

Animacy, specificity and verb semantics. What drives Differential Object Marking in Hindi?

This presentation aims to explore the dynamics of differential object marking (DOM) in Hindi, focusing on three questions related to (1) the role of animacy, (2) the role of definiteness/specificity and (3) the role of verb semantics. In Hindi, the *ko*-marking of the direct object (DO) is known to be influenced by two factors: animacy and definiteness/specificity. It is traditionally assumed that an animate DO is marked with the objective marker *ko*. However, Mohanan (1994) gives examples of animate non-specific/indefinite DO's which are *not ko*-marked. This raises the following questions: Is this a rule or are these exceptions? How does animacy interact with definiteness/specificity? The marking of the inanimate object is said to be determined by the definiteness/specificity of the object. Interestingly, linguists do not seem to agree on which terminology to use with regard to the specificity/definiteness opposition. Some use specificity and definiteness as interchangeable, others mention either the role of definiteness or the role of specificity in DOM, again others describe these factors as each having a different impact on the marking (Montaut 2004; Kachru 1980, 2006; Vashishth&Joseph 2008, Singh 1994; Aissen 2003; Spencer 2005; Malchukov 2008, Butt 1993; Bhatt & Anagnostopoulou 1996; de Hoop & Narasimhan 2005; de Hoop & Malchukov 2008). This brings us to the following research question: do specificity and definiteness play a different role in the *ko*-marking of the DO in Hindi? If so, which definitions of definiteness/specificity should be used, and what are the different roles of these factors? A third influencing factor to be considered are the verb semantics. Several linguists (Mohanan 1994; de Hoop & Narasimhan 2005; Klein 2007; Geist et al. 2007) describe that the *ko*-marking in Hindi also depends on selectional properties of the verb. This asks for further investigation: does the DO of a certain verb always get *ko*-marked, and, vice versa, are there verbs of which the DO is never marked? In order to find an answer on these issues, our methodological approach will be twofold: first, we will perform a literature study of existing textbooks and grammars of Hindi in order to explore the different ways in which DOM in Hindi is being described and taught. Second, we will conduct a brief analysis of the EMILLE Spoken Hindi corpus (Lancaster University, available on <https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/>) in order to find the frequencies of occurrence of *ko*-marked objects and their correlation with the semantic parameters of animacy, definiteness/specificity and verb meaning. As such, this article aims, first, to offer a clear overview of the various linguistic analyses of differential object marking in Hindi, and second, to illustrate these analyses by means of real language usage.

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