Honor and Plurality in Hindi-Urdu

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Number agreement and honorificity: Basic data

(1)   a.   Mi:na: lambi: hɛ
        Mina.F tall.F   be.PRS.3.SG
        'Mina is tall.'

      b.   ve   laṛkiyã: lambi: hɛ̃
        DEM.PL girl.F.PL tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL
        'Those girls are tall.'

(2)   a.   * Mi:na:-ji: lambi: hɛ
          Mina.F-HON tall.F   be.PRS.3.SG

      b.   Mi:na:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃
          Mina.F-HON tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL
          'Mina, who I respect, is tall.'

Where is honorificity?

(3)   a.   laṛki: lambi: hɛ
              girl.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.SG
              'The girl is tall.'

        b.   laṛkiyã: lambi: hɛ̃
              girl.F.PL tall.F be.PRS.3.PL
              'The girls are tall.'

(4)   a.   laṛki:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃   / *hɛ
              girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL / *be.PRS.3.SG
              'The girl, who I respect, is tall.'

        b. * laṛkiyã:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃   / hɛ
              girls.F.PL-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL / be.PRS.3.SG
              intended: 'The girls, who I respect, are tall.'

Where is honorificity?

Dem Plural ⇐ Hon ⇒ Singular N

(5) Dem is plural; N is singular:

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

'That girl, who I respect, is tall.'

(6) Dem is plural; N is singular:

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

'Call that girl, who I respect'

Plural features, not plural semantics

(7) a. ek laṛki: lambi: hɛ
      one girl.F.SG tall.F be.PRS.3.SG
      'One girl is tall.'

   b. * ek laṛkiyã: lambi: hɛ̃
      one girl.F.PL tall.F be.PRS.3.PL
      Literally: 'One girls are tall.'

   c. ek laṛki:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃   /
      one girl.F.SG-HON tall.F be.PRS.3.PL /
      *hɛ
      be.PRS.3.SG
      'One girl, who I respect, is tall.'

A puzzle: Masculine common nouns

What we have seen before: feminine nouns + Hon: noun appears in a 'singular' form; 'plural' form is bad.

New: masculine nouns + Hon: noun appears in a 'plural' form; 'singular' form is bad.

(8) a. laṛka: lamba: hɛ
     boy.M.SG tall.M.SG be.PRS.3.SG
     'The boy is tall.'

  b. laṛke lambe: hɛ̃
     boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
     'The boys are tall.'

  c. laṛke-ji: lambe: hɛ̃
     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.'

Obliqueness as a solution

(9) a. DIRECT

laṛka: a:j   a:-ya:
boy.M.SG.DIR today come-PFV.M.SG

'The boy came today.'

b. OBLIQUE

laṛke   ko   a:j   a:-na: hɛ
boy.M.SG.OBL DAT today come-INF be.PRS.3.SG

'The boy has to come today.'

Obliqueness as a solution

most -*a:* ending MASCULINE

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	laṛka:	laṛke
PL	laṛke	laṛkõ

other MASCULINE NOUNS

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	dhobi:	dhobi:
PL	dhobi:	dhobiyõ

FEMININE NOUNS

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	laṛki:	laṛki:
PL	laṛkiyã:	laṛkiyõ:

HON requires Obliqueness

(10) a. laṛke-ji: lambe   hɛ̃
          boy.M.SG.OBL-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
          'The boy, who I respect, is tall.'

      b. laṛki:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃
          girl.F.SG.OBL-HON tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL
          'The girl, who I respect' is tall.'

Demonstratives, Hon, and Obliqueness

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

(11) DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE + MASCULINE NOUN

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE	HON.DIRECT	HON.OBLIQUE
SG	vo laṛka:	us laṛke P	vo/ve laṛke ji:	un laṛke ji: P
PL	vo/ve laṛke	un laṛkõ P	NA	NA

(12) vo/ve/*un/*us laṛke-ji: lambe
     DEM   boy.M.SG.OBL-HON tall.M.PL
     hɛ̃
     be.PRS.3PL
     'That boy, who I respect, is tall.'

Hon, ∗, and PL: a rough sketch of our analysis

- ▶ *ji:* expresses Hon, attaching to an NP and signaling the speaker's respect toward the NP referent.
- ▶ Hon and the plural-forming morpheme ∗ both attach under the Num head, and are hence in complementary distribution.
- ▶ Both have the same [PL] feature conventionally associated with plural agreement.
- ▶ Both require their complement to appear in the oblique form.
- ▶ But they have distinct semantics (honorification, plurality) and different realization.

Num as the locus of Hon and ∗

(13)   a.   [NumP [NP boy.OBL] Num[Hon]]
             laṛke/*laṛka: 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)'

The absence of plural morphology in (13b) follows because there is
just no plural formative to deliver plural morphology. The plural
formative ∗ that would be required for this purpose is blocked by
the presence of Hon; by hypothesis both formatives appear under
Num, and are thus in complementary distribution.

