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Case Marking in Gojri

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Abstract

A fairly extensive and substantial research has been conducted over the years on the case system of the South Asian languages. However, Gojri could not get a proper place in the series of enquiry. This paper aims at describing the case system in Gojri spoken in the state of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (Pakistani held part). There have been some very interesting facts which are needed to be investigated to view this language either similar or different from other regional languages of the state including Urdu, Pahari, Hindko, Kashmiri etc. This paper is just a glimpse and invites other readers to investigate and contribute their research for the future enquiries.

1. Introduction

Kachru (1980) referred the nominative case as direct case as it is phonologically null. Its stem form is never inflected and can be used at different position in the sentence structure. Its use at different positions is simply because of the fact that Gojri, like many other languages of the region, is flexible in the word order. T. Mohanan (1990) has introduced three distinct morphological realisations for the description of case system of Hindi/Urdu: case clitics, post positions and inflected stem forms. This description can also be applied to Gojri with morphological variations in the construction of the words. In the following table, Mohanan (1990:80) points out the possible inflections of a masculine noun *baccaa* ‘child’ for Hindi/Urdu.

Function	Singular	Plural
Nominative	baccaa	bacce
Oblique	Bacce	baccō
Vocative	bacce	Bacco

Like Hindi/Urdu and Punjabi, the oblique form in Gojri can only be used when a noun is followed by a case marker. In (1a), the subject *gədra* ‘Boy’ is unmarked and glossed as nominative. However, in (1b) it shows ergative case marker. This can easily be judged because ‘boy’ has an oblique form here.

- 1.a. *gədra* *əm* *kha* *reo* Ɂ
boy.M.Nom mango.M.Nom eat stay.Perf.M.Sg be.Pres.3.sg
‘The boy is eating a mango.’
- b. *gədre-ne* *əm* *kha* *leyo* Ɂ
boy.M.Obl.Erg mango.M.Nom eat take-Perf.M.sg be.Pres.3.sg
‘The boy has eaten a mango.’

It is interesting to note that there are two nominative arguments in (a) where as the (b) takes only one. This is because of the fact that the (b) displays an Ergative form *ne* that makes it oblique. In traditional literature on case system, the objects like in (a) are glossed as accusative. However, Van Valin 1990, Bobaljik 1992, Bittner and Hale 1993 and Butt 1995 see it in a different perspective.

Gojri employs quite an elaborate case system. Nominals and noun phrases are overtly case-marked for the syntactic or semantic functions they perform. (2) lists the case markers (Sharma 1982) which indicate the grammatical or semantic function of the nominal or the NP:

(2)	CASE MARKER	CASE	FUNCTION
a.	-ne	Ergative	Subject
b.	-Ø	Nominative	Subject/object
c.	-na~	Accusative	Object
d.	-na~	Dative	Subject/Object
e.	-kolo~/thu~	Instrumental	Subject/Oblique
f.	-te	Locative	Subject/Oblique
g.	ka/ke/kii/kiaa~	Genitive	Subject/Object

2. Nominative Case

Like Hindi-Urdu and Punjabi, Subject in Gojri is marked with Nominative case. In other words, nominative case NP controls agreement with the verb. If the subject appears in other cases, it will take a case marker. Gojri does not have a marker with Nominative subjects. Consider the following example:

(3)	Kaloo	Gaiyaa~	charato	e
	Kaloo-Sg.M	cows-Pl-Fem	graze-Hab-Sg.M	is
	'Kaloo make cows graze.'			

In the above example, there are two NPs, *Kaloo* and *Gaiyaa~*. The first NP *Kaloo* controls agreement with the verb from the subject position, as it is in the singular and masculine noun and the verb shows singular and masculine inflection. It is also very clear that the other noun *Gaiyaa~* 'cows' is a feminine plural noun, and does not control agreement in this case. Therefore, the NP *Kaloo* is in the Nominative Case.

The subject in Gojri bears an ergative marker e.g. *-ne*, if the sentence is a transitive one and is in the past form, and does not control agreement in this case, the object present in the sentence controls agreement. This is shown in (4)a. However, if the tense is non-past, then the nominative case e.g. *-Ø* appears on the subject as illustrated in (4)b.

