associated with pluralization and a meaning associated with honorification. §5 introduces a number of other lexical bearers of Hon, all of which trigger plural agreement and are thus analyzed as having a formal PL feature. One such variant is phonologically null, so that a singular subject with plural agreement can in some circumstances be interpreted as honorific without an overt Hon morpheme. Finally, section 6 extends the discussion to second person pronouns, which show a three-way distinction in honorific status, with complex effects on their resulting agreement patterns.

## 2 Where is honorificity?

Given that Hon attaches to an NP, the question naturally arises as to what kind of NP<sup>1</sup> it attaches to. That is, does it attach to a maximal NP, or to some constituent thereof? To explore this question, we look within the NP, starting with honorification of common

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<sup>1</sup>For convenience, we refer to the maximal nominal projection as NP, which corresponds to DP in many theories; this terminology is merely an attempt at maintaining theory-neutrality.

nouns. The examples in (3) show the basic singular-plural contrast in non-honored third person feminine common nouns, here illustrated by *lar̥ki*: ‘girl’ and *lar̥kiyā* ‘girls’. Note that the verb shows overt number agreement with the subject: *hɛ* for singular and *hẽ* for plural.

- (3) a. *lar̥ki*: *lambi*: *hɛ*  
 girl.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.SG  
 ‘The girl is tall.’  
 b. *lar̥kiyā*: *lambi*: *hẽ*  
 girl.F.PL tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The girls are tall.’

The examples in (4) show that while *ji*: triggers plural agreement, it attaches to common nouns that are both morphologically and semantically singular. The grammatical example in (4a) satisfies this requirement, while the ungrammatical example in (4b) does not. Note that the use of *ji*: requires a *singular* noun but triggers *plural* agreement, making *hɛ* ungrammatical in (4a). The use of *ji*: with a plural noun, meanwhile, leads to ungrammaticality regardless of verb agreement, as shown in (4b).

- (4) a. *lar̥ki*:-*ji*: *lambi*: *hẽ* / \**hɛ*  
 girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL / \*be.PRS.3.SG  
 ‘The girl, who I respect, is tall.’  
 b. \**lar̥kiyā*:-*ji*: *lambi*: *hẽ* / *hɛ*  
 girls.F.PL-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL / be.PRS.3.SG  
 intended: ‘The girls, who I respect, are tall.’

We conclude that *ji*: requires a semantically and morphologically singular noun complement. But the following example shows that the *entire* NP is *not* morphologically singular. In this example, the *ji*:-marked subject NP is headed by the singular noun *lambi*: ‘girl’, but contains the plural demonstrative *ve*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The plural demonstrative *ve* contrasts with *vo*, but the latter is number-neutral rather than singular; that is, the two demonstratives are analyzed as follows:

- i. a. *ve* = DEM.PL  
*ve* is marked for number, can only combine with formally plural NPs.  
 b. *vo* = DEM, ≠ DEM.SG  
*vo* is unmarked for number, can combine both with singular NPs and formally plural NPs.

Hence the following example with *vo* is grammatical, but this is not a challenge to the idea that the part of the nominal up from Hon (the *ji*:) is formally plural, since *vo* is number-neutral and thus compatible with plural NPs:

- ii. *vo lar̥ki*:-*ji*: *lambi*: *hẽ*  
 DEM girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘That girl, who I respect, is tall.’

(5) Dem is plural; N is singular:

[ ve larki:-ji: ] lambi: hē  
 DEM.PL girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3PL

‘That girl, who I respect, is tall.’

While the head noun has to be singular, the demonstrative itself cannot be singular. To see this we need to switch to an oblique context<sup>3</sup> – in direct contexts, the ‘singular’ demonstrative *vo* is actually unmarked for number (see footnote 2, ex. ii). In oblique contexts, there is a contrast between the singular demonstrative *us* and the plural demonstrative *un*. We find that only the plural demonstrative is acceptable with *ji:*:

(6) Dem is plural; N is singular:

[ un/\*us larki:-ji: ko] bulaa-o  
 DEM.PL.OBL/\*DEM.SG.OBL girl.F.SG-HON DAT call-IMP

‘Call that girl, who I respect’

It seems that Hon (expressed by *ji:*) in effect splits the NP in two, with the demonstrative required to appear with plural morphology and the head noun to appear with singular morphology (insofar as these contrasts are morphologically realized). In a picture:

Dem Plural  $\Leftarrow$  Hon  $\Rightarrow$  Singular N

We propose that this picture is derived as follows: Hon (which is realized by *ji:*) selects a semantically singular complement N. The selected N in turn inflects for SG (reflecting its semantics). Hon itself has a formal PL feature, which projects. Higher nominal elements (in particular, Dem) agree with this formal PL feature, leading to a formally plural NP with singular semantics and a formally singular head noun. Predicate agreement with an honored NP subject tracks the projected PL feature projected by Hon.

