# HONORIFICATION IN NEPALI'S SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

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This Honours Thesis represents my own work and due acknowledgement is given whenever information is derived from other sources. No part of this Honours Thesis has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other university.

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*To My Mother,*

*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,*

*but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*

*Proverbs 31:30 ESV*

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1PL | First-person plural |
| 1SG | First-person singular |
| 2PL | Second-person plural |
| 2SG | Second-person singular |
| 3PL | Third-person plural |
| 3SG | Third-person singular |
| ACC | Accusative |
| ConjP | Conjunction Phrase |
| GEN | Genitive |
| IMP | Imperative |
| MSA | Modern Standard Arabic |
| N | Neuter |
| NOM | Nominative |
| NP | Noun Phrase |
| NUM | Number |
| OBJ | Object |
| PASS | Passive |

| | |
|---|---|
| PERS | Person |
| PRES | Present tense |
| PROG | Progressive |
| PSTH | Past-habitual tense |
| SUBJ | Subject |
| S-V | Subject-Verb |
| [HON] | Honorific feature |
| ∅ | Undefined or undetermined |
| Φ | Phi-features: Person, Gender, Number |
| ! | Indicates an imperative construction |
| ~ | Nasalized vowel. E.g. *ũ, ã* |
| ə | Schwa. The vowel sound of the 'a' in the word *about* |
| ( ) | A bracketed word in the data means the word is optional |
| * | Ungrammatical |
| # | Grammatically well-formed but pragmatically ill-formed |

# ABSTRACT

Nepali displays a rich and complex system of honorification embedded within its subject-verb agreement system. This phenomenon is labelled as 'Subject-verb honorification'. For instance, the choice of pronoun subjects will have an impact on the suffix of the verb used. A pronoun that indexes a certain level of respect has to be matched with a verb-suffix that indexes the same level of respect. Any mismatch of the levels of respect indexed by both the pronoun subject and the verb-suffix will lead to ungrammaticality. Apart from describing the patterns of subject-verb honorification, this paper aims to address two primary questions related to this phenomenon in Nepali which have not been addressed in previous studies. The first, does the subject-verb honorification system targets only grammatical subject of the sentence? The second, should honorific features be considered as syntactic features or pragmatic features? Firstly, this paper will demonstrate that subject-verb honorification is always between the grammatical subject of the sentence and its respective verb-suffix. One evidence is that when the grammatical subject is absent, there is also an absence of honorific agreement as seen in passive constructions. Secondly, this paper argues for a syntactic analysis of the honorific features as opposed to a pragmatic one. One argument for a syntactic analysis is that honorific features are shown to be very similar to $\Phi$-features in their characteristics. While there are several good arguments for a syntactic analysis, they are not without its problems. Particularly, the puzzle regarding non-canonical agreements will remain unresolved. Hence, further research on the nature of honorific features in Nepali is certainly warranted.

# CHAPTER ONE

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Research Focus

Nepali displays a rich and complex system of honorification embedded within its subject-verb agreement system. In this paper, honorific is "a term used in the grammatical analysis of some languages to refer to syntactic or morphological distinctions used to express levels of politeness or respect" (Crystal 2008:167). In Nepali, for instance, the choice of pronouns will have an impact on the suffix of the verb used. A pronoun that indexes a certain level of respect has to be matched with a verb-suffix that indexes the same level of respect. Any mismatch of the levels of respect indexed by both the pronoun and the verb-suffix will lead to ungrammaticality. This observation is not limited to pronouns only but also to other types of nouns that function as the grammatical subject of the sentence. Hence, in this paper, the term 'subject-verb honorification' will be used to describe this type of agreement in honorifics.

The aim of this paper is therefore to describe and analyse the subject-verb honorification system in Nepali. There are two primary sets of research questions that will be explored in this paper.

**Research Questions 1:** Does the subject-verb honorification system in Nepali targets only the grammatical subject of the sentence? In other words, does the honorific agreement applies only between the verb-suffix and the grammatical subject? Is it possible for the agreement to be between the verb-suffix and the grammatical object?

**Research Questions 2:** Taking a syntactic and agreement approach of subject-verb honorification, what then is the nature of honorific features? Are these features similar to Φ-features such as person and number? Should honorific features be considered pragmatic features rather than syntactic features instead? What are the evidence for both pragmatic and syntactic analyses?

This paper is organized into three main sections. The first section covers chapter 2. Chapter 2 provides an overall description of the subject-verb honorification observed in the data collected from the language informant. This chapter will also introduce the scale of honorific features that will be used to describe the data throughout this paper. The second section covers chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 3 focuses on whether the honorification system observed targets the grammatical subject of the sentence. Basically, this chapter will address the questions raised in Research Questions 1. Chapter 4 provides additional information to chapter 3 by delving deeper into constructions

which involve more complex subjects. The third section covers chapter 5. Chapter 5 provides a rich discussion on the nature of honorific features. In short, the questions of Research Questions 2 will be addressed in chapter 5 from two different approaches, the pragmatic approach and the syntactic approach.

## 1.2. On Nepali and the Language Informant

Nepali is the national language and lingua franca of the Republic of Nepal. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family along with other languages such as Hindustani and Bengali. Nepali is also widely spoken outside of Nepal and in fact it is one of the official languages of India since 1992 (Sarkar, 2008:95). The language informant who provided the Nepali data used in this paper is a native speaker of Nepali who was born in India but whose parents were originally from Nepal. He was born in the town of Kalimpong and lived for 20 years in Darjeeling which is a town located in West Bengal and borders Nepal in the north. According to Cardona and Jain (2007:539), Nepali plays an important role in the Darjeeling-Kalimpong region. Although, the language informant has been living in Singapore for the past 25 years, he is actively interacting with the Nepalese community that resides in Singapore. Apart from Nepali, he is also fluent in English and Hindi. All the data used in this paper are solely gathered from the eleven interview sessions conducted with the language informant. The two methods of data collection used during these interviews are translations and grammaticality judgments which are the most

common methods of elicitation (Bowern, 2015:90). The samples of the relevant data will be provided in the texts in the following chapters while the raw and additional relevant data can be found in appendix B sorted according to topic.

## 1.3. Brief Overview of Relevant Literatures

There are very few studies that have been done on the syntax of Nepali in the recent years (Some examples of recent works: Li, 2007; Verbeke, 2013). Although Nepali's subject-verb honorification has been documented in a few studies such as in the descriptive grammar done by Acharya (1990), there is currently no studies that focuses specifically on the theory or the nature of this subject-verb honorification. The only paper that focuses particularly on Nepali's honorifics is a study done several decades ago by Schmidt (1976). While this study does attempt to describe Nepali's honorifics in a systematic manner, it does not provide a syntactical analysis of these honorifics nor of their nature. Nonetheless, a syntactic analysis of honorification and of honorific features has been done on other languages which exhibit a rich system of honorification such as Japanese and Korean (Boeckx & Niinuma, 2004; Kim & Sells, 2007). In addition, there has also been ongoing discussions on the nature of honorifics, in particular if they can be considered as features such as gender and number (Corbett, 2012). Hence this paper is an attempt to contribute to the discussions by providing a syntactic analysis of Nepali's subject-verb honorification.

# CHAPTER TWO

# HONORIFIC AGREEMENT IN PRONOUNS AND VERB-SUFFIXES

## 2.1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is twofold. First, this chapter will describe the pronouns that are used in Nepali and the various levels of honorification they index. Second, it will also describe verb-suffixes in Nepali and how these suffixes agree in honorification with their pronoun subjects. However, in order to achieve these two goals, a scale which indexes the different levels of honorification possible are needed in order to represent the data accurately and consistently.

## 2.2. Levels of Honorification and Honorific Features

The scale and the honorific features that will be used in this paper are not universal. Unlike Φ-features, honorific features do not have universally accepted categories or standards. In this paper, Φ-features refer to the set of features that traditionally includes person, number and gender (Kerstens, 1993:1; Adger, 2003:45). In addition, it is also important to remember that in the real world, the different levels of honorification are dynamic and relative to various contexts and hence will not be as distinct and neat as the scale that will be presented in this chapter. However, it is essential to utilize a certain form of scale with discrete levels of honorific features in order to give a

systematic and coherent description of Nepali's honorification system. Schmidt (1976:218) did attempt to provide a system of Nepali honorification with four discrete levels of honorification. This paper however will not employ Schmidt's system as the data collected from the language informant do not correspond with Schmidt's system. Hence, the system used in this paper is derived solely based on the Nepali data collected from the language informant. This system is represented in the scale of honorific features shown in figure 2.1.

Least Respect                                                                 Most Respect

HON-            HON±            HON                        HON+
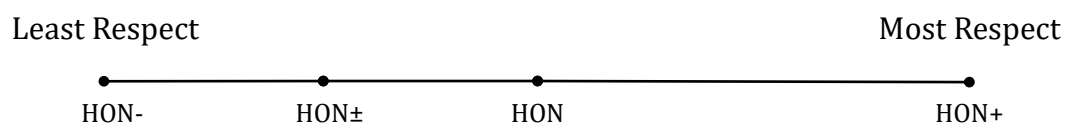
*Figure 2.1: Spectrum of Honorific Features*

The scale in figure 2.1 represents a spectrum of levels of respect that are marked with four distinct honorific features. First, the honorific feature [HON+] at the extreme right of the spectrum denotes the highest level of respect a word can index. It is normally required when the speech involves a person who is highly esteemed in Nepali's culture and society such as a teacher (Goodman, 1983) or the king (Although the monarchy was abolished in the last decade (Rosenberg, 2008)). Second, the feature [HON-] at the extreme left of the spectrum represents the lowest level of respect. This level does not simply denote an absence of respect but words with [HON-] features are considered disrespectful or even rude. Such words are normally used when a person wishes to show disrespect to another person or when a speaker wants to show

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his superiority relative to the hearer such as in a sentence spoken by an old man to a young boy. In addition, casual conversations among close friends often utilize words with [HON-] features as well. Third, the honorific feature [HON] which is right in the middle of the spectrum, denotes the default or neutral level of respect. The [HON] feature is not considered inherently disrespectful or respectful. However, it is imperative to note that it can be considered rude or inappropriate to use words with [HON] features when the context requires the use of words with [HON+] features such as when speaking to a king. Finally, the presence of the [HON±] feature which falls right in between [HON] and [HON-] is an interesting phenomenon that is observed only in sentences involving third-person subjects. This phenomenon will be described in greater detail in a later part of this chapter in the section concerning the verb-suffix agreement involving third-person pronouns. At this stage, it is sufficient to note that while using words with [HON] feature is considered to be more respectful than words with [HON±] feature, the [HON±] feature is not considered to be as disrespectful as [HON-] feature. Moreover, is important to note that the scale represents the distance between [HON] and [HON+] as greater than the distance between [HON] and [HON±]. These four distinct honorific features will be employed consistently throughout the rest of this paper and they will be indicated at the glossing of the Nepali data to indicate the level of respect a noun or a verb-suffix indexes. Finally, a key issue that will be addressed in chapter 5 of this paper is whether these honorific features are syntactic or pragmatic in nature.

## 2.3. Nepali Pronouns

This section will describe the pronouns that are used in Nepali and they have been categorized broadly based on first, second and third-person feature. A summary of the Nepali pronouns used by the language informant has been summarized in table 2.1.

There are several observations that can be made from table 2.1. Firstly, it can be seen that Nepali pronouns are not distinguished by gender and thus they are all neuter and can be used to refer to both masculine and feminine objects. However, other Nepali variety may possess dedicated feminine pronouns (Joe, 2016:5). Nonetheless, a later section of this chapter will demonstrate that it is possible for certain verb-suffixes to cause the pronoun subject to refer strictly to a feminine object.

