

NON-NOMINATIVE SUBJECTS IN KASHMIRI: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This paper illustrates the presence of the phenomenon of non-nominative subjects in Kashmiri. Kashmiri is an SVO language with split ergativity. Therefore, other than the canonical nominative subject, it has ergative subject. Additionally, Kashmiri shows dative subjects too. Apart from this, genitive subjects are also seen in gerundial clauses. The presence of varied non-nominative subjects entails a discussion because it is one of the primary characteristics of South-Asian languages and it seems Kashmiri is no exception. Non-Nominative subjects with ergative, dative and genitive markings in Kashmiri depend on tense, verb types and finiteness. This study descriptively showcases different facets of this non-nominative phenomenon on subjects.

1. INTRODUCTION

This descriptive study examines the characteristics of non-nominative subjects with empirical evidence from Kashmiri language. The non-nominative subjects in finite clauses of Kashmiri include ergative and dative markings. Kashmiri is a non-tonal, verb second language from the Dardic group of languages with SVO word order. Kashmiri is spoken in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent and is closely related to the Western Indo-Aryan languages. It is a past tense based split ergative language. Now we move on to provide the detailed description of non-nominative constructions in Kashmiri in the subsequent sections. Section 2 illustrates the common case markings related to ergative, dative and genitive because these constitute the major non-nominative subjects in Kashmiri. Section 3 studies the non-nominative subjects descriptively in relation to verb types of unaccusative, unergative, transitive, ditransitive verbs and modal verbs. This section also comments on the causativized counterparts of each verb type. The gerundial constructions in Kashmiri take genitive subjects and section 4 explains such data. Section 5 describes the coordinate structures. Section 6 shows subject scrambling and expletives in Kashmiri. The study is concluded in Section 7.

2. COMMON NON-NOMINATIVE CASES IN KASHMIRI

Kashmiri is a split ergative language which shows nominative-accusative alignment in the present and future tense, whereas it triggers ergative alignment in the past tense. The ergative case is marked on the subject. The primary non-nominative cases present in Kashmiri are: Absolutive, Ergative, Dative, Ablative and Genitive. Among these the case

markers which are associated with the non-nominative subjects are ergative, dative and genitive.

The case markers associated with the ergative case are:

Masculine		Feminine	
Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
-an	-tʃ(palatalization)	-i/-an	-av

(1) Ergative case markers

According to the table (1), *-an* and the palatalized counterpart of the consonant come with nouns bearing the feature values of singular masculine and plural masculine nouns respectively. The former one comes with singular nouns. The *-i/-an* ergative marker comes with singular feminine and *-av* appears with nouns with plural feminine nouns.

Similarly, the dative case markers of the language are:

Masculine		Feminine	
Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
-as/-is	-an	-i	-an

(2) Dative case markers

The table (2) describes the dative markers of Kashmiri. *-as/-is* and *-an* are attached to singular masculine and plural masculine nouns. The other two markings, *-i* and *-an* are inflections of singular feminine and plural feminine nouns. When we compare (1) and (2), we see syncretism between the ergative and dative markers in the feminine nouns.

The genitive markers are *-un*, *-uk*, *-hund/sund*. The *-un* marker comes with proper nouns. The *-uk* marker comes with masculine singular inanimates. The last marking comes with the rest of the nouns.

This section gives a description of Kashmiri case markings which are found in non-nominative subjects. Now the next section illustrates the markings in subject positions in sentences in relation to verb types.

3. NON-NOMINATIVE SUBJECT AND VERB-CLASSES

Verbs can be categorized according to the number of arguments they take. Therefore, verb types can be differentiated into:

- A. Intransitive, namely unergatives and unaccusatives
- B. Transitive
- C. Ditransitive

3.1 Unergative and Unaccusative

Kashmiri marks unergatives with ergative markers. The unaccusatives may or may not take the ergative marker. See examples below.

- (1) *ro:hnan tʰu osmut*
rohan-ERG be-Pr laugh-Perf
“Rohan has laughed”

Unergative verb “laugh” among intransitive verbs in Kashmiri takes the ergative case as seen in (1). Unaccusative verbs like “melt” also take the ergative case.

- (2) *fi:n veglio:v*
snow-ERG melt-Ps
“The son melted”

However, some unergative verbs can take both nominative and ergative subjects with the difference in agreement. For example:

- (3) *bɪ notsus*
I.M.NOM danced.1P
“I danced”

- (4) *me nots*
I-ERG danced
“I danced”

Kaul and Wali (2009)

The examples of (3) and (4) are striking because the verb ‘dance’ takes two differently case-marked subjects. In (4), the use of ergative subject is seen.