We stress that the projected PL feature is purely formal, and in no sense encodes semantic plurality, as shown by the compatibility of honorificized NPs with the numeral *ek* ‘one’:

- (7) a. ek laṛki: lambi: hē  
 one girl.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.SG  
 ‘One girl is tall.’
- b. \*ek laṛkiyā: lambi: hē  
 one girl.F.PL tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 Literally: ‘One girls are tall.’
- c. ek laṛki:-ji: lambi: hē / \*hē  
 one girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL / be.PRS.3.SG  
 ‘One girl, who I respect’ is tall.’

<sup>3</sup>We discuss the phenomenon of obliqueness in §3.

Having argued that Hon selects for singular head nouns, we now turn to data that seem to contradict this conclusion.

### 3 Honorification and obliqueness

#### 3.1 A puzzle: Masculine common nouns

All the examples in the previous section involved feminine common nouns. This is no accident. When we look at masculine common nouns, an apparent contradiction with the generalizations derived thus far emerges:

- (8) a. laṛka:    lamba:    hε  
       boy.M.SG tall.M.SG be.PRS.3.SG  
       ‘The boy is tall.’
- b. laṛke    lambe:    hẽ  
       boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
       ‘The boys are tall.’
- c. laṛke-ji:    lambe:    hẽ  
       boy.M.??-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
       ‘The boy, who I respect, is tall.’  
       unavailable: ‘The boys, who I respect, are tall.’

Comparing (8c) with (8a) and (8b), the honored subject in (8c) has what looks like plural marking on the NP but has only a singular meaning. (8c) is also in conflict with (4b), which showed that morphological marking of plurality on the noun was incompatible with *-ji:*. This would apparently lead us to the following description:

1. feminine nouns + Hon: noun appears in a ‘singular’ form; ‘plural’ form is bad.
2. masculine nouns + Hon: noun appears in a ‘plural’ form; ‘singular’ form is bad.

Despite the apparent plural morphology, the masculine head noun does not signal semantic plurality; masculine nouns are still compatible with *ek* ‘one’, just like feminine honorified nouns:

- (9) a. ek laṛka:    lamba:    hε  
       one boy.M.SG tall.M.SG be.PRS.3.SG  
       ‘One boy is tall.’
- b. \*ek laṛke    lambe:    hẽ  
       one boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
       Literally: ‘\*One boys are tall.’
- c. ek laṛke-ji:    lambe:    hẽ  
       one boy.M.??-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
       ‘One boy, who I respect, is tall.’

It would seem, then, that there are conflicting data patterns: for feminine nouns, *ji:* selects for a semantically and morphologically singular head noun, while for masculine nouns, *ji:* selects for a semantically singular but morphologically plural head noun.

### 3.2 A solution: Obliqueness

In Hindi-Urdu and many other Indo-Aryan languages nominals have two distinct forms: a direct form that appears when the nominal is not the complement of a postposition and an oblique form that appears when the nominal is the complement of a postposition. For the noun we saw in the previous section meaning ‘boy’, the singular direct form is *lar̥ka:* ‘boy.M.SG’, as seen in (10a). When appearing as the complement of the dative postposition *ko*, however, it appears in the oblique form *lar̥ke ko* ‘boy.M.SG.OBL DAT’, as seen in (10b).

- (10) a. DIRECT  
 lar̥ka:            a:j    a:-ya:  
 boy.M.SG.DIR today come-PFV.M.SG  
 ‘The boy came today.’
- b. OBLIQUE  
 lar̥ke            ko a:j    a:-na:    hɛ  
 boy.M.SG.OBL DAT today come-INF be.PRS.3.SG  
 ‘The boy has to come today.’

The realization of the direct/oblique distinction depends upon the particular nominal. A subset of masculine nouns that end in *-a:* behave as in (11). Most other masculine nouns behave as in (12). (13) is representative of feminine nouns.

- (11) most *-a:* ending MASCULINE NOUNS      (12) other MASCULINE NOUNS

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	lar̥ka:	lar̥ke
PL	lar̥ke	lar̥kō

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	dhobi:	dhobi:
PL	dhobi:	dhobiyō

- (13) FEMININE NOUNS

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	lar̥ki:	lar̥ki:
PL	lar̥kiyā:	lar̥kiyō:

With masculine nouns, there is a syncretism between M.PL.DIR and M.SG.OBL; that is, the plural direct form is homophonous with the singular oblique form. So when we see a form like *lar̥ke*, we cannot tell from morphology alone whether it is M.PL.DIR or M.SG.OBL. The syncretism does not hold for feminine nouns – compare *lar̥kiyā:* ‘girl.PL.DIR’ with

*lar̥ki*: ‘girl.SG.DIR/OBL’. With feminine nouns, there is instead syncretism of DIRECT and OBLIQUE *singular*.