(4)	a.	us-ne/* us	xat	likho
		s/he-ERG	letter.3.s.M.	write-PST.M
		'S/he wrote a/the letter.'		
	b.	wa /* wo-ne	xat	likho go
		he-NOM.M.	letter.3.s.M.NOM	write aux. FUT.

‘He will write a/the letter.’

3. Ergative Case

Gojri is an ergative language. Dixon (1979) and Van Valin (1990) define ergative languages in the way that they group the subjects of intransitive verbs together with the objects of transitive verbs. On the other hand, accusative languages like English group the subjects of transitive verbs together with the subjects of intransitive verbs. Marantz (1984) is of the view that an ergative system is underlying the inverse of an accusative system. Some other attempts have also been made to capture the nature of the ergative system. Mahajan (1989) provides an analysis of ergative for Hindi. He claims that noun phrases in Hindi be allowed to have two case: Structural Case and Inherent Case. In ergative languages, an ergative argument would be analysed as being structurally nominative but inherently ergative. Garrett (1990) draws a conclusion from the data of Anatolian and Papuan languages that the development of an ergative system can not be conditioned by semantic factors, but must be motivated by the processes of reanalysis of unproductive or rare instrumental markers in null subject clauses.

There are many controversies as to whether Hindi/Urdu is a split ergative language or not. Dixon (1979) and Bittner and Hale (1993) claim these languages as split ergative as the split is simply conditioned by transitivity and perfective aspect. On the other hand, Pandharipande and Kachru (1978) argue that Hindi does not fit the definition of a split ergative system. They claim that the evidence from verb agreement, past participle modification, relativization, and some other phenomena that S is not always aligned with O, but that S behaves like A some of the time. If we take these argument inconsideration and apply to Gojri, it seems that these are also true and workable in ergative case system in Gojri.

Khan (1987), T. Mohanan (1990) Butt and King (1991), Butt (1995), have one opinion that the ergative must be analysed as a marker of agentivity or volitionality in Urdu/Hindi. Akhtar (1998) has the same claim for Punjabi. So for as ergativity in Gojri is concerned, the examples would show that it falls in the category of Hindi/Urdu and Punjabi class of languages. The following examples show the difference between the two constructions where one subject is nominative and the other one takes ergative marker to show the volitionality involved in the action:

- (5) a. Kaloo khangyo.
kaloo.M.Nom. cough.Perf.M.Sg.
'Kaloo coughed.'
- b. Kaloo-ne khangyo.
Kaloo.M.Erg cough.Perf.M.Sg
'Kaloo coughed (intentionally).'

The above examples show that the verb *khang* ‘cough’ can appear in both cases, i.e. nominative and ergative. However, for the native speakers of Gojri, it is quite obvious that the ergative case marker in such type of structures conveys a message of intention, volition or purpose. Following Mohanan (1990) for

Hindi/Urdu, it is interesting to note that in Gojri an infinitive construction with a dative subject expresses an obligation on the part of the subject. Again, if the dative subject replaced by an ergative subject, it conveys the meanings of volitionality on the part of the subject:

- (6)a. kiran-na~ ka kepRō ➞
 Kiran.F.Dat grass.M.Nom cut.Inf.M be.Pres.3.sg
 `Kiran has to cut grass.'
- b. kiran-ne ka kepRō ➞
 Kiran.F.Erg grass.M.Nom cut.Inf.M be.Pres.3.sg
 `Kiran wants (is willing) to cut grass.'

Butt (1995) argues that Urdu clearly indicates that the ergative is not used according to the tradition notion of ergativity, but is rather used to mark volitional agent. She further adds that non-volitionality is more generally expressed by dative subject construction or complex predicates, where the light verb requires a nominative subject. If these arguments are tested in Gojri, they seem to be valid as the above examples have already indicated the phenomenon.

4. Dative Vs Accusative Case

Mohanani (1990,1993a) argue that the dative in Hindi appears on goals, whether they are spatial or abstract. Interestingly, the dative case marker and the accusative case marker are same in most of the regional languages of South Asia, and sometimes they are treated as one. This is supported by the Mahajan's (1990) analysis where he claims that every instance of *ko* in Hindi must be treated as inherent dative case. Mohanani(1990) approach towards the dative and accusative case marker is different and he carefully distinguishes one from the other. This disagreement in terms of the dative and accusative markers is not recent one.

