Ergativity in Pahari Language

Abdul Qadir Khan & Sumaira Sarfraz

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing Pahari language as an ergative language by using the standard mechanism of case marking, verb agreement and word order. The results show evidence of both nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive structures in Pahari. This implies that, like other regional languages, Pahari also exhibits split ergativity. Ergativity frequently appears with perfective aspect or the past tense, accusative morphology being found elsewhere.

Introduction

Pahari language belongs to the family of Indo-Aryan languages which is a sub-branch of Indo-European languages. It is one of the most ancient languages of South Asia. It is one of the two-dozen languages spoken in state of Jammu and Kashmir. It derives its name from *Pahar* meaning "hills and mountains," for it is spoken over a large area starting from Nepal and running through the foothills of the Himalayas, in Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir region in India and Kashmir region in Pakistan. Pahari was initially written in *Landa* script and Landa is the form of Sharda, which was invented by Buddhists. Sharda was a Buddhist University which was situated in Neelam valley near Muzaffarabad in the Kashmir region in Pakistan.

Heim Chander (1088-1172), an ancient Chinese Schloar, collected eight ancient manuscripts from the Sharda monastery in order to compile his new book of grammar entitled "Sada Heim Chander". It can be said arguably that Sharda Pahari was one of the oldest written languages in South Asia and it also contributed to the development of other languages, old and modern, including Urdu. Pahari is not taught in the classroom but is very much alive in its active use by the people of the region.

The status and use of Pahari has suffered over the centuries. Pahari erosion started with the demise of Buddhist Empire. In lower regions, the style of writing started changing with Greek invasion, but in Kashmir until 10th century AD the Nagri alphabet survived. This changed with Muslim rule and it became Farsi from 1819 to 1846. During Sikh rule it was Punjabi and then it was replaced by Urdu.

Pahari is also spoken in UK by the people who originate from Kashmir region in Pakistan. About six hundred thousand people speak Pahari language in UK. Once a thriving written language, Pahari became extinct not only from the classroom but also from its representation in the written form.

Ergativity

The focus of this paper is ergativity, specifically with regard to Pahari language.

Languages vary and show different behaviours. They can differ in word order, case system, arguments, etc. In many languages, subject exhibits nominative case and also shows person/number agreement on the finite verb. In some languages, gender also shows agreement with subject/object. Finite verb agreement is only found with nominative DPs

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. Mahajan (1989) claims that noun phrases in Hindi be allowed to have two cases: structural case and inherent case.

Dixon (1979) and Bittner and Hale (1993) claim these languages (such as Hindi) as split ergative as the split is simply conditioned by transitivity and perfective aspect. Mohanan (1990), Butt and King (1991), Butt (1995), argued that the ergative must be analyzed as a marker of agentivity and volitionality in Urdu-Hindi. Bukhari N.H. (2007) has the same claim for Gojri.

Indo-Aryan languages show some specific characteristics regarding case marking and agreement structure. Most of the Indo-Aryan languages show ergativity. Some languages like Urdu show split ergativity. In Urdu, a split occurs between perfect and imperfect aspect. Verb in the perfect aspect makes its argument to be marked using an ergative system, while the imperfective aspect triggers accusative marking. So, in Urdu, split morphology is triggered by the case markers specifically by ergative that appears on the subjects of transitive verbs when it carries perfect morphology.

2.1. Background

Dixon (1979) classified three core semanticosyntactic relationships:

- Nominal argument of intransitive clause : S

- Agent like argument of transitive clause : A

- Patient like argument of transitive clause : O

Accusative Languages

On the basis of these three relations languages are classified into two groups named accusative languages and ergative languages. Languages that treat S and A same morphosyntactically and O

differently are said to have nominative-accusative system and are also called accusative languages. English is one such example.
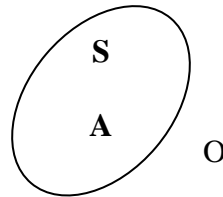
1.   (a) **She** smiled

   (b) **She** saw me

   (c) I saw **her**

The above example shows that 3rd person singular female pronoun takes the form 'She' when it is an intransitive subject (1-a) or a transitive subject (1-b), but takes 'her' form when it is direct object.