Putting the pieces together, we argue that the contrast noted above between masculine and feminine nouns is only apparent: *ji*: selects for a singular head noun, but requires that this noun appear in the *oblique* rather than the direct form. The data with feminine common nouns tells us only that *ji*: requires a singular noun, since there is no formal difference between singular direct and oblique forms. The fact that *ji*: selects for an oblique common noun only becomes apparent when looking at masculine nouns, and this fact is obscured by the systematic syncretism between the oblique singular and the direct plural.<sup>4</sup>

- (14) a. lar̥ke-ji: lambe hẽ  
 boy.M.SG.OBL-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The boy, who I respect, is tall.’  
 b. lar̥ki-ji: lambi: hẽ  
 girl.F.SG.OBL-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The girl, who I respect’ is tall.’

To complete the picture, we show how demonstratives display number and obliqueness, something we touched upon in footnote 2 and example (6). (15) shows that the number-neutral demonstrative *vo* and the plural *ve* are both direct forms. *us* (singular) and *un* (plural) are the oblique forms.

(15) DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE + MASCULINE NOUN

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE	HON.DIRECT	HON.OBLIQUE
SG	vo lar̥ka:	us lar̥ke P	vo/ve lar̥ke ji:	un lar̥ke ji: P
PL	vo/ve lar̥ke	un lar̥kõ P	NA	NA

As seen in (16), the demonstrative of a *ji*:-marked NP, in contrast to the head noun, cannot appear in the oblique form when it is not in an environment that would otherwise trigger obliqueness, such as in an NP appearing before a postposition.

- (16) vo/ve/\*un/\*us lar̥ke-ji: lambe hẽ  
 DEM boy.M.SG.OBL-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘That boy, who I respect, is tall.’

This leads us to the following picture: in honored NPs, the morpheme Hon splits the NP in two, such that the head noun is singular and oblique, while the demonstrative is plural and direct:

$$\text{Dem.PL} \Leftarrow \text{Hon} \Rightarrow \text{N.SG.OBL}$$

<sup>4</sup>Sinha (this volume) gives an alternative explanation, according to which only ‘portmanteau’ plurality (M.PL) can appear below Hon, while segmentally-expressed plurality (F.PL) cannot. The apparent plurality is conditioned by a higher PL and does not correspond to semantic plurality. In this last point, our analyses coincide.

We argue that this is due to Hon selecting a *singular oblique* N complement, and projecting a *plural* feature to the higher NP. Obliqueness is not a feature of Hon, but rather a feature required of its complement, and is not projected. The NP thus “defaults” to the direct form, which is reflected in the morphology of the demonstrative. If the entire NP is *itself* the complement of a higher postposition, then the demonstrative will appear with oblique morphology, due not to Hon but to the postposition selecting the entire NP.

### 3.3 Additional NP structure

We have shown that Dem behaves differently from N, and that Hon marks the boundary of the two zones. Where do numerals and adjectives fall with respect to this boundary? Unfortunately we cannot tell just on the basis of the forms of adjectives in Hindi-Urdu. To see why, let us remind ourselves of the crucial piece of data that argued for the noun being in a different zone from the demonstrative: this involved feminine nouns which appeared in their singular form. The inflection of adjectives in Hindi-Urdu makes this crucial datum unavailable for determining the structural location of the adjective. The full paradigm of adjectival inflection is presented below.

(17) Adjective Inflection Paradigm, ‘tall girl’

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
F.SG	lambi: laṛki:	lambi: laṛki:
F.PL	lambi: laṛkiyā̃:	lambi: laṛkiyō̃
M.SG	lamba: laṛka:	lambe laṛke
M.PL	lambe laṛke	lambe laṛkō̃

Adjectives inflect for number, gender, and obliqueness, but a peculiarity of the inflection makes the feminine part of the paradigm uninformative. Unlike feminine nouns, where number distinctions are overtly realized, the adjectival inflection neutralizes number information in the context of feminine features. The masculine paradigm was already uninformative due to the M.PL.DIR/M.SG.OBL syncretism. So now there is no way to tell whether the adjective is in the higher (plural direct) part of the tree or the lower (singular oblique) part of the tree. Numerals in Hindi-Urdu do not inflect for number or obliqueness, so examining their form is not helpful either. The closely related language Punjabi does not neutralize number information in the context of feminine features and the data there suggests that adjectives are lower than Hon ([Dem[*u*PL] [Hon[PL] [A[*u*PL,*u*GENDER] [[Num[SG] [N[GENDER<sub>1</sub>]]]]]]]). For Hindi-Urdu, however, the data does not determine the analysis.

#### 4 Analysis: One PL, two meanings

Our core claim is that there is one PL feature that is associated with one of two meanings: a meaning associated with pluralization and a meaning associated with honorification. We first offer a treatment of how the association with the two meanings comes about in terms of contextual allosemy, and then consider an alternative ambiguity proposal.