Secondly, first-person pronouns can only index [HON] feature which means that a speaker do not have to choose an appropriate first-person pronouns for a particular situation. This is in line with the findings by Cardona and Jain (2007:556) that only second and third-person pronouns have distinct levels of respect. Hence, the honorific level of first-person pronouns do not have any impact on the hearer. This differs from languages such as Bahasa Indonesia where the kind of first-person pronoun used can determine the level of respect given to the hearer (Manns, 2012). For instance, in Bahasa Indonesia, *gua* 'I' is only used among close friends of similar age while *saya* 'I'

is likely to be the [HON] form that can be used generally such as when speaking to a stranger.

| Person | Gender | Number | Honorific | Pronoun |
|--------|--------|--------|-----------|---------|
| 1st | | SG | HON | *mə* |
| | | PL | HON | *hami (həru)* |
| 2nd | | SG | HON- | *tã* |
| | | | HON | *timi* |
| | | | HON+ | *təpai* |
| | | | HON+ | *hojur* |
| | | PL | HON | *timi həru* |
| | | | HON+ | *təpai həru* |
| | N | | HON+ | *hojur həru* |
| 3rd | | SG | HON± | *u* |
| | | | HON | *uni/tini* |
| | | | HON+ | *ũhã* |
| | | | HON+ | *wahã* |
| | | PL | HON | *uni/tini həru* |
| | | | HON+ | *ũhã həru* |
| | | | HON+ | *wahã həru* |

*Table 2.1: Summary of Nepali Pronouns*

Thirdly, the word *hǝru i*s a plural marker in Nepali and can be attached to any pronouns to make them plural with the exceptions of *mǝ* 'I', *tã* 'you' and *u* 'he/she'. However, for the first-person plural pronoun *hami* 'we', the plural marker *hǝru* is optional. These observations are summarized in (1).

(1)     a. **mǝ hǝru*

        b. **tã hǝru*

        c. **u hǝru*

        d. *hami (hǝru)*

Fourthly, there are two forms of third-person singular pronouns namely *uni* and *tini* that possess [HON] feature. These two words are interchangeable and hence for the rest of this paper, only *uni* will be used.

Finally, second-person pronouns and third-person pronouns each have two pronouns that possess [HON+] feature. These second-person pronouns are *tǝpai* and *hojur.* As for the third-person pronouns, they are *ũhã* and *wahã*. In some Nepali varieties however, the two pairs are distinguished. In these varieties, *hojur* and *wahã* have higher honorific levels as compared to *tǝpai* and *ũhã* respectively. Schmidt's system reflects such Nepali varieties as shown in figure 2.2 (Schmidt's, 1976:218). Figure 2.2 shows that Schmidt assigns *hojur/hajur* with greater honorific value than *tǝpãi/tapãi*. The language informant for this paper however do not seem to distinguish one as higher than the other or if any differences exist, they are insignificant.
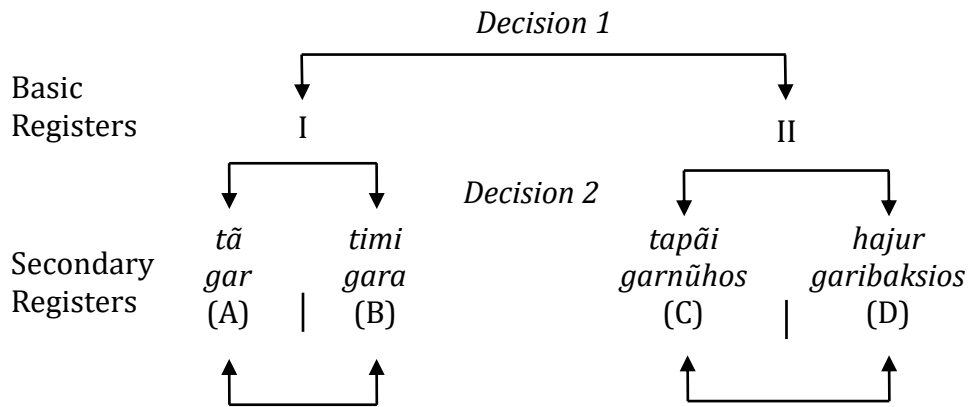
*Figure 2.2: Schmidt's Levels of Nepali's Honorification*

*Note.* Adapted from "The nepali system of honorific registers", Schmidt, R. L.,

1976, *Kailash. A journal of Himalayan Studies*, *4*(3), 218.

## 2.4. Verb-Suffixes and Agreement in Honorification

One of the most interesting observation concerning Nepali's honorification is the complex system of agreement in honorific features between subjects and their verb-suffixes. All the examples provided in this chapter will utilize pronouns as the subjects of the sentences. This is to demonstrate in a clearer manner the presence of some form of agreement between the subject and its verb-suffix. As the examples below will show, the choice of pronouns used will have a direct impact on the suffixes of the verb. The examples given in (2) to (5) show a clear relationship between a subject and its verb-suffix in terms of their honorific features. It is important to note that these verb-suffixes can also stand alone as a word in the form of *be*-verbs.

(2) *Tã*        *yãha*  *chəs*

2SG.**[HON-]**    here   be.2SG.PRES.**[HON-]**

'You are here.'

(3) *Timi*       *yãha*  *chou*

2SG.**[HON]**    here   be.2.PRES.**[HON]**

'You are here.'

(4) *Təpai*      *yãha*  *hunuhunchə*

2SG.**[HON+]**    here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'You are here.'

(5) *Hojur*      *yãha*  *hunuhunchə*

2SG.**[HON+]**    here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'You are here.'

Examples (2) to (5) all have the same meanings. What differentiates them is the second-person pronouns used. Sentence (2) uses a pronoun that has the lowest level of honorific feature while (4) and (5) use pronouns that possess highest honorific feature and (3) uses a pronoun that has the default honorific feature. The key thing to note is that, with different pronouns, the *be*-verbs or verb-suffixes change accordingly. All the four pronouns used in these four examples are the same in terms of person feature and number feature. They are all second-person and singular pronouns. The only feature that they differ in is the honorific feature. Therefore, the change in the *be*-verbs in these sentences can only be attributed to a form of agreement relationship with the pronouns in terms of honorification. It can be posited therefore that these *be*-

verbs or verb-suffixes also possess honorific features just like the pronouns. If a pronoun possesses a [HON+] feature, the verb-suffix must also possess a [HON+] feature to match. Any mismatch in the honorific features between the pronoun and its verb-suffix will result in ungrammatical sentences as can be seen in examples (6) and (7).

(6)  *Tã           yãha  chou
     2SG.**[HON-]**    here   be.2.PRES.**[HON]**
     'You are here.'

(7)  *Timi          yãha  hunuhunchə
     2SG.**[HON]**     here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**
     'You are here.'

In (6), the pronoun subject has [HON-] feature while the *be*-verb has [HON] feature. The sentence is thus ungrammatical as there is a mismatch of honorific features. The same goes for (7) where the pronoun subject has [HON] feature while the *be*-verb has [HON+] feature.

The honorification agreement that has been described so far between pronouns and their verb-suffixes are not independent from other features such as persons, numbers, genders and tenses. A summary of the various possible agreement between pronouns and verb-suffixes in present tense and past-habitual tense has been summarized in table 2.2 (The same table can be found in Appendix A as well). In this table, the lines that connect the pronouns to the verb-suffixes represent the possible agreement relationships.

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| Person | Number | Honorific | Pronouns | Verb-Suffixes Present tense — Verbal Predicate | Non-Verbal Predicate | Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate (Feminine) | Pronouns | Verb-Suffixes Past-Habitual Tense — Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate | Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate (Feminine) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | SG | HON | mə | chu | hũ | | mə | thĩe | |
| 1st | PL | HON | hami | chõu | hãu | | hami | thĩau | |
| 2nd | SG | HON- | tə̃ | chəs | hos | | tə̃ | this | |
| 2nd | SG | HON | timi | chou | hau | | timi | thiau | |
| 2nd | SG | HON+ | təpai | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | | təpai | hunuhunthĩo | |
| 2nd | SG | HON+ | hojur | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | | hojur | hunuhunthĩo | |
| 2nd | PL | HON | timi həru | chou | hau | | timi həru | thiau | |
| 2nd | PL | HON+ | təpai həru | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | | təpai həru | hunuhunthĩo | |
| 2nd | PL | HON+ | hojur həru | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | | hojur həru | hunuhunthĩo | |
| 3rd | SG | HON± | u | chə | ho | chin | u | thĩo | thiin |
| 3rd | SG | HON | uni/tini | chən | hun | chin | uni/tini | thie | thiin |
| 3rd | SG | HON+ | ũhã | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | chin / ?hunuhunchin | ũhã | hunuhunthĩo | hunuhunthiin |
| 3rd | SG | HON+ | wahã | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | chin / ?hunuhunchin | wahã | hunuhunthĩo | hunuhunthiin |
| 3rd | PL | HON | uni/tini həru | chən | hun | chin | uni/tini həru | thie | thiin |
| 3rd | PL | HON+ | ũhã həru | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | chin / ?hunuhunchin | ũhã həru | hunuhunthĩo | hunuhunthiin |
| 3rd | PL | HON+ | wahã həru | hunuhunchə | hunuhunchə | chin / ?hunuhunchin | wahã həru | hunuhunthĩo | hunuhunthiin |

*Table 2.2: Summary of Pronouns and Verb-Suffixes Agreement*

There are several observations that can be made from table 2.2 and the rest of this chapter will make constant references to this table (The raw data that are used to form this table can be found in Appendix B). Firstly, as there is only one pronoun each for first-person singular and first-person plural, there is also only one possible verb-suffix for each. In other words, *mə* 'I' always go with *chu* or with *hũ* while *hami* 'we' always go together with *chõu* or *hãu*.

Secondly, in the present tense form, the verb-suffixes can be classified into two groups namely those that involve verbal predicates and those that involve non-verbal predicates. An example of the former is given in (8) while the latter in (9).

(8)   *Mə*          *yahã*        **chu**

      1SG.[HON]     here          **be**.1SG.**PRES.**[HON]

      'I am here.'                               (Verbal predicate)

(9)   *Mə*          *bidhyarthi*  **hũ**

      1SG.[HON]     student       **is**.1SG.**PRES.**[HON]

      'I am a student.'                          (Non-verbal predicate)

In the past-habitual tense however, there is no distinction made on whether a verb-suffix is for a verbal predicate or a non-verbal predicate. The verb-suffix can be used in both contexts as shown in (10) and (11).

(10)  *Mə*          *yãha*        **thĩe**

      1SG.[HON]     here          **be**.1SG.**PSTH.**[HON]

      'I used to be here.'                       (Verbal predicate)

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(11)  *Mə*          *bidhyarti*    ***thĩe***

1SG.[HON]      student       **be**.1SG.**PSTH**.[HON]

'I used to be a student.'                    (Non-verbal predicate)

Sentence (10) has a verbal-predicate while sentence (11) has a non-verbal predicate yet both sentences use *thĩe*.

Thirdly, although the Nepali variety spoken by the language informant do not have dedicated feminine pronouns, it is possible to use a certain verb-suffix to indicate that the neuter pronoun subject refers to a female. This verb-suffix is the word *chin*. Sentence (12) shows the use of *chin*.

(12)  *Uni*          *yãha*   ***chin***

3SG.[HON]      here    be.3SG.**F**.PRES.[HON]

'She is here.'

The pronoun *uni* in (12) is neuter but when the verb-suffix *chin* is used, the pronoun has to refer to a female object. While *chin* is used for present-tense constructions, the word *thiin* is used for past-habitual tense constructions. Another thing worth noting is that the verb-suffix *hunuhunchin* which is supposed to refer to the feminine form of *hunuhunchə* is not used by the language informant. According to him, *hunuhunchin* is used in a certain Nepali variety but what is interesting however, he uses *hunuhunthiin* which is the past-habitual equivalent of *hunuhunchin*.

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Fourthly, there are variations in the surface appearances of verb-suffixes given in table 2.2. These variations are likely due to phonological reasons. The first is that the suffixes may or may not be attached to their verbs. In some verbs, these suffixes may be attached to their verbs and this will be shown by the use of hyphens in the examples. Whereas in some other verbs, these suffixes may come after the verbs but as a separate word. Examples (13) and (14) demonstrate this variation.

(13)     *Timi-le*            *ənggreji*       ***pərhãu***       ***chou***

         2SG.[HON]-NOM       English       **teach**       **be.2.PRES.[HON]**

         'You teach English.'

(14)     *Timi*               *ənggreji*       ***pər-chou***

         2SG.[HON]       English       **study-2.PRES.[HON]**

         'You study English.'

