Chapter-3

Theta

Absorption
Chapter – III

THETA ABSORPTION

3.0 Arguments in a sentence

One of the conditions that a sentence must fulfill in order to be well-formed is that its verb must have all the arguments with appropriate θ-roles in it. In case a sentence is well-formed but all the arguments are not overtly present there, it may be because of the following reasons.

I. One argument has been moved out of the θ-position to a non-θ-position in the sentence, as in (1b):

1a. I don’t like mangoes.
   b. Mangoes₁ [ I don’t like t₁]
   c. *I don’t like _.
   d. *Mangoes₁ [, I don’t like apples.]

We may notice that in (1b), the NP argument mangoes, which has the θ-role of theme in (1a), is moved to the front of the sentence for focus. The movement of this argument has not been motivated by case. An argument may move from θ-position to a non-θ-position in order to get case but it is not the point here. The argument mangoes has already been assigned the accusative case by the verb eat. The argument has moved outside the sentence because it has become the topic. However, there is no vacancy inside the clause boundary because the moved NP has left a trace behind it. That’s why, if we remove this antecedent NP as a topic, as in (1c), the sentence is wrong. The trace carries the relevant properties of its

42 Grimshaw (1990) uses the term “suppression” of an argument to discuss the phenomenon. See (p-108-118, 129-133) for details. Williams (1987, 1994) uses the term “implicit argument” to discuss arguments that are θ-absorbed.
antecedent NP, i.e. mangoes. Without this relationship it does not have the properties of its own. In other words, without having a relation with the antecedent NP, the sentence with the vacant position in (1c) is incomplete because the NP which has the theme relation with the verb is missing and the sentence goes wrong. If we put an NP in the vacant position, as in (1d), the sentence is ungrammatical. As this empty position is carrying the relevant properties of its antecedent NP, no other NP can be inserted in its place.

II. As Urdu is a pro-drop language, the argument in the subject position may be optionally deleted, in case it can be recovered from the AGR features on the verb. For instance:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{2a. } & [\text{maĩ čahtī: hũ: } [\text{CP ke } [\text{IP ye ka:m ho ja:ye}]]] \\
& \text{I want 1 fem. Sg that this work be done} \\
& \text{‘[I want [this work to be done.]’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{2b. } & [\text{Pro ča:htī: hũ: } [\text{CP ke } [\text{IP ye ka:m ho ja:ye}]]] \\
& \text{want 1 fem. Sg that this work be done}
\end{align*}
\]

In (2a), the AGR features on the verb ča:hna: ‘to want’ are first person, feminine and singular which indicate that maĩ ‘I’ has the agent θ-role. Even though, the subject in (2b) is not phonetically realized to which the agent θ-role could be assigned, it can be recovered from the AGR features i.e., 1 fem. sg. Such an empty NP is symbolically represented by pro.

III. The clause is without an overt subject but it contains a non-overt subject NP, syntactically represented as PRO, as in (3)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3. } & [\text{IP, maĩ } [\text{IP, PRO x ghar ja:na:}] \text{ ča:hta: hũ:} \\
& \text{I home to go want} \\
& \text{‘[IP, I want [IP, PRO, to go home.]’}
\end{align*}
\]
In (3), IP₂ [\text{PRO}_x \text{ ghar jaːnaː}] is embedded in IP₁. The subject position in the embedded IP is empty but it is controlled by the subject position of the main IP i.e. IP₁, the empty NP is PRO\textsuperscript{43}.

If none of the situations mentioned in (I-III) is there, the argument may be deleted if it is a case of either incorporation or \(\theta\)-absorption.

3.1. Incorporation

The concept of incorporation is generally used in the sense of Mark Baker (1988:1) who has interpreted the notion as a process by which “one semantically independent word comes to be inside another”. The formation of the larger unit may be indicated by a syntactic process (say move \(\alpha\)) by which two elements are brought together to become one unit. According to Baker, incorporation has two types of consequences in a linguistic structure: (a) it creates a complex category of x-bar level, and (b) it creates a syntactic link between two positions in the phrase marker. For instance, in (4a) the complex verb ‘babysit’ incorporates two positions of the VP, the verb ‘sit’ and the NP ‘baby’, as is shown in (4b). Likewise, in (5b), the verb bartend incorporates two constituents of the VP, the verb ‘tend’ and the NP bar.

