Chapter-6
Agreement in Ho

6.1. Introduction

Ho\(^6\) language is very rich in agreement. Lexical case marking may or may not block the agreement between the NP and the verb. However, according to Subbarao (2001), a noun phrase whether lexically case marked or not, agrees with the verb if the functional head agreement is “active”. Agreement is not morphologically manifested and is “covert” if the functional head agreement is “weak”.

This chapter is an attempt to define the term Agreement and it deals with the types of agreement with subject, object and possessor of an object in Ho. This chapter also discusses the pro-drop parameter to show that there are languages such as Ho in particular and North-Munda languages in general, where the first constituent (subject) agrees with the object or if there is no object at all, and then it agrees with the verb. A subject may or may not be overtly realised.

6.2. Definition of Agreement

Many attempts have been made to define the term “Agreement”. According to Crystal’s first dictionary of linguistics and phonetics (1995:13), agreement is “the formal relationship between elements whereby a form of one word requires a corresponding form of another”. Steel (1978:610) also defines agreement as “the term agreement commonly refers to some systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another, for example, adjectives may take some formal indication of the number and gender of the noun they modify”. Other such as Keenan (1978), Lehman (1982) and Haegeman (1994) have also tried to define the term “Agreement”. Haegeman (1994) defines agreement as “a formal requirement for indicating specific syntactic properties between constituents”. She also states that

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6.\textit{Mundari} is a main language of Kherwari group of North-Munda along with Santhali language of Austro-Asiatic family. Grierson (1906), in Linguistic Survey of India mentioned it as a close dialect of Ho and Bhumij. Anderson (2001) and Difloth (2005) put it under North-Munda group of Kherwarian in their classification.
“agreement” plays a major role in “Binding and Case Theory\(^7\)”, which are components of Government and Binding Framework proposed by Chomsky (1981).

All definitions, in fact, focus on one important point, that is, the covariance of matching of features between separate elements, such as a subject NP and a Verb, or a Noun and an Adjective. The term “Concord” has been used as synonymous with agreement, with no clear distinction between the two. Nevertheless, it seems that in recent generative linguistics, “Agreement” has resurfaced with a new range of applicability.

In the 1990s, agreement has become the focal point of study. Linguists have proposed different ways of examining “agreement” with a keen interest to find out the universal principles, which govern agreement patterns with reference to parametric variations. More recently agreement became the focal point in Minimalist Program. Chomsky (1981) treats agreement with superscripts in part because it fails to serve as an antecedent for the Binding Theory. Chomsky (1995) has explored the idea that functional categories C and I are regular in terms of X-bar theory and constitute heads of phrases. The subject NP emerges from this analysis as the specifier of IP. Koopman (1987) posits that all agreement relations are Spec-Head agreement. This proposal certainly makes sense for subject-verb agreement.

6.3. Subject-Verb Agreement

The Agreement is overtly realized between an NP and a Verb, and the most frequent pattern of this type is Subject-Verb agreement. The verb changes its form according to number, gender and person existing in the Subject. Some of these features may not be exhibit in all languages. In Ho also there are no such morphological modifications, but since Ho is an agglutinating language, its agreement feature occurs as a suffix to the verbal root, though the place of occurrence of agreement is not fixed.

\(^7\) In Government and Binding Theory, developed by Chomsky (1981), Binding and Case Theory are two modules of the six theory discussed.
There are also languages, where agreement is realized even in the absence of a lexically realized subject. These are called pro-drop languages.

1. aň  uli- ŋ jom -ke -D -a

   I  mango 1sg eat pst +tr fm

   ‘I ate a mango’.

   In the above sentence subject pronoun is aň. The object NP uli ‘mango’ agrees with the subject NP and the subject pronominal clitic –ŋ occurs to the right of the object NP uli as velar nasal ŋ.

   2  proi  uli -ŋi jom -ke -D -a

   mango 1sg eat pst +tr fm

   The subject can be dropped as in (2)

   Some further examples of subject pro-drops are given below.