In (13) the suffix *chou* is a separate word from the verb *pərhãu* 'teach' while in (14) *chou* is attached to the verb *pər* 'study'. The second variation to note concerns the [HON+] suffixes *hunuhunchə* and *hunuhunthĩo*. In certain constructions these two suffixes will be shortened to just *hunchə* and *hunthĩo*. Examples (15) to (17) show this variation.

(15)     *Təpai*        *ənggreji*       *pər-dai*       *hunuhunchə*

         2SG.[HON+]       English       study-PROG       be.PRES.[HON+]

         'You are studying English.'

(16)  *Təpai*        *ənggreji*        *pər-nu*        **huncha**

2SG.[HON+]    English        study        be.PRES.[HON+]

'You study English.'

(17)  *\*Təpai*        *ənggreji*        *pər-nu*        *hunuhuncha*

2SG.[HON+]    English        study        be.PRES.[HON+]

'You study English.'

In (15) the suffix *-dai* is a progressive marker and the verb *pər-dai* 'studying' is followed by *hunuhuncha*. Without *-dai* however, the verb *pər* 'study' has to change to *pərnu* 'study'. According to Acharya (1990:92), verbs with the suffix *-nu* represent the citation form of Nepali verbs. The word *pərnu* 'study' is then followed by *huncha* as (16) shows. If *hunuhuncha* is used instead it will lead to ungrammaticality as seen in (17). The generalization that can be made from the data is that whenever the verb is in the citation form with the suffix *-nu*, *huncha* and *hunthĩo* will be used instead of *hunuhuncha* and *hunuhunthĩo.* Table 2.3 below provides a list of examples from the data.

| Verb (English) | Verb (Nepali) |
|:---:|:---:|
| run | *dogur-nu hunchə* |
| cry | *run-nu hunchə* |
| eat | *kha-nu hunchə* |
| study | *pər-nu hunthĩo* |
| teach | *pərhãu-nu hunthĩo* |

*Table 2.3: Examples of variations of* hunuhunchə *and* hunuhunthĩo

The final observation with regards to table 2.2 pertains to the agreement relationship for third-person pronouns and their suffixes. As can be seen from the table, the agreement lines crosses between different levels of honorific features. While this section will only provide a description of what is going on with the agreement pattern, a more detailed analysis will be presented in chapter 5. In this paper, canonical agreement refers to a case where the two relevant honorific features match and the sentence is grammatical. On the other hand, non-canonical agreement refers to a case where the honorific features do not match but the construction is still grammatical. It is important to note that this usage of the term differs from Corbett's (2006:8-10) 'canonical' approach to agreement. Table 2.4 below shows the canonical agreement of third-person pronouns and their verb-suffixes.

| Pronoun | | | Verb-suffix |
|---|---|---|---|
| *u* [HON±] | ← | → | *chə* [HON±] |
| *uni* [HON] | ← | → | *chən* [HON] |
| *ũhã* [HON+] | ← | → | *hunuhunchə* [HON+] |
| *wahã* [HON+] | ← | → | *hunuhunchə* [HON+] |

*Table 2.4: Canonical agreement for third-person pronouns and verb-suffixes*

The data however, reveals that it is possible to match some of the pronouns and verb-suffixes even when they do not match in terms of honorific features. Examples (18) and (19) demonstrate this disjunction.

(18)  *Uni*          *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

3SG.**[HON]**      here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'He/she is here.'                              (Non-canonical)

(19)  *U*            *yãha*   *thie*

3SG.**[HON±]**     here    be.3.PSTH.**[HON]**

'He/she used to be here.'                     (Non-canonical)

In (18), the pronoun has [HON] feature while the suffix has [HON±] feature while in (19) the pronoun has [HON±] and the suffix has [HON] feature and yet both sentences are grammatical. The various non-canonical agreements possible have been indicated in table 2.2 using diagonal dotted lines. Whereas canonical-agreements are all indicated with horizontal solid lines. At this juncture, it is sufficient to note that there is a disjunction in the agreements

involving third-person pronouns and their suffixes. This puzzle will be further discussed along with the possible solutions in chapter 5.

## 2.5. Chapter Summary

In sum this chapter has given a description of three important issues. The first issue concerns the honorific features and the spectrum of honorific levels that are used in this paper. The spectrum of honorific levels have been categorized into four main honorific features as shown in figure 2.1. The second issue pertains to the various pronouns that are used in Nepali. It has been indicated that Nepali pronouns do not just possess standard Φ-features such as number and person but they also carry honorific features which can potentially be considered as syntactic features. Table 2.1 gives the summary of the pronouns in Nepali with their respective features. The final issue is about verb-suffixes in Nepali and how these verb-suffixes are sensitive to the pronoun subjects used in the sentence. The honorific feature of a pronoun subject has to match the honorific feature of its verb-suffix, otherwise it will result in an ungrammatical sentence. However, it has also been noted that there is a disjunction with regards to the agreement between third person pronouns and their verb-suffixes which require further explanation. The main findings and observations of this chapter have been neatly and clearly summarized in table 2.2.

# CHAPTER THREE

## SUBJECT-HONORIFICATION

## 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, it has been shown that there is an honorific agreement relationship between Nepali's pronoun subjects and their verb-suffixes. However, does this honorific agreement applies to sentences with pronoun subjects only? What about nouns that are in the object positions? These are some of the questions that this chapter will seek to address. In short, this chapter will argue that the honorific agreement observed in the previous chapter is always between the grammatical subject of the sentence and its respective verb-suffix and this is regardless of whether the subject is a pronoun or not. The term that will be used to describe this form of agreement in this paper is subject-honorification. The argument for subject-honorification in Nepali will be based on four observations. The first involves sentences that use proper nouns or non-pronoun subjects. The second observation focuses on sentences with transitive verbs that involve both grammatical subjects and objects. The third observation deals with passive constructions in Nepali. Lastly, the final argument pertains to whether Nepali honorification functions like an honorific register.

## 3.2. Proper Nouns and Non-Pronoun Subjects

The examples given in the previous chapter all involve pronouns. In order to demonstrate that the honorific agreement targets a subject in general, sentences with proper nouns or non-pronoun subjects such as names and animals will be used in this section. Examples (1) to (3) below show sentences with proper noun subjects. *Samit* is a common masculine Nepali name and for the purposes of this paper, the [Ø] feature at the glossing means that the honorific feature of *Samit* is undefined or undetermined yet.

(1)  *Samit*      *yãha   chə*

 Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

 'Samit is here.'

(2)  *Samit*      *yãha   chən*

 Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

 'Samit is here.'

(3)  *Samit*      *yãha   hunuhunchə*

 Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

 'Samit is here.'

What can be observed from (1) to (3) is that all the three third-person verb-suffixes *chə*, *chən* and *hunuhunchə* can be used together with the proper noun *Samit* as the subject. The subject remains constant through all the three examples while the verb-suffixes changes. In other words, the meanings of (1) to (3) is the same and the difference pertains to the level of respect given to

*Samit*. When an interlocutor choose to utter (3) instead of (1), he is showing a certain level of respect to the subject of the sentence which is *Samit*. A very important question that arises from these examples is how does the honorific agreement works? Does *Samit* possess different honorific features in each of the three examples? Or do the verb-suffixes assign the honorific features to its respective subjects? These questions will be addressed in chapter 5. Regardless of which hypothesis one adopts to answer these questions, it still stands that the interaction of the verb-suffixes are still with the subjects of the respective sentences. When the honorific feature of the verb-suffix is changed, the level of respect the subject possesses or is assigned with changes. The verb-suffix therefore targets the subject of the sentence even when the subject is not a pronoun.

In (1) to (3), the subject *Samit* may not have an inherent honorific feature and thus is ambiguous. However, in Nepali, it is common to put a title which precedes the name of a person. Table 3.1 provides some of the common titles used in Nepali provided by the language informant.

| Nepali | English | [HON] Feature |
|--------|---------|---------------|
| *daju* | elder brother | [HON+] / [HON] |
| *bhəi* | younger brother | [Ø] |
| *didi* | elder sister | [HON+] / [HON] |
| *bhəini* | younger sister | [Ø] |

*Table 3.1: Common titles in Nepali*

The titles shown in table 3.1 can be used for non-family members as well. For instance, an interlocutor can use *daju* 'elder brother' to address a stranger who is much older than him. These titles can be used to precede names such as *Samit*. The titles *daju* and *didi* can possess a [HON+] or [HON] feature as it is expected for a person to show some form of respect when addressing someone who is older. The other two titles *bhəi* and *bhəini* are more ambiguous. It is optional to show respect to someone who is younger but an interlocutor may choose to do so for instance in cases where he is hosting a guest who is younger. The use of *daju* 'elder brother' is demonstrated in (4) to (6).

(4)  *\*Daju*             *Samit*             *yãha*   *chə*

     elder.M.**[HON+]**    Samit.M.**[HON+]**    here   be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

     'Samit is here.'

(5)  *Daju*             *Samit*             *yãha*   *chən*

     elder.M.**[HON]**    Samit.M.**[HON]**    here   be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

     'Samit is here.'

(6)   *Daju*             *Samit*            *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

elder.M.**[HON+]**     Samit.M.**[HON+]**     here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'Samit is here.'

The use of titles can help to clarify the undetermined nature of the honorific feature of *Samit.* The use of *daju* 'elder brother' in examples (4) to (6) is akin to an assignment of [HON±] or [HON] feature to *Samit* and thus only the verb-suffix *hunuhunchə* or *chən* are grammatical in this context. On the other hand the title *bhəi* can be used with all three verb-suffixes present in the third-person category as (7) to (9) shows.

(7)   *Bhəi*             *Samit*     *yãha*  *chə*

younger.M.[Ø]     Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

'Samit is here.'

(8)   *Bhəi*             *Samit*     *yãha*  *chən*

younger.M.[Ø]     Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

'Samit is here.'

(9)   *Bhəi*             *Samit*     *yãha*  *hunuhunchə*

younger.M.[Ø]     Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'Samit is here.'

The title *bhəi* 'younger brother' in (7) to (9) does not assign or clarify the honorific feature of *Samit* and thus its honorific feature will depend on the respective verb-suffixes used. An interlocutor may choose to utter any of these

three sentences depending on the level of respect he may want to attribute to *Samit.*

Next, what happens if the subject intuitively has an inherent honorific feature such as the word *raja* 'king'? In Nepali culture, a king is certainly someone who is greatly respected and therefore it is not unwarranted to assume that the word *raja* 'king' carries a [HON+] feature. This turns out to be true based on the data in (10) to (12).

(10)　*Raja*　　　　*yãha*　*chə*

　　　king.**[HON+]**　here　be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

　　　'The king is here.'

(11)　*Raja*　　　　*yãha*　*chən*

　　　king.**[HON+]**　here　be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

　　　'The king is here.'

(12)　*Raja*　　　　*yãha*　*hunuhunchə*

　　　king.**[HON+]**　here　be.PRES.**[HON+]**

　　　'The king is here.'

Examples (10) to (12) shows that with *raja* 'king' as the subject, only the suffix *hunuhunchə* is grammatical. The other two suffixes which do not possess [HON+] feature clearly does not match the honorific feature of the subject and hence they are ungrammatical. Therefore, the honorific agreement does not apply to just subjects that are pronouns or proper nouns, it applies to other types of nouns as well. In contrast to the use of *raja* 'king' as the subject, what

happens when the subject is a noun such as an animal or an inanimate object? Intuitively, such nouns should not be given an equal level of respect as to a human being. Although it is natural to suggest that the lowest feature [HON-] should be assigned to these nouns, the third-person category does not have this feature. Looking back to table 2.2 or appendix A, the lowest honorific feature that can be assigned for a third-person subject is [HON±]. Hence it can be predicted that an animal or an inanimate noun carries [HON±] feature. In fact, the data in (13) to (15) show that this is the case.

(13)  *Kukur*      *yãha*   *chə*

  dog.**[HON±]**    here    be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

  'The dog is here.'

(14)  *\*Kukur*      *yãha*   *chən*

  dog.**[HON±]**    here    be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

  'The dog is here.'

(15)  *\*Kukur*      *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

  dog.**[HON±]**    here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

  'The dog is here.'