Allen (1951) simply argues that the Hindi *ko* is nothing but the dative marker. On the other hand, Kiparsky (1987) claims that though the dative and the accusative *ko* in Hindi are homophonous, yet they fulfil two different functions and appear in complementary distribution. Butt (1995) claims that in principle there is no concrete indefinable differences. For her, *ko* represents a single case marker which can be identified with a single, unifying function in all its realisations.

This issue is also very complicated in Gojri because one cannot easily fit one criterion for describing the difference in the dative and the accusative *na~*. Apparently it seems that whatsoever is true for Hindi/Urdu is true for Gojri as well. Traditionally, classifying the objects as direct or indirect in terms of their use in a sentence can easily draw this difference.

In a dative construction, the dative argument generally precedes the direct object, though different possibilities exist as to the position of the dative argument, as illustrated in (7):

- (7) a. Kaloo-ne gera-na~ pin ditto
 Kaloo-ERG boy-DAT pen.3.s.M.NOM give-PST

‘Kaloo gave boy a pen.’

- | | | | | |
|----|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| b. | gera-na~ | Kaloo-ne | pin | ditto |
| c. | Kaloo-ne | pin | gera-na~ | ditto |
| d. | Kaloo-ne | pin | ditto | gera-na~ |

With regard to case marking on the object, the picture is quite complex. The presence or absence of the accusative case marker on the object is correlated with an animacy parameter (Masica 1976, Mohanan1990, Sing 1993). That is, if the object is animate, then it will bear the accusative case marker *-na~*. However, if the object is inanimate, it is often zero marked, which corresponds to nominative case. This pattern is shown in (8) below:

- (8) a. Kaloo-ne gedra-na~ maaryo
 Kaloo-ERG boy.3.s.M-ACC hit/beat-PST
 ‘Kaloo hit/beat the boy.’
- b. Kaloo-ne ka keppyo
 Kaloo-ERG grass.3.s.M-NOM cut-PST
 ‘Kaloo cut the grass.’

An inanimate object may, however, take the accusative case marker as well. The use of the accusative case marker with inanimate is motivated by their definite reference. In (9)c, the object *mez* ‘table’ is Specified, as is indicated by the appearance of the demonstrative *ya* ‘this’ and thus requires the accusative case – *na~*. if this demonstrative is replaced with its synonym *ya*, it wont take the accusative marker. Similarly, if a numeral precedes the inanimate object, never accommodates the accusative marker.

- (9) a. us -ne is mez-na~ cukyo
 s/he-ERG this table.3.s.m.ACC lift-PST
 ‘S/he lifted this table.’
- b. us -ne ya mez- cha-yo
 s/he-ERG this table.3.s.m.ACC lift-PST
 ‘S/he lifted this table.’
- c. us -ne ek mez cha-yo
 s/he-ERG one table.3.s.m.NOM lift-PST
 ‘S/he lifted a table.’

Case marking on the direct object is also sensitive to the presence of the dative indirect object or subject. Even a human direct object, which normally requires accusative case marking on the direct object, does not allow this case when the subject is in the dative case. This is illustrated in (10)a. Similarly, an inanimate object cannot take the accusative case, although it may admit the accusative

optionally, when no other argument is marked with *na~*. This pattern is illustrated in (10b):

- (10) a. *us -na~* *gerii * na~* *pasind* *aa-ii*
 s/he-DAT *girl.3.s.F.NOM* *choice* *come-PST*
 ‘S/he liked the girl.’
 b. *us -na~* *kataab *na~* *pasind* *aa-ii*
 s/he-DAT *book.3.s.F.NOM* *choice* *come-PST*
 ‘S/he liked the book.’

