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Itelmen object agreement is different: since suffixal agreement is always required on the Itelmen verb, object agreement is only optionally an indicator of topicality of the object, though it does indicate that there is no other topical nonsubject (oblique) element in the clause. In other words, the verb shows object agreement if the object is the only possible agreement controller, or if the other potential controllers are nontopical. Constraints associated with the first person singular object agreement suffix are:

(37) First person singular object agreement (Itelmen):

\[
\begin{align*}
\uparrow \text{OBJ PERS} &= 1 \\
\uparrow \text{OBJ NUM} &= SG \\
\neg \uparrow \text{(OBJL), DF} &= \text{TOPIC} \\
\uparrow \text{(OBJ), DF} &= \text{TOPIC}
\end{align*}
\]

The first two lines of this specification ensure that the object is first person singular. The third line states that there may be no oblique phrase which bears the topic role in the clause.\(^7\) The fourth line introduces a default specification of topicality for the object in the presence of object agreement.

6.3 Conclusion

We have shown that topichood of a nonsubject element can be explicitly indicated by casemarking (as in Persian or Tariana) or agreement (as in Itelmen and possibly Tabassaran) for objects, obliques, possessors, and other nonsubject grammatical functions. The languages we have examined do not require a unique alignment between information-structure role and grammatical function, but provide primary evidence for the relevance of topicality in grammatical marking of nonsubjects.

7 Topicality and DOM

We have seen that some languages treat nonsubject topics specially in terms of grammatical marking: in such languages, topic marking can apply to a variety of nonsubject elements, and any one of a number of grammatical roles can be the target of topic marking. In this chapter we discuss languages in which only topical objects are marked, giving rise to DOM. In some of these languages DOM depends on topicality alone, while in others topicality-based DOM works together with semantic factors.

7.1 Objects as grammaticalised secondary topics

Chapter 6 discussed languages in which a whole range of salient nonsubject elements in the clause can bear topical marking: direct objects, some oblique objects and adjuncts, and sometimes even possessors. Crucially, objects are always candidates for marking of this type: we do not know of any language in which nonsubject topic marking is unavailable for objects, and in fact in many languages grammatical marking of topical nonsubject arguments is restricted to objects. This is DOM.

Languages with DOM conditioned by information structure overtly mark a close association between topics and objects, just as some languages require and mark a close association between topics and subjects. Topics are more likely than nontopics to be objects — or, more generally, to appear high on the grammatical function hierarchy. Croft (1991) observes that subjects are typified by “high topicality”, while “medium topicality” is characteristic of objects, in contrast to other grammatical functions. Rude (1986) and Blake (2001:135) also claim that objects tend to be more topical than obliques and adjuncts, which are located low on the hierarchy. Sasse (1984) discusses the inherent connection between grammatical functions and information-structure roles (or, in his terminology, pragmatic functions). He argues that subject and object are pragmatically more prominent than other grammatical functions: the canonical pragmatic function of the direct object as a secondary grammatical

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\(^7\) The information-structure role of other arguments in the clause, including obliques, may be specified by casemarking, agreement, prosody, phrase structure position, or discourse context, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.3.
function associated with the patient role is to identify the pragmatic peak corresponding to “lower-order” (secondary) topicality.

Indeed, as follows from the definition of secondary topic given in Chapter 3, an utterance with a primary and secondary topic conveys a relation that holds between two salient participants. Since the primary topic is closely associated with the subject function (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3), and languages tend to lexicalise important relations between two participants as transitive verbs, we would expect that the secondary topic would often be realised as the second argument of a transitive verb: the object. This means that the direct object is the result of grammaticalisation of the secondary topic in the same way as the subject is usually thought to be the result of the grammaticalisation of the primary topic. In fact, Givón explicitly addresses the grammatical association of the secondary topic function with objecthood and suggests that in historical terms, objects are grammaticalised secondary topics (Givón 1983b, 1984a, b, 1990, 2001).