Realizing ∗ under Num

(14) [_{NumP} [_{NP} boy.OBL] Num[∗]]

    laṛke
    boy.OBL

    'boys'

(15) [_{NumP} [_{NP} girl.OBL] Num[∗]]

    laṛki-yã:
    girl.OBL-PL

    'girls'

In (14), ∗ has a zero realization and in (15), it is realized as -yã:. In both cases, ∗ requires the obliqueness of its complement but is itself in the direct form.

(16) Realization Rules for ∗:
    a. [∗, OBL] ↔ -õ̃
    b. [∗] ↔ ∅ / __ [M]
    c. [∗] ↔ -yã: / __ [F]
    (so far HON is realized as -ji:)

What about SG

Should we postulate SG, the singular counterpart to $*$?

(17) SG is generated under Num
   a. semantics: not contentful
   b. realization: none

SG's only reason for being would be to provide singular phi features. But these can easily be handled as elsewhere features in Hindi-Urdu.

Moreover given that Hon combines with semantically singular nouns and Hon would be in complementary distribution with SG, then SG cannot be a requirement for singularity on the noun or for deriving singular nominal morphology.

A world without SG

We could instead assume that there is no such thing as SG. The only elements that are generated under Num are Hon and $*$.

This would then allow us to associate plural phi-features with the Num head itself and not the elements that realize this head.

The fact that honorific agreement is the same as plural agreement would not then be an accident.

It would be instructive to look at languages that both have an agreement system that distinguishes numbers beyond the singular/plural opposition and honorific agreement.

An important aspect of our proposal is that nouns are born singular; something additional needs to be done to achieve plural reference and morphology (see Schwarzschild 2022).

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
(19).

(18)   a. Ra:m   lambe   hɛ̃
         Ram.M tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

         'Ram, who I respect, is tall.'

      b. Mi:na: lambi: hɛ̃
         Mina.F. tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL

         'Mina, who I respect, is tall.'

Hon without *-ji:*

(19) a. Ra:m lambe hɛ̃
       Ram.M tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
       'Ram, who I respect, is tall.'

   b. Mi:na: lambi: hɛ̃
      Mina.F. tall.F be.PRS.3.PL
      'Mina, who I respect, is tall.'

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) and that agreement is not always with the subject makes the covert Hon idea easier to implement in the Hindi-Urdu context.

Covert Hon with common nouns: editors yes, children no!

(20) a. *sampa:dak* 'editor.M'

   sampa:dak lambe hɛ̃
   editor(s).M tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

   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: lambi: hɛ̃
   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.

Covert Hon with common nouns: editors yes, children no!

This silent Hon seems to be unavailable with more garden variety nouns like *laṛka:* 'boy' and *laṛki:* 'girl':

(21) a. *laṛke* 'boy.M.PL.DIR'/'boy.M.SG.OBL'

    laṛke   lambe   hɛ̃
    boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

    'The boys are tall.'
    unavailable: 'The boy, who I respect is tall.'

    b. *laṛki:* 'girl.F.SG' (DIR or OBL)

     * laṛki: lambi: hɛ̃
       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 (21) lack honorific readings, though we will offer some speculations.

Other overt realizations of Hon

(22) a. daroga: sa:b lambe   hɛ̃
     inspector.M HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
     'The inspector, who I respect, is tall.'

   b. mantri: mahoday lambe   hɛ̃
     minister.M HON   tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
     'The minister, who I respect, is tall.'

Other overt realizations of Hon

(23) Ayesha ma'am   (24) Tanmoy sir
Ayesha.F ma'am   Tanmoy.M sir
'The hon. Ayesha'   'The hon. Tanmoy'

There is a degree of selection between the specialized markers of honorificity and the nominals they combine with. For example, *driver* goes with *-sa:b*. *driver mahoday* feels very odd. And *ma'am*/*sir* select for the gender specification of their complement.

Other overt realizations of Hon

Like *-ji:*, these specialized markers of honorificity require obliqueness (visible on masculine nominals) and singular form (visible on feminine nominals).

(25) a. lakaṛha:re/*lakaṛha:ra: sir
          woodcutter.OBL/woodcutter.SG.DIR sir
          'The woodcutter, who I respect'

      b. ṭhelewa:li:/*ṭhelewa:liyã:/*ṭhelewa:liõ   ma'am
          cart.lady/cart.lady.PL.DIR/cart.lady.PL.OBL ma'am
          'The cart lady, who I respect'

Differential availability of covert Hon: Selection

Speculation: a kind of selection

For some speakers, even an overt Hon is disfavored with the nouns that do not allow a covert Hon (e.g. (21)). Perhaps then the unavailability of covert Hon with these nouns is a kind of selection.