Another example from Tamil, a language spoken in India:

   2.   (a) Avan   ooDinAAn

He-Nom   ran.

            He ran

         (b) Avan   puLLAYe   paattAAn

            He-Nom   child-Accu   saw

            He saw the child.

Ergative Languages

A number of languages exhibit a quite different pattern in which the subject of intransitive clause S and direct object of transitive clause O are treated identically, while transitive subjects are treated differently.
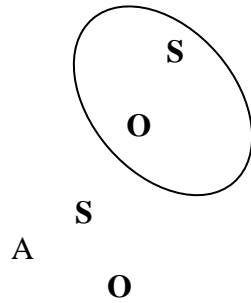
Basque is a good example: NP. gizona 'the man' and nesks 'the girl' can take either the case ending zero or the case ending –k as follows:

1.   (a). Gizona   heldu zen

        The man-Nom

            The man arrived

    (b) Kizonok   neska   ikusi zuen

           The man-Erg   the girl-Nom

           The man saw the girl.

    (c) Neskak   gizona   ikusi zuen

           The girl-Erg   the man-Nom

           The girl saw the man

It is clear from the above example that the transitive agent A takes the ending –k while both S (subject argument of the intransitive clause) and O (patient like arguments of the transitive clause) take the zero ending. In Basque, ergative morphology is thoroughgoing: ergative case marking can be applied in all circumstances. Such languages are called ergative languages.

Split Ergative

Many ergative languages show split ergativity in their grammar. This means that they are ergative only in certain circumstances. One of the commonest split is that ergative morphology appears only in the perfect aspect or in the past tense, accusative morphology being used elsewhere.
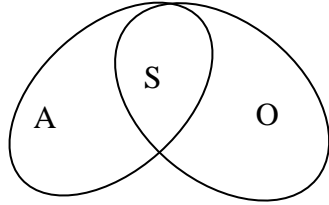
Here is an example from Urdu:

(a) Imperfective Aspect

2.   (a) mæ☐   ʊse   ɖekʰʈa   hʊ·

             I-Nom   he/her-Accu   see-PRS.M.Sg   be-PRS.Sg

              I see him/her

           (b) vo   mʊje   ɖekʰʈa   hæ

                He-Nom   I-Accu   see-PRS.M.Sg   be.PRS.Sg

                 He sees me

           (c) ʈʊm mʊje   ɖekʰʈe   ho

               You-Nom I-Accu   see-PRS.M.Pl   be-PRS.Sg

                You see me

(b) Perfective Aspect

           (d) mæ☐ –ne   ʊse   ɖekʰa

                I.Erg.   He.Accu.   see.PST.Sg

                I saw him/her

           (e) ʈʊm –ne   mʊje   pen   ɖija

                You-Nom   I-Dat   pen-Nom.Sg   give-PST.M.Sg

                 You gave me a pen

In the present aspect in the above example (4 a-c), the subject is in the nominative case and verb agrees with it while the object stands in the obli1ue case. In the past aspect as shown in example (4 d), the subject takes the ergative marker –ne and is used in oblique case while object also takes oblique case. Direct object takes accusative case while in (4-e), both direct and indirect objects are used. Here, direct object is sensitive to dative case and dative case does not allow accusative case of direct object and it takes nominative case her as direct object 'pen' is not case marked in (4-e) so it takes nominative case.