Other oblique subjects like genitive and instrumental also do not allow accusative case marking on the direct object as shown in (11)-(12):

- (11) a. *kiran de* *do* *pràà* *hen*
 kiran GEN *two* *brothers* *be-PRES.PL*
 ‘Kiran has two brothers.’
 *b. *kiran de* *do* *pràà na~* *hen*
- (12) a. *daakTar-ne* *mariiz-na~* *dekh-yo*
 doctor-ERG *patient-ACC* *see-PST*
 ‘The doctor examined the patient.’
 b. *daakTar-kolo~* *mariiz/*na~* *dekhayo* *geyo*
 doctor-INSTR *patient-NOM/*ACC* *see-PST* *go-PST*
 ‘The patient was examined by the doctor.’

In (12)b, the object *mariiz* ‘patient’ cannot take accusative case. Note, however, that it does admit the accusative case when the subject is in the ergative case as shown in (12)a. Thus, accusative case marking on the direct object is not only related to the animate/inanimate distinction, but also depends on the case marker appearing on the subject.

Accusative case marking on the direct object is also not permitted in a dative construction. This prohibition can be accounted for by the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP) Constraint (Mohan 1993a), a familiar notion in phonology. The OCP constraint postulates that two elements of the same form cannot occur side by side. This principle has been extended to explain the non-occurrence of two NPs bearing in same case marker in syntax. Since, the accusative case marker and dative marker are homophonous in Gojri and Hindi-Urdu, i.e. identical in form; they are not allowed to occur next to each other.

Thus, in a dative construction, accusative case marking i.e. *-na* on the direct object is not permitted since the indirect object also carries the same case marker i.e. *-na*. There also exists a hierarchical order with respect to case marking.

For instance, in a dative construction, the beneficiary argument obligatorily requires the case marker *-na* and the direct object has to be in the nominative case. For an illustration of the phenomenon consider the examples in (13):

- (13) a. *us-ne* *gerii-na~* *nikko* *ditto*
 s/he-ERG *girl-DAT* *child-NOM* *give-PST*

‘S/he handed over/gave the child to the girl.’

*b. us-ne gerii-na~ nikke-na~ ditto

*c. us-ne gerii nikke-na~ ditto

The ungrammaticality of (13)b and (13)c is due to the fact that the preference order for the dative marking over the direct object has been violated and because the same case marker cannot be used more than once in the same construction.

Like Hindi-Urdu, Gojri also overtly case marks first and second person subjects with the ergative case marker *-ne* in the perfective tenses (Bhatia 1993) as is exemplified by the examples in (20).

(14) a. mai~/*ne xat likhyo
I-ERG letter.3.s.M.NOM wrote-PST
‘I wrote a letter.’

b. tuu~/*ne xat likhyo
You- ERG letter.3s.M.NOM write-PST
‘You wrote the letter.’

For third person subjects, however, ergative case marking, e.g. *-ne*, on the subject is obligatory when the verb is transitive in the perfective. The pattern is illustrated in (15):

(15) a. us-ne/*us xat likhyo
s/he-ERG letter.3.s.M.NOM write-PST
‘S/he wrote a/the letter.’

b. us-ne/us* baTTo cukyo
s/he-ERG stone.3.s.M.NOM lift-PST
‘S/he lifted the stone.’

5. Case Inflections

In Gojri, different nominals behave differently with respect to case inflection. Case markers can be classified into three groups, namely, simple, oblique, and vocative. This is illustrated in (16) using the nominals *gədra* ‘boy’, *pra* ‘brother’ and *chacha* ‘uncle’.

(16) gədre-ne pra-na~ chache-kolo~ xat
boy-ERG brother-DAT uncle-INSTR letter.3.s.NOM
likhvayo
write-PST

‘The boy made his uncle write the brother a letter.’

Note that the form *gədre* ‘boy’, as compared to its neutral form *gədr-* ‘boy’, arises by adding the case suffix *-e* when the nominal is in the ergative case as indicated by the case marker *-ne*. Similarly, the nominal *pra* ‘brother’ being in the dative case as indicated by the suffix *-na~*, which again is an oblique case, is inflected as *pra* ‘brother’. Finally, the case suffix *-e* is attached to the nominal *chaacha* ‘uncle’ yielding the form *chaache* ‘uncle’, as the nominal is in the instrumental case, as indicated by the instrumental case marker *kolo~*.