3.2 Transitive

The transitive verbs in Kashmiri show variation vis-à-vis subject marking in the non-nominative subject. This section describes such evidence where transitive verbs take up either ergative or dative subjects. The subjects of present and future tense counterparts of such verbs mostly retain the nominative case. However this changes in the past tense. For example:

- (5) *furi kʰej tsū:tʰ*
boy-ERG eat-Ps apple-M-Pl
“The boy ate the apples ”

- (6) *fur tʰu tsū:t kʰeva:n asli sehti ba:pat*
boy-NOM be-Pr apple-M-Sg eat-Indfhealth for-Pp
“The boy eats the apples for good health”

In (5), we see the transitive verb ‘eat’ takes ergative case in the position of the subject argument. However, it is not seen in (6) and subject takes nominative case instead. Departing from this data, it can be concluded that Kashmiri allows ergative case in transitives in the past tense, in contrast with the present tense. This is a unique characteristic of Kashmiri. Ergative subjects do not trigger agreement with the verb, except when the subject is in the second person. For example:

- (7) *tse vutʰitʰan sɔ*
you.ERG saw.3FSg.2Sg her.ABS
“You saw her”

The ergative subject in second person in (7) agrees with the verb. This is not seen in (5) where the subject is in third person.

Some transitive verbs in Kashmiri take obligatory dative subjects. Presence of dative subjects is a primary feature of South Asian languages and Kashmiri is no exception. Let us look at some examples (8-10) below:

- (8) *me tʰi tʰə:nɪ bu:tʰ pasand*
I-DAT be-Ps you-GEN Shoe-Pl like
“I like your shoes”
- (9) *me ə:sɪ tʰə:nɪ bu:tʰ pasand*
I-DAT be-Ps you-GEN Shoe-Pl like
“I liked your shoes”
- (10) *tʰə:nɪ bu:tʰ tʰus bɪ pasand kara:n*
you-GEN shoe-Pl be-Ps I-NOM like
“Your shoes are liked by me”

One interesting property of dative subjects is dative subjects retain the dative nature when they are passivized. For example:

- (11) *nazi:ran li: tʰ dʒami:las tʰitʰ*
nazir.ERG write-Ps jameela-DAT letter
“Nazir wrote a letter to Jameela”

(12) *d̪ami:las a:ji t̪itʰʰ l̪e:kʰni nazi:rni z̪əriji*

jameela.-DAT come.Ps letter write.INF.nazir by

“A letter was written to Jameela by Nazir”.

The dative case is attached to “Radha” in both (11) and (12). However, the structural positions of the dative subjects have changed. Dative marked subjects also do not trigger agreement.

3.3 Ditransitive

Ditransitive verbs in Kashmiri take the ergative case in the past tense and behave similarly to the transitive verbs and thus, they take the nominative case in the present tense. The examples below (13-16) show how ergative marked subjects are found in the past tense in ditransitive verbs:

(13) *bafi:r t̪ʰu diva:n meh dohaj p̄ō:s̄i*

basher-NOM be-Pr give-Ind me-DAT everyday money

“Bashir gives me money everyday”

(14) *bafi:ran dit̪ meh p̄ō:s̄i*

basher-ERG give-Ps me-DAT money

“Bashir gave me money”

(15) *nazi:r chu meh p̄ō:s̄i so:za:n*

nazir-NOM be-Pr me-DAT money send-Ind

“Basher sends me money”

(16) *nazi:ran su:z̪ meh p̄ō:s̄i*

nazir-ERG send-Ps me-DAT money

“nazir sent me money”

Examples (13) and (15) shows that ditransitive verbs take nominative subjects. In contrast to this, subjects of verbs in the past tense take ergative subjects as seen in (14) and (16).

3.4 Causativized verb or causatives

This subsection talks about how different verbs behave when they are causativized. When an intransitive verb is causativised in the past tense, the subject must take the ergative case:

(17) *bafi:ran asno:v d̪za:ved*

Bashir-ERG laugh-Caus javed-NOM

“Bashir made javed laugh”

(18) *ak^htaban veglo:v fi:n*

sun-ERG melt-Caus snow

the sunlight meted the snow

Kashmiri transitives have two ways of causativization. They are called standard causativization and extended causativization. Some examples are:

(19) *me hjavnov džave:d palav*

I-ERG buy.cause.3P.Sg javed cloths

“I made javed buy cloths”

(20) *me k^hav:vina:vinov džave:das athi mohni dat^h*

I-ERG eat.causeII.3P.Sg javed.DAT by Mohan grapes.