The correlation between objecthood and topicality is so strong that in a number of languages, nontopical patients cannot be expressed as syntactic objects, and must undergo incorporation. Sasse (1984) shows that this situation is attested in a number of Eastern Cushitic languages (see Naess 2007 for similar observations). This is parallel to the situation in languages in which nontopical agents cannot be expressed as subjects, discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3. Conversely, in some languages topical status triggers the promotion of non-object arguments to the object role, often via applicativisation (see Peterson 2007 and references therein, and the discussion of Upper Necaxa Totonac in Chapter 9, Section 9.4.3). This is parallel to the situation in languages in which topical non-agent arguments are promoted to the subject role via passivisation (Chapter 5, Section 5.3). Rude (1986) shows that in Nez Perce (Sahaptian) a number of nonobject grammatical functions can undergo promotion to object. This is characteristic of allative, associative and ablative obliques. In example (1a), 'river' is an oblique argument with allative case, while example (1b) illustrates an alternative encoding of this argument as a direct object marked with the object marker -ne, here the verb hosts the applicative affix (“allative voice”), signalling transitivisation.

(1) a. kaa hi-teem’ik-se pik’üün-x and 3Nom-go.down-Asp river-All ‘And she went down to the river.’
   b. kaa kuus-ne pee-x-yuu-ye and water-Obj 3Tr-go-All-Asp ‘And he went to the water.’

Rude argues, based on a textual study, that “promoted”/applied objects are more topical than non-promoted obliques. In fact, he claims that “the Nez Perce direct object is a kind of secondary topic” (Rude 1986:148), although his definition of secondary topic is not actually provided.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will discuss languages where topicality marking is restricted to objects, parallel to the languages where it is restricted to subjects, as discussed in Chapter 5.

7.2 Agreement with topical objects: Tundra Nenets

In Tundra Nenets2 (Uralic), subject agreement is obligatory and references both person and number features. Object agreement is optional, and references the number but not the person of the accusative object. Thus, intransitive verbs agree with the subject, while transitive verbs either agree with the subject alone, or with both the subject and the object. The object marker for the singular object is always phonologically null, and the marker for singular objects is a portmanteau morpheme referring both to the subject and the object. In further glosses, object agreement is glossed simply as Obj, without indicating the object marker specifically.

Agreeing and nonagreeing objects have different information-structure roles. If example (2d) is understood as an answer to (2a), the whole clause constitutes the focus domain. If it is understood as an answer to (2b), the focus domain includes the verb and the object, but excludes the (topical) subject. If it is understood as an answer to (2c), the object corresponds to narrow focus. In all of these contexts, object agreement is disallowed.

1 Rude’s operational criteria for topicality are different from the presuppositional approach we employ here: for him, topicality is a gradient discourse-related notion and can be “measured” in terms of referential distance and persistence in discourse. Nevertheless, the two approaches lead to roughly similar results when it comes to the analysis of narrative texts. A recurrent referent repeatedly mentioned in the previous discourse is likely to be salient for the speaker and the addressee and therefore to be topical in our sense as well.

2 The Tundra Nenets data were collected by the second author during fieldwork supported by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, SOAS, London, as well as a grant from the Academy of Finland (project number 125225).
(2) a. What happened?
   b. What did a/the man do?
   c. What did a/the man kill?
   d. xasawa ti-m xada' da / *xada' da
      man reindeer-Acc kill.3SgSubj kill.Obj.3SgSubj
      ‘A/the man killed a/the reindeer.’

Similarly, in (3a) the question word xibya-m ‘whom’ is focused, and object agreement is impossible. Example (3b) is understood as an answer to (3a), with the object Peter in narrow focus: again, object agreement is ungrammatical.

(3) a. Wanya xibya-m lada’ / *lada’ da
    John who-Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
    ‘Whom did John hit?’
   b. Wanya Pyetya-m lada’ / *lada’ da
    John Peter-Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
    ‘John hit Peter.’

