Honor and Number Agreement in Hindi-Urdu

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Number agreement and honorificity: Basic data

(1) a.   Ra:m   lamba: hɛ
         Ram.M tall.M.SG be.PRS.3SG
         'Ram is tall.'

     b.   ve   log   lambe   hẽ
         DEM.PL people tall.M.PL be.PRS.3PL
         'Those people are tall.'

(2) a.   * Ra:m-ji: lamba: hɛ
         Ram.M-HON tall.M.SG be.PRS.3SG

     b.   Ra:m-ji: lambe   hẽ
         Ram.M-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3PL
         'Ram, who I respect, is tall.'

- *ji:* expresses HON, attaching to an NP and signaling the speaker's respect toward the NP referent.
- HON brings in a PL feature which triggers PL agreement.
- This PL feature does not signal semantic plurality.
- Instead, PL seems to mark honorification of the subject.
- Our basic idea: The interpretation of PL is subject to *allosemy*.

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

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

▶ *ji:* is not necessary; PL agreement with a singular subject is
  enough to contribute HON meaning.

▶ So what's going on?
  1. covert HON on the NP, or
  2. agreement morphology is interpreted — agreement PL feature
     is ambiguous?

What kind of NP does HON combine with?

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

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

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

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

Formal number split in the honored NP/DP

(5) DEM is plural; N is singular:

[ve   larki:-ji:] lambi: h$\tilde{\varepsilon}$
DEM.PL girl.F.SG-HON   tall.F   be.PRS.3PL

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

A picture:
Dem Plural $\Leftarrow$ HON $\Rightarrow$ Singular NP

▶ HON (which is borne by *ji:*) selects a semantically singular complement N/NP.

▶ 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/DP with singular semantics.

PL feature on the NP/DP is formal, not semantic

This is only formal plurality, not semantic plurality, as shown by the compatibility of honorificized NPs with the numeral *ek* 'one':

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

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

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

A confound

(7) 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 is ok but this is not a challenge to the idea
that the part of the nominal up from the HON (the *ji:*) is formally
plural:

(8) vo   larki:-ji: lambi: hɛ̃
     DEM   girl.F.SG-HON   tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL
     'That girl, who I respect, is tall.'

(9)   a.   laṛka: lamba: hɛ
          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.'

A puzzle: Masculine common nouns

- ▶ (9c) has what looks like plural marking on the NP but has only a singular meaning.
- ▶ (9c) is also in conflict with (4d), which showed that morphological marking of plurality on the noun was incompatible with -*ji:*.
- ▶ The two aren't quite a minimal pair — the nouns differ in gender:
    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.

Masculine 'plural' form with HON still semantically singular

Honorificized M nouns are still compatible with *ek* 'one', just like feminine honorificized nouns:

(10)   a.   ek larka: lamba: hɛ
             one boy.M.SG tall.M.SG be.PRS.3.SG
             'One boy is tall.'

        b. *ek larke   lambe: hẽ
             one boy.M.PL tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
             Literally: '*One boys are tall.'

        c.   ek larke-ji: lambe: hẽ
             one boy.M.??-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL
             'One boy, who I respect, is tall.'

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 P
  laṛka: 'boy.M.SG'

- ▶ an oblique form that appears when the nominal is the complement of a P
  laṛke ko 'boy.M.SG.OBL DAT'

DIRECT/OBLIQUE × SG/PL × M/F

The realization of the direct/oblique distinction depends upon the particular nominal:

most *-a:* ending MASCULINE

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	laṛka:	laṛke P
PL	laṛke	laṛkõ P

other MASCULINE

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	dhobi:	dhobi: P
PL	dhobi:	dhobiyõ P

FEMININE

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

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SG	dhobi:	dhobi: P
PL	dhobi:	dhobiyõ P

FEMININE

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

Syncretism

- There is a syncretism between:
    - M.PL.DIR
    - M.SG.OBL
- So when we see a form like *laṛke*, we cannot tell whether it is M.PL.DIR or M.SG.OBL.