“I made Mohan eat grapes through javed”

In (19), we see that the verb eat is causativised and in (20), the case of extended causativization is seen. In both cases, the subject takes the obligatory ergative case.

3.5 Modal verbs

In case of presence of modal verbs in Kashmiri, the subject takes dative case. Some modal verbs used to express modality in Kashmiri are *a:sun'*, *po'n'* 'have to' etc. For example:

(21) *təmis o:s do:stan palzun*

he.DAT had friends.DAT help.INF

'He had to help his friends'

(22) *me peji ji kə:m karin'*

I.DAT fell.Fut this work.do-inf

“I will have to do this work”

The subjects take the dative case in the presence of modal verbs as seen in the examples above.

4. NON-NOMINATIVE SUBJECT IN GERUNDIAL

The last sections primarily talk about finite verbs taking different types of non-nominative subjects. This part is dedicated to describing the non-finite gerundial constructions. Such constructions act differently from finite counterparts. This is because instead of ergative or dative, such construction shows obligatory genitive case marked subjects. For illustrations look at the examples below:

(23) *təm sund vatih peṭh pathar p'ion a:v nih meh pasand kenh*
his-GEN road on-PP down fall come neg I-ERG like neg
“I didn’t like his falling down on the road”

(24) *baṣirun nebr̥ih kʰon tʰun tʰun̥ih tahndi kʰetreh asl kenh*
bashir-GEN out eat neg him for good not
“Bashir’s eating out is not good for him”

The examples above take genitive subjects *temsund* and *bashirun* in the non-finite gerundial clauses instead of other non-nominative markings. The subjects lose their markings in absence of the gerundial clause.

5. CO-ORDINATE SUBJECTS

This section discusses how co-ordinate subjects are treated in Kashmiri. Transitive subjects obligatorily take the ergative case in co-ordinate subjects, unlike intransitives.

(25) *ra:ja tih rahim gej pʰilim vutʰni*
raja-NOM and-Conj rahim-NOM go-Pst movie see
“Raja and Rahim went for the movie”

(26) *ra:ja tih rahim tʰi gatsʰan dohaj pʰilim vuchni*
raja-NOM and-Conj rahim-NOM go-Indef everyday movie see
“Raja and Ram goes for a movie everyday”

(28) *ḍʒave:dan tih ṣi:ban khov asl bateh*
javed-ERG and-Con sheeba-ERG eat-Ps good-Adj food
“Javed and Sheeba ate good food”

Both of the co-ordinate subjects with the conjunction ‘and’ take nominative case irrespective of tense as seen in (25) and (26). However in the past tense. Co-ordinate subjects accompanying transitive verbs show ergative subjects, as seen in (28).

6. SCRAMBLING

Kashmiri allows scrambling. There is only one primary condition for scrambling. Kashmiri, being a V2 language, obligatory keeps the finite verb in the second position. Due to scrambling, the SVO nature of Kashmiri gets altered *prima facie*. For example:

(29) *bī gatsh̥i t̥a m̥isindi ne:rni pat̥i*
I.NOM go.fut He.GEN.ABLdeparture.INF.ABL after
“I will go after his departure”

(30) *t̥am̥i sindi ne:rni pat̥i gatsh̥i bī*

He.GEN.ABL departure.INF.ABL after go.fut I.NOM

“I will go after his departure”

In (29), the subject comes in the first position following the SVO word order. However, in the scrambled counterpart of (29) in (30), we see the subject in the non-canonical position.

Kashmiri uses expletive *ji* as the subject of construction if the subject position remains unfilled. For example:

(31) *ji a:v vuchi ni zi*

it come.PASS seen that

‘It was seen that.

Sometimes when the subject is dropped, the use of expletives, as seen in (31) is seen.

CONCLUSION

Non-nominative subjects in Kashmiri are not thoroughly researched to date. This paper is a descriptive attempt to analyse the non-canonical subjects in the language. The common non-canonical subjects present are ergative, dative and genitive. The ergative alternates with the nominative case in the past tense. Datives are also seen in dative-triggering verbs. Ergative subjects do not participate in agreement, the only exception is the second person pronominal subject. Dative subjects never participate in agreement. Scrambling is seen but with V2 restrictions. Therefore, this paper descriptively illustrates some features of non-nominative subjects in Kashmiri.

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