Under the contextual allosemy proposal, the PL feature can appear under a Hon head or a Num head. Its interpretation depends upon its location – under Hon, [PL] is associated with honorific semantics and under Num, [PL] is associated with ‘normal’ number semantics. The Num head can be specified singular SG or plural PL. The Hon head, however, comes lexically specified with a PL feature, and selects a singular and oblique complement. So the PL feature can appear in a nominal in the following two configurations.

- (18) a. “Regular” PL under Num:  
           [Dem[*u*PL] [Num[PL] [N[GENDER]]]]  
           → [Dem[PL] [Num[PL] [N[GENDER]]]]
- b. Honorific PL under Hon:  
           [Dem[*u*PL] [[Hon[PL] [[Num[SG] [N[GENDER]]]]]]]  
           → [Dem[PL] [[Hon[PL] [[Num[SG] [N[GENDER, OBLIQUE]]]]]]]

The agreement system is oblivious to honorificity. There are no phi-features specifically associated with honorificity and we do not need to adjust the agreement algorithm to handle honorificity. T probes for various phi-features including [PL]. The [PL] feature can come from Hon or Num. What is new is that the interpretation of [PL] is subject to contextual allosemy: Num-[PL] contributes plural meaning and Hon-[PL] contributes the semantics of honorification. Honorific plural *agreement* is never interpreted, any more than ‘regular’ plural agreement is interpreted. What receives interpretation is Hon-[PL] or Num-[PL].

The contextual allosemy proposal needs to stipulate that Hon selects a singular complement. We need this to block *\*lar̥kiyã-ji:* ‘girls-Hon’. This stipulation, however, seems to miss a generalization, namely that instead of the formative that would have pluralized the nominal, we have a formative that honorificizes it, and thereby blocks the possibility of pluralizing it. We explore this intuition in what we will call the ambiguity proposal. Under this proposal, we have two distinct formatives, \* and Hon, which share the following properties: (i) their complement appears in the oblique form, (ii) they are generated under the Num head, and (iii) they have the same phi-features, those conventionally associated with plural NPs. They differ in their semantics, with \* delivering plurality and Hon honorification. They also differ in their realization. For starters, only Hon can be realized as *-ji:*. Let’s start with the following honorific structures, where Hon is realized as *-ji:*.

- (19) a. [*NumP* [*NP* boy.OBL] Num[Hon]]  
           lar̥ke/\*lar̥ka:     ji:  
           boy.OBL/boy.DIR HON  
           ‘The boy (who I respect)’

- b. [*NumP* [*NP* girl.OBL] Num[Hon]]  
 laṛki:/\*laṛkiyã:/\*laṛkiyõ:           ji:  
 girl.OBL/\*girl.PL.DIR/girl.PL.OBL HON  
 ‘The girl (who I respect)’

In both cases, the head noun needs to be in the oblique. This is clearly so in the masculine where we get the oblique form (syncretic with the direct plural, but distinct from the direct singular) and the direct form is not possible. In the feminine, obliqueness is not overtly expressed in the singular. What is striking, though, is that the absence of plural morphology in (19b) follows straightforwardly – there is just no plural formative to deliver plural morphology to us. We thus derive the ungrammaticality of \**laṛkiyã-ji:* ‘girls-Hon’ without stipulation, since the plural formative \* that would be required here is blocked by the presence of Hon, since by hypothesis both formatives appear under Num, and are thus in complementary distribution.

We now turn to the realization of \*, which under this account also selects for an oblique complement. The structures where \* appears are structurally identical to the structures where Hon appears – as noted above, both appear under Num, take an oblique complement, and have the same phi-features (relevant for the agreement system). But they differ in their semantics and in their realization. Let’s consider the following structures with \*.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(20) [<i>NumP</i> [<i>NP</i> boy.OBL] Num[*]]<br/>         laṛke<br/>         boy.OBL<br/>         ‘boys’</p> | <p>(21) [<i>NumP</i> [<i>NP</i> girl.OBL] Num[*]]<br/>         laṛki-yã:<br/>         girl.OBL-PL<br/>         ‘girls’</p> |
|--|--|

In (20), \* has a zero realization and in (21), it is realized as *-yã:*. In both cases, \* requires the obliqueness of its complement but is itself in the direct form. In (22) and (23), there is an additional source of obliqueness, *ko*, the dative postposition. As a result obliqueness appears twice, on the head noun (from \*) and on \* itself (from the dative postposition). As a result \* surfaces in its oblique form *-õ*.

- (22) [[*NumP* [*NP* boy.OBL] Num[Pl, OBL]] K]  
 laṛk-õ           ko  
 boy.OBL-PL.OBL DAT  
 ‘to the boys’
- (23) [[*NumP* [*NP* girl.OBL] Num[Pl, OBL]] K]  
 laṛki-õ:           ko  
 girl.OBL-PL.OBL DAT  
 ‘to the girls’

We will need the following realization rules.