\textsuperscript{43} Culicover (2009 : 267) explains it as follows: A thematic relation that corresponds to (an) overt subject must correspond to an invisible subject when there is no “visible constituent”. Conventionally this NP is PRO.
4a. She babysat last evening.

b. \[
\text{VP} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{V'} \rightarrow \text{PP} \\
\text{P} \rightarrow \text{NP} \\
\text{D} \rightarrow \text{N} \rightarrow \text{V}
\end{array}
\]
c. \[
\begin{array}{c}
sit \\
by \\
the \\
baby \\
babysit
\end{array}
\]

5a. He bartends on weekends

b. \[
\text{VP} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{V'} \rightarrow \text{NP} \\
\text{D} \rightarrow \text{N} \rightarrow \text{V}
\end{array}
\]
c. \[
\begin{array}{c}
tend \\
the \\
bar \\
bartend
\end{array}
\]

We may note that in both these cases, the incorporated NPs (baby in (4a) and bar in (5b)) have the theta role of theme which is incorporated in the new verbs, babysits and bartends in (4c) and (5c) respectively. Extending this concept further, we may claim that in (6b) the use of the verb plough is an instance of incorporation.

6a. He turned over land with plough.

b. He ploughed the land.
One of the most salient differences between the instances of incorporation in (4) and (5) and those in (6) is that, in the former both incorporated elements are visible whereas in the latter the incorporated noun has changed its grammatical category and become a verb. In short, *to turn over with plough* is replaced by *to plough*. The verb *wire-transfer* is also a very good example of incorporation, which is a combination of NP *wire* and the verb *transfer* and is derived from *transfer by wire*.

In Urdu also, there are examples of incorporation of this type. For instance, we may look at (7).

7a. Asad ne Anees ko la:t se ma:ra:
Asad Anees kicked (with his foot)
‘Asad kicked Anees (with his foot).’

b. Asad ne Anees ko latiya:ya:
Asad Anees kicked
‘Asad kicked Anees.’

We may note that in (7a), the postpositional phrase (PoP) *la:t se* ‘with foot’ has the theta role of instrument, but in (7b) it is incorporated in the new verb i.e. *latiya:na:* ‘to grab’, *jutiya:na:* ‘to hit with shoes’, *laThiya:na:* ‘to hit with stick’, etc.

3.2. Theta-absorption

It was Gruber who for the first time discussed the idea of θ-absorption but with the name of incorporation rather than θ-absorption. Gruber (1976:11-12) defined the term *incorporation* as a process which is used to explain the phenomenon of deletion of certain overtly expressed elements at the pre-lexical level. He claimed that this process depends on two elements being neighbours. A verb that incorporates its argument NP can specify it because the latter itself “determines much of the meaning of the
verb used” (1976:22). In order to make Gruber’s notion of incorporation clear, we may look at examples in (8).

8a. Asad kahā:nī: paRh raha: hai
    Asad story reading is
    ‘Asad is reading a story.’

b. Asad paRh raha: hai
    Asad reading is
    ‘Asad is reading.’

According to Gruber’s concept of incorporation in (8) the verb paRhna:, in the sense of *to study* incorporates the theme *something worth studying*. It is more appropriate to say that paRhna: ‘to read’ in (8b) incorporates *anything readable* (i.e., an unspecified object of reading). In this sense (8b) is different from (8a); the theme is specified in (8a) but not in (8b).

Jackendoff (1990:50-55) also mentions the notion of incorporation but emphasizes that it takes place at the conceptual level. He further suggests that the features of an argument should be compatible with the property of the verb. If an argument is not expressed syntactically, it is implied by its predicate. Incorporated element can be expressed by the conceptual structural information with which it is co-indexed. Jackendoff uses the term *argument fusion* to combine the reading of the argument with the reading of the verb. He illustrates the point by the following example:

9a. Harry drank the wine.

    b. Harry drank.

In (9a), the theme is specified as *wine*; in (9b), the verb *to drink* incorporates the theme. It is interpreted as *alcohol / liquor* and no other liquid. The theme cannot be interpreted at the conceptual level as any
liquid. It can be noticed that the verb to drink is transitive but it does not have an overt object in (9b) due to the process of incorporation.