Differences in Ergativity between Pasheen and Urdu

3.   (a) maa   day   wulid

                I- Erg. he-Nom.   See.PST

                I saw him

      (b) Taa   ze   wulidem

                You-Erg   I-Nom   see.PST

                 You saw me

2.2. Case Marking in Pahari

This section discusses the case system that prevails in Pahari. We will highlight the case alternations in split ergativity in Pahari. Most of the material discussed in this section has been taken from Butt and King, Rajesh Bhatt, Nadir Durrani, Nadeem Bukhari and the first writer of this article, Abdul Qadir Khan.

Pahari language has complex case marking system. In some cases it uses different ergative case markers with nominals and pronominals. In the following section, case markers with nominal are discussed.

There are seven cases in Pahari as shown below:

Case	Masculine		Feminine	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	φ	φ	φ	φ
Ergative	–e	– eã	–ju	– iã

Dative/Accusative	-a	-a	-a	-a
Genitive	nã	ne	ni	niã
Instrumental	-kola ,-kolu·/nal	-kola,-kolu·,nal	-kola,-kolu·,nal	-kola,-kolu·,nal
Vocative	-a	-eo	-je	-jo
Locative	bitch /ar/tek	bitch /ar/tek	bitch /ar/tek	bitch /ar/tek

Table 1: Nominal Case Markers in Pahari (Khan A.Q.)

Pronominal Case Marking in Pahari

Cases	1st person Sig	1st Person Pl	2nd Person Sing	2nd Person Pl	3rd Person Sig	3rd Person Pl
Nominative	mæ◻	əns	ʈʊ·	ʈʊs	oh(he,she,it) jo(he,she,it)	oh jo
Ergative	mæ◻	əns-ã	ʈʊ·	ʈʊs- ã	ʊs ɪs	ʊn-ã (they,far) ɪn- ã (they,near)
Genetive	maɽa maɽi maɽe maɽijã	əns-ã-nã	ʈʊɽa ʈʊɽi ʈʊɽe ʈʊɽijã	ʈʊs-ã nã/ne/ni	ʊs-nã /ni/ne ɪs-nã /ni/na	ʊn-ã-nã ɪn-ã-nã
Dative/ Accusative	mijja	əns-ã-a	ʈʊjja	ʈʊsã-a	ʊs-ja ɪs-ja	ʊnã-a ɪnã-a

Table 2: Pronominal Case Markers in Pahari (Khan A.Q.)

In this paper we are primarily concerned with the first three cases. These are discussed below briefly.

2.2.1. Nominative Case

The nominative case marker can occur in all the tenses in transitive and intransitive forms. Example

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Intransitive Nominative forms

4.(a) Khalid   hənsja

Khalid-Nom,Sg.M   laugh-PST.Sg.M

Khalid laughed.

(b) Khalid   hənsnã̃   ɖa

Khalid-Nom   laugh-PRS.Sg.M. be-PRS.Sg.M.

Khalid laughs

(c) Khalɪd həns-el

Khalid-Nom laugh-PRS   FUT.Sg

Khalid will laugh.

Transitive Nominative forms

(a)   Khalid   seb   kʰai   tʃʰɽja (complex predicate)

Khalid-M.Nom apple-M.-Nom.M   eat.PST leave -PST

Khalid ate an apple

(b)   Khalid   seb   kʰanã̃   ɖa

Khalid-Nom   apple-M.Nom   eat-PRS.M.Sg be-PRS.M.Sg.

(c)   Khalid   seb   kʰasi

Khalid-Nom   apple-Nom   eat-PRS.Sg FUT.Sg

Khalid will eat an apple

2.2.2. Ergative Case

In Pahari, the ergative case markers come with the subjects of transitive verbs when the verb carries perfective aspect (-s, -i, e, ijan). With other aspects, subjects exhibit nominative case. The subject of unaccusative verb, whether perfective or imperfective, cannot have ergative case. They are always nominatives (8-a)

8.   (a) Khalid   jasi   /Khalid gətʃʰ -el

       Khalid –Nom go-Sg.FUT

The ergative case also shows up with an infinitive in combination with a present or past form of -da.