In contrast, agreement must be present when the previous context establishes a topical role for the object. Interpreted as answers to the question in (4a), the object of kill in (4b) and (4c) is the secondary topic, and the verb must show object agreement. Thus, Nenets is similar to the languages discussed in Chapter 6 in that agreement depends on topichood; it is syntactically more constrained, however, in that only topical objects control secondary agreement, and not other nonsubject arguments.

(4) a. What did a/the man do to the a reindeer?
   b. xasawa ti-m xada’ da / *xada’ da
      man reindeer-Acc kill.3SgSubj kill.Obj.3SgSubj
      ‘A/the man killed a/the reindeer.’
   c. xada’ da
      kill.Obj.3SgSubj
      ‘He killed it.’

Example (4c) shows that the topical subject and object need not be overtly expressed. As noted in Chapter 3, topical arguments are often discourse-old, and tend to receive reduced expression as a pronoun or null element; in fact, a topical third person pronoun is normally omitted unless it is contrastively stressed. When there is no object pronoun, the agreement affix is the only overt expression of the object.

In (5), narrow focus is associated with the locative phrase, the topic referent is John, and the secondary topic referent is Peter; again, object agreement is obligatory:

(5) a. Where did John hit Peter?
   b. Wanya Pyetya-m pedara-x’ na lada’ da / *lada’
      John Peter-Acc forest-Loc hit.Obj.3SgSubj hit.3SgSubj
      ‘John hit Peter in the forest.’

Nenets allows nontopical (focus) subjects in transitive clauses; they are not morphosyntactically marked, but must bear nuclear stress. If the object is topical, the verb shows object agreement:

(6) a. xibya ti-m xada’ / xada’ da
    who reindeer-Acc kill.3SgSubj kill.Obj.3SgSubj
    ‘Who killed a/the reindeer?’
   b. Wanya ti-m xada’ / xada’ da
    John reindeer-Acc kill.3SgSubj kill.Obj.3SgSubj
    ‘JOHN killed a/the reindeer.’

There is no subject topic in these examples. This indicates that object agreement is not associated only with the secondary topic function. In (6b), the agreeing object is the primary topic and is likely to have a definite interpretation. In other words, although in many cases the agreeing object bears the secondary topic role, the function of object agreement is broader: it can simply indicate the topicality of the object.

There is no difference in the behaviour of objects with different semantic features such as definiteness or animacy with respect to object agreement. Non-referential objects do not trigger agreement, but this follows from the general condition that topics must be referential, as noted in Chapter 3. Third person pronouns behave like lexical nouns, as shown in (7), which is grammatical without object agreement if the object is in focus, for example as an answer to the question Who did John hit? or What did John do?, if it is construed as an answer to the question What did John do to him?, so that the object has the secondary topic role, object agreement is obligatory.

(7) Wanya syita lada’ / lada’ da
    John he.Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
    ‘John hit him.’

However, there are certain semantic restrictions on agreeing objects in Tundra Nenets. Objects with indefinite determiners never trigger agreement:
Additionally, first and second person singular and plural object pronouns behave differently from all other objects in that they do not trigger agreement, no matter what their information-structure role. Example (9) is ungrammatical with object agreement, even construed as an answer to the question *What did John do to you/me?*, a context in which the object is associated with the secondary topic function.

(9) Wanya syiqm³/syir³ lado³ / *lado³'da
John 1.Acc/you.Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
‘John hit me/you.’