- (24) a. [ $*$ , OBL]  $\leftrightarrow$   $-\tilde{o}$   
 b. [ $*$ ]  $\leftrightarrow$   $\emptyset$  /  $\_\_\$  [M]  
 c. [ $*$ ]  $\leftrightarrow$   $-y\tilde{a}:$  /  $\_\_\$  [F]

This setup delivers to us the syncretism found between oblique masculine nouns and direct plurals. In our system, direct plurals are oblique!<sup>5</sup>

## 5 Hon without *ji:*

A complication to the picture developed above is that plural agreement can signal honorification of a third person singular subject even in the absence of the honorific suffix *ji:*, as seen in (25).

- (25) a. Ra:m lambe hē  
 Ram.M tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘Ram, who I respect, is tall.’  
 b. Mī:na: lambi: hē  
 Mina.F. tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘Mina, who I respect, is tall.’

This shows that *ji:* is not necessary for honorification; plural agreement with a singular subject is (sometimes) enough to contribute the meaning of Hon. This state of affairs can be interpreted in two ways: either there is in these cases a covert Hon formative in the subject NP, or the plural agreement morphology is itself interpreted. In the latter case, we could conclude that the PL *agreement* feature (as opposed to the PL feature found under Num within the NP) is semantically ambiguous. Both approaches are plausible, but the fact that there can be multiple instances of honorific agreement (e.g. on an adjective, a participle, and a finite auxiliary) makes the covert Hon idea easier to implement in the Hindi-Urdu context. For simplicity and concreteness, this is the path we take.

The examples in (25) show that plural agreement is sufficient to signal the Hon meaning, without the use of *ji:*, in the case of proper nouns. With some common nouns as well, it is possible to get honorific meaning by agreement alone, without an overt honorific marker:

- (26) a. *sampa:dak* ‘editor.M’  
 sampa:dak lambe hē  
 editor(s).M tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

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<sup>5</sup>Things are slightly more complicated once we consider masculine plural obliques of the inflecting *-a:* class, see (22). Our system would predict *laṛk-e-ō ko*. To make things work, we will need an additional rule to delete the offending *-e-* in this context. Exactly such a rule has been proposed in Sinha (2018), also see Sinha (this volume, pgs. 11-12). The identification of direct plurals with obliques works well for Hindi-Urdu and other languages that have the oblique/plural syncretism. Sinha (this volume) points out that it does not extend to Marathi, which lacks this syncretism.

1. ‘The editors are tall.’
  2. ‘The editor, who I respect, is tall.’
- (note: *sampa:dak* is ambiguous between ‘editor’ and ‘editors’)

- b. *sampa:dika*: ‘editor.F.SG’  
*sampa:dika*: *lambe* *hẽ*  
 editor.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The female editor, who I respect, is tall.’  
 (note: *sampa:dika*: only means singular ‘female editor’)

We assume that there is a silent Hon formative in these cases that brings in the semantics of honorification, makes its sister oblique, and introduces the formal feature that triggers PL agreement. This silent Hon seems to be unavailable with more garden variety nouns like *lar̥ka*: ‘boy’ and *lar̥ki*: ‘girl’:

- (27) a. *lar̥ke* ‘boy.M.PL.DIR’/‘boy.M.SG.OBL’  
*lar̥ke* *lambe* *hẽ*  
 boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The boys are tall.’  
 unavailable: ‘The boy, who I respect is tall.’
- b. *lar̥ki*: ‘girl.F.SG’ (DIR or OBL)  
 \* *lar̥ki*: *lambe* *hẽ*  
 girl.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.PL  
 intended: ‘The girl, who I respect, is tall.’

At this point we don’t understand why this kind of covert honorification isn’t freely available – i.e. why the examples in (27) lack honorific readings, though we will offer some speculations at the end of this section.

We note that some nouns such as *daddy/mummy/papa/uncle/auntie/sir/ma’am* don’t need *-ji*: and are yet almost always used as honorifics, i.e. with plural agreement and singular reference. Also there are, in addition to *ji*:, other overt morphemes that, like *ji*:, signal honorification of a singular referent and trigger plural agreement morphology.

- (28) a. *daroga*: *sa:b lambe hẽ*  
 inspector.M HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The inspector, who I respect, is tall.’
- b. *mantri*: *mahoday lambe hẽ*  
 minister.M HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘The minister, who I respect, is tall.’