Nominals that allow for covert Hon only do so when the presence of the covert Hon can be detected from agreement (e.g. *Mi:na:* in (19b) and *sampa:dika:* 'female editor' in (20b)). 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.

(26) 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 in Plural Agreement

Recoverability seems to also play a role in number agreement. Consider *akhba:r* 'newspaper', whose plural in non-oblique contexts is the same as its singular. Also *vo* 'that' is not marked for number.

(27) vo akhba:r beka:r hɛ/hɛ̃
    that newspaper.M useless be.PRS.3.SG/be.PRS.3.PL

    'That newspaper is/those newspapers are useless.'

However if we place a surface ambiguous expression like *vo akhba:r* in positions where it does not trigger agreement, at least for some speakers, only the singular reading is available.

(28) tumha:ra: vo akhba:r paṛh-na: zaru:ri:
    your that newspaper.M read-INF necessary
    hɛ
    be.PRS.3.SG

    'Your reading that newspaper/*those newspapers is necessary.'

Recoverability in Plural/Honorific Agreement

Perhaps certain covert segments need to be 'identified' i.e. in the absence of overt evidence, the parser does not postulate them. This is the case in the absence of agreement.

But when the agreement tells us that there must be plural phi-features on a certain DP, then the parser postulates a covert Hon/∗.

This conceptualization is superficially close to the idea that it is the agreement that is interpreted, but it does not actually involve interpretation of the agreement. The agreement merely provides the cue for postulating covert material.

Korean

A language with a rich and intricate honorific system, including addressee and *subject oriented honorific* markers.

(29) **halapenim**-i   pata-ey {#ka-ess-ta | **ka-*sy*-ess-ta**}.
     grandfather-NOM sea-DAT {#went | **went.hon**}.

(30) **ai**-ka   pata-ey {**ka-ess-ta** | #ka-*sy*-ess-ta}.
     child-NOM sea-DAT {**went** | #went.HON}.

Japanese

Another language with a rich and intricate honorific system, including addressee and *subject oriented honorific* markers.

(31) **sensei**-ga   umi-ni {it-ta | **irasshatta**}.
grandfather-NOM sea-DAT {went | went.HON}.
"The teacher went to the ocean."

(32) **kodomo**-ga umi-ni {**it-ta** | #irasshatta}.
child-NOM   sea-DAT {went | #went.HON}.
"The child went to the ocean."

Yaeyaman

Yet another language with a rich and intricate honorific system, including addressee and *subject oriented honorific* markers.

(33) Higher status subject:

ubuza=ndu   sunaka=ha {#hatta | **ootta**}.
grandfather=NOM.FOC ocean=to {#went | went.HON}

"The elder man went to the ocean."

(34) Lower status subject:

unu **faa**=ndu   sunaka=ha {**hatta** | #ootta}.
that child=NOM.FOC ocean=to {went | #went.HON}

"That child went to the ocean.

Subject honorifics as agreement

- ▶ A number of researchers treat subject-oriented verbal honorific morphology as a kind of agreement (Toribio 1990, Ura 1993, Ahn 2002, Koopman 2005, Hasegawa 2005, Choi & Harley 2019, a.o.)
- ▶ Objections to this view (for the case of Korean) given in Kim and Sells 2007.
- ▶ Hindi honorific agreement co-opts a pre-existing rich agreement system; no 'honorific' feature is introduced into the system. Instead, the pre-existing PL feature is recycled.
- ▶ Korean, Japanese, and Ryukyuan have no agreement phenomena, apart from purported honorific agreement.
- ▶ In these languages, an agreement system would be created on the basis of an HON feature on the NP, and operate without any other dimensions of syntactic agreement.

Some issues with the agreement account

Many issues already noted by Kim and Sells 2007 for Korean; we focus here on Japanese.

1. Japanese has at least two types of subject-oriented verbal honorific morphology, and these signal different levels of honorification (Oshima 2019).

2. Japanese has NP elements (nominal suffixes etc) that honor the NP referent, but none of these *grammatically* require verbal honorific morphology.

3. Honorific morphology can be "stacked", and the result is to increase the overall level of honorification.

Different honorific morphology signals different levels of honor

Japanese has two primary devices for signaling subject-oriented honorification on the verb:

1. Type 1: Passive morphology (with no valency-changing or other syntactic effects).

2. Type 2: The complex construction *o*-VERB *ni naru*, in which an infinitival verb form is prefixed with the honorific prefix *o*-, and then combined the light verb *naru* 'become'.
   ⇒ many verbs have a suppletive form corresponding to the second honorific type.

As noted by Oshima 2019, these two honorific strategies are associated with different levels of honorification, such that Type 2 >> Type 1.