It is also useful to draw a distinction between the morphological notion of case and the syntactic notion of case. Postpositions like *-ne*, *-na~*, *-kolo~* etc. are syntactic case markers. They indicate the syntactic function the nominal phrase fulfils e.g. subject, direct object, or indirect object etc. as well as its semantic function like causer, causee, instrument, beneficiary etc. This case marking is distinguishable from the morphological case marking which appears on the nominal indicating in which case the nominal is. Thus, it is possible to distinguish the basic-stem form e.g. *gədr-* and the various case endings as illustrated in (17):

(17)	a.	<i>gədr-a</i>	<i>gədr-ii</i>	NOMINATIVE
	b.	<i>gədr-e</i>	<i>gədr-ii</i>	OBLIQUE (Singular)
	c.	<i>gədr-ea~</i>	<i>gədr-iaa~</i>	OBLIQUE (plural)
	d.	<i>gədr-eo</i>	<i>gədr-iio</i>	VOCATIVE

Nominals are also inflected for number. As for gender, nouns are different from adjectives in that while the latter are inflected for gender, the former are lexically specified for gender. The case, gender, number and phonological shapes of the nominal interact in a complex way. For instance, the plural form of a nominal is determined by its inflection class and the phonological characteristics of its final segments. In the nominative cases, masculine nominal ending in *-a* takes the inflection *-e* in the plural forms as shown in (18).

(18)	a.	<i>gədra</i> boy.Sg.-NOM ‘The boy runs fast.’	<i>tez</i> fast	<i>dòRto</i> run-PRES	ε be-PRES.Sg.
	b.	<i>gədre</i> boy.PL-NOM ‘The boys run fast.’	<i>tez</i> fast	<i>dòRte</i> run-PRES	$\varepsilon\sim$ be-PRES.PL

Note that *gədra* ‘boy’ in (18)a is in the direct case i.e. NOM. By contrast, in (18)b, it takes the form *gədre* ‘boys’ when the nominal is in the plural form. This plural inflection, however, needs to be distinguished from the *-e* inflection, which is marked on a singular nominal ending in *-a* when it is in an oblique case. In (19)a, the singular masculine noun *gədra* ‘boy’ takes the inflection *-e* in an oblique case e.g. ergative. On the other hand, the plural form *gədre* ‘boys’ takes the form *gədreaan~* ‘boys’ in (19)b because it is in an oblique case e.g.

accusative. Thus, noun declension is sensitive to the phonological shape of the final segment.

- (19) a. gədre-ne kətab pàRii
 boy.s.-ERG book.3.s.F-NOM read-PST
 ‘The boy read the book.’
- b. us -ne gədreaa~-na~ maaryo
 s/he-ERG boy.PL.-ACC hit/beat-PST-DEFAULT
 ‘S/he hit/beat the boys.’

The picture with masculine nouns which do not end in –a like jəNRo ‘man’, kàr ‘house’, tòbii ‘washerman’ etc. is relatively less complex. These nominals are not inflected in their nominative plural form. However, in oblique cases, the plural form takes the inflection –*eeaa~*. This pattern is illustrated in (20) and (20):

- (19) a. ek jəNRo ayo
 one man.SING. come.SING.-PST
 ‘A man came.’
- b. das jəNRe~ aae
 ten men.PL. come.PL-PST
 ‘Ten men came.’
- (20) a. do tòbii pəlle tò~R Ge
 two washermen clothes wash.Inf.Obl. go-FUT
 ‘Two washermen will wash clothes.’
- b. do tòbiyaa~-ne pəlle tòte
 two washermen-ERG clothes wash-PST
 ‘Two washermen washed the clothes.’
- c. mastər-ne tòbiyaa~-na~ ənam diiyo
 teacher-ERG washermen-DAT prize give-PST.
 ‘The teacher gave away the prize to the washermen.’

In (19)b, the plural form of *JəNRo* ‘man’ changed into jəNRe~. However, in (20), the nominal *tòbii* ‘washerman’ does not inflect for plural in the nominative case as indicated in (20)a. However, in (20)b and (20)c, when this nominal is oblique e.g. ergative and dative respectively, the oblique plural marker –*iyaa~* shows up on the nominal.