9.   (a) Kʊɽju   ganã̃   ɖ̪a

       The girl-Erg   sing-PRS   be-PRS.M.Sg

Intransitive Ergative forms

10.   (a) Khalid –e   ɡaja

       Khalid –Erg   sing –PRS.

       Khalid sang.

       (b) Khalid   ɡasi

       Khalid-Nom   sing FUT.Sg.

       Khalid will sing

       (c) Khalid-e   ganã̃   ɖ̪a

       Khalid-Erg   sing –PRS   be-PRS.Sg.M

       Khalid will sing

Transitive Ergative Forms

Subjects of transitive verbs with perfective case always show ergative behavior

11.   (a) Khald-e   tʃa   bənai

          Khalid-Erg   tea-Nom   make-PST

          Khalid made tea.
       (b).Khalid –e   tʃa   bənani   ɖ̪i (DUTY)

          Khalid –Erg   tea-Nom   make.PRS.Sg.F   be-PRS

2.2.3. Accusative/Dative Case

In Pahari, (-a,-ja) mark the goal or specify the experiencer as compared to the ergative which marks agentivity.

12.　　　(a) Khalid-aa　　billi　　　nezar　ai

　　　　　Khalid-Accu　cat-Nom　sight　come-PST.Sg.F

　　　　　Khalid saw the cat (got the sight of it)

　　(b) Khalid-e　　billi　　　　　ɖekʰi (saw it purposefully)

　　　　　Khalid-Erg　cat-Nom.Sg.F　see-PST.Sg.F

　　　　　Khalid saw the cat

3. Methodology

Ergativity in the morphology of a language manifests itself through the means employed for marking (identifying) grammatical function (Anderson 1976:3). The prime innovators of morphological tests and their use in this fashion were Anderson (1976) AND Dixon (1979).In this paper I have adapted three tests presented by Keenan(1976).These test should be considered indicators rather than　conclusion. Keenan (1976:324-5) identifies three coding properties of noun phrases, which may be examined for evidence of ergative morphology. These coding properties are:

- Case Marking
- Verb Agreement
- Constituent Order

A language can be analyzed in the light of these domains one by one.

The approach used by Thomas E Payne works by constructing a 3x3 matrix. S (Nominal argument of intransitive clause), A (Agent like argument of transitive clause) and O (Patient like argument of transitive clause) operate along x-axis and the three above mentioned variables (constituent order, case marking and verb agreement) function along y-axis. Behaviour of S,A and O is examined against each y-axis entry.

	S	A	O
Case marking			
Verb agreement			
Constituent Order			

Table 3

4. Results and Discussions

From the study of sections 2.1 and 2.2, it can be implied that Pahari demonstrates split ergativity. To elaborate further let us try to fill above defined matrix and discuss variables one by one.

4.1. Case Markers

Pahari Shows ergative morphology in the perfective aspect while, in other cases, nominative accusative construction is used. Pahari proper nouns ending with vowel do not take any overt ergative case marker while proper nouns ending with consonants take case marker –e.

Consider the following examples:

4.1.1. Nominative –accusative behavior of Pahari

16.   (a) Khalid   nəssi

            Khalid-Nom   ruN-FUT.Sg.

            Khalid will run

    (b) Khalid   sʊʈa   ɖ̪a

            Khalid-Nom sleep-PRS.Sg.M   be.PRS.Sg.M

             Khalid sleeps

    (c) Khalid   Pʰʊl   oʈʰal/oʈʰasi

          Khalid-Nom flowers-Nom pick up-FUT

Khalid will pick up flowers

When object is inanimate, it takes nominative case instead of accusative case but if the object is animate it takes accusative case as shown in (13-d)

(d) Khalid   Hamid-e-aa   jəɣanã̃   ɖa

Khalid –Nom   Hamid-Accu   wake-PRS.Sg.M be-PRS.Sg.M

Khalid wakes Hamid.