For first and second person pronominal objects, then, patterns of agreement do not depend on information structure. Instead, they are defined in terms of the referential status of these objects: first and second person objects never trigger agreement. We return to this point in Chapter 10.³

Note that in some respects, object agreement in Nenets resembles that of Chichewa, as analysed by Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6). As in Nenets, Chichewa object agreement is optional, and correlates with the topicality of the object. However, a closer look reveals that Nenets object agreement is grammatical agreement, whereas Chichewa involves what Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) call anaphoric agreement, or pronominal incorporation. Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) point out that in languages with incorporated pronominal objects, the verb cannot govern the case of the full noun phrases that are anaphorically linked to the incorporated pronouns, since these full noun phrases are not arguments of the verb. This, then, allows us to distinguish between anaphoric and grammatical agreement. Crucially, objects in Nenets must appear in accusative case, even if object agreement is present on the verb, as demonstrated in (7). This shows that object noun phrases in Nenets are governed by the verb, and that the object agreement affixes represent grammatical agreement and not pronominal incorporation.

We now turn to the question of the grammatical function of agreeing vs. nonagreeing objects, as determined by their syntactic behaviour: we find no behavioural differences between them. Objects in Nenets have a number of syntactic properties that distinguish them from other grammatical functions. They can be promoted to subject in the passive. Subjects and objects are the only two grammatical functions that can be relativised using the participial strategy; all other grammatical functions must be relativised by means of another verbal form, the action nominal. These tests, however, will not help us in establishing syntactic differences between marked and unmarked objects, since there is no object agreement in the resulting construction.

Another object property relates to control structures. Nenets has a number of complement-taking verbs which take a dependent null-subject clause headed by a so-called converb (either the modal converb or the purposive converb). The dependent subject must be interpreted as coreferential with the matrix object: this is object control. Both agreeing and nonagreeing objects can control the dependent subject.

(10) nyisya-da nyú-m-ta xanye³ toxola³/toxola³'da
father-3Sgson-Acc-3Sg hunt.Mod.Conv teach.3SgSubj/teach.Obj.3SgSubj
‘The father taught his son to hunt.’

(11) xæ-wancy³ nya-m-ta xolkad³'tampyi/xolkad³'tampyida
leave-Purp.Conv friend-Acc-3Sgpersuade.3SgSubj/persuade.Obj.3SgSubj
‘He is persuading his friend to leave.’

Additionally, both agreeing and nonagreeing objects can serve as the antecedent of a possessive reflexive, provided the antecedent linearly precedes the reflexive.

(12) Pyetya Masha-m pida nya-k'na-nta lado³ / lado³'da
Peter Mary-Acc she yurt-Loc do g-Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
‘Peter hit Mary, in her yurt.’

Moreover, Nenets agreeing and nonagreeing objects do not show any obvious positional difference. Nenets is a fairly strictly subject-initial verb-final language, but word order is otherwise relatively free. Example (13a) demonstrates that both types of objects can appear immediately before the verb, while in (13b) both types of objects are separated from the verb by the oblique element ‘in the forest’.

(13) a. nyisya-da pedara-x'na wenyako-m lado³ / lado³'da
father-3Sg forest-Loc dog-Acc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
‘His father hit a/the dog in the forest.’
b. nyisya-da wenyako-m pedara-x'na lado³ / lado³'da
father-3Sg dog-Acc forest-Loc hit.3SgSubj hit.Obj.3SgSubj
‘His father hit a/the dog in the forest.’

³ In some varieties of Nenets, third person pronouns behave like first and second person pronouns, and do not trigger agreement.
We therefore suggest that marked and unmarked objects realise the same grammatical function: the object. Nenets is a language with only one object function, the OBl function of LFG (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). As we might expect, then, Nenets has no double object constructions; the goal argument of verbs such as 'give' is invariably expressed by a dative-marked oblique:  

(14) Petya Masha-nh ti-m / myiqqa / myiqqada  
Peter Masha-Dat reindeer-Acc give.3SgSubj give.Obj.3SgSubj  
'Peter gave Masha the reindeer.'

Dative obliques never trigger agreement and do not have other syntactic properties of objects: they do not passivise, do not participate in control constructions and are relativised by means of a different strategy.