   3. (am)i  mâDî -mi jom -ke -D -a

   you meal 2sg eat pst +tr fm

   ‘You have eaten meals’/ ‘You ate meals’

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8 ŋ, a first person pronominal clitic is becoming velar nasal ‘ŋ’ in influence of front vowel ‘i’. Munda languages have too much vowel harmony that can be seen easily.
4. 

\( (ini) \_i \) laD -aïi jom -a

`he bread 3sg eat fm`

‘He eats bread.’

5. 

\( (iku) \_i \) laD -koi jom -ye -a

`they bread pl eat pst fm`

‘They ate bread.’

6. 

\( (ako) \_i \) pāiti -koi nām ke -D -a

`they work 3pl get pst +tr fm`

‘They got a job.’

In sentences (3) - (6), subject pronouns can be dropped; because of the subject agreement marker is implicit on the object NP. For example, in sentence (6), \( ako \) ‘they’, an NP, is subject of the sentence and it can be dropped, because of the agreement markers presence with object NP \( pāiti \).

**6.4. Person Agreement and Honorific Agreement**

Both Lyons (1968:725) and Crystal (1997:256) define person as a category that has to be defined with reference to participant-roles for which there is usually a three-way contrast, i.e., the first person (the speaker), the second person (the listener) and the third person (who is being referred to). There is also a fact about person plural agreement that some languages might have. There is a distinction of inclusive or exclusive pronoun, where inclusive means that the hearer is included and exclusive, excludes the hearer. Some other languages like *Maithili* have different forms of pronouns for honorific and non-honorific persons. *Ho* too has such distinction in pronouns.
7. ako, laD -ko, jom -e -a

*they bread pl eat fut fm*

‘They will eat bread.’

In sentence (7), *ako* is third person non-honorific plural pronoun and it agrees with the verb. In sentence (5), we have *inku*, which is honorific third person plural pronoun. Thus there is distinction in pronouns in third person plural, but there is no difference in agreement marker. Even in third person singular pronouns we have a distinction in Ho.

8. ini(NH) seno -ja -n -a

*he go pst -tr fm*

‘He had gone/He went’.

9. in-kin(H) seno -ja -n -a

*he go pst -tr fm*

‘They (two) had gone.’

In example (8) *ini* is non-honorific in *Ho*, but *in-kin* has also been used as an honorific marker along with of dual marker. However, the verb does not exhibit any agreement. In *Ho* honorificity plays a major role in agreement marking.

In *Ho* there also exists an exclusive and inclusive distinction in first person pronouns. In sentence (10) *ale* is exclusive pronoun and in sentence (11) *abu* is inclusive pronoun of first person plural.
10. ale aň -lagte vōTa -ke -D -a
   
   we I for vote pst +tr fm

   (inclu) ‘*We voted for me.’ (Literal meaning)

11. *ale aň -le sālā -ke -y a
   
   we I 2pl elect pst fm

   (exclu) ‘We elected me’. (Literal meaning)

If we put ape ‘you’ instead of ale ‘we’ the meaning will be ‘you elected me’ and sounds fine in (11) above.

6.5. Number Agreement

Agreement with the number corresponds to the number of real entities, which are referred to in a sentence by an agreement marker. Ho is a language, which has singular, dual and plural number system. As we have shown in example 1-11 above there are separate agreement markers for each pronoun. We have given details of pronouns and their agreement suffixes in the chapter on Anaphora.

6.6. Gender Agreement

In this type of agreement, the verb agrees with the gender of the subject NP. There is no gender agreement in Ho. Munda languages are not gender sensitive like Hindi.

12. repo ini -e koTari -tan -a
   
   Repo he poss criticise pres fm

   ‘Repo criticises him’
13 nāmasi ini -e koTari -tan -a

*Namsi he poss criticise pres fm*

‘Namsi criticises him’

14. ini nāmasi -ke koTari -tan -a

*he Namsi Acc criticise pres fm*

‘He criticises Namsi.’

Hence, we can say that there is no gender agreement in *Ho*.