When subject shows some sort of volition /compulsion/duty the inanimate object also takes accusative case as shown in (13-e) below.

(e) Khalid   Pʰʊl- ã̃ -a   o ʈʰ al/   oʈʰasi

Khalid-Nom Flowers-Accu   pick-up-FUT/pick up-FUT.Sg

Khalid will pick up the flowers

The above-mentioned examples clearly show that in nominative –accusative pattern, the subject of intransitive clause and transitive clause coincide.

Criteria	S	A	O
Case Marking	Φ	Φ	-aa

Table 4: Nom-Accu. Case Marking

4.1.2. Ergative –Absolutive Behavior of Pahari

17.   (a) Khalid   nəsja

Khalid-Nom   run -PST

Khalid ran

(b) Khalid-e   kəhani   sunai

Khalid-Erg. Story-Nom.Sg.F tell-PST.Sg.F.

Khalid told the story

Perfective intransitive verbs allow nominative subjects as shown in (17-a). Perfective transitive verbs in Pahari require subjects with ergative cases. The above example (17-b) shows that the verb 'sunai' ergative case –e with subject Khalid and is prohibiting Khalid to occur with nominative case so in perfective aspect 'Khalid kəhani sunai' is not allowed.

In the above case the S of the intransitive clause (17-a) and A of transitive clause (17-b) do not coincide in this case, but O patient Kəhani of transitive verb 'sunai' coincide with S, Khalid. Since both have nominative cases, therefore, they both show ergative absolutive format.

Criteria	S	A	O
Case Marking	Φ	-e	φ

Table 5: Erg-Absu Case Marking

The above table clearly shows that S and O coincide.

4.2. Verb Agreement

Another morphological feature which may have implications for determining the degree of ergativity in a language is verb agreement. If the verb shows agreement with the subject of an intransitive verb and indirect object in one way and with agent in another way, this may be the evidence of ergative verb agreement (Trask 1979:388); Dixon 1979:66).

All Pahari nouns have inherent gender: masculine and feminine. A verb in a clause agrees to the gender of the noun. For example

18.   (a) gəzra   hənsja

   The boy-Nom.Sg.M.   laugh-PST.Sg.M.

    The boy laughed.

               (b) kuɽi   hənsi

    The girl-Nom.Sg.F.   laugh-PST.Sg.F.

    The girl laughed.

The above examples (18a, b) show that the verb of intransitive clause in perfective aspect agrees with the gender of nominative case. Singular masculine form takes –a sound and singular feminine form takes –i sound. In the case of plural form or a singular form with 2nd or 3rd (level of honor) these take –ay and –yaan.

The verb in perfective aspect (which take perfective case) does not agree with the agent of the transitive clause rather it agrees with the object.

4.2.1. Nominative –Accusative Verb Marking

19.   (a) Khalid   sʊʈa   ɖa

   Khalid-Nom.Sg.M.   sleep-PRS.Sg.M   be.PRS.Sg.M

   Khalid sleeps.

                (b) Maryam   sʊʈi   ɖi

    Maryam-Nom.Sg.F.   sleep-PRS.Sg.F.   be.PRS.Sg.F

    Maryam sleeps.

(c) Khalid   Hamid-e-a   jaɣana   ɖa

    Khalid-Nom.Sg.M. Hamid-Accu.Sg.M wake-PRS.Sg.M. be-PRS.

     Khalid wakes Hamid.

(d) Maryam   Hamid –e-a   jaɣani   ɖi

     Maryam-Nom.Sg.F. Hamid-Accu.Sg.M. wake-PRS.Sg.F. be.PRS

     Maryam wakes Hamid.

The above examples (19 a, b) show that, in intransitive imperfective clauses, verb requires nominative case, and both verb and auxiliary agree with subject in gender and number. Examples (19 c, d) show that, in transitive clauses, in imperfective aspect, the verb requires object in accusative case, both the verb and auxiliary agree with the nominative subject.