In formal terms, third person topical object agreement in Nenets is associated with the following constraint:

(15) Agreement with third person topical objects:

\[(\uparrow \text{OBJ} \text{PERS}) = 3\]

\[(\uparrow \text{OBJ}, \text{DF}) = \text{TOPIC}\]

This is similar to the constraint for topical subject agreement, given in (18) of Chapter 5, except that the constraint requires the object rather than the subject to be topical. As a result of this specification, the semantic structure contributed by the object is associated with the information-structure role of topic. Verbs which agree only with the subject are not associated with this constraint, since they do not require their object to bear a particular information-structure role (recall that first and second person objects do not control agreement, and may or may not be topical).

7.3 Casemarking of topical objects

In Tigre (Semitic) and Dolakha Newar (Tibeto-Burman), casemarked and non-casemarked objects have different information-stucture roles: marked objects are topical, while unmarked objects are nontopical. We know of no behavioural differences between marked and unmarked objects, and we analyse both as primary objects, LFG's OBl. Unlike Nenets, both languages have a double object construction, which we discuss in Chapter 9; here we restrict attention to the behaviour of monotransitive objects, marked and unmarked, showing that they bear different information-structure roles, but correspond to the same grammatical function.

7.3.1 Tigre

The primary description of the Tigre data comes from Jake (1980).

Tigre objects can be marked by the preposition ?igil, and can trigger object agreement in person, number and gender. Agreement is determined by definiteness: definite objects always trigger agreement, while indefinites do not. This distribution is not affected by information structure. Here we are primarily interested in prepositional marking of objects, which is optional on definite objects of monotransitive verbs, but incompatible with indefinite objects (animacy plays no role). For monotransitive verbs, this results in the following possibilities for object marking: (i) casemarked definite objects that trigger agreement; (ii) noncasemarked definite objects that trigger agreement, and (iii) noncasemarked indefinite objects that do not trigger agreement. In Chapter 9, we return to a discussion of casemarking and agreement in double object constructions in Tigre.

The object in example (16) is definite, and must agree with the verb. The preposition is allowed but not required for the definite object in (16), and disallowed with the indefinite object in (17). We are interested in the optionality demonstrated in (16), and the conditions under which definite objects must be preceded by the preposition ?igil.

(16) ḥaṣāma ʔittā (?igil) la ḥiš’an naḍaʔu  / *naḍaʔa  
Hasama.Masc to.her Prep the boy sent.3Masc.3Masc sent.3Masc  
'Hasama sent the boy to her.' (Jake 1980:72)

(17) Lilat (*ʔigil) waraqat katbat(*tā)  
Lilet.Fem Prep letter.Fem wrote.3Fem(3Fem)  
'Lilet wrote a letter.' (Jake 1980:73)

Jake (1980) is mainly concerned with an explication of conditions on verb agreement, and she does not provide a detailed characterisation of when the

5 Raz (1983) analyses what Jake calls an object agreement affix as a "pronominal suffix." Since we are primarily concerned with prepositional object marking rather than verbal morphology, we do not take a position on which of these analyses is correct. In the following, we will use the term "object agreement" where necessary.

6 Jake (1980) notes that the causee argument displays the same distribution of prepositional marking as patient/theme objects: indefinite causes are unmarked, while definite causes are either marked or unmarked. However she argues that the causee differs from the patient/theme objects in a number of other syntactic properties, from which she concludes that it corresponds to a different grammatical function. The data on causatives are inconclusive, and we leave this question open.
preposition ‘pigil’ is used on definite objects. However, an analysis of the narrative texts published in Raz (1983) reveals that such objects must be topical. A definite object introduced into the discourse for the first time remains unmarked, even if it is highly identifiable; we suggest that this is because there is no pragmatically presupposed relationship between its referent and another salient referent, and so the object referent is not a secondary topic. This is shown in example (18).7

(18) a. wa kaʔonna ʔat lawaddu mador kanaʔan warssaw
and like.this while doing land Canaan inherited.3PI
‘And while living like this, they inherited the land of Canaan.’

b. gis wagabilye man ʔode far’on ʔafgar
go and.my.people from hand Pharaoh bring.out
‘Go and free my people from the hands of Pharaoh.’