### 6.7. Subject-verb agreement in [-transitive] verbs

In *Ho*, if the verb is [-transitive] it carries subject agreement provided there is no other constituent. For example:

15. repo, jāpiD -e, -a

*Repo sleep 3sg fm*

‘Repo sleeps.’

The reason for agreement on the verb is the absence of a direct object or an adverb. In other word, since there is no pre-verbal word in (15), the agreement marker has to occur on the verb.

### 6.8. Subject-Verb agreement in [+transitive] verbs

According to Chomsky (1995), in the Nominative-Accusative type of languages with a transitive verb, the AGRs (the subject verb agreement) is “active” in which the
subject of a [+transitive] verb agrees with the functional head AgrS of the INFL. Consider (16&17) from Ho.

16. kowā₁ -hon kitāb -e paRāw -e₁ -a
   boy man book Acc read 3sg fm

   ‘A boy reads a book’.

17. ini₁ laD₁ -ai₁ jom -a
   he bread 3sg eat fm

   ‘He eats bread.’

In sentences (16) and (17), subject controls the agreement. Hence, we can drop subject, but we cannot drop object. Since objects are not only carrying subject agreement markers, but also there is no object agreement marker in the verb.

6.9. Dative subject construction in relation to agreement

It is a common phenomenon in most of the Indo-Aryan languages that predicates expressing psychological feeling, possession and duty etc. mark their subject with a dative or genitive case marker. In a set of languages of South-Asia verb agrees with the object. The appearance of subject agreement is blocked in such cases and the dative marker on the indirect object of a di-transitive verb in perfective aspect along with the presence of an ergative marker on the subject necessiates the verb to agree with its direct object in languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Punjabi etc. In Ho, however there is no ergative marker. The subject agreement marker does not occur on the Indirect Object (IO) if it is case marked dative.
18. repo nāmasi -ke kitāb-e emā -Di -e

*Repo Namsi Dat book-3sg give pst fm*

‘Repo gave a book to Namsi.’

19. (aŋ am -ke) miaD uli-ŋ em -le -D -me -a

*I you Dat one mango-1sg give pst +tr 2sg fm*

‘I gave a mango to you.’

In sentences (18) the subject agreement marker occurs on direct object and in (19) on direct object respectively, because of the presence of the lexical case marker on the indirect object, which blocks agreement with the verb. In Ho, there are some sentences, which exhibit agreement when an NP is lexically case-marked as in (19) above where *am ‘you’* is lexically case marked but it agrees with the verb.

6.10. Object-Verb Agreement

In Ho subject agreement marker generally occurs to the right of the preverbal word and object agreement marker occurs either to the left of the tense marker or to the right of the tense marker in the verb.

20. aŋ hapnam-k0,ň nel -le -D -k0, -a

*I girl-pl-1sg see pst +tr 3sg fm*

‘I had seen girls’.
21. ale am-le dulār -te -m -a  
   we you-2pl love pp 2sg fm  
   ‘We love you.’

22. ini laD -e jom -a  
   he bread 3sg eat fm  
   ‘He eats bread’.

23. inku laD -ko jom -a  
   they bread pl eat fm  
   ‘They eat bread’.

   In sentence (20), the noun aň ‘I’ and in (21), am can be dropped, because the verb carries the agreements of these nouns. In sentences (22) and (23), subject pronouns can be dropped, but the objects cannot be dropped since objects are carrying agreement markers of the subjects. The richness of agreement is evident in above sentences. In these sentences agreement is marked either on preverbal word or on the verb.

6.11. Agreement in Small Clause and ECM constructions

Radford (1998) has defined Small Clause (SC) as a clause which neither has finite verb nor an infinitival too. It is usually abbreviated as SC and its structure can be elaborated as “NP XP / XP NP” where XP can be AP or NP etc. Let us see the agreements in such cases in Ho.