Note that *daroga:/mantri*: are unmarked for number and do not inflect for obliqueness. In the absence of *sa:b/mahoday*, these examples could also mean ‘The inspectors/ministers are tall.’ Other elements in the *sa:b/mahoday* class include *sir* and *ma’am*.



handle on this question, we have two observations to offer. The first observation is that for some speakers, even an overt Hon is disfavored with the nouns that do not allow a covert Hon (e.g. (27)). Perhaps then the unavailability of covert Hon with these nouns is a kind of selection. The second observation concerns the role of recoverability. We find that nominals that optionally allow for covert Hon only do so when the presence of the covert Hon can be detected from agreement (e.g. *Mi:na:* in (25b) and *sampa:dika:* ‘female editor’ in (26b)). If we put such nominals in a location where they cannot trigger agreement, the honorific meaning disappears. To get an honorific meaning, we need an overt Hon.

- (34) a. *Mina/sampa:dika:* ko bulaa-o  
 Mina.F/editor.F DAT call-IMP  
 ‘Call Mina/the female editor!’ (no honorific meaning is available)
- b. *Mina/sampa:dika:* ji: ko bulaa-o  
 Mina.F/editor.F HON DAT call-IMP  
 ‘Call Mina/the female editor, who I respect!’

Recoverability seems to also play a role in number agreement. Consider the noun *electrician*. This is a borrowing from English, which would fall in the ‘other masculine nouns’ class (see (12)) with the exception that it lacks an oblique plural form – the expected \**electrician-ō* is not well formed. We find that in an agreeing context, *electrician* can deliver both a plural and a honorific meaning (35a). But in a non-agreeing context (35b), only a singular non-honorific meaning is available.

- (35) a. *electrician kahā:* hē?  
 electrician where be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘Where are the electricians?’  
 ‘Where is the electrician, who I respect?’ (with covert HON)
- b. *electrician ko bulaa-o*  
 electrician DAT call-IMP  
 ‘Call the electrician!’ (no honorific meaning is available, no plural meaning)
- (36) a. *electrician saab ko bulaa-o*  
 electrician HON DAT call-IMP  
 ‘Call the electrician, who I respect!’
- b. *electricians ko bulaa-o*  
 electricians DAT call-IMP  
 ‘Call the electricians!’ (no honorific meaning is available)

To get the honorific meaning in a non-agreeing context, an overt honorific is needed, as in (36a). The specialized honorific *sa:b* feels more natural than *-ji:* here. Curiously, as shown in (36b), there is no way to get the plural meaning in this context without making recourse to English plural morphology!<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>There is at least one environment where plural interpretation is available even though the silent plural

## 6 Second person subjects

We turn now to honorification in the context of second person. Here for space reasons, we will not present a full analysis but just limit ourselves to a presentation of the data that such an analysis would need to capture. Hindi-Urdu has three pronominal forms used for singular second person reference:

- (37) (addressee is male)
- a. *tu:*            *lamba:*    *hē*  
2.SG.**RUDE** tall.M.SG be.PRS.2.SG  
'You are tall.' (speaker is being rude to a single addressee)
  - b. *tum lambe:*    *ho*  
2    tall.M.PL be.PRS.2.PL  
'You are tall.' (single addressee)
  - c. *a:p*    *lambe:*    *hē*  
2.**HON** tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
'You are tall.' (speaker is being polite to a single addressee)

Semantically, the three second person pronouns are honorifically distinguished: *tu:* is rude/familiar, *tum* is neutral, and *a:p* is honorific. None of these pronouns can be used on their own to refer to a plural group of speakers; that is, they are all semantically singular. Looking at the agreement patterns, however, shows that while the rude/familiar pronoun *tu:* triggers singular agreement, the other two semantically singular pronouns trigger plural agreement. The honorific *a:p* is moreover formally *third person*, in terms of its agreement profile, despite being semantically second person.

We stress that, despite the plural number morphology, *tum* and *a:p* can on their own only be used with singular reference. To achieve plural reference, we need an additional marker of plurality such as *sab* 'all', *log* 'people', or a plural NP. These can be combined with *tum* or *a:p* but not with the inherently singular *tu:*, as seen below:

- (38) (addressees are male)
- a. \* *tu:*    *log/sab/laṛke*    *lamba:*    *hē*  
2.SG people/all/boys tall.M.SG be.PRS.2.SG  
'You people/all/boys are tall.' (speaker is being rude/asserting higher status)

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is technically not recoverable. In (i), *peṛ* 'tree' in the direct form is unmarked for number and it is not in a position where it controls agreement; agreement goes with the subject.

- i. *laṛkiyā:* *peṛ*    *ka:ṭ rahi:*    *hē*  
girl.PL tree.M cut PROG.F be.PRS.3.PL  
'The girls are cutting a tree/trees.'

But a plural interpretation is possible for the object. It should be noted though that this is a pseudo-incorporation environment and the putative plural interpretation might have a source distinct from an interpreted Pl on the nominal. See Dayal (2011).