The objects in these examples are highly definite: in (18a) the object is a proper name (‘Canaan’) and in (18b) it is a possessed definite phrase (‘my people’). However, there is no presupposed pragmatic relationship between the subject and the object referent established prior to the time of the utterance. Example (18a) is the last sentence of a text telling the story of Moses and the people of Israel, but there is no previous mention of the land of Canaan in the text. Example (18b) is direct speech: God is addressing Moses. Again there is no established pragmatic relation between the subject (Moses) and the referent of ‘my people’, since it is the first time for God to address Moses with this request and it is rather unexpected for Moses.

On the other hand, discourse-old definite objects are likely to be topical, and are often marked by the preposition ‘pigil’. The beginning of the same story describes how Moses’s mother made a chest, put her baby in the chest, and put the chest in the Nile. The chest was then found by the Pharaoh’s daughter. At that stage of the story the NP denoting the referent ‘chest’ is definite and identifiable by the interlocutors, since it has been mentioned in the previous discourse. Example (19) describes the first time the Pharaoh’s daughter sees the chest; there is no presupposed pragmatic relationship between her and the chest, and the object remains unmarked.

(19) wa ʔattu man rayim lasanduqat salsala ʔatta māy korit raʔetta
and there from afar the.chest reed in.the.water placed saw.3Fem.it
‘And there she saw, from afar, the reed chest in the water.’

The Pharaoh’s daughter then sends her maidservants to retrieve the chest. When sentence (20) is produced, the interlocutors have a mental representation of a certain relation that holds between the maidservants and the chest, since the narrator has already made it clear that the servants were sent for the chest. The sentence provides new information about the relationship that holds between the maidservants (primary topic) and the chest (secondary topic), and can be paraphrased as follows: ‘what the maidservants then did to the chest is: they opened it’. The object NP ‘the chest’ is prepositionally marked.

(20) wa lawašāyfa ʔagal lasanduqat kfat-kamsalʔabalaya gāna bakke
and her.maidservants Prep the.chest when-opened.3Pl.it a.child crying
her.maidservants Prep the.chest when-opened.3Pl.it a.child crying.

Note that there is no prepositional marking on the indefinite object ‘child’ in the second clause.

Similarly, example (21), taken from a tale about two friends, a cat and a dog, updates the nature of the relationship that holds between two highly salient participants (‘the cat deceived the dog’).

(21) daʔam dammu ... ʔagal kalob woʔul talmat ʔattu
but cat Prep dog deliberately she.deceived him
‘But the cat ... deliberately deceived the dog.’

Here the subject (‘cat’) and the object (‘dog’) are construed as the primary and the secondary topic, respectively. The secondary topic object exhibits prepositional topic marking.

Thus, casemarked objects in Tigre are topical. The examples we have seen indicate that the casemarked object is the secondary topic, but we have no examples where the subject is in focus, so we do not know if the casemaker appears on primary topic objects as well. Only a subset of topics is marked, namely, definite topics; indefinite topical objects are not marked. Tigre object marking involves, then, a combination of semantic and information-structural factors.
The next question is whether casemarked and noncasemarked objects correspond to the same grammatical function. Jake (1980) shows that casemarked and noncasemarked definite objects of monotransitive verbs behave identically in obligatorily triggering agreement, and she does not discuss any other behavioural differences between the two types of monotransitive objects. In the absence of any evidence of behavioural differences, we believe that casemarked and noncasemarked objects of monotransitive verbs correspond to the same grammatical function: the (primary) object, LFG’s OBJ.