Since *kukur* 'dog' possess [HON±] feature, the only grammatical verb-suffix is *chə* and all other verb-suffixes result in ungrammaticality as seen in (14) and (15). The data in (16) to (18) further demonstrate that this is the case as well for inanimate nouns.

(16) *Kǝmej*      *ramro*      *chǝ*

     shirt.**[HON±]**    nice           be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

     'The shirt is nice.'

(17) *\*Kǝmej*      *ramro*      *chǝn*

     shirt.**[HON±]**    nice           be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

     'The shirt is nice.'

(18) *\*Kǝmej*      *ramro*      *hunuhunchǝ*

     shirt.**[HON±]**    nice           be.PRES.**[HON+]**

     'The shirt is nice.'

In sum, it has been shown that the verb-suffixes in the data given thus far all interact with the subjects. These subjects do not have to be pronouns. Instead they can be proper nouns or other types of nouns. At times, the subject may have an inherent honorific feature such as *raja* 'the king' whereas proper nouns such as *Samit* may not have an inherent honorific feature in itself but the verb-suffix used may help to determine the honorific feature a proper noun may possess.

## 3.3. Sentences with Transitive Verbs

One the most important way to test if honorification in Nepali targets the subject of the sentence is to analyse transitive sentences which are essentially sentences that have two arguments, one is the subject and the other is the object (Carnie, 2013:58). It will be shown in this section that Nepali honorification cannot target objects or non-subjects. Hence it is different from

languages such as Korean that have what is termed 'non-subject honorification' (Kim & Sells, 2007:321). Examples (19) to (21) consist of transitive sentences.

(19)　*Samit-le*　　　　*kukur-(lai)*　　*maya gər-chə*

　　　Samit.M.[Ø]-NOM　dog.**[HON±]**-ACC　love　action-3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

　　　'Samit loves the dog.'

(20)　*Samit-le*　　　　*kukur-(lai)*　　*maya gər-chən*

　　　Samit.M.[Ø]-NOM　dog.**[HON±]**-ACC　love　action-3.PRES.**[HON]**

　　　'Samit loves the dog.'

(21)　*Samit-le*　　　　*kukur-(lai)*　　*maya gərnu hunchə*

　　　Samit.M.[Ø]-NOM　dog.**[HON±]**-ACC　love　action be.PRES.**[HON+]**

　　　'Samit loves the dog.'

It has been suggested in the previous section that all animals possess [HON±] feature. Hence, in (19) to (21), the object of the sentence which is *kukur* 'dog', all have [HON±] feature. If verb-suffixes in these sentences target the object, examples (20) and (21) should be ungrammatical due to the mismatch of honorific features. Only the verb-suffix in (19) has [HON±] feature that matches the honorific feature of *kukur* 'dog'. However, to be certain that the verb-suffix does not target the object *kukur* 'dog' in (19), the object can be substituted with *raja* 'king' as shown in (22).

(22) *Samit-le*        *raja-(lai)*      *prem*  *gər-chə*

Samit.M.[Ø]-NOM  king.**[HON+]**-ACC  love   action-3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

'Samit loves the king.'

Example (22) reinforces the point that the verb-suffix does not target the object of transitive sentences. However, the transitive data so far only supports the idea of subject-honorification indirectly by showing that verb-suffixes do not interact with the object. In order to demonstrate subject-honorification through transitive sentences, there is a need to show the explicit agreement between the subject and the verb-suffix. This cannot be shown explicitly if the subject is a proper noun as proper nouns may not have inherent honorific features. Hence in the following examples, pronouns will be used as subjects because pronouns have been suggested in the previous chapter to have inherent honorific features. Sentences (23) to (25) present sentences with pronoun subjects and animal objects.

(23) *Tə̃i-le*        *kukur-(lai)*     *maya*  *gər-chəs*

2SG.**[HON-]**-NOM  dog.[HON±]-ACC   love   action-2SG.PRES.**[HON-]**

'You love the dog.'

(24) *Timi-le*        *kukur-(lai)*     *maya*  *gər-chou*

2SG.**[HON]**-NOM   dog.[HON±]-ACC   love   action-2.PRES.**[HON]**

'You love the dog.'

31

(25) *Tɘpai-le         kukur-(lai)        maya  gɘrnu  hunchɘ*

2SG.**[HON+]**-NOM  dog.[HON±]-ACC   love   action  be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'You love the dog.'

Examples (23) to (25) demonstrate a clear agreement between the verb-suffixes and the subjects of the sentences. The object *kukur* 'dog' has [HON±] feature but none of the verb-suffixes in the three examples have [HON±] feature instead their features all consistently agree with the honorific features of the pronoun subjects.

The transitive sentences in Nepali give a strong evidence that the verb-suffixes agree in their honorific features with the subjects of the sentences. The honorific feature of the object does not have any bearing on the verb-suffix in a sentence. Hence, Nepali does not have object-honorification if this means that there is no agreement relationship between the honorific feature of the verb-suffix and the grammatical object. Nonetheless, it is possible to adjust the level of respect given to the object of transitive sentences if the objects are pronouns as shown in (26) to (28).

(26) *Samit-le            tãi-lai              pɘrhãu  chɘ*

Samit.M.[∅]-NOM    2SG.**[HON-]**-ACC     teaches  be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

'Samit teaches you.'

(27) *Samit-le            timi-lai             pɘrhãu  chɘ*

Samit.M.[∅]-NOM    2SG.**[HON]**-ACC      teaches  be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

'Samit teaches you.'

(28)     *Samit-le*           *təpai-lai*           *pərhãu*    *chə*

        Samit.M.[Ø]-NOM       2SG.**[HON+]**-ACC       teaches   be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

        'Samit teaches you.'

It can be seen that the honorific features of the verb-suffixes remain constant in (26) to (28). However, the honorific features of the pronoun objects change in all three examples. Nonetheless, these constructions do not fall under the category of object-honorification.

## 3.4. Passive Constructions

This section focuses on Nepali's passive constructions and how they support the argument that honorification targets the grammatical subject. It is important to note however that Nepali's passive constructions differ significantly from those of English. In a typical English passive construction, the original grammatical object normally would be transformed to become the grammatical subject as shown in (29) and (30).

(29)     *John kicked him* **[ACC]**.

(30)     *He* **[NOM]** *was kicked (by John).*

Sentence (30) is the passive form of sentence (29). The phrase *by John* is an adjunct and hence optional. In (29), *him* is the grammatical object but in (30), *him* which is in accusative case has to become *he* which is in the nominative case. When the grammatical object is made into the grammatical subject in passive constructions, the word takes up nominative case. In Nepali however,

this is not the way passive construction works. The first thing to note is that in Nepali, the suffix *-le* is the nominative case marker while the suffix *-lai* is the accusative case marker as shown in (31).

(31)   *Neha-le*          *Samit-lai*        *lati*   *han-chə*

        Neha.F .[Ø]-**NOM**     Samit.M.[Ø]-**ACC**    leg   hit-3SG.PRES.[HON±]

        'Neha kicks Samit.'

Sentence (31) is in the active form and *Samit* is the grammatical object in this construction. What happens when sentence (31) is passivized? The outcome is shown in (32).

(32)   *Samit-lai*         *lati*   *han-in*       *thĩo*

        Samit.M.[Ø]-**ACC**    leg   hit-**PASS**   be.3.PSTH.[HON±]

        'Samit used to be kicked.'

In a typical passive construction, it should be expected that *Samit* will take up a nominative case and becomes the grammatical subject of the sentence but this is not the case as shown in (32). *Samit* maintains its accusative case in spite of being the only argument left in the sentence. It seems therefore that in Nepali, a passive construction is devoid of any grammatical subject. If there is no grammatical subject in the sentence, it can be predicted that there will be no agreement in honorification as well. In fact, this prediction corresponds to the data presented below in (33) and (34).

(33)  *Samit-lai            lati    han-in       thie

      Samit.M.[∅]-ACC        leg     hit-PASS     be.3.PSTH.**[HON]**

      'Samit used to be kicked.'

(34)  *Samit-lai            lati    han-in       hunuhunthĩo

      Samit.M.[∅]-ACC        leg     hit-PASS     be.PSTH.**[HON+]**

      'Samit used to be kicked.'

Both (33) and (34) attempt to give higher honorific features to *Samit* but both resulted in ungrammatical sentences. In passive constructions, the verb-suffix is always *thĩo* as shown in (32). Even if the grammatical object is changed to *raja* 'king' which normally warrants a [HON+] feature on the verb-suffix, the verb-suffix has to remain as *thĩo* in the passive construction as shown in (35) and (36).

(35)  *Raja-lai*            *lati*   *han-in*     ***thĩo***

      king.**[HON+]**-ACC   leg     hit-PASS     be.3.PSTH.**[HON±]**

      'The king used to be kicked.'

(36)  ***Raja-lai***        *lati*   *han-in*     ***hunuhunthĩo***

      king.**[HON+]**-ACC   leg     hit-PASS     be.PSTH.**[HON+]**

      'The king used to be kicked.'

In sum, the data presented thus far have shown that passive constructions in Nepali do not permit honorific agreement because there is no grammatical subject in them to which the verb-suffix can interact with.

## 3.5. Honorification as Honorific Registers?

In sociolinguistic, a register "... refers to a variety of language defined according to its use in social situation" as defined by Crystal (2008:409). The issue that will be raised in this section is whether the honorification system discussed so far functions like a register. In other words, do the situation in which a sentence is uttered has any impact on the words used in the sentence? Do honorific features carried by words or suffixes in sentences have any correspondence to the social situation of the utterance? Answering these questions will help to demonstrate that the subject-verb honorification system in Nepali targets the grammatical subject of the sentence and are not affected by the social situation in which the utterance is made. The only exception are sentences that involve second-person pronouns as subjects.

Intuitively, sentences with second-person pronouns have a direct relation to the surrounding situation as the subject of the sentence refers to the hearer which is a participant of the conversation. Hence, in order to determine if Nepali's subject-verb honorification functions like an honorific register, data involving third-person pronouns as subjects must be used. Sentences (37) to (39) show the same sentences with different levels of honorific features but all uttered to a king.

(37)  *U*          *yãha*   *chə*

3SG.[HON±]     here    be.3.[HON±]

'He is here.'                                              (Uttered to a king)

(38)   *Uni*          *yãha*   *chən*

3SG.[HON]       here     be.3.PRES.[HON]

'He is here.'                                    (Uttered to a king)

(39)   *Ũhã*          *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

3SG.[HON+]      here     be.PRES.[HON+]

'He is here.'                                    (Uttered to a king)

The three examples from (37) to (39) are all appropriate sentences that can be uttered to a king. This demonstrates that the honorific features of the words in the sentences do not have any impact on the hearer. The honorification is targeted at the subject of the sentence itself. If the honorification functions like a register, sentences (37) and (38) may be deemed as inappropriate as it may be expected that when a person is speaking to a king, he must only use words that carry [HON+] features. However, this is not the case as the data reveals. The social situation of the utterance only matters when the subject of the sentence involves the hearer such as in examples (40) to (42) where the second-person pronouns are subjects.

(40)   *#Tã*          *yãha*   *chəs*

2SG.**[HON-]**     here     be.2SG.PRES.**[HON-]**

'You are here.'                                  **(Uttered to a king)**

(41)   *#Timi*        *yãha*   *chou*

2SG.**[HON]**      here     be.2.PRES.**[HON]**

'You are here.'                                  **(Uttered to a king)**

(42)    *Təpai           yãha    hunuhunchə*

        2SG.[HON+]      here    be.PRES.[HON+]

        'You are here.'                                                                    (Uttered to a king)

The '#' symbol indicates that the sentence is grammatically well-formed but pragmatically ill-formed. It is not appropriate to utter (40) and (41) to a king. The reason is that the subject of the sentence is the hearer of the sentence and thus impacted by the social situation of the utterance.

In short, the subject-verb honorification observed in Nepali does not function like honorific registers. The agreement in honorification is not affected by the social situation of the utterance but is limited to the subject of the sentence only. Therefore, the data presented in this section provides further argument for subject-honorification in Nepali.