24. aň-re atkarai -min -a [(aň) sugrā-ń]  
   I-pp believe be fm I good-1sg  
   ‘[I believe [myself to be good]]’
25. ini [āy- āy-ge sugarā] atkarain ke -D -a

   he himself-emp good believe pst +tr fm

   ‘He believed [himself to be smart]’

In sentences (25), there are no agreement markers either on matrix verb or embedded verb.

6.12. Adjective Agreement

Adjectives are used in connection with a noun or pronoun to produce a description about the person, thing or group referred to. Adjectives may either be used predicatively or attributively. The adjective “beautiful” in “a beautiful girl” is used attributively because it is placed in front of the noun it qualifies. The same adjective in “the girl is beautiful” is used as predicate because it is placed after a linking verb. Adjectives used in this way are called the complements of the linking verb. In Ho there is no agreement with adjectives.

26. en sepeD bugin -a

   that boy good fm

   ‘That boy is good’.

27. bugin sepeD

   good boy

   ‘Good boy’.
In sentences (26) and (27), there is no agreement on the NP sepeD ‘boy’ and adjective bugin in either case. Hence, there is no adjective agreement in Ho.

6.13. Demonstrative Agreement

Demonstratives are generally used to refer to people or things in a definite way. There is no agreement with demonstratives in Ho as in (26) above illustrates the point.


In some languages such as Maithili, Hmar and Kurmali there is a possessor agreement. In Ho, there is no agreement with possessor as in example (28) and (29) below:

28. sōmā amā tīyī ābuŋ -ke -D -a -i
   
   *Soma your hand wash pst +tr fm 3sg*

   ‘Soma washed your hands.’

29. sōmā aŋā tīyī abuŋ ke -D -a -i
   
   *Soma my hand wash pst +tr fm 3sg*

   ‘Soma washed my hands’.

Maithili.

30. sītā hamī -ar hāth dho -l -akī

   *Sita I gen hand wash pst 1sg*

   ‘Sita washed my hands’.

In (30), verb agrees with the possessor hamar, thus we have an example of possessive agreement in Maithili.
6.15. Long-Distance Agreement

There are instances of long distance agreement in some South-Asian languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Maithili, Mizo, Hmar and Telugu (Subbarao). Let us consider the case of Ho.

31. sōmā adana -a [S₂cilke sāikal -ko harey-e -a]
   Soma know pres fm how bicycle Acc drive-3sg fm
   ‘Soma knows [how to ride a bicycle.]’

32. sōmā sanaŋ -tan -a [S₂am gupuí -im -e]
   Soma wants pres fm you fight 2sg 3sg
   ‘Soma wants [you to fight.]’ (Literally: Soma wants that I and you fight)

33. sōmā sanaŋ -tan -a [S₂aŋ nikul -eŋ ol -e -a]
   Soma want pres fm I letter 1sg write 3sg fm
   ‘Soma wants [me to write a letter.]’ (Literally Soma wants that I write a letter)

In sentences (31) - (33), we have evidence of long distance agreement. Soma is in 3rd person and it is the matrix subject. The third person agreement marker –e occurs with embedded verb. Hence, we can say that Ho has long-distance agreement.

6.16. Agreement in Relative clauses

Ho has a relative-correlative construction as well as externally headed relative clauses such as in English. It has no internally headed relative clause.
34. en uli  [S₂ okona aňa  juDī  jom -ke  -D  -a]  
that mango  which  my friend  eat  pst  +tr  fm  

ena  soyā  -ka  -n  -a  
that  useless  pst  -tr  fm  

‘That mango [which my friend had eaten] was useless.’

35. en tebal  maraŋ-  gi  -a  [S₂ okonā  -re  am  jom-  am  
that table  big  emp  fm  which  on  you  eat  2sg  
rikē  -taD  -a]  
keep  pst  fm  

‘The table [on which you have kept the food] is big.’

In sentence (34), we have a relative-correlative construction and in (35), the embedded relative occurs to the right of the matrix VP just as in English relative clause construction. The difference between the two is also found in its agreement marking. In (35), we have the second person agreement marker –am ‘you’ in the preverbal constituent of the embedded sentence, whereas there is no agreement marker in (34).