If we accept the characteristics of incorporation, given by Baker, (8b) and (9b) are not cases of incorporation; both are cases of deletion of object NPs, which have the theta role of theme. In (8b), the NP something readable has been omitted and in (9b) liquor has been deleted. In these cases, neither the process of incorporation has created a complex lexical unit, nor has it changed the grammatical function of the “incorporated element”. Chomsky (1981, 1986a) termed this phenomenon as θ-absorption. In other words, θ-absorption refers to cases in which an argument is absorbed in the verb. The verb in which the argument is absorbed in these cases is basically transitive. The verb does not need an overt object complement, when an argument is absorbed in it. For instance:

10a. Asad a:m kha: raha: hai
    Asad mango eating is
    ‘Asad is eating a mango.’

b. Asad kha: raha: hai
    Asad eating is
    ‘Asad is eating’

In (10b), it is noticeable that the theme argument is not overt there but the sentence is complete. (10a) possesses two arguments i.e. the agent Asad and the specified theme a:m ‘a mango’ in order to be grammatical but (8b) has only one argument i.e. the NP agent Asad. The theme argument something edible is absorbed here. It may also be observed that the sentence (10a) is unlike (10b), as it has a specified theme but the theme is not overtly expressed in (10b). We may conclude that there is no need to mention the argument which is generic in nature if it can be predicted by
the verb. However, sometimes an argument which may be specific in nature can also be absorbed, as the absorption of *wine* in the verb *drink*.

Thus we can say:

11a. wo pa:nī: pi: raha: hai
   he  water drinking  is
   ‘He is drinking water’

b. wo sharbat pi: raha: hai
   he  sharbat  drinking  is
   ‘He is drinking sharbat.’

But if we say:

c. wo pi:ta: hai
   he  drinks
   ‘He drinks’

we mean *wo shara:b pi:ta: hai* ‘He drinks wine’, not anything else.

Having demonstrated the phenomenon of θ-absorption, we may conclude that it may happen when the NP in question lacks specification, as in (10b), or when a restricted and specified meaning is easily predictable, as in (11c). Furthermore, the argument which is contextually specified can also be dropped from the surface, as is clear if we contrast (12b) with (12d).

12a. Asad ne mujhe kita:b di: hai
   Asad     me     book given has
   ‘Asad has given me a book.’

b. Asad ne mujhe di: hai
   Asad     me     given has
   ‘*Asad has given me.’

c. Asad ne tumhẽ kita:b di: hai kya:?
   Asad      you      book      given has
   ‘Has Asad given you a book.’

d. ____ di: to hai  par maīne ____ kahā: rakhi:,  ya:d nahī:
   given has  but  I    where kept have  remember don’t
   ‘(He) has given it to me but I don’t know where I have kept (it).
The theme argument is dropped in (12b) and it cannot be recovered in an isolated sentence. In (12d), the theme kita:b ‘book’ can be recovered from the sequence of sentences given in (12c). If an argument has been mentioned earlier; it is not repeated in a given context. It can be deduced from the context and the sentence is grammatical.

In short, we reject the concept of incorporation in the sense of Gruber and Jackendoff and for cases where an argument is missing but it is recoverable from the verb. We do not consider it a case of incorporation in the sense of Baker. For such a case, we prefer the term \( \theta \)-absorption\( ^{44} \).

In the rest of this chapter, we will use it in this sense.

In the following sections, an attempt has been made to examine the phenomenon of theta absorption to find out which theta roles might be absorbed in Urdu in unspecified contexts.

### 3.2.1 Absorption of Theme

We may now look at the sentences in (13) to explain the process of absorption of theme.

13a. wo kors ki: kita:b paRh raha: hai
   he course book reading is
   ‘He is reading a course book.’

13b. wo kaha:ni: ki: kita:b paRh raha: hai
   he story book reading is
   ‘He is reading a story book.’

\( ^{44} \) Culicover (2009:171) calls theta-absorbed arguments “implicit argument”; they involve cases in which conceptual structure (CS) arguments do not correspond to (overt) syntactic arguments.
c. wo paRh raha: hai
   he reading is
   ‘He is reading.’

In (13a) and (13b), the themes are specified as korse ki: kita:b ‘course’ and kaha:ni: ki: kita:b ‘story book’ respectively. In (13c), the verb paRhna: absorbs the theme and the absorbed theme is understood as something readable. The absorbed theme is usually something that can be inferred from the verb in which it is absorbed. For instance, we may consider the verb khelna:, as in (14):

   14a. wo futbaul khel raha: hai
       he football playing is
       ‘He is playing football.’

   b. wo khel raha: hai
       he playing is
       ‘He is playing.’

In (14a), the NP futbaul ‘football’ is the specified theme of the verb khelna: ‘to play’. (14b) indicates that the verb absorbs its theme which is not necessarily a football. In other words, the verb entails the generic nature of its theme, that is, any object used for playing. Some other verbs that belong to this type and can absorb an unspecified theme are as shown in (15b-17b).

   15a. wo katthak na:č raha: hai
       he katthak dancing is

---

45 Just as a constituent can be deleted only when it is recoverable, an NP constituent is theta-absorbed only when it may be entailed by the verb in which it is absorbed. If so, (13c) cannot absorb course book even if paRhna: carries the sense of ‘to study’.