## 3.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter has argued for the form of honorific agreement termed subject-honorification. In short, subject-verb honorification in Nepali is always between the grammatical subject of the sentence and its respective verb-suffix. The arguments for subject-honorification are based on four evidence. The first evidence comes from data involving proper nouns and non-pronoun nouns as subjects. The honorific agreement does not just apply when the subjects are pronouns but it applies to all other types of nouns as well. The second evidence is from transitive sentences. There is no object-honorification in Nepali and hence the honorific agreement can only target the grammatical subject of the

sentence. The third evidence is found in passive constructions. Passive constructions in Nepali have been shown to be devoid of any grammatical subject. Without a grammatical subject, there can be no honorific agreement and the data reflects this phenomenon clearly. The fourth and last evidence pertains to the question of honorific registers. Subject-verb honorification in Nepali does not function like honorific registers where the social situation of the utterance has an impact on the choice of words for the utterance. Instead the honorific agreement is restricted to the grammatical subject of the sentence itself.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## HONORIFICATION INVOLVING COMPLEX SUBJECTS

### 4.1. Introduction

In chapter 3, it was established that honorification targets the grammatical subjects of the sentence. This is a supplementary chapter which aims to investigate constructions which involve complex subjects such as possessive pronouns and conjunction phrases. In addition, it will also look into imperative constructions where subjects are often optional.

### 4.2. Honorification Targets Head of NP Subject

In Nepali, possessive or genitive pronouns are derived by adding the suffix *-ko* or *-ro* to the pronouns as seen in (1).

(1)     *mə + -ro → məro*

      *təpãi + -ko → təpãiko*

      *hojur + -ko → hojurko*

However, a number of them may surface differently due to phonological processes such as the following pronouns in (2).
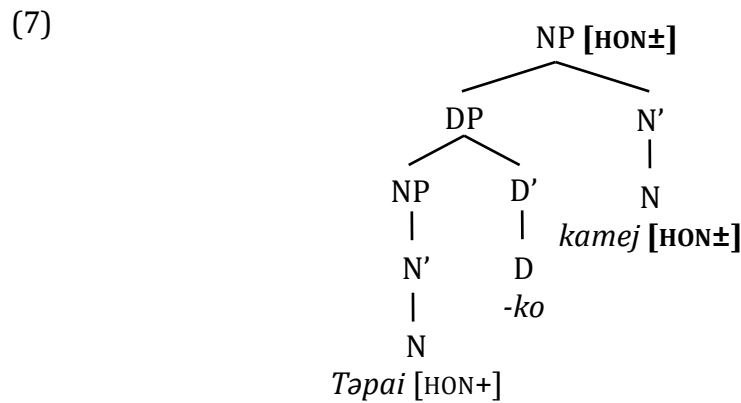
(2)     *hami + -ro → hamro*

      *\*hamiro*

      *uni + -ko → unko*

      *\*uniko*

Subjects that involve possessive pronouns often are composed of two nouns, the owner and the object owned such as the Noun Phrase (NP) *timro kamej* 'your shirt'. In such NP, both *timro* 'your' and *kamej* 'shirt' have their respective honorific features. The following examples in (3) to (6) will show constructions that involve subjects with such NPs.

(3)    *Te-ro*           *kamej*     *ramro*     *chə*

        2SG.[HON-]-GEN    shirt.**[HON±]**  nice       be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

        'Your shirt is nice.'

(4)    *Tim-ro*          *kamej*     *ramro*     *chə*

        2SG.[HON]-GEN     shirt.**[HON±]**  nice       be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

        'Your shirt is nice.'

(5)    *Təpai-ko*      *kamej*     *ramro*     *chə*

        2SG.[HON+]-GEN    shirt.**[HON±]**  nice       be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

        'Your shirt is nice.'

(6)    *\*Təpai-ko*     *kamej*     *ramro*     ***hunuhunchə***

        2SG.[HON+]-GEN    shirt.**[HON±]**  nice       be.PRES.**[HON+]**

        'Your shirt is nice.'

In (3) to (5) it can be seen that the verb-suffixes agree with *kamej* 'shirt' as opposed to the possessive pronouns. In fact, if the verb-suffix agrees with the possessive pronoun such as in (6), it results in ungrammaticality. More precisely this ungrammaticality is a result of using a [HON+] suffix with *kamej* 'shirt' which is an inanimate object. Intuitively, it does not make sense to give

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respect to an inanimate object. It can be predicted therefore that while the grammatical subject of these constructions are the entire NP *timro kamej* 'your shirt', the honorification targets specifically the head of the NP which is the noun *kamej* 'shirt'. Hence, the principle of endocentricity applies to honorific features as well and not just Φ-features. Endocentricity states that the features of an NP will reflect the features of its head (Hornstein, Nunes & Grohmann, 2005:176-177). The honorific feature of the head N *kamej* 'shirt' is projected up to the NP as illustrated in the tree structure in (7).

(7)

```
                          NP [HON±]
                         /         \
                    DP               N'
                   /   \              |
                 NP     D'            N
                 |       |         kamej [HON±]
                 N'      D
                 |      -ko
                 N
              Təpai [HON+]
```

The honorific feature that is projected up to the matrix NP is the honorific feature of its head which is *kamej* 'shirt' as opposed to *təpai* 'you' which is not the head of the matrix NP. Therefore, the honorific agreement of the verb-suffix is with the matrix NP which has the honorific feature of the N *kamej* 'shirt'. In short, the principle of endocentricity applies to honorific features as well and hence the entire NP subject carries the honorific future of its head N.

## 4.3. Subjects Involving Conjunctions

Next, how does honorific agreement function when the subject is composed of two nouns combined through a conjunction? This is an interesting case to observe as the two nouns in a Conjunction Phrase (ConjP) may have two different honorific features. To which of these two honorific features do the verb-suffix of the construction must agree?

Firstly, before looking into honorific features, it is important to look into the agreement of Φ-features in constructions with ConjP subjects. An example of a sentence with a ConjP subject with two different person features is given in (8).

(8)    *Timi     ani     mə          yãha     chõu*

       **2**SG.[HON]  and   **1**SG.[HON]     here    be.**1**PL.PRES.[HON]

       'You and I are here.'

In (8), the ConjP is composed of a second-person singular pronoun and first-person singular pronoun but the verb-suffix has to be a first-person plural suffix. Any other verb-suffix used will result in ungrammaticality. Hence, in cases such as (8), a priority is given to first-person agreement. The various person feature combinations and their respective verb-suffixes are summarized in table 4.1.

| Noun 1 | Noun 2 | Verb-Suffix | Suffix Honorific |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1SG | 2SG | 1PL | [HON] |
| 1SG | 3SG | 1PL | [HON] |
| 2SG | 3SG | 2PL | [HON] / [HON+] |
| 3SG | 3SG | 3PL | [HON] / [HON+] |

*Table 4.1: Φ-features Agreement involving ConjP*

Noun 1 and Noun 2 in table 4.1 refer to the two nouns that are in the ConjP. Whenever one of the noun is a first-person, the verb-suffix has to be a first-person. When the ConjP is composed of a second-person and a third-person, priority is given to second-person and hence the verb-suffix has to be in second-person. Therefore it can be observed that there is a hierarchy in terms of person agreement. Priority is given to first-person, followed by second-person and finally third-person. As for number feature, the verb-suffix has to be in plural always. This is expected as a ConjP subject consists of more than one item. As for the honorific feature, only when the verb-suffix is in the second or third-person can [HON+] be used. This too is expected as there is no [HON+] feature for first-person suffixes. What is interesting is that when a [HON+] suffix is used, both nouns in the ConjP received the respect regardless of their individual honorific features as seen in (9).

(9)    *Raja*        *ani*    ***Samit***        *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

king.[HON+]   and   Samit.M.**[HON+]**       here   be.PRES.[HON+]

'The king and Samit are here.'

In (9), the [HON+] suffix gives respect to the entire ConjP subject and hence respect is given to both *raja* 'king' and to *Samit* as well. A complication will arise however when the ConjP consist of nouns that explicitly differ in their honorific feature. Take for instance sentence (10).

(10)    ?*Raja*        *ani*    *kukur*    *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

king.**[HON+]**       and   dog.**[HON±]**   here   be.PRES.[HON+]

'The king and the dog are here.'

In (10), the suffix gives respect to both *raja* 'king' and *kukur* 'dog'. The language informant is unable to decide if *hunuhunchə* should be used here. While it seems natural to him to assign respect to *raja* 'king', it is unimaginable to assign respect to *kukur* 'dog'. If he has to choose between the two, since it is not unthinkable that someone may want to express the meaning of (10), he will use *hunuhunchə* though with some hesitancy. In general however, priority is given to [HON+] feature over other honorific features. Whenever one of the nouns in the ConjP has [HON+] feature, a [HON+] should be used.

## 4.4. Imperative Constructions

It is worth looking at how honorification functions in imperative constructions where subjects are commonly omitted (Valin, 2001:41).

Although, verb-suffixes in Nepali are able to give some clues on the characteristics of their subjects such as the person feature, subjects are not allowed to be dropped as seen in (11) and (12).

(11)    *Timi*      *ənggreji*      *pər-chou*

       2SG.[HON]  English       study-2.PRES.[HON]

       'You study English.'

(12)    *\_\_\_\_      *Ənggreji*      *pər-chou*

       \_\_\_\_    English       study-2.PRES.[HON]

       'You study English.'                                   (intended)

In Nepali's imperative constructions however, the second-person pronoun subjects are optional as demonstrated in (13) and (14).

(13)    *Timi*      *khau!*

       2SG.[HON]  eat.**IMP**.[HON]

       'You eat!'                                          (Imperative)

(14)    *Khau!*

       eat.**IMP**.[HON]

       'Eat!'                                              (Imperative)

Nonetheless, the imperative verbs are able to inflect to index different levels of respect. Table 4.2 provides a few examples of the imperative verb forms in their respective honorific category.

| Verb | Citation Form | [HON-] | [HON] | [HON+] |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Eat! | *Khaunu* | *Kha!* | *Khau!* | *Khanuhos!* |
| Come! | *Aunu* | *Aijə!* | *Au!* | *Aunuhos!* |
| Jump! | *Ufranu* | *Ufri!* | *Ufra!* | *Ufranuhos!* |

*Table 4.2: Examples of Imperative Verbs*

Based on the data collected, there does not seem to be a predictable pattern of the inflections of [HON-] and [HON] imperative verbs. As for [HON+] imperative verbs, a suffix *-hos* is simply attached to the citation form of the verb as shown in (15).

(15)    *khanu + -hos → Khanuhos*!

   *aunu + -hos → Aunuhos!*

   *ufranu + -hos → Ufranuhos!*

Since it has been established that honorification targets grammatical subject of the sentence, how can imperative constructions whose subjects are optional be accounted for? Firstly, when the subject is present, honorific agreement still stands as shown in (16) where a conflict in honorific features result in ungrammaticality.

(16)    *\*Tə̃        khau!*

   2SG.**[HON-]** eat.IMP.**[HON]**

   'You eat!'                                             (Imperative)

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As for imperative constructions where subjects are omitted, it can be stated intuitively that their subjects are always second-person pronouns since they are always targeted towards the hearer of the utterance. The subjects are therefore redundant since all the information of the subjects are already encoded in the imperative verbs including their honorific features. This is in line with Upadhyay (1999:64-65) who states that "... a pronominal subject in Nepali utterance may be dropped without losing its honorific value because it is retrievable from the verb form which encodes information about the level of honorificity expressed by the speaker." In sum, honorification in imperative constructions is a unique case which does not in any way threaten the idea of subject-honorification.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## HONORIFICS: SYNTACTIC OR PRAGMATIC FEATURES?

### 5.1. Introduction

The subject-verb honorification analysis that has been given in this paper so far has been presented with the view that honorific features are syntactic features. These honorific features behave in a manner that is very similar to other Φ-features such as person and number. In order for a sentence to be grammatical, the subject and verb must not only agree in person and number but also in their honorific features. Hence, Nepali's subject-verb honorification can be seen as a case of feature agreement. However, Corbett (2012:14) rightly cautioned that "... occurrences of honorific markers at various points in an utterance does not necessarily imply an agreement analysis." These honorific features that have been observed so far can be considered as pragmatic features as well. What are the evidences that these honorific features are syntactic features as opposed to pragmatic features? This chapter will address this question by presenting and evaluating the possible arguments for two analysis. The first is a pragmatic analysis and the second is a syntactic analysis which can also be labelled as the agreement analysis. This chapter will demonstrate that the arguments for a syntactic analysis of these honorific features are more plausible than a pragmatic analysis.