- b. tum log/sab/larke lambe: ho  
 2 people/all/boys tall.M.PL be.PRS.2.PL  
 ‘You all/people/boys are tall.’ (neutral with respect to honorificity)
- c. a:p log/sab/larke lambe: hẽ  
 2.HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL  
 ‘You all/people/boys are tall.’ (speaker is being polite)

This is why we choose to gloss *tum* and *a:p* as unspecified for number – they are compatible with plural reference but not on their own. *tu:*, however, is incompatible with plural reference and hence cannot combine with plural noun phrases. The combination of semantic and formal features is summarized in the following table:

(39) Semantic and formal features of second person pronouns

	SEMANTICS	FEATURES
<i>tu:</i>	2.SG.RUDE	2.SG
<i>tum</i>	2	2.PL
<i>a:p</i>	2.HON	3.PL (2.PL)

We will see that it is important to keep the semantic features of these pronouns separate from their agreement features. First of all there is a mismatch but in addition, we will see that the formal number feature of *tum* isn’t quite PL and that *a:p* can also be associated with 2.PL features. The existence of mismatch is something we have seen before – honorificized singular third person nominals triggered plural agreement. Our analysis was that the plural agreement features originated in a Hon head and not from the plural semantics contributing \* head. Let’s examine *tum* and *a:p* from this perspective.

### 6.1 The case of *tum*

We have seen that the plural feature on *tum* and *a:p* is not associated with plurality. In the case of *a:p*, this feature is plausibly associated with honorificity as was the case with third person nominals. But the plural feature associated with *tum* does not mark honorification; *tum* is neutral with respect to honorification. In order to get an honorific interpretation similar to that signaled by *ji:*, one must use *a:p*. So if *tum*’s PL feature is encoding neither number nor honor, what is it doing?

A closer examination shows that this plural feature that contributes neither plurality nor honorification triggers different agreement patterns than its semantically contentful counterparts (i.e. semantically plural NPs and honorificized NPs). The table in (40) shows forms of the adjective ‘tall’ and the past auxiliary verb, crossing number and gender.

(40) Number × gender agreement

## Participle/Adjective

## Past Auxiliary

	M	F
SG	lamba:	lambi:
PL	lambe	lambi:

	M	F
SG	tha:	thi:
PL	the	thĩ:

Notice first that the feminine form of ‘tall’ shows syncretism for number, with *lambi:* for both singular and plural forms. The feminine past auxiliary, on the other hand, shows a gender distinction, singular *thi:* and plural *thĩ:*. Comparing these forms, it can be seen that nasalization is an exponent of PL. That is, plural agreement is expressed transparently, by adding nasalization to the vowel. The masculine adjective and past auxiliary both show a singular/plural contrast, but unlike the feminine past auxiliary, the morphology here is opaque; the singular forms are signaled by a final *a:*, while the plural forms are signaled by a final *e*. These final vowels do not exclusively signal number agreement, but are also part of the gender marking. That is, the final *a:* is a portmanteau signaling masculine singular, while final *e* signals masculine plural. Comparing this to the feminine past auxiliary, the final *i:* signals feminine (since this is constant across both forms). Singular is unmarked, with plural agreement signaled by the nasal feature.

Plural agreement with bare *tum* is sensitive to the realization of plural agreement (portmanteau versus separate exponent). Note that bare *tum* is semantically singular and is not honorific. Plural agreement is expressed only if it would be realized as a portmanteau as in (41a) but not where it would be expressed by a separate exponent (nasalization) as in (41b). Let’s call this **split** agreement (for an initial description see Bhatt & Keine (2018) and for an analysis Sinha (2021)).

- (41) a. male addressee:  
 tum lambe    **\*tha:/the**  
 2    tall.M.PL be.PST.M.PL  
 ‘You were tall.’
- b. female addressee:  
 tum lambi: **thi:/\*thĩ:**  
 2    tall.F be.PST.F.SG/be.PST.F.PL  
 ‘You were tall.’

In agreeing like this, bare *tum* does not pattern with semantically plural NPs or honorificized NPs.

- (42) Singular honorificized/plural third person
- a. Mahesh-ji:/sab lar̥ke                      lambe    the  
 Mahesh-HON/all boy.M.PL.DIR tall.M.PL be.PST.M.PL  
 ‘The honorable Mahesh/all the boys were tall.’
- b. Mi:na:-ji:/sab lar̥kiyã:                      lambi: thĩ:  
 Mina-HON/all girl.F.PL.DIR tall.F be.PST.F.PL  
 ‘The honorable Mina/all the girls were tall.’

Semantically plural NPs and honorificized NPs display plural agreement throughout the paradigm.<sup>7</sup> Nor does bare *tum* pattern with singular non-honorificized NPs, which display singular agreement throughout. When *tum* combines with a plural NP, it can have plural reference though it is still neutral with respect to honorificity. Once plural reference is there though, the agreement is no longer split. We get plural agreement throughout.