As for feminine nouns, they display a rather consistent pattern. Feminine nouns ending in –i, take an –*iaa~* inflection to form plural. However, they remain uninflected in nominative and oblique cases in their singular form. With plural forms, they do not make any distinction between nominative or oblique case. In both cases, the plural marker –*iaa~* will appear on the noun. This pattern is shown in (21) and (22):

- (21) a. gədri kətab pàRe
 girl.s.-NOM book.3.s.F.NOM read.s.-PRES
 'The girl reads a/the book.'
- b. gədrian~ kətab pàRε~
 girl.PL-NOM book.3.s.F.NOM read-PL.PRES
 'The girls read a/the book.'
- (22) a. gədrian~-ne xat likhyo
 girl.PL-ERG letter.3.s.M-NOM write-PST
 'Girls wrote a/the letter.'
- b. mastər-ne gədrian~-na~ paRaayo
 teacher-ERG girl.PL.ACC teach-CAU-PST-DEFAULT
 'The teacher taught the girls.'

6. Pronominals

Pronouns in Gojri exhibit more elaborate case forms than their counterpart nouns. The simple forms of the pronouns are listed below in (23):

(23)	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1 st Person	hu~	həm
2 nd Person	tuu~	təm
3 rd Person (Proximate)	wa	wei
(Remote)	us	unaa~

Case relations for pronouns are expressed by means of case markers as illustrated in (24).

(24)	CASES	1 ST PERSON		2 ND PERSON		3 RD PERSON	
		SING.	PL.	SING.	PL.	SING.	PL.
	NOM	hu~	həm	tuu~	təm	wa yɔ/ya	wei ye
	ERG	mai~	həmRε~	tei~	təmRε~	us	us
	GEN	mero meri	mara mari~	tero teri	Thara Thari	is-ka us-ka/i	inna~-ka unna~ka/i
	OBL	mai~	həmRa~	tai~	tuo~	i(s) ne us-ne	ina~-ne unna-ne

As can be seen in (24), the ergative marker *-ne* does not occur with first and second person pronouns. The ergative has the same form as nominative. The evidence for the presence of ergative case in this situation is provided by the fact that the verb does not agree with the first or second person subject, though the latter is apparently in the nominative case. Recall from the discussion of agreement above, which the verb in Gojri agrees with the highest nominative argument. The examples presented in (25) show that this does not extend to an uninflected pronominal subject in an ergative case position:

- (25) a. mai~ bəkri xariid-ii
 I- ERG goat.3.s.f.NOM buy-PST.f.s.
 ‘I (male/female) bought a goat.’
- b. həmRε~ bəkriaa~ xaridia~
 we- ERG goat.PL.f.NOM buy-PST.f.PL.
 ‘We (male/female) bought she-goats.’
- (26) a. tε~ kaar bech-yo
 you- ERG home.3.s.m.NOM sell-PST.3.s.m.
 ‘You (male/female) sold thehome.’
- b. təmRε~ baarii khol-ii
 you- ERG window.3.s.f.NOM open-PST.3.s.f.
 ‘You (male/female) opened the window.’

In the genitive form of the pronoun, the case relation is expressed by the postposition *kaa*. This genitive marker shows agreement with the following noun in gender and number in the third person. For instance, it takes the form *kaa*, *ke*, *kii* and *kiaa~* to represent masculine singular, masculine plural, feminine singular and feminine plural respectively. In the first and second person the situation is slightly different. In these cases, it tends to lose its independent status as a genitive element and gets incorporated into first and second person singular form, giving rise to suppletive possessive forms. Thus, *mai~ + kaa* → *mero*; *təm + kaa* → *tero* represent the genitive forms.

7. Conclusion

Analysing Case system in Gojri is as complicated as many other regional languages of the region. However, this paper has come up with the idea that Gojri respects and follows most of the common features of the South Asian languages in terms of their case marking. There are some unresolved issues which were beyond the scope of this paper and will be investigated and discussed in future papers. Apparently, the question of ergativity and the complexities of the dative and accusative cases have settled down, but the picture is still blur and needs more and deep study of this phenomenon.

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