MASCULINE

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	laṛka:	laṛke P
PL	laṛke	laṛkõ P

FEMININE

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

- The syncretism does not hold in the feminine – compare *laṛkiyã:* 'girl.PL.DIR' with *laṛki:* 'girl.SG.DIR/OBL'.
- There is instead syncretism of DIRECT and OBLIQUE *singular* forms for feminine nouns.

Solution: *ji:* selects for SG.OBL

MASCULINE

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
SG	laṛka:	laṛke P
PL	laṛke	laṛkõ P

FEMININE

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

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

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

Demonstratives again

To complete the picture, let us also consider how demonstratives display number and obliqueness:

DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE + N.MASCULINE

	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** laṛke-ji: lamba: hɛ̃
      DEM boy.M.SG.OBL-HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3PL
      'That boy, who I respect, is tall.'

We are now at the following picture:

▶ Honored NPs: DEM.PL HON N.SG.OBL
▶ HON selects a *singular oblique* N complement.
▶ It projects a *plural* feature to the higher NP/DP, and
▶ *obliqueness* is *not* projected to the entire NP/DP.

- ▶ 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!

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
M.SG	lamba: laṛka:	lambe laṛke P
M.PL	lambe laṛke	lambe laṛkõ P
F.SG	lambi: laṛki:	lambi: laṛki: P
F.PL	lambi: laṛkiyã:	lambi: laṛkiyõ P

Further structure: adjectives and numerals

▶ We have shown that the DEM behaves differently from the N and that the HON marks the boundary of the two zones.

▶ Where do numerals and adjectives fall with respect to this boundary?

▶ Unfortunately we cannot tell!

	DIRECT	OBLIQUE
M.SG	lamba: laṛka:	lambe laṛke P
M.PL	lambe laṛke	lambe laṛkõ P
F.SG	lambi: laṛki:	lambi: laṛki: P
F.PL	lambi: laṛkiyã:	lambi: laṛkiyõ P

Morphological opacity of numerals and adjectives

▶ Numerals in Hindi do not inflect for number or obliqueness

▶ 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!

(13) "Regular" PL under NUM:

$\qquad$ DEM[uPL] [A[uPL,uGen] [Num[PL] [N[Gen$_1$]]]]

$\rightarrow \qquad$ DEM[PL] [A[PL,Gen$_1$] [Num[PL] [N[Gen$_1$]]]]

(14) Honorific PL under HON:

$\qquad$ DEM[uPL] [A[uPL,uGen] [Hon[PL] [[Num[SG] [N[Gen$_1$]]]]]

$\rightarrow \qquad$ DEM[PL] [A[PL,Gen$_1$] [Hon[PL] [[Num[SG] [N[Gen$_1$]]]]]

▶ T probes for the [PL] feature.

▶ HON selects for a SINGULAR NumP

▶ The [PL] feature can be born under the HON head or under the NUM head.

▶ The interpretation of [PL] is subject to contextual allosemy:

   ▶ NUM-[PL] – contributes plural meaning

   ▶ HON-[PL] – contributes the semantics of honorification

Analysis: Further consequences

- In our account, honorific PL *agreement* is never interpreted, any more than 'regular' PL agreement is interpreted.
- What receives interpretation is HON-[PL] or NUM-[PL].

Note: The above line of reasoning suggests that HON is above NUM and N.

- if we identify NUM with the location where actual numerals appear then we have an argument for the following structure:
- [DEM [HON [NUMERAL/NUM [ADJECTIVE [N]]]]]

HON without *ji:*

Recall that, with singular proper nouns, plural agreement was sufficient to signal the HON meaning, without the use of *ji:*:

(3) 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:*

With some common nouns as well, it is possible to get honorific meaning by agreement alone, without an overt honorific marker:

(15) 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.'

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

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

laṛke   lambe   h̃ɛ
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: h̃ɛ
  girl.F.SG tall.F   be.PRS.3.PL

intended: 'The girl, who I respect, is tall.'

HON without *ji:*

We assume that there is a silent HON formative in these cases that

1. brings in the semantics of honorification,
2. makes its sister OBLIQUE, and
3. introduces the PL feature.

▶ At this point we don't understand why this kind of covert honorification isn't freely available – i.e. why the examples in (16) lack honorific readings.

▶ We note that some nouns don't need *-ji:* and are yet almost always used as honorifics, i.e. with plural agreement and singular reference.