46 Khelna: ‘to play’ may means to engage in an activity for enjoyment (without an object to play with). If so, it is not a case of θ-absorption. The verb is treated as intransitive and needs only one argument, i.e. the agent.
‘He is dancing katthak dance.’

b. wo na:č raha: hai
   he  dancing      is
   ‘He is dancing’ (but not necessarily any specific dance).

c. wo na:čta: hai
   he    dances
   ‘He dances.’ (He is a dancer)

16a. wo Gazal ga: raha: hai
    he  ghazal singing    is
    ‘He is singing ghazal’

b. wo ga: raha: hai
    he  singing       is
    ‘He is singing.’

c. wo ga:ta: hai
    he       sings
    ‘He sings.’ (i.e. He is a singer)

17a. wo Urdu paRha: raha: hai
    he  Urdu  teaching    is
    ‘He is teaching Urdu.’

b. wo paRha: raha: hai
    he  teaching      is
    ‘He is teaching.’

c. wo paRha:ta: hai
    he    teaches
    ‘He teaches.’ (i.e. He is a teacher)

18a. wo Khat likh rahi: hai
    She letter writing    is
    ‘She is writing a letter.’

b. wo likh rahi: hai
    he    writing      is
    ‘She is writing.’

c. wo likhti: hai
    she  writes
    ‘She writes’ (i.e., She is a writer)
When used in an indefinite present tense such verbs indicate more than an action, as is clear from the contrast between (15b-18b) and (15c-18c) respectively. In (15c-18c), the verbs refer to profession such as that of the dancer, singer, teacher and writer respectively. The verb *naːčnaː* ‘to dance’ can also be used transitively and intransitively like the verb *khelnaː* ‘to play’.

Another verb which indicates more than an action used in an indefinite present tense is *piːnaː* ‘to drink’, as is clear from the following sentences:

19a. wo paːniː piː rahaː hai  
he  water drinking  is  
‘He is drinking water.’

b. wo piː rahaː hai  
he  drinking  is  
‘He is drinking.’

c. wo piːtaː hai  
he  drinks  
‘He drinks (alcohol).’

It may be noted that in (19a), the presence of the theme makes the object of drinking specific. The theme is absent from both (19b) and (19c). In (19b) *alcohol* may or may not be an understood theme in certain contexts but in (19c) it is the only theme one can think of.

There is a class of verbs in Urdu that takes a reflexive as its theme and can absorb it, as is clear from the contrast of (20b) with (20c).

20a. wo Khud daːRhiː banaː rahaː hai  
he  himself shaving  is  
‘He is shaving himself.’

b. wo daːRhiː banaː rahaː hai  
he  shaving  is  
‘He is shaving.’
It may be noted that (20b) will always be interpreted as (20a), and not as (20c). The reflexive which bears the θ-role of theme is specified. We may note that both Urdu sentences and their English equivalents have the same characteristics in regard to the absorption of arguments but there are verbs where the difference between the two languages is very clear. For example:

21a. wo khetõ ki: sīča:i: kar raha: hai
   he   field   irrigating  is
   ‘He is irrigating the field.’

b. wo sīča:i: kar raha: hai
   he   irrigating  is
   ‘*He is irrigating.’

In (21b), it may be noticed that Urdu sentence is well-formed without the theme but its English counterpart is incomplete without an overt theme. There are some verbs in Urdu which do not absorb their theme, but English does. For example:

22a. Asad na:v khe raha: hai
   Asad  boat  rowing   is
   ‘Asad is rowing the boat.’

b. *Asad khe raha: hai
   Asad  rowing   is
   ‘Asad is rowing.’

In (22b), it is very clear that the Urdu sentence is incomplete without the theme but its English equivalent is correct. The meaning of the theme in it can be inferred from the verb to row.
Some other verbs in Urdu that can absorb the theme are the verb of transaction such as bečna: ‘to sell’, Khari:dna: ‘to buy’, dena: ‘to give’, bhejna: ‘to send’, Dhona: ‘to carry’, qarz dena: ‘to lend’ but with a difference. The arguments which have been absorbed\(^47\) in the following sentences are inferred from the context in Urdu whereas, the phenomenon of the absorption of the arguments discussed so far refer to the cases where the arguments are inferred from the verb.

23a. wo santare Khari:d raha: hai
   he oranges buying is
   ‘He is buying oranges.’

b. wo Khari:d raha: hai
   he buying (something)is
   *‘He is buying.’

24a. usne mujhe kita:b di:
   he me book gave
   ‘He gave me a book.’

b. usne mujhe di:
   he me gave
   *‘He gave me.’