## 5.2. Case for Pragmatic Feature Analysis

### 5.2.1. Involvement of world knowledge

One key argument for the pragmatic analysis of honorific features is that the proper use of honorifics in Nepali requires certain world knowledge. This knowledge includes things such as the custom and culture of Nepali-speaking community. On the other hand, Φ-features generally do not involve world knowledge and are usually syntactic in nature. The following examples will illustrate how honorific features are different from other features such as person, number or gender. Examples (1) to (3) below are repeated from chapter three.

(1)  *Samit*          *yãha*   *chə*

     Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

     'Samit is here.'

(2)  *Samit*          *yãha*   *chən*

     Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

     'Samit is here.'

(3)  *Samit*          *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

     Samit.M.[Ø]    here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

     'Samit is here.'

In (1) to (3), *Samit* is a proper noun and it seems that proper nouns do not have honorific features inherently stored in them. In all three examples, *Samit* maintains the same number, person and gender feature but intuitively the

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honorific features can be predicted to be different in all three instances. Therefore, the honorific feature of *Samit* seems to be determined by world knowledge. If *Samit* is an older person with respect to the speaker, *Samit* should then possess [HON+] feature. However, if *Samit* is a servant or is subordinate to the speaker, *Samit* may have [HON±] feature instead. In short, the honorific feature in proper nouns such as *Samit* has different characteristics when compared to Φ-features. Involvement of world knowledge is what distinguishes honorific feature from Φ-features and hence an honorific feature should be considered as a pragmatic feature instead of a syntactic feature.
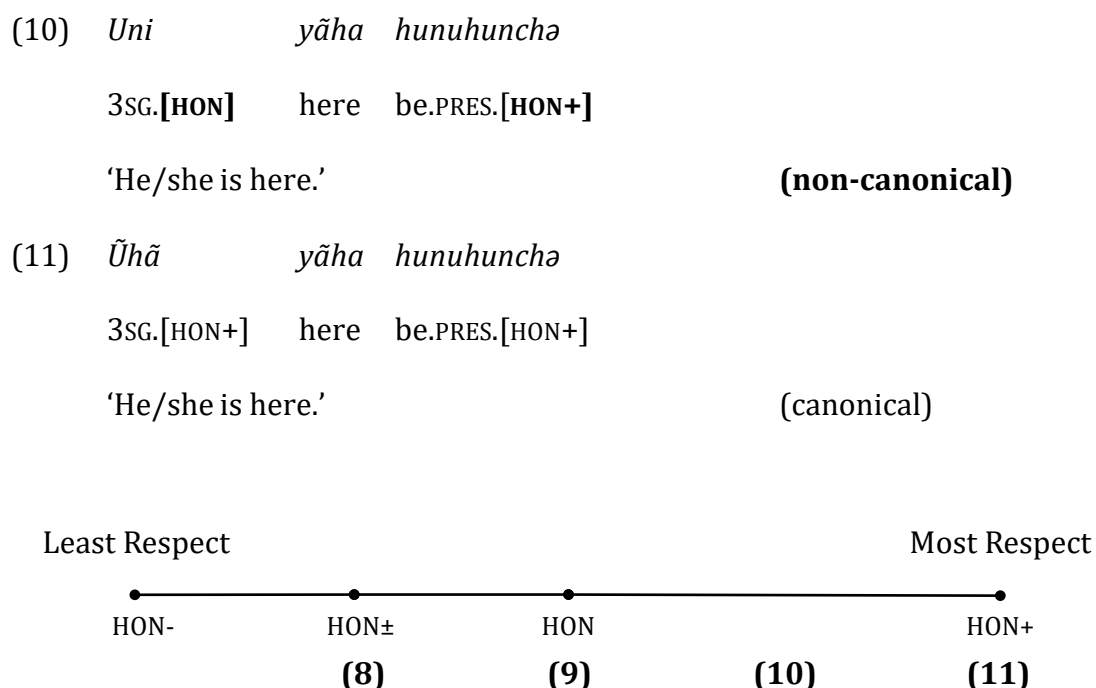
*5.2.2. Non-canonical agreement*

A second important argument for a pragmatic analysis of honorific features come from the non-canonical agreements involving third-person pronouns as subjects. A few examples showing these non-canonical agreements have been given in chapter two. In order to illustrate the argument more clearly, the data which involves singular third-person pronouns and present-tense verb-suffixes have been summarized and simplified in (4) to (7).

(4)  Subject [HON±] *u*  ←→  Verb [HON±] *-chə*  (canonical)

(5)  Subject [HON] *uni*  ←→  Verb [HON] *-chə*  (canonical)

(6)  Subject **[HON]** *uni*  ←→  Verb **[HON+]** *hunuhunchə* **(non-canonical)**

(7)  Subject [HON+] *ũhã*  ←→  Verb [HON+] *hunuhunchə*  (canonical)

It has been observed that the honorific subject-verb agreements in (4) to (7) are possible. What is interesting is not simply that agreement between different honorific features are possible but the language informant was able to organize these four sentences into a hierarchy of respect. The overall level of respect of the sentences are ordered with (4) being the lowest and (7) being the highest. Hence, the non-canonical agreement in (6) seems to create an intermediary level of respect in between agreements that involves [HON] features only or [HON+] features only such as in (5) and (7) respectively. In other words, the overall honorific level of a sentence is composed of the individual honorific levels of the words that compose it. (6) is judged as higher in its overall honorific level than (5) as it contains [HON+] feature in addition to [HON] feature. Whereas (5) has only [HON] feature. In sum, if examples (8) to (11) are ranked in terms of its overall honorific level, sentence (8) will have the lowest ranking with (11) ranked as the highest. Figure 5.1 illustrates these rankings when placed in the spectrum of honorific levels which was introduced in chapter 2.

(8)    *U*        *yãha*  *chə*

        3SG.[HON±]    here   be.3SG.PRES.[HON±]

        'He/she is here.'                    (canonical)

(9)    *Uni*       *yãha*  *chən*

        3SG.[HON]    here   be.3.PRES.[HON]

        'He/she is here.'                    (canonical)

(10)  *Uni*          *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

3SG.**[HON]**      here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

'He/she is here.'                                    **(non-canonical)**

(11)  *Ũhã*          *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

3SG.[HON+]      here    be.PRES.[HON+]

'He/she is here.'                                    (canonical)


Least Respect                                              Most Respect

HON-          HON±          HON                      HON+
              **(8)**          **(9)**          **(10)**          **(11)**

*Figure 5.1: Honorific levels of sentences (8) to (11) on the honorific spectrum*

This phenomenon poses a threat to the agreement analysis as it seems to suggest that a speaker possesses some freedom in combining different honorific features to give an overall honorific level of respect to the sentence uttered. If this is the case, honorific features are therefore more pragmatic in nature than syntactic.

**5.3. Case for Syntactic Feature Analysis**

This section is divided into two parts. The first part provides a response to the issues raised by the arguments for a pragmatic feature analysis. The second part will present the arguments and evidence for a syntactic feature analysis.

*5.3.1. Honorific features valued upon production*

In chapter three, an important question was raised with regards to the honorific feature of proper nouns. In examples (12) to (14) below, does *Samit* possesses different honorific features for each sentence? In other words, does *Samit* possess [HON±] in (12), [HON] in (13) and [HON+] in (14)? Another possible way to look at these examples is that *Samit* does not have any honorific feature but is assigned with an honorific feature by the verb-suffix.

(12)  *Samit*       *yãha*   *chə*

      Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.3SG.PRES.**[HON±]**

      'Samit is here.'

(13)  *Samit*       *yãha*   *chən*

      Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.3.PRES.**[HON]**

      'Samit is here.'

(14)  *Samit*       *yãha*   *hunuhunchə*

      Samit.M.[Ø]   here   be.PRES.**[HON+]**

      'Samit is here.'

There are therefore two hypotheses that can explain the honorific feature of the proper noun *Samit*.

> **Hypothesis 1:** In (12) to (14), the three *Samit* possess different honorific features. Hence, the human lexicon has three different entries for *Samit*.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Samit* has no inherent honorific feature stored in the lexicon. Its features in (12) to (14) are determined or assigned by the verb-suffixes.

Both hypotheses however do not seem to provide a satisfactory explanation. Hypothesis 1 is not preferred as it is not economical for the human lexicon to store multiple entries of the same word with difference only in their honorific features. On the other hand, hypothesis 2 will not be able to explain sentences with subjects that have inherent honorific features such as pronouns. It is unlikely that there are two different processes involved. When the honorific feature of the subject is defined, an agreement checking process is involved. Whereas when the honorific feature is not defined, a feature assignment process is used instead. There is however an alternative to these two hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 3:** The honorific feature of certain nouns is valued upon production.

The third hypothesis suggests that certain nouns such as proper nouns do not have inherent honorific features stored in the lexicon. However, their honorific features are assigned or valued upon production. In the lexicon, the word *Samit* has its Φ-features stored except for its honorific feature as illustrated in (15). Its honorific feature is not assigned or valued by the verb-suffix as hypothesis 2 suggests but rather it is determined by the speaker.

(15)    *Samit* [PERS: 3; GEN: M; NUM: SG; **HON:___**]

With this hypothesis, the agreement analysis and hence the syntactic nature of honorific features can be maintained. Nonetheless, a question remains, how does the speaker decide with which honorific feature should *Samit* be valued? It seems inevitable that world knowledge is still involved in the valuing of *Samit*'s honorific feature. While it is certainly the case that honorific feature behaves differently from Φ-features, the involvement of world knowledge does not necessarily disqualify honorific feature as a syntactic feature. In fact, it seems that Φ-features are not always inherently valued in the lexicon as well. Firstly, there are languages such as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) where the subject and verb has to agree not just in numbers and person but also in gender (Shorafat, 2012:33; Aoun, Choueiri & Benmamoun, 2010). In MSA for instance, if the subject is a proper noun, one has to know if the name is a masculine or a feminine name in order to rightly inflect the verb to match the gender of the proper noun. Hence, the speaker has to have the appropriate word knowledge in order to value the right gender to the proper noun. Secondly, in English, it is natural to assume that nouns such as *daddy* have third-person feature. However, it is very common to use the word *daddy* as a first-person as (16) will demonstrate (Lang, 2017).

(16)    *Daddy is going to work now.*

The person feature of *daddy* in (16) can be ambiguous. If (16) is uttered by a mother to her child, *daddy* refers to a third-person. However, if (16) is uttered by a father to his child, *daddy* refers to a first-person which is the father himself

and this phenomenon is not restricted to English only but to other languages such as Icelandic as well (Collins, 2014:196). In sum, the involvement of world knowledge is not restricted to honorific features but it can extend to Φ-features such as gender as MSA demonstrates. Furthermore, for a feature to be considered a syntactic feature, it does not have to be defined in the lexicon, the feature can be valued upon production as the example of the word *daddy* in English shows. Therefore, while honorific features may on the surface seem very different from Φ-features, both features are actually very similar upon closer examination.

The hypothesis that honorific features can be valued upon production can be extended to pronouns as well. Throughout this paper, Nepali pronouns have been considered to have inherent honorific features. However, if honorific features in pronouns can also be valued upon production, this can help to partly resolve the issue of non-canonical agreements which has been raised in the arguments for pragmatic feature analysis. Example (17) will illustrate how this hypothesis can help to maintain the agreement and syntactic analysis of honorific features.

(17)  *Uni*        *yãha*  *hunuhunchə*

     3SG.**[HON]**      here    be.PRES.**[HON+]**

     'He/she is here.'                                        (non-canonical)

It has been noted earlier in this chapter that sentences such as (17) is one example of non-canonical agreements found in the data collected if it is

assumed that *uni* inherently has [HON] feature. In this case, the subject and verb-suffix are not in agreement with respect to their honorific features yet the sentence is considered as grammatical. However, if honorific feature in pronouns can be valued upon production just like proper nouns, it is possible to produce *uni* with [HON+] feature and therefore maintain a canonical agreement as show in (18).