▶ In the Bhatt idiolect, *daddy/mummy/papa/uncle/auntie/sir/ma'am* are such nouns.

Other HON bearers

There are other overt morphemes that, like *ji:*, signal honorification of a singular referent and trigger plural agreement morphology:

(17) 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.'

      note: *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.'

And now: Second person pronouns

Hindi has three pronominal forms used for singular second person reference:

(18) (addressee is male)

    a. tu: lamba: hɛ
       2.SG.RUDE tall.M.SG be.PRS.2.SG

       'You are tall.' (speaker is being rude to addressee)

    b. tum lambe: ho
       2.SG tall.M.PL be.PRS.2.PL

       'You are tall.'

    c. a:p   lambe: hɛ̃
       2.SG.HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

       'You are tall.' (speaker is being polite to addressee)

Note: none of these can be used to refer to a plural group of speakers.

(Dis)Honor in second person singular pronouns

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(18)   (addressee is male)

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        'You are tall.' (speaker is being rude to addressee)

    b. tum lambe: ho
        2.SG tall.M.PL be.PRS.2.PL

        'You are tall.'

    c. a:p   lambe: hɛ̃
        2.SG.HON tall.M.PL be.PRS.3.PL

        'You are tall.' (speaker is being polite to addressee)

Note: none of these can be used to refer to a plural group of speakers.

Semantic vs formal features

	SEMANTICS	FEATURES
tu:	2.SG.RUDE	2.SG
tum	2.SG	2.PL
a:p	2.SG.HON	3.PL

The three second person singular pronouns are honorifically distinguished:

- ▶ *tu:* is rude
- ▶ *tum* is neutral
- ▶ *a:p* is honorific

Along with these pragmatic differences, the three pronouns are distinguished in their formal features (as evidenced by agreement):

- ▶ Both *tu:* and *tum* are formally second person, but differ in their formal number features:
    - ▶ *tu:* is formally singular
    - ▶ *tum* is formally plural
- ▶ *a:p*, meanwhile, is formally a third person plural

Brief digression: Second person plural reference

These pronouns on their own can only have 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:*.

(19)   (addressees are male)

    a. * tu: log/sab/laṛke   lamba: hɛ
         2.SG people/all/boys tall.M.SG be.PRS.2.SG

        'You are tall.' (speaker is being rude/asserting higher status)

    b. tum log/sab/laṛke   lambe: ho
        2.PL people/all/boys tall.M.PL be.PRS.2.PL

        'You all/people/boys are tall.'

    c. a:p log/sab/laṛke lambe: hɛ̃
        3.PL tall.M.PL   be.PRS.3.PL

        'You all/people/boys are tall.' (speaker is being polite)

Semantic versus formal features

	SEMANTICS	FEATURES
tu:	2.SG.RUDE	2.SG
tum	2.SG	2.PL
a:p	2.SG.HON	3.PL

There is thus a divergence in formal and interpreted features on two dimensions:

▶ The plural feature on *tum* and *a:p* is a 'dummy' feature, whose function seems to be tied to honorification, as we saw with third person honorific subjects.

▶ For second person subjects, however, the 'dummy' plural feature on *tum* does not mark honorification; instead, the *lack* of the plural feature on *tu:* marks anti-honorification.

▶ In order to get an honorific interpretation similar to that signaled by *ji:*, one must use *a:p*, which is formally third person and plural.

Interim conclusion: Two kinds of non-NUM PL

	SEMANTICS	FEATURES
tu:	2.SG.RUDE	2.SG
tum	2.SG	2.PL
a:p	2.SG.HON	3.PL

▶ PL agreement with *a:p* can be attributed to a lexically-bundled HON-[PL], as with honored third person subjects.
▶ But what about PL agreement with *tum*?
  ▶ Since *tum* is not honorific, PL can't be a reflex of HON.
  ▶ Since *tum* is singular, PL can't be reflex of NUM.

Participle/Adjective

	M	F
SG	lamba:	lambi:
PL	lambe	lambi:

Past Auxiliary

	M	F
SG	tha:	thi:
PL	the	thĩ:

(20) (male addressee(s))

    a. tum   lambe   the
        2.SG tall.M.PL be.PST.M.PL
        'You were tall.'

    b. tum   laṛke   lambe   the
        2   boy.M.PL.DIR tall.M.PL be.PST.M.PL
        'You boys were tall.'