25a. usne mujhe kita:b bhej di:
   he me book sent
   ‘He sent me the book.’

b. usne mujhe bhej di:
   he me sent
   *‘He sent me.’

It may be noted that the English equivalent of (23b), (24b) and (25b) are not well-formed. In order to make them grammatical, the theme must be overtly mentioned, as in (23c), (24c) and (25c). Here, it refers to the theme.

\(^47\) It would be more appropriate to say that the arguments have been deleted rather than absorbed because they are inferred from the context rather than verbs.
23c. He is buying it.
24c. He gave it to me.
25c. He sent it to me.

The basic difference between Urdu and English seems to be that English can never omit the theme of verb of transaction but Urdu can when the object of the transaction is not specific or has been contextualized earlier.

Normally verbs of physical and mental perception cannot absorb the theme, as is obvious from the ungrammaticality of (26b) and (27b). However, the Urdu sentences mentioned in (26b) and (27b) can be deemed to be correct without the theme if they are used with reference to the earlier sentences but this is not the case with their English counterparts. Sometimes θ-absorption occurs in Urdu even without any reference, as is obvious from (26c) and (27c).

26a. usne haːthiː ko dekhaː:
he   elephant         saw
‘He saw the elephant.’
b. ?usne dekhaː hai
he     seen         has
*‘He has seen.’
c. usne dekhaː lekin kuːch bataːyaː nahĩː:
he   saw    but    anything point out did not
‘He saw but didn’t point out anything.’

27a. usne ye kahaːniː suniː:
he   this       story    heard
‘He heard the story.’
b. ?usne suniː hai
he    heard    has
*‘He has heard.’
c. usne sunaː par kuːch samjhaː nahĩː:
he   heard    but    anything    understand    didn’t
He heard but didn’t understand anything.’

In (26c) and (27c), the theme can be understood as *something worth seeing* (or can be seen) and *something worth hearing* (or can be heard). However, if these verbs are used just to indicate the agent’s ability to see, perceive etc, the unspecified theme can be absorbed, as in (26d) and (27d):

26d. Asad ra:t mē nahī: dekh sakta:
Asad night at not see can
‘Asad cannot see at night.’

27d. wo sun sakta: hai
he hear can
‘He can hear.’

Similar other verbs of physical and mental perception are listed below.


c. sũ:ghna: ‘to smell’  d. mahsu:s karna: ‘to feel’

Like the verb *dekhna: ‘to see’* the verb *ta:Rna: ‘to perceive’* also refers to agent’s ability but it does not θ-absorb its object.

29a. maĩ khatre ko ta:R sakta: hũ:
I danger perceive can
‘I can perceive the danger.’

b. *maĩ ta:R sakta: hũ:
I perceive can
‘*I can perceive.’

(29a) is well-formed but (29b) is not because the theme cannot be θ-absorbed in *ta:Rna: ‘perceive’*. The other verb *ta:kna: ‘to look at’*, which is also a verb of perception, shows the absorption of theme in Urdu but
not in English. These points can be illustrated with the help of following sentences.

30a. wo bahot der se mujhe ta:k raha: hai
   he       for long       me   looking has been
   ‘He has been looking at me for long.’

b. wo bahot der se ta:k raha: hai
   he       for long    looking at has been
   *‘He has been looking at for long.’

Both (30a) and its equivalent are well-formed but the English equivalent of (30b) is ill-formed when the theme is θ-absorbed.

Verb such as rakhna: ‘keep’, phẽkna: ‘throw’, jama: karna: ‘collect’ do not theta absorb their theme, as is obvious from (31b), (32b) and (33b). If these sentences are used in a context, they can be correct in Urdu, as in (31d), (32d) and (33d) respectively in response to the question in (31c), (32c) and (33c) respectively.

31a. usne kita:b mez par rakhi:
    he     book   table   on   put
    ‘He put the book on the table.’

b. ?usne mez par rakhi:
    he       table   on   put
    ‘*He put on the table.’

c. usne kita:b kahã:rakhi:?  
    he       book   where   put
    ‘Where did he put the book?’

d. mez par rakhi: to thi: par hai nahi:  
    table   on   put   has  but  is  not
    ‘*put on the table but is not there.’

32a. usne gêd phẽka:
    he     ball   threw
‘He threw the ball.’

b. ?usne phẽka:
   he       threw (away)
   ‘*He threw (away)’.

c. usne gẽd ka kya: kiya:?
   he    ball    what did he do
   ‘What did he do with the ball?’

d. phẽk diya: par u:par nahi: gaya:.
   threw       but    up       did not go
   ‘*Threw but did not go up.’