(18)  *Uni*          *yãha*    *hunuhunchə*

      3SG.**[HON+]**    here    be.PRES.[HON+]

      'He/she is here.'                         (*uni* originally has [HON] feature)

Nonetheless, this hypothesis is not without its problem. This hypothesis is unable to explain why it is not possible to produce the pronoun *u* which originally has [HON±] feature, with a [HON+] feature in order to make example (19) grammatical.

(19)  *\*U*          *yãha*    *hunuhunchə*

      3SG.**[HON+]**    here    be.PRES.[HON+]

      'He/she is here.'                         (*u* originally has [HON±] feature)

In addition, the hypothesis is still unable to explain how examples (8) to (11) can be ranked into in terms of the overall level of respect these sentences index. If the non-canonical agreement in (17) is now interpreted as canonical in (18), what is the difference between (18) and (11)? For a clearer illustration, examples (18) and (11) are repeated below in (20) and (21).

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(20)  *Ũhã*　　　　*yãha*　*hunuhunchə*

     3SG.**[HON+]**　here　be.PRES.[HON+]

     'He/she is here.'

(21)  *Uni*　　　　*yãha*　*hunuhunchə*

     3SG.**[HON+]**　here　be.PRES.[HON+]

     'He/she is here.'　　　　　　　(*uni* originally has [HON] feature)

In (20) and (21), the subjects and verb-suffixes are all interpreted to have [HON+] features. However, sentence (20) is considered to be more respectful than sentence (21). Under hypothesis 3, the difference between (20) and (21) cannot be accounted for. In spite of its problems, hypothesis 3 is still the best hypothesis which is able to maintain an agreement analysis of subject-verb honorification and hence the syntactic nature of honorific features.

*5.3.2. Interaction of honorific features with Φ-features*

Corbett (2012:14) states that one of the ways to identify whether honorific features are syntactical in a particular language is to observe whether these features "… cross-classifies with other morphosyntactic features." It can be seen that in Nepali that the verb-suffixes give clues on both the honorific features and the Φ-features they carry. Payne (1997:27) describes such morphemes as fusional because "… one form can simultaneously embody several meanings." Nepali's verb-suffixes are therefore fusional as they do not simply carry information about the honorific features alone but other information as well such as number and person. Since

honorific features and other Φ-features are tightly connected together in these verb-suffixes, it can be expected that these two types of features will interact with one another. Hence a way to demonstrate that honorific features are syntactical in nature is to show that these features are not independent but instead they interact with Φ-features as well. This interaction with Φ-features can be observed in two cases namely Nepali's passive construction and the reduced Φ-features agreement related to the [HON+] verb-suffix *hunuhuncha*.

In chapter two, it was established that there is no grammatical subject in Nepali's passive construction. This absence of grammatical subject is illustrated in (22) to (24).

(22)   Subj   Obj   Verb                    (Active Construction)

(23)   Subj ◄▬▬   Verb-PASS          (Typical Passivisation)

(24)   ___   Obj   Verb-PASS          (Nepali's Passivisation)

In a typical passivisation, the grammatical object is often transformed into the grammatical subject and one way this can be seen is through the change of its case feature. In Nepali however, it seems that the grammatical subject is omitted while the grammatical object remained in its position. Since, honorification targets the grammatical subject of the sentence and the grammatical subject is absent, passive constructions do not show the honorific features agreement observed in normal active constructions. The data that will be shown in this section will further demonstrate that in addition to the absence of honorific features agreement, there is also an absence of Φ-features

agreement in passive constructions. In other words, in active constructions, the subject and verb have to agree in both honorific and Φ features. On the other hand, in passive constructions, there is neither honorific nor Φ-features agreement. This argument is summarized in (25) and (26).

(25)  Subj  Obj  Verb      (S-V Agreement: HON and Φ features)

(26)  ___  Obj  Verb-PASS   (S-V Agreement: **none**)

The following sentences from (27) to (29) show that there are no agreement in person feature between the arguments in the sentences and their respective verbs. In all three instances, the verb maintains the suffix *thĩo* which possesses third-person feature while the arguments can possess first or second-person feature. Therefore, there is no person feature agreement in these passive constructions.

(27)  *Mə-lai*           *lati*  *han-in*    ***thĩo***

      **1**SG.[HON]-ACC    leg    hit-PASS    be.**3**SG.PSTH.[HON±]

      'I used to be kicked.'

(28)  *Timi-lai*         *lati*  *han-in*    ***thĩo***

      **2**SG.[HON]-ACC    leg    hit-PASS    be.**3**SG.PSTH.[HON±]

      'You used to be kicked.'

(29)  *Keta-lai*         *lati*  *han-in*    ***thĩo***

      boy.**3**SG.M.[Ø]-ACC  leg    hit-PASS    be.**3**SG.PSTH.[HON±]

      'The boy used to be kicked.'

Next, in (30) to (32), all the arguments are plurals and yet the verb-suffixes remain as *thĩo* again which has singular number feature. Hence, there is an absence of number feature agreement in these passive constructions.

(30)  *Hami-lai*           *lati*   *han-in*   ***thĩo***

     1PL.[HON]-ACC        leg      hit-PASS   be.3SG.PSTH.[HON±]

     'We used to be kicked.'

(31)  *Timi hǝru-lai*      *lati*   *han-in*   ***thĩo***

     2PL.[HON]-ACC        leg      hit-PASS   be.3SG.PSTH.[HON±]

     'You all used to be kicked.'

(32)  *Keta hǝru-lai*      *lati*   *han-in*   ***thĩo***

     boy.3PL.M.[Ø]-ACC    leg      hit-PASS   be.3SG.PSTH.[HON±]

     'The boys used to be kicked.'

In sum, the data reveals that in addition to the absence of honorific feature agreement, agreement of Φ-features such as person and number are also absent in passive constructions. This shows that an absence of honorific features is connected in some ways to the absence of Φ-features and vice-versa. This points to a strong relationship and interaction between the two types of features and thus suggests that like Φ-features, honorific features are syntactical in nature.

The interaction between honorific features and Φ-features can be further seen in the reduced Φ-features agreement related to the [HON+] verb-suffix *hunuhunchǝ.* In order to understand this argument, it is necessary to

analyse the morphological structure of Nepali's verb-suffixes which has been summarized in table 5.1. In addition, it can be seen thus far that Nepali is a synthetic language which means that morphology plays a key role in how the language functions (Haspelmath & Andrea, 2013:4-5).

| Honorific | Tense | Morphological Structure | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| non-[HON+] | PRES | *ch-Φ*.HON | *ch-u; ch-õu; ch-ən* |
| | PSTH | *th-Φ*.HON | *th-ĩe; th-ĩau; th-ĩo* |
| [HON+] | PRES | *hunuhun-ch-*GEN | *hunuhun-ch-ə* |
| | PSTH | *hunuhun-th-*GEN | *hunuhun-th-ĩo* |

*Table 5.1: Morphological Structure of Nepali's Verb-Suffixes*

Table 5.1 shows the breakdown of the morphological structure of all the verb-suffixes found in table 2.2. It can be observed from table 5.1 that non-[HON+] verb-suffixes carry information of Φ-features in their morpheme. Whereas [HON+] verb-suffixes do not have the full Φ-features information but only information on gender. Therefore, subject-verb agreements involving the [HON+] suffix such as *hunuhunchə* agree in honorific features but only partially agree with respect to Φ-features. On the other hand, subject-verb agreements involving non-[HON+] suffixes such as *chu* agree in honorific features along with full agreement in Φ-features as well. Therefore, it can be observed that there is a reduction of Φ-features agreement as shown in (33).

(33)    Agreement: [HON, GEN, PERS, NUM] ⟶ Agreement: [HON, GEN]

Once again, the implication of this reduced agreement is that there is an interaction between honorific features and Φ-features. When the honorific feature agreement involves [HON+] verb-suffixes, the agreement in Φ-features is reduced to only gender feature.

## 5.4. Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the nature of honorific features in Nepali. Are these features pragmatic or syntactic in nature? The pragmatic analysis argues that these features are more pragmatic rather than syntactic in nature because of the involvement of world knowledge in the proper use of honorifics in the language. The second argument for the pragmatic analysis is the non-canonical agreements observed in the data which introduce a big challenge to the agreement or syntactic analysis.

On the other side, the syntactic analysis argues that the involvement of world knowledge does not necessarily disqualify honorific features as syntactical in nature. These features while not always stored in the lexicon like Φ-features, can be valued upon production. It was also shown that Φ-features behaves very similarly to honorific features and hence the two categories of features are actually much closer to one another upon a deeper investigation. In addition, the syntactic analysis argues that Φ-features and honorific features interact very closely to each other as can be seen in the absence of both honorific and Φ-features agreement in passive constructions. Finally, the

phenomenon of reduced agreements involving [HON+] verb-suffixes reinforces the close link between the two types of features.

In conclusion, the case for a syntactic analysis of Nepali honorifics seem to be stronger than a pragmatic analysis. The solutions provided by the syntactic analysis for the problems raised by the pragmatic view seems adequate to maintain a reasonable agreement and syntactic analysis of Nepali's honorific features. The only exception is the puzzle with regards to non-canonical agreements which remains unresolved. Hence, further research on the nature of honorific features in Nepali is certainly warranted.

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| Person | Number | Honorific | Pronouns | | Verb-Suffixes Present tense | | | Pronouns | | Verb-Suffixes Past-Habitual Tense | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Verbal Predicate | Non-Verbal Predicate | Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate (Feminine) | | | Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate | Verbal/Non-Verbal Predicate (Feminine) |
| 1st | SG | HON | *mə* | | *chu* | *hũ* | | *mə* | | *thĩe* | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PL | HON | *hami* | | *chõu* | *hãu* | | *hami* | | *thĩau* | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2nd | SG | HON- | *tã* | | *chəs* | *hos* | | *tã* | | *this* | |
| | | HON | *timi* | | *chou* | *hau* | | *timi* | | *thiau* | |
| | | HON+ | *təpai* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | | *təpai* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | |
| | | HON+ | *hojur* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | | *hojur* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PL | HON | *timi həru* | | *chou* | *hau* | | *timi həru* | | *thiau* | |
| | | HON+ | *təpai həru* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | | *təpai həru* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | |
| | | HON+ | *hojur həru* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | | *hojur həru* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3rd | SG | HON± | *u* | | *chə* | *ho* | *chin* | *u* | | *thĩo* | *thiin* |
| | | HON | *uni/tini* | | *chən* | *hun* | *chin* | *uni/tini* | | *thie* | *thiin* |
| | | HON+ | *ũhã* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | *chin / ?hunuhunchin* | *ũhã* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | *hunuhunthiin* |
| | | HON+ | *wahã* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | *chin / ?hunuhunchin* | *wahã* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | *hunuhunthiin* |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | PL | HON | *uni/tini həru* | | *chən* | *hun* | *chin* | *uni/tini həru* | | *thie* | *thiin* |
| | | HON+ | *ũhã həru* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | *chin / ?hunuhunchin* | *ũhã həru* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | *hunuhunthiin* |
| | | HON+ | *wahã həru* | | *hunuhunchə* | *hunuhunchə* | *chin / ?hunuhunchin* | *wahã həru* | | *hunuhunthĩo* | *hunuhunthiin* |

*Table 2.2: Summary of Pronouns and Verb-Suffixes Agreement*

# APPENDIX B

Note: This appendix provides additional raw data that are relevant to this paper. The raw data have been arranged according to the chapters and topics of this paper.

## CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 2

**Present Tense; 1st Person Pronouns; Verbal Predicates**

I am here

*Mə yahã chu*

*\*Mə yahã hũ*

We are here

*Hami yahã chõu*

*\*Hami yahã hãu*

I study English

*Mə ənggreji pər-chu*

We study English

*Hami ənggreji pər-chõu*


**Present Tense; 1st Person Pronouns; Non-Verbal Predicates**

I am a student

*Mə bidhyarthi hũ*

*\*Mə bidhyarthi chu*

We are students

*Hami bidhyarthi hãu*

*\*Hami bidhyarthi chou*


**Present Tense; 2nd Person Pronouns; Verbal Predicates**

You are here

*Timi yãha chou*

*Tã yãha chəs*

*Təpai yãha hunuhunchə*

*Hojur yãha hunuhunchə*

You (PL) are here

> *Timi hǝru yãha chou*

> *Tǝpai hǝru yãha hunuhunchǝ*

> *Hojur hǝru yãha hunuhunchǝ*

You study English

> *Timi ǝnggreji pǝr-chou*

> *Tã ǝnggreji pǝr-chǝs*

> *Tǝpai ǝnggreji pǝrnu hunchǝ*

> *Hojur ǝnggreji pǝrnu hunchǝ*

You (PL) study English

> *Timi hǝru ǝnggreji pǝr-chou*

> *Tǝpai hǝru ǝnggreji pǝr-nu hunchǝ*

> *Hojur hǝru ǝnggreji pǝr-nu hunchǝ*


**Present Tense; 2nd Person Pronouns; Non-Verbal Predicates**

You are a student

> *Timi bidhyarthi hõu*

> *Tã bidhyarthi hos*

> *Tǝpai bidhyarthi hunuhunchǝ*

> *Hojur bidhyarthi hunuhunchǝ*

> *\*Timi bidhyarthi hunuhunchǝ*

You (PL) are students

> *Timi hǝru bidhyarthi hõu*

> *\*Tã hǝru*

> *Tǝpai hǝru bidhyarthi hunuhunchǝ*

> *Hojur hǝru bidhyarthi hunuhunchǝ*

**Present Tense; 3rd Person Pronouns; Verbal-Predicates**

He is here

> *U yãha chə*
>
> *Uni yãha chən*
>
> *Ũhã yãha hunuhunchə*
>
> *Wahã yãha hunuhunchə*

He studies English

> *U ənggreji pər-chə*
>
> *Uni ənggreji pər-chən*
>
> *Ũhã ənggreji pərnu hunchə*
>
> *Wahã ənggreji pərnu hunchə*

She is here

> *Uni yãha chin*
>
> *U yãha chin*
>
> *Wahã yãha chin*
>
> *\*Ũhã yãha hunuhunchin*
>
> *\*Wahã yãha hunuhunchin*

She studies English

> *Uni ənggreji pər-chin*

They are here

> *Uni həru yãha chən*
>
> *Ũhã həru yãha hunuhunchə*
>
> *Wahã həru yãha hunuhunchə*

They study English

> *\*Uni həru ənggreji pər-chə*
>
> *Uni həru ənggreji pər-chən*
>
> *Ũhã həru ənggreji pər-chən*
>
> *Uni həru ənggreji pər-nu hunchə*
>
> *Ũhã həru ənggreji pər-nu hunchə*

*Wahã həru ənggreji pər-nu hunchə*


**Present Tense; 3ʳᵈ Person Pronouns; Verbal-Predicates**

He is a student

> *U bidhyarthi ho*
>
> *Uni bidhyarthi hun*
>
> *Ũhã bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*
>
> *Wahã bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*

They are students

> *Uni həru bidhyarthi hun*
>
> *\*U həru*
>
> *Ũhã həru bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*
>
> *Wahã həru bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*

She is a student

> *\*Uni bidhyarthi chin*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 1ˢᵗ Person Pronouns; Verbal Predicates**

I used to be here

> *Mə yãha thĩe*

I used to study English

> *Mə ənggreji pər-thĩe*

We used to be here

> *Hami (həru) yãha thĩau*

We used to study English

> *Hami ənggreji pərhãu-thĩau*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 1ˢᵗ Person Pronouns; Non-Verbal Predicates**

I used to be a student

> *Mə bidhyarti thĩe*

We used to be students

> *Hami (həru) bidhyarti thĩau*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 2ⁿᵈ Person Pronouns; Verbal Predicates**

You used to be here

> *Timi yãha thĩo*
>
> *Tã yãha this*
>
> *Təpai yãha hunuhunthĩo*
>
> *Hojur yãha hunuhunthĩo*

You (PL) used to be here

> *Timi həru yãha thĩau*
>
> *Təpai həru yãha hunuhunthĩo*
>
> *Hojur həru yãha hunuhunthĩo*

You used to teach English

> *Timi ənggreji pərhãu thĩau*
>
> *Tã ənggreji pərhãu this*
>
> *Təpai ənggreji pərhãunu hunthĩo*
>
> *Hojur ənggreji pərhãunu hunthĩo*

You (PL) used to teach English

> *Timi həru-le ənggreji pərhãu thĩau*
>
> *Təpai həru-le ənggreji pərhãunu hunthĩo*
>
> *Hojur həru-le ənggreji pərhãunu hunthĩo*
>
> *\*pərhãu hunuhunthĩo*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 2ⁿᵈ Person Pronouns; Non-Verbal Predicates**

You used to be a student

> *Timi bidhyarthi thĩo*
>
> *Tã bidhyarthi this*
>
> *Təpai bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

*Hojur bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

*\*Tɘpai bidhyarthi thĩo*

You (PL) used to be students

*Timi hɘru bidhyarthi thĩau*

*Tɘpai hɘru bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

*Hojur hɘru bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 3rd Person Pronouns; Verbal Predicates**

He used to be here

*U yãha thĩo*

*Uni yãha thie*

*Ũhã yãha hunuhunthĩo*

*Wahã yãha hunuhunthĩo*

He used to study English

*Us-le ɘnggreji pɘr-thĩo*

*Ũn-le ɘnggreji pɘr-thie*

*Ũhã-le ɘnggreji pɘrnu hunthĩo*

*Wahã-le ɘnggreji pɘrnu hunthĩo*

They used to study English

*Uni hɘru-le ɘnggreji pɘreka thie*

*Ũhã hɘru ɘnggreji pɘrnu hunuhunthĩo*

*Wahã hɘru ɘnggreji pɘrnu hunuhunthĩo*


**Past-Habitual Tense; 3rd Person Pronouns; Non-Verbal Predicates**

He used to be a student

*U bidhyarthi thĩo*

*\*U bidhyarthi thĩau*

*Uni bidhyarthi thie*

*Ũhã bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

*Wahã bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

She used to be a student

    *U bidhyarti thiin*

    *Uni bidhyarti thiin*

    *Ũhã bidhyarti hunuhunthiin*

    *Wahã bidhyarti hunuhunthiin*

They used to be students

    *Uni həru bidhyarthi thie*

    *Ũhã həru bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*

    *Wahã həru bidhyarthi hunuhunthĩo*


**Progressive Verbs**

I am teaching English

    *Mə ənggreji pərhãu-dai chu*

We are teaching English

    *Hami ənggreji pərhãu-dai chou*

You are studying English

    *Timi ənggreji pər-dai chou*

    *Tã ənggreji pər-dai chəs*

    *Təpai ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

    *Hojur ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

You (PL) are studying English

    *Timi həru ənggreji pər-dai chou*

    *Təpai həru ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

    *Hojur həru ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

He is studying English

    *U ənggreji pər-dai chə*

    *Uni ənggreji pər-dai chən*

    *Ũhã ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

*Wahã ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

They are studying English

> *Uni həru ənggreji pər-dai chə*
>
> *Uni həru ənggreji pər-dai chən*
>
> *Ũhã həru ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*
>
> *Wahã həru ənggreji pər-dai hunuhunchə*

**Other Verbs**

Samit runs

> *Samit dogur chə*
>
> *Samit dogur chən*
>
> *Samit dogur-nu hunchə*

Samit cries

> *Samit run chə*
>
> *Samit run-nu hunchə*

Samit eats the banana

> *Samit-le kera khan-chə*
>
> *Samit-le kera khan-chən*
>
> *Samit-le kera khanu hunchə*

Samit drinks the milk

> *Samit-le dud pĩu chə*
>
> *Samit-le dud pĩunu hunchə*

## CHAPTER 3

**Proper Nouns and Non-Pronouns Subjects**

Samit is a student

> *Samit bidhyarthi ho*
>
> *Samit bidhyarthi hun*

*Samit bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*

Samit studies English

*Samit-(le) ənggreji pər-chə*

*Samit-(le) ənggreji pər-chən*

*Samit-(le) ənggreji pərnu hunchə*

Neha is a student

*Neha bidhyarthi ho*

*Neha bidhyarthi hun*

*Neha bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*

*\*Neha bidhyarthi chin*

Neha is here

*Neha yãha chə*

*Neha yãha chin*

*Neha yãha hunuhunchə*

*Neha yãha hunuhunchin*

*\*Neha yãha ho*

*\*Neha yãha hun*

Neha studies English

*Neha ənggreji pər-chə*

*Neha ənggreji pər-chin*

*Neha ənggreji pər-nu hunchə*

The dog loves Samit

*Kukur-le Samit-(lai) mən pərau-chə*

Samit loves the dog

*Samit-le kukur-(lai) mən pərau-chə*

The book is good

*Kitap ramro chə*

The idea is good

*Bicar ramro chə*

**Transitive Sentences**

Samit teaches Neha

> *Samit-le Neha-lai pərhãu-chə*
>
> *Samit-le Neha-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le Neha-lai pərhãu-nu hunchə*

Samit teaches him

> *Samit-le ũhã-lai pərhãu-chə*
>
> *Samit-le ũhã-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le ũhã-lai pərhãu-nu hunchə*
>
> *Samit-le un-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le us-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le wahã-lai pərhãu-chən*

Samit teaches them

> *Samit-le uni həru-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le ũhã həru-lai pərhãu-chən*
>
> *Samit-le wahã həru-lai pərhãu-chən*


**Passive Sentences**

The boy was kicked

> *Keta-lai lati han-in thio*
>
> *\*Keta-lai lati han-in hunuhunthio*

The boy was scolded

> *Keta-lai gali gər-in thĩo*

The king was scolded

> *Raja-lai gali gər-in thĩo*

**Genitive / Possessive Pronouns**

My shirt is nice

> *Məro kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *\*Məro kəmej ramro chən*

Your shirt is nice

> *Timro kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Tə̃-ro kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Təpai-ko kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Hojur-ko kəmej ramro chə*

His shirt is nice

> *Usko kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Unko kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Ũhã-ko kəmej ramro chə*
>
> *Wahã-ko kəmej ramro chə*

Samit's shirt is nice

> *Samit-ko kəmej ramro chə*

**Conjunctions**

The king and the boy are here

> *Raja ani keta yãha hunuhunchə*

The teacher and his dog are here

> ?*Sikchək ani us-ko kukur yãha chə*
>
> ?*Sikchək ani us-ko kukur yãha hunuhunchə*

You and I are here

> *Timi ani mə yãha chõu*
>
> *Təpai ani mə yãha chou*

The boy and I are here

> *Keta ani mə yãha chõu*
>
> *Mə ani keta mə yãha chou*

You and the boy are here

> *Timi ani keta yãha chou*

The king and his dog are here

> ?

## Subject-Drop

You study English

> *Timi ənggreji pər-chou*
>
> *\*ənggreji pər-chou*

He studies English

> *Uni ənggreji pər-chən*
>
> *\*ənggreji pər-chən*

She studies English

> *Uni ənggreji pər-chin*
>
> *\*ənggreji pər-chin*

## Imperative Verbs

You eat!

> *Timi khau!*
>
> *Tə̃ kha!*
>
> *\*Tə̃ khau!*
>
> *Təpai khanuhos!*
>
> *\*Təpai khau!*
>
> *Hojur khanuhos!*

Throw!

> *Fiak!*

*Fiakə!*

*Fiaknuhos!*

Wait!

*Pərkhi!*

*Pərkhə!*

*Pərkhinuhos!*


## CHAPTER 5


## Non-Canonical Agreements

He is a student

*Uni bidhyarthi hunuhunchə*

They study English

*Uni həru ənggreji pər-nu hunchə*

They are studying English

*Ũhã həru ənggreji pər-dai chən*

*Wahã həru ənggreji pər-dai chən*

He used to be here

*U yãha thie*

*Uni yãha thĩo*

*Uni yãha hunuhunthĩo*

They used to be here

*Uni həru yãha hunuhunthĩo*