The PL feature on *tum* is a defective agreement trigger

Participle/Adjective

	M	F
SG	lamba:	lambi:
PL	lambe	lambi:

Past Auxiliary

	M	F
SG	tha:	thi:
PL	the	thĩ:

(21) (female addressee(s))

    a. tum lambi: **thi:/*thĩ:**
       2.SG tall.F be.PST.F.SG/be.PST.F.PL
       'You were tall.'

    b. us din tum laṛkiyã: lambi:
       that day 2 girls.F.PL tall.F
       *thi:/thĩ:
       be.PST.F.SG/be.PST.F.PL
       'You girls were tall.'

The PL feature on *a:p* is not defective

The honorific 2nd person pronoun *a:p* consistently agrees in the plural irrespective of whether it is associated with singular reference or plural reference.

(22) a. female addressee, unmodified singular *a:p*

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

'That day, you were tired.' (speaker expresses respect towards addressee)

b. female addressees, *laṛkiyã:* 'girls' forces plural reference

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

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

Analysis

tum has defective plural features, which we will notate as P̶L̶.

(23) Interpretation of non-defective PL:
    a. NUM-PL – corresponds to plural meaning
    b. HON-PL – corresponds to honorification

(24) Interpretation of defective P̶L̶:
    a. does not contribute plural meaning
    b. does not contribute honorification
    Slogan: no number, no honor!

Analysis

In addition to the semantic distinction between P̶Ł̶ and PL, the two are also distinct in their morphological realization.

(25) a. $/\text{PL}/ \leftrightarrow$ ˜ (freestanding nasal segment)
      b. P̶Ł̶ does not have an independent freestanding realization

Speculation:

▶ The freestanding nasal ˜ is associated with plural or honorific semantics in contemporary Hindi and this is why it is not available to unmodified *tum*.

▶ 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, P̶Ł̶ and PL have the same behavior.

In the tables below, the independent cases are **in bold red** and the conditioned cases are *in yellow italics*. Note that number is neutralized on adjectives in the context of F.

Participle/Adjective

	M	F
SG	lamba:	lambi:
PL	*lambe*	lambi:

Past Auxiliary

	M	F
SG	tha:	thi:
PL	*the*	**thĩ:**

Present Auxiliary

	1	2	3
SG	hũ:	hɛ	hɛ
PL	**hɛ̃**	*ho$_{tum}$*	**hɛ̃**

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

(26) Featural content:

    a. features of unmodified *tum* = [2, PL]
(depending upon the gender of the addressee, we will have [2, M, PL] or [2, F, PL]

    b. features of unmodified *a:p* = [3, HON-PL]
(depending upon the gender of the addressee, we will have [3, M, PL], [3, F, PL])

    c. features of modified *tum* = [2]
combines with a plural NP, [*tum*[2] NP[GEN, PL]]
resulting features: [2, GEN, PL]

    d. features of modified *a:p* = [3,HON-PL]
combines with a plural NP, [*a:p*[3,PL] NP[GEN, PL]]
resulting features: [3, GEN, PL]

Some unresolved questions

- Where does PL̶ live? It doesn't really have semantics so perhaps it doesn't matter whether we put it under HON or NUM
- How do we distinguish semantically between:
    - *tu:*, [2, NUM-SG]
    - *tum*, [2, PL̶]

We have treated *a:p* as having $3.\textsc{pl}$ features. However it can also agree with $2.\textsc{pl}$ features!

(27) POLITE:

   a:p   lambe: hɛ̃/ho
   3.PL 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.

▶ It is still respectful but perhaps a shade lower. 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.

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

Note that despite this usage, *a:p* does not display the singular agreeing pattern of *tum*.

(28) female addressee, unmodified *a:p* only has singular reference

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

'That day, you were tired.' (speaker expresses respect towards addressee)

This suggests that *a:p* has access to the following two feature representations:

(29) a. Highest Honor: [3, HON-PL]
     b. High Honor: [2, HON-PL]