The formal treatment of topical object casemarking for monotransitives is straightforward:

\[(\text{OBJ})^+ \]
\[(\uparrow \text{DEF}) = + \]
\[(\downarrow \text{DEF}) = \text{TOPIC} \]

These constraints require the marked argument to be an object, to be definite, and to play the role of topic at information structure. In fact, the treatment of casemarking is more complicated than this when we take into account patterns of casemarking with ditransitive verbs; we return to a discussion of ditransitive marking in Tigre in Chapter 9.

Kifle (2007) discusses the closely related language Tigrinya, and shows that, although patterns of casemarking and agreement in Tigrinya are similar in very broad terms to Tigre, the two languages differ in interesting ways. In particular, it is casemarking in Tigrinya that depends on definiteness, while agreement patterns are determined by information-structure role: in this way, Tigrinya is, in a sense, “opposite” to Tigre with respect to the roles of agreement and casemarking in signalling semantic information and information-structure role. As in Nenets, agreement depends on topicality for transitive objects. Additionally, Tigrinya has an applicative construction in which the applied argument must be topical and verb agreement with the applied object is required; this follows the general tendency for applicativisation to be triggered by the topicality of the applied argument, as discussed for Nez Perce in Section 7.1 of this chapter.

Interestingly, the applied argument cannot become the subject of a passive sentence, although either the recipient or the theme of an underlying ditransitive verb can passivise. Kifle (2007) analyses this as a problem for the alignment between information-structure roles and grammatical functions which we propose, but we believe that it actually indicates a need for refinement of the general theory of applicatives and voice alternations, and in particular Bresnan and Moshi’s (1990) formal theory of object asymmetries. The Tigrinya data are otherwise unproblematic for our view.

7.3.2 Dolakha Newar

Object marking in Dolakha Newar, as described by Genetti (1994, 1997, 2007), shows essentially the same properties as Tigre, except that definiteness does not play a role. Objects are either unmarked (hence in absolutive case) or marked with the suffix -ta, termed “dative” by Genetti. The suffix will be glossed here as Obj, although it should be noted that the same marking occurs on experiencer subjects.

Objects of monotransitive verbs are either marked or unmarked. According to Genetti (2007:113), the object is casemarked if (i) the referent is human and “given” in the discourse, or (ii) the referent is nonhuman but animate, and “occurs in a clause crucial to the resolution of a narrative plot”. This means that marked objects denoting human referents tend to be discourse-old. In example (23), the child was mentioned in the immediately preceding sentence in the discourse (“Then they had one small son at that time.”). The utterance makes an assertion about the relationship that holds between two highly topical referents under discussion, the parent and the child.

\[\text{ām mucas-ta bābu-ri-n mucāju-e-lāgin muryā-ku-ta-ene} \]
\[\text{child-Obj father-Ind-Erg child be-NMLZ-becauselap-Loc put-Part} \]

“Because he was a child, the father put the child on his lap.”

(23) (Genetti 2007:115)

Notice, however, that discourse givenness is not actually a necessary condition for object marking. Genetti provides evidence that in some cases the referent of a marked object is not mentioned in the previous text, but is “accessible through the invocation of a schema”. Example (24) is taken from a text about a crown prince; in Dolakha Newar culture it is generally assumed that crown princes have wives, so the referent of the phrase “your legal wife” is accessible and its existence is presupposed. Recall from Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2 that pragmatic presupposition of existence is a necessary property of topics, while discourse givenness is not.

\[\text{muca-ta} \]
\[\text{babu-ri-n mucaju-e-lāgin muryā-ku-ta-ene} \]
\[\text{father-Ind-Erg child be-NMLZ-becauselap-Loc put-Part} \]

(24) (Genetti 1997:48)

On the other hand, not all human objects are casemarked. They typically remain unmarked when first introduced into the text, so humanness is not a sufficient condition for object marking.