	S	**A**	**O**
Gender Agreement	Khalid-M	Khalid-M	Hamid-M
	Maryam-F	Maryam-F	Hamid-M

Table 6: Nom-Accu. Gender marking on Verbs

4.2.2. Ergative -Absolutive Gender marking on Verbs

In perfective intransitive construction, verb takes nominative subject, and verb and auxiliary both agree with nominative subject in number and gender. Consider the following example

    20.   (a) Khalid   hənsja

  Khalid-Nom.Sg.M   laugh-PST.Sg.M.

  Khalid laughrd.

            (b) Maryam   hənsi

          Maryam-Nom.Sg.F   laugh-PST.Sg.F

In perfective transitive clauses, where A is marked with ergative case, the verb agrees with O (patient-like argument). Consider the following example.

           (c) Khalid-e   kəhani   sunai

  The boy-Erg.Sg.M   story-Nom.Sg.F   tell-PST.Sg.F

  The boy told the story

           (d) Maryam-aan   ɖar   kʰolja

  The girl-Erg.Sg.F   door-Nom.Sig.M. open-PST.Sg.M

  The girl opened the door.

Gender Agreement	S	A	O
	Khalid-M	lerka-M	Kəhani-F
	Maryam-F	Lerki.F	ɖar-M

Table 7: Nom-Accu. Gender marking on Verbs

The predicate 'sunai-F (tell) and 'khola-M (open) in (20 c-d) agree in gender with the O argument ['kahani-F (story)] and ['dar-M (door)] respectively and not with 'Larka-M (boy) and 'larki-F (girl)' that are in ergative case. So, in this case, O of transitive case and S on intransitive clause follow identical pattern and hence exhibit ergativity.

4.3. Constituent Order

Pahari language normally follows SOV canonical structure. Unlike English, its word order is not so rigid. OSV is also used in spoken with change in meaning. For example

    21.   (a).Khalid-e Sultan-e-a marja   (S/AOV)
            (b). Sultan-e Khalid-e-a marja   (OSV)

It shows that we cannot rely on the constituent order when studying the split ergative behavior of Pahari language. The test of constituent order is truly useful when applied to verb-medial languages. As Pahari is a verb-final language, this test does not yield any relevant evidence in support of the presence of ergativity in Pahari languages.

The whole discussion can be summarized in the form of the table (Table 8)

Criteria	S	A	O
Case Marking Nom-Accu	φ	φ	-a
Case Marking Erg-Absu	φ	-e	φ
Gender Agreement of Verbs Nom-Accu	Khalid-M	Khalid-M	Hamid-M
	Pred. sleep.M	Pred.wake.M	Pred-wake.M
	----------	----------	---------
	Maryam-F	Maryam-F	Hamid-M
	Pred.sleep-F	Pred.wake-F	Pred.wake-F
Gender Agreement of Verbs Erg-Absu	Khalid-M	Khalid-M	Kahani-F
	Pred. Run.M	Pred.tell-F	Pred.tell-F
	-------------	-----------	-----------
	Khalid-M	Maryam-F	ḍa r-M
	Pred.nasja-M	Pred.open-M	Pred.open-M

Constituent Order	X	X	X

Table 8: Split Ergative Format in Pahar

5. Conclusion

This paper evaluated Pahari as an ergative language. The analysis was based on a standard checklist of three fundamental tests- case marking, verb agreement and constituent order. Results showed that a split ergative pattern in Pahari is triggered by the ergative case marking. The ergative case markers appear only in perfective aspects or past tense. Perfective aspect does not allow nominative case at the subject position. Other than ergative-absolutive pattern, nominative-accusative pattern was also found. It is also found that with ergative case markers in transitive clauses, the auxiliary and main verb both agree with the object in person number and gender which otherwise agrees with the subjects again showing a split behavior.

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