33a. usne bahot kita:bẽ jama: kĩ:
   he many books    collected
   ‘He collected many books.’

b. ?usne jama: kĩ:
   he collected
   ‘*He collected.’

c. usne un kita:bõ ka: kya: kiya:?
   he those books    what did do
   ‘What did he do with those books?’

d. jama: kĩ: par rahī: nahī:.
   collected   but did not remain
   ‘*He collected but did not remain (with him).’

The verb kama:na: ‘to earn’ needs two arguments, agent and theme. for the sentence to be grammatical but sometimes the theme is θ-absorbed, as mentioned in (34c).

34a. Asad ne paise kama:ye
   Asad      money earned
   ‘Asad earned money.’

b. *Asad ne kama:ye
   Asad       earned
   *’Asad earned.’
c. Asad ne kama:ya: to bahot lekin bačha:ya: nahĩ: 
Asad earned a lot but save did not  
‘Asad earned a lot but didn’t save.’

Another verbs which falls under this category are sočna: ‘to think’ and ča:hna: ‘to want’.

3.2.2 Absorption of Experiencer.
There are verbs in Urdu that can absorb the experiencer argument. The following examples illustrate the point.

35a. sala:h dena: ‘to advise’
   b. maĩ tumhẽ [IP PRO a:ra:m karne ki:] sala:h deta: hũ:
      I you to rest advise  
      ‘I advise you to rest.’
   c. maĩ [IP PRO a:ra:m karne ki:] sala:h de raha: hũ:
      I to rest advising am  
      ‘*I am advising to rest.’

In (35b), the verb sala:h dena: ‘to advise’ has taken three arguments. The NP maĩ ‘I’ is the agent, the NP tumhẽ ‘you’ is the experiencer and the infinitive ara:m karna: ‘to rest’ is the the theme. While in (35c), the direct object argument i.e. experiencer tumhẽ ‘you’ is θ-absorbed in Urdu, its English counterpart does not θ-absorb the experiencer, it must be overt in order to control the subject of the infinitival clause.

Some other verbs of the same type are hukm dena: ‘to order’, guza:rish karna: ‘to request’, isra:r karna: ‘to urge’, as in (36), (37) and (38).

36a. [maĩ tumhẽ [IP PRO ja:ne ka:] hukm deta: hũ:]
    I you to go order  
    ‘I order you to go.’
b. maĩ [IP PRO ja:ne ka:] hukm deta: hũ:
   I to go order
   ‘*I order to go.’

37a. [maĩ a:pse [IP PRO andar a:ne ki:] guza:rish karta: hũ:]
   I you inside to come request
   ‘I request you to come inside.’

37b. [maĩ [IP PRO andar a:ne ki:] guza:rish karta: hũ:]
   I inside to come request
   ‘*I request to come inside.’

   he me to come a lot urged
   ‘He urged me a lot to come.’

38b. [usne [IP PRO a:ne ke liye] ka:fi: isra:r kiya:]
   he to come a lot urged
   ‘*He urged a lot to come.’

There are performative verbs which have maĩ ‘I’ as the agent and tum ‘you’ as the experiencer and absorb the experiencer. For example:

39a. maĩ tumse [IP PRO a:ne ka:] wa:da: karta: hũ:
   I you to come promise
   ‘I promise you to come.’

39b. [maĩ [IP PRO a:ne ka:] wa:da: karta: hũ:]
   I to come promise
   ‘I promise to come.’

We may notice that in (39b) the experiencer argument i.e. tumse is θ-absorbed in both Urdu and its English counterpart. The sentence is well-formed because the subject of the infinitival clause PRO is controlled by maĩ ‘I’ which is not θ-absorbed. Some other verbs which are involved in the absorption of experiencer are ma:fi: mā:gna: ‘to apologize’, tasdiːːq karna: ‘to testify’, qabuːlːna: ‘to confess’.
3.2.3 Absorption of goal

There are verbs which can absorb the goal argument. For instance, we can look at (40b).

40a. Asad madarse mê baččhō: ko Urdu paRha:ta: hai

Asad school in children to Urdu teaches
‘Asad teaches Urdu to children in school.’

b. Asad madarse mê Urdu paRha:ta: hai

Asad school in Urdu teaches
‘Asad teaches Urdu in school.’

In (40b), the argument that has the thematic relation of goal in relation to the verb PaRha:na: ‘to teach’ has been absorbed. PaRha:na: ‘to teach’ can absorb the theme as in (40c) and both the theme and goal respectively, as in (40d).