For nonhumans, too, object marking indicates that the referent is highly salient, since such objects occur at a climax in the narrative. Example (25) appears "when the manipulation of the animal is crucial for resolution of the
plot" (Genetti 2007:114). The speaker has related the son’s plan to release the calf, and the release of the calf described here is the culmination of this plan.

(25) kac-uri-n tapakka saca-ta phen-ju
son-Indef-Erg all.at.once calf-Obj release-3Sg.Past
‘Then the son suddenly released the calf.’ (Genetti 2007:114)

In our terms, this means that the object in (25) is topical.

Genetti also provides several examples of casemarked inanimate objects, although she notes that they are rare:

(26) a. ota ulta ye-η-en kεrį-gu ju-en con-a ka
this.Obj translate do-Part show-NMLZ be-Part stay-3Sg.Past
‘It turns out she translates this, then shows it to people.’ (Genetti 1994:51)

b. āu luŋmā tuphi-ta hāti yer-eu?
now mortar broom-Obj what do-3Pl.Fut
‘Now what will he do with the mortar and the broom?’ (Genetti 1994:114)

In example (26a), the object marker has fused with the pronoun. Though the context for example (26a) is not given, the object is a demonstrative pronoun, and is likely to refer to a salient entity that has been mentioned in the previous context. Examination of the context for example (26b), taken from a narrative text, shows that the casemarked object is topical. The immediately preceding discourse is: ‘One of them quickly brought in a mortar and a broom. And put them there. What was born? They said: A mortar and broom were born. When they said that the king stayed silent.’ In this context, (26b) describes a pragmatically highly salient relationship between the king and the mortar and broom, where the coordinated object NP is the secondary topic.

Thus, casemarking of patient/theme objects cannot be unambiguously described in terms of definiteness, discourse-givenness or animacy. Instead, the presence of the casemaker requires a certain degree of pragmatic salience: the referents of the object and the subject must stand in a certain presupposed relationship established in the context or based on world knowledge. The assertion associated with the sentence where the marked object appears is meant to update the addressee’s knowledge about this relationship. Notice that object marking can co-occur with the topic marker, as shown in example (24) as well as in (27):

(27) bhut-na janta wā guli khyān-an tar-ai
ghost-Erg 1SgObj Top how.much scare-Part put-3Sg.Pres
‘Ghosts scare me so much.’ (Genetti 2007:300)

It is not clear on Genetti’s account whether the topic marker in either of these examples carries an additional meaning (for instance, contrastivity).

Genetti (2007:315) shows that objects in Dolakha Newar can be distinguished from subjects by means of a number of tests: objects do not trigger agreement, do not serve as antecedents of regular reflexives, and do not participate in control constructions or certain types of relativisation. The tests do not distinguish between marked and unmarked objects, however, and she concludes that there is no behavioural syntactic difference between them: in our terms, they are both primary objects, LFG’s OBJ. We adopt a formal treatment of object marking in Newar that is similar to the one proposed above for Tigre, except that definiteness does not play a role in marking:

(28) Casemarking of topical objects, Newar:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(OBJ) } & \text{TOPIC} \\
\left(\text{OBJ} \uparrow \right) & \left(\text{TOPIC} \uparrow \right)
\end{align*}
\]

These constraints require the marked argument to be an object and to fill the topic role at information structure.

7.4 Conclusion

In the languages we have examined in this chapter, DOM is governed by topicality, sometimes in combination with semantic features. Marked and unmarked objects of monotransitive verbs correspond to the same grammatical function: both are primary objects, the OBJ function of LFG. We base this claim on the lack of observed behavioural differences between them. Of course, further research on these languages may reveal hitherto undiscovered behavioural differences between marked and unmarked objects, which would necessitate their recategorization along the lines to be discussed in Chapter 8. There, we will see that other languages exhibit a different pattern: the marked object of monotransitive verbs can be shown to have different grammatical properties from the unmarked object.