- (43) a. male addressees:  
 tum laṛke                  lambe    \***tha/the**  
 2    boy.M.PL.DIR tall.M.PL be.PST.M.PL  
 ‘You boys were tall.’
- b. female addressees:  
 tum laṛkiyā:    lambi:    \***thi:/thī:**  
 2    girls.F.PL tall.F    be.PST.F.SG/be.PST.F.PL  
 ‘You girls were tall.’

The split agreement that we find with bare *tum* shows that the plural features on bare *tum* are to be distinguished from the plural features associated with plural/honorific semantics. We notate this as  $\text{PE}$ , the defective counterpart of PL. Unlike PL,  $\text{PE}$  is not associated with either plural or honorific semantics.  $\text{PE}$  and PL are also distinct in their morphological realization.

- (44) a. /PL/  $\leftrightarrow$  ~ (freestanding nasal segment)  
 b.  $\text{PE}$  does not have an independent freestanding realization (alternatively: is deleted by a late impoverishment rule that applies after it has conditioned the realization of M)

There are a number of environments, however, where PL does not have a freestanding realization but its presence conditions the realization of other features, and in **all** such environments,  $\text{PE}$  and PL have the same behavior. In the tables below, the independent cases are **in bold** and the conditioned cases are *in italics*. Note that number is neutralized on adjectives in the context of the feminine F.

(45) **Independent** and *conditioned* expression of PL agreement

Participle/Adjective			Past Auxiliary			Present Auxiliary			
	M	F		M	F		1	2	3
SG	lamba:	lambi:	SG	tha:	thi:	SG	hū:	he	he
PL	<i>lambe</i>	lambi:	PL	<i>the</i>	<b>thī:</b>	PL	<b>hē</b>	<i>ho<sub>tum</sub></i>	<b>hē</b>

From a diachronic perspective, Annie Montaut (p.c.) has told us that singular *tum* did in fact trigger full plural agreement in Hindi around the turn of the 20th century. Reasoning backwards, we speculate that perhaps the loss of number/honor features is a recent one.

<sup>7</sup>*a:p* also displays plural agreement throughout.

What we have reported here is contemporary spoken Hindi. However, even today, written usage occasionally reflects the older pattern, particularly in poetic contexts. It is possible that the use of *a:p* as the general 2nd person honorific led to the loss of the honorific meaning associated with *tum*, which made its PL feature atavistic.

## 6.2 A final puzzle: Person (mis)agreement with *a:p*

We have treated *a:p* as having 3.PL features, due to the agreement patterns shown in (46).

- (46) a. male addressee, unmodified *a:p* only has singular reference  
 us din a:p thake hue **the/\*tha:**  
 that day 2HON tired.M.PL be.PART.M.PL be.PST.M.PL/be.PST.M.SG  
 ‘That day, you were tired.’ (speaker expresses respect towards addressee)
- b. female addressee, unmodified singular *a:p*  
 us din a:p thaki: hui: **thī:/\*thi:**  
 that day 2.SG.HON tired.F be.PART.F be.PST.F.PL/be.PST.F.SG  
 ‘That day, you were tired.’ (speaker expresses respect towards addressee)

However *a:p* can also agree with 2.PL features.

- (47) a:p lambe: hē/ho  
 2.HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL/be.PRS.2.PL  
 ‘You are tall.’ (speaker is being polite)

Use of *ho* here is widely accepted. Pragmatically, it seems that *a:p* with 2.PL agreement is still respectful but perhaps a shade lower than when it has 3.PL agreement. It feels playful; one would use it with someone one respects but with whom one could take some liberties. In strictly formal settings, using *ho* with *a:p* would be off. Note that despite this usage, *a:p* does not display the split agreeing pattern of *tum*.

- (48) female addressee, unmodified *a:p* only has singular reference  
 us din a:p thaki: hui: **thī:/\*thi:**  
 that day 2.HON tired.F be.PART.F be.PST.F.PL/be.PST.F.SG  
 ‘That day, you were tired.’ (speaker expresses respect towards addressee)

Honorification with *a:p* differs from honorification of third persons in that honorification of plurals is possible with *a:p*.

- (49) a. male addressees, *log/larke*: ‘people/boys’ forces plural reference  
 us din a:p log/larke thake hue  
 that day 2 people/boys.M.PL tired.M.PL be.PART.M.PL  
**the/\*tha:**  
 be.PST.M.PL/be.PST.M.PL

‘That day, you people/boys were tired.’ (speaker expresses respect towards addressees)

- b. female addressees, *laṛkiyā*: ‘girls’ forces plural reference

us din a:p    laṛkiyā:    thaki:    hui:    **thī:/\*thi:**  
that day 2.HON girls.F.PL tired.F be.PART.F be.PST.F.PL/be.PST.F.SG

‘That day, you girls were tired.’ (speaker expresses respect towards addressees)

The reader will recall that with third persons, plurality and honorification were in complementary distribution. We take this to show that the honorific meaning of *a:p* is at least partly encoded in the lexical meaning of *a:p*.

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