40c. Asad madarse mê baččhō: ko paRha:ta: hai

Asad school in children to teaches
‘Asad teaches children in school.’

d. Asad madarse mê paRha:ta: hai

Asad school in teaches
‘Asad teaches in school.’

Some verbs of transaction that θ-absorb goal when the latter is unspecified are bečna: ‘to sell’ and atiya karna: ‘to donate’, as in (41-42):

41a. usne apna: ghar Asad ko beč diya:

he his home Asad to sold
‘He sold his house to Asad.’

b. usne apna: ghar beč diya:

he his home sold
‘He sold his house.’

42a. usne apni: ja:eda:d yati:mō: ko atiya kar di:

he his property orphan to donated
‘He donated his property to orphans.’
b. usne apni: ja:e:da:d atiya kar di:
   he     his    property    donated
   ‘He donated his property.’

There is no difference between Urdu and English from the point of view of θ-absorption in so far as such verbs are concerned.

Some other verbs that absorb goal are bhejna: ‘to send’ and lauTa:na: ‘to return’.

### 3.2.4 Absorption of Source

There are verbs in Urdu that can absorb the source if its specification is not needed. For instance, we may look at the verb si:khna: ‘to learn’ as in (43).

43a. maĩ apne usta:d se   ãgrezi: si:kh rahi: hũ:
   I      my    teacher from English    learning   am
   ‘I am learning English from my teacher.’

43b. maĩ   ãgrezi: si:kh rahi: hũ:
   I      English    learning   am
   ‘I am learning English.’

In (43a), the source usta:d se ‘from teacher’ is overt; in (43b) the verb absorbs the source (i.e., the person I am learning from). It is understood that the agent maẽ ‘I’ is gaining knowledge from someone, but it is not specified that she is learning it from a teacher, she might be learning it on her own. Other verbs that can absorb the theta role of source are as follows:

44a. usne ye kita:b ba:za:r se   ha:sil ki:
   he     this    book    market from obtained
   ‘He obtained this book from the market.’

44b. usne ye kita:b ha:sil ki:
he this book obtained
‘He obtained this book.’

45a. wo ye sa:ma:n duka:n se la:ya:
he this material shop from brought
‘He brought this material from the shop.’
b. wo ye sa:ma:n la:ya:
he this material brought
‘He brought this material.’

46a. usne ye čhi:zẽ duka:n se khari:dĩ:
he these things shop from bought
‘He bought these things from the shop.’
b. usne ye čhi:zẽ khari:dĩ:
he these things bought
‘He bought these things.’

47a. wo ghar se a:ya:
he home from came
‘He came from home.’
b. wo a:ya:
he came
‘He came.’

The English translations of all these Urdu sentences are also well-formed. In other words, Urdu and English are alike in this respect; they both show absorption of the source argument.

3.2.5 Absorption of location

Location is an argument that can also be absorbed when it is unspecified. We may consider the verb bharna: ‘to fill’ and rakhna: ‘to put’, as in (48) and (49), to illustrate the point.

48a. Asad ba:lTi: mẽ pa:ni: bhar raha: hai
Asad bucket in water filling is
‘Asad is filling water in the bucket.’
b. Asad pa:ni: bhar raha: hai
Asad water filling is
‘*Asad is filling water.’

49a. maĩne kita:b mez par rakh di:
I book table on put
‘I put the book on the table.’
b. maïne kita:b rakh di:
   I book put
   **I put the book.**

In (48a) and (49a), the location ba:lTi: mē ‘in the bucket’ and mez par ‘on the table’ are the arguments of the verb bharna: ‘to fill’ and rakhna: ‘to put’ respectively. When the theta role of location lacks specification, as in (48b & 49b), it is absorbed in the verb in Urdu. The English equivalents of (48b) and (49b) are not correct without the locative argument. In other words, the locative argument is essential for the sentence to be complete in English but it is not necessarily so in Urdu. Locational verbs such as phaila:na: ‘to spread’, bona: ‘to sow’ etc, can absorb the θ-role of location.

50a. usne kapRe gha:s par phaila: diye
   he clothes grass on spread
   ‘He spread the clothes on the grass.’

b. usne kapRe phaila: diye
   he clothes spread
   ‘He spread the clothes.’

51a. usne apne khet mē čane boye
   he his field in gram sowed
   ‘He sowed gram in his field.’

b. usne čane boye
   he gram sowed
   ‘He sowed gram.’

It may be noticed in (50b) and (51b) that both the Urdu sentences and their English counterparts are correct without the locative argument.