Different honorific morphology signals different levels of honor

(35) a. No honorific:

Suzuki-san ga   kak-u.
Suzuki-Mx NOM write-PRS

b. Type 1 honorific (passive morphology):

Suzuki-san ga   kak-are-ru.
Suzuki-Mx NOM write-HON1-PRS

c. Type 2 honorific (complex construction with light verb):

Suzuki-san ga   o-kaki   ni   nar-u.
Suzuki-Mx NOM HON2-write DAT become-PRS

"Suzuki (will) write (it)."

In an agreement-based account, will need to posit (at least) two different honorific NP features, associated with distinct levels of honor and triggering distinct agreement forms.

Nominal honorifics do not grammatically require verbal honorific morphology

Japanese has NP elements (nominal suffixes etc) that honor the NP referent, but none of these *grammatically* require verbal honorific morphology. Example: nominal suffix *-sama*

(36) a. Suzuki-sama ga   kak-u.
            Suzuki-HON NOM write-PRS

      b. Suzuki-sama ga   kak-are-u.
            Suzuki-HON NOM write-HON1-PRS

      c. Suzuki-sama ga   o-kaki   ni   nar-u.
            Suzuki-HON NOM HON2-write DAT PRS

⇒ Forced to conclude that nominal HON feature is always covert.
⇒ Contrast with Hindi *ji:*, whose presence obligatorily triggers plural agreement morphology.

Multiple honorific marking = increased honorificity

The following examples and discussion are based on Oshima 2019:

(37)   a. No honorific:

    Suzuki-san ga   kak-u.
    Suzuki-Mx NOM write-PRS

   b. Type 1 honorific (passive morphology):

    Suzuki-san ga   kak-are-ru.
    Suzuki-Mx NOM write-HON1-PRS

   c. Type 2 honorific (complex construction with light verb):

    Suzuki-san ga   o-kaki   ni   nar-u.
    Suzuki-Mx NOM HON2-write DAT become-PRS

   d. Type 1 + Type 2 honorific:

    % Suzuki-san ga   o-kaki   ni   nar-are-ru.
      Suzuki-Mx NOM HON2-write DAT become-HON1-PRS

Empirical observation: An increased degree of honorification when honorific marking is doubled *on the same verb*.

Multiple honorific marking = increased honorificity

The following examples and discussion are based on Oshima 2019:

(38) a. No honorific:

Suzuki-san ga   tabe-u.
Suzuki-Mx NOM eat-PRS

b. Type 2 honorific (suppletive verb):

Suzuki-san ga   meshiagar-u.
Suzuki-Mx NOM eat.HON2-PRS

c. Doubling of Type 2 honorific (suppletive verb combined appearing in honorific construction with light verb, both forms signaling Type 2 honorification):

Suzuki-san ga   o-meshiagari   ni   nar-u.
Suzuki-Mx NOM HON2-eat.HON2 DAT become-PRS

"Suzuki (will) eat (it)."

Empirical observation: An increased degree of honorification when honorific marking is doubled *on the same verb*, even when this doubling involves the *same type of honorific morphology*.

Extreme honorification

Although prescriptively frowned upon, an exuberant honorer might even utter something like the following:

(39) Doubling of Type 2 honorific (suppletive verb + honorific construction with light verb, both forms signaling Type 2 honorification) + Type 1 honorification on the light verb:

Suzuki-san ga   o-meshiagari   ni   nar-are-ru.
Suzuki-Mx NOM HON2-eat.HON2 DAT become-HON1-PRS

"Suzuki (will) eat (it)."

Again, the effect is to increase the level of honorification even higher. The pattern here is in line with what Potts (2007) observes for expressive meaning:

Repeatability: If a speaker repeatedly uses an expressive item, the effect is generally one of strengthening the emotive content, rather than one of redundancy.

Some final thoughts

▶ Hindi-Urdu honorific agreement recycles a pre-existing agreement system; plural agreement with Hon is a side-effect of Hon being located under Num.

▶ Cases with null Hon might make it look like agreement morphology itself is interpreted, but a closer examination of the system makes this analysis implausible.

▶ By contrast, Japanese/Korean/Ryukyuan are languages without any non-honorific agreement system, in which verbal morphology targets the subject referent, with effects similar to that of Hindi-Urdu Hon.

▶ While often analyzed as agreement, a closer examination (at least of Japanese) makes this analysis less plausible – here, it really seems as if verbal morphology is itself interpreted, and not "agreement" at all.

Addressee-oriented honorification

- ▶ This talk has focused exclusively on honorification of third-person referents.
- ▶ Japanese, Korean, and Yaeyaman also have separate addressee-oriented honorific systems that work in tandem with their argument-oriented systems.
- ▶ Hindi-Urdu has a rather intricate system of second-person pronoun distinctions, which in combination with verbal agreement serve to distinguish different levels of honor/rudeness toward the addressee. For an overview of this system, see our upcoming FASAL-12 paper!