6.17. Agreement and the role of [± Animate]

Ho is very much sensitive with regard to the feature [±Animate]. The inanimate NP has the object agreement marker –e/-i in the verb in [-past] tense. The 3<sup>rd</sup> plural marker –ko is used as an agreement marker with inanimate plural nouns.
36. pro uri -ñ kumbu -i tan -a
   
   cow 1sg steal 3sg pres fm
   
   ‘I am stealing the cow’.

37. āye am -a setā -ko -e tām -ko -a

   he you poss dog pl 3sg hit pl fm
   
   ‘He hit your dogs’.

   When tense is [-past], [+animate] direct object agreement marker occurs to the left of the tense marker as in (36), but when tense is [+past] DO agreement appear after the tense marker. We find the same distinction with regard to [±human]. The occurrence of subject agreement marker to the right of the subject depends on the feature [±human]. However, in Direct Object (DO) agreement cases, there is no distinction between the two as shown in example (37) above.

6.18. Agreement in di-transitive verbs

Example (38) exhibits subject as well as DO agreement but there is no IO agreement as it has been lexically case marked. Some time speakers of Ho may prefer marked order, where IO occurs initially.

38. am₁ añ -ta hapnum -ko₁ -m₁ kul -leD -ko₁ -a

   you 1 for girl pl 2sg send pst pl fm
   
   ‘You sent girls to me’.
39. aň (am -ke) mīaD’ uli -ň ema -le -D -me -a

I you Dat one mango 1sg give pst +tr 2sg fm

‘I had given a mango to you’.

Thus in example (38), subject is marked on DO. And the IO is lexically case marked and hence, cannot trigger any agreement. However, the DO can trigger agreement in the verb.

6.19. Agreement Hierarchy

Direct object and Indirect object agreement cannot occur together in Ho. There seems to be a grammatical hierarchy in agreement among the subject, direct object and indirect object.

Sub Agr>IO Agr> DO Agr

40. am₁ aň -tā hapnum -koᵢ -mᵢ kul -leD -koᵢ -a

you I for girl pl 2sg send pst pl fm

‘You sent girls to me.’

41. remoᵢ āy -tā?re miDo banduk -eᵢ jōgāw -le -D a

Remo he near one gun 3sg put pst +tr fm

‘Remo put the gun near him.’

42. apuiŋ aň -ke am -e emād -mi -a

my father I Acc you 3sg give 2sg fm

‘My father gave me to you.’
If the IO is lexically case marked, it cannot occur as an agreement marker anywhere else in the sentence. Hence, only the subject agreement marker and DO agreement marker can occur as in example (40). In example (41), only subject agreement marker can occur and in (42), subject as well as IO agreement marker occurs with the verb.

6.20. Conclusion

*Ho* is a Nominative/Accusative type of language in terms of verb agreement. The verb obligatorily agrees with the subject NP in terms of person and number. The subject is marked by the clitic pronominal in the verb phrase which is freely standing after the verb or with the word preceding it. The pronominal have the same shape as personal pronouns, except that the third person is marked by –e/-i, -kin and -ko respectively in the singular, dual and plural; when an animate noun stands as the subject NP, it agrees with the verb by its clitic form.

The marking of pronominal object plays an important role in *Ho*. The animate objects are marked in the verb in the form of infixed clitic pronominal. Direct object marked by clitic pronominal in infixed form; and the indirect object, marked by an applicative.

The *Ho* language developed a strict distribution of position to distinguish between Subject and Object suffixes, and in this way managed to use the suffixes for both Subject and Object. The syntactic function and position of these person affixes is not constant throughout the North Munda languages. Basically, the function and position of these person affixes differs strongly throughout this family. As far as the function is concerned, the suffixes either mark for Subject or for Object (or for both). As far the position, the suffixes either occur as suffixes to the main predicate or to the immediately preverbal word. Lexical case marker blocks the agreement as it is shown in example (39) above but not in (42). It is not constant throughout the *Ho* language.