3.2.6 Absorption of Instrument

In addition to the absorbed theta roles discussed so far, Urdu has verbs that can absorbs an unspecified instrument. We may look at the verb ka:Tna: ‘to cut’, as in (52), to illustrate the point.

52a. Asad kulha:Ri: se daraKht ka:T raha: hai
    Asad axe with tree cutting is
‘Asad is cutting the tree with an axe.’

b. Asad daraKht ka:T raha: hai

‘Asad is cutting the tree.’

In (52a), the verb *ka:Tna:* ‘to cut’ has the PoP *kulha:Ri: se* ‘with axe’ which has the theta role of instrument. In (52b), the theta role of instrument is absorbed in the verb, he may cut the tree not exactly *with an axe as*, in (52a), but by anything that can be used to cut it. Other verbs that can optionally absorb the theta role of instrument are as follows:

53a. Asad ne laRke ko bêt se ma:ra:

‘Asad hit the boy with a cane.’

b. Asad ne laRke ko ma:ra:

‘Asad hit the boy.’

54a. Asma ne farsh ko jhaRu: se buha:ra:

‘Asma swept the floor with a broom.’

b. Asma ne farsh ko buha:ra:

‘Asma swept the floor.’

55a. Asma ne sala:i: se sweTar buna:

‘Asma knit the sweater with needles.’

b. Asma ne sweTar buna:

‘Asma knit the sweater.’

56a. Aziz ne paudhe ko dha:ge se bã:dha:

‘Aziz tied the plant with a thread.’

b. Aziz ne paudhe ko bã:dha:

‘Aziz tied the plant.’

57a. Asad ne phal ko tara:zu:par taula:

‘Asad weighed the fruit on the balance.’

b. Asad ne phal ko taula:

‘He weighed the fruit.’
It may be noted that the English equivalents of (53-57b) are also well-formed, i.e., the unspecified instrument argument can be deleted in English as well.

3.2.7 Absorption of Agent

The Theta absorption of agent may also take place in a sentence. When a sentence is passivised, the theme or patient argument occupied the subject position and agent is θ-absorbed. For instance:

58a. loha:r ne lohe ko pighla:ya:
blacksmith iron melted
‘The blacksmith melted the iron.’

58b. lohe ko pighla:ya: gaya:
iron melted was
‘The iron was melted.’

We may notice that the agent loha:r ‘blacksmith’, which occupied the subject position in (58a), is missing from (58b), though it is implied here. All the verbs which need two such arguments i.e., agent and theme or agent and patient can be passivised and will fall into this category. Jaeggli (1986) and Roberts (1987) propose that the Agent role is not absent from passive sentences rather, it is absorbed by the passive morphology on the verb. When the agent needs to be overt, it is expressed by means of an adjunct PoP with ke zariye ‘by’ as in (59).

58c. lohe ko loha:ar ke zariye pighla:ya: gaya:
iron blacksmith by melted was
‘The iron was melted by blacksmith.’

It may be claimed that the phenomenon of the absorption of an argument differs in passive sentences from that in active sentences. In an active sentence, the argument is absorbed in the verb while in a passive sentence the argument is absorbed by the passive morphology of the verb. We

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48 See Haegeman (1991: 166) when she talks about inherent θ-role assignment.
agree with the second point i.e., in passive sentence, the agent is absorbed by the morphological marking on the verb. In so far as the active sentences are concerned, we have already discussed in the earlier sections that Urdu is a pro-drop language and an unspecified agent, occupying the subject position can be recovered from the AGR of the verb and it is not a case of θ-absorption.

To sum up, we have discussed various cases of the absence of an argument in sentences. It may be the case of incorporation or θ-absorption of an argument, if the absence of an argument is not due to the movement, pro-drop, or PRO. We have made the distinction between Baker’s incorporation and Chomsky’s θ-absorption. Keeping in view our prime concern i.e. the thematic structure, we have restricted ourselves to the concept of θ-absorption. We have compared the Urdu sentences to their English counterparts to check whether the pattern of absorption of arguments in both the languages is similar. It is found that the most common argument absorbed in the verb in both the languages is the theme. Other arguments which are absorbed in both the languages are experiencer, goal, source, location and instrument. As far as the agent is concerned, we have observed that in passive sentences the agent is absorbed by the morphological marking on the verbs in both the languages but in active sentences it is not the case. As Urdu is a pro-drop language, the agent can be dropped from an active sentence but in English, the absence of the agent argument is not possible. The patient argument is not found to be absorbed in the verb in either language. We have noticed further that Urdu and English differ from each other in the absorption of theme and experiencer while in the absorption of goal, location, instrument and source, they seem to be similar.