THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND SYNTAX IN HINDI

The case of the expression of perceptions and bodily sensations

A SEMANTICALLY ALIGNED LANGUAGE

Hindi maps the linguistic material according to semantic and not syntactic constraints. This peculiarity has led Montaut (2004) to define Hindi syntactic patterns as semantic alignments (following the definition given in Donohue & Wichmann 2008) rather than syntactic ones.
Hindi clearly has a tendency to encode semantic roles in a rather iconic way and to apply each syntactic pattern to specific semantic features, mainly related to the most salient participant and to the type of the event.

Iconicity >> Markedness [Malchukov (2005)]

Languages that rank Iconicity over Markedness are more concerned with the faithful encoding of the semantic features of their arguments: these languages tend to not extend the use of transitive constructions to non-transitive events, because in such languages transitive constructions tend to be semantically constrained to prototypical transitivity.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

My purpose is to apply the concept of linguistic iconicity (Malchukov 2005, 2015) to Hindi experiential constructions in order to deepen our understanding of the semantic-syntactic interplay in this language.

METHODOLOGY

- **THEORETICAL APPROACH** → Cognitive construction grammar (Goldberg 1995)

- **CORPUS** → Modern literature– Tokens: 1.136.573 → SketchEngine

Analysis of the Hindi constructions encoding experiential events and of the frequency and distribution of each pattern.
Evaluation of possible semantic constraints on the occurrence of each constructions, in relation of event's properties and argument's properties.

Focus on PERCEPTIONS and BODILY SENSATIONS

Perceptions and bodily sensations are the two most semantically different experiential subdomains in relation to semantic properties: they lay at the opposite extremes of the transitivity hierarchy (Malchukov 2005, Tsunoda 2015, Luraghi 2020). Bodily sensation verbs are the most distant from the transitive prototype, being among the least controlled experiential event; moreover, they typically consist of a monovalent argument structure with the Experiencer as the single argument. Perceptions, instead, can be controlled by an agentive participant; moreover, their argument structure usually involves two arguments: the Experiencer and the Stimulus.

PERCEPTIONS

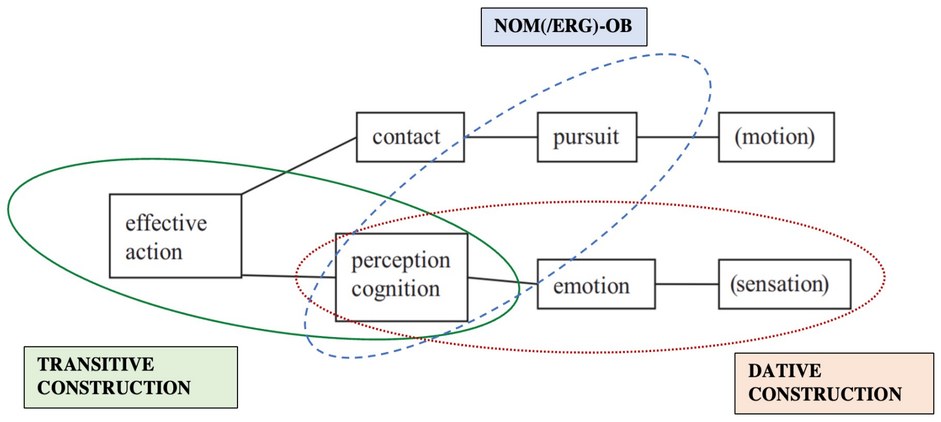
Construction	Semantics	TOT
Transitive construction	Both agentive and non-agentive	729
NOM/ERG – OB construction	Only agentive perceptions[1]	61
Dative construction	Only non-agentive perceptions	208

[1] Only for visual perceptions

Jamādār ne use sir se pāṁv tak dekhā
Jamādār.ERG 3SG.ACC head from foot to to look at.PRF.M.SG
Jamadar looked him up and down.

Oṁkārnāth ne du:khī ānkhoṁ se patnī kī or dekhā.
Onkarnath.ERG sad eyes.OB STRM wife towards to look at.PRF.M.SG
Onkarnath looked at his wife with sad eyes.

pāpnāśī ko ek daridr jhompṛī dikhāī dī.
Papnashi.DAT a poor hut.F.SG.NOM appear.PRF.F.SG
Papnashi saw a poor hut.



Semantic maps of the three constructions used by perception verbs, based on Malchukov's transitivity hierarchy (2005).

BODILY SENSATIONS

	Pain/Itching	Temperature	Hunger/Thirst	TOT
Transitive pattern	4/75	-	-	4/203
Locative pattern	52/75	-	-	52/203
Dative pattern	19/75	13/13	57/115	89/203
One-place NOM pattern	-	-	58/115	58/203
TOTAL	75	13	115	203

Dative construction

Ragghū ko is samay marmāntak pīṛā ho rahī thī
Ragghu.DAT this.OB time piercing pain.NOM.F.SG to be.PRS.PRG.F
Ragghu was in piercing pain at that moment.

CONCLUSIONS

	Dative construction	Transitive construction	Nom/Erg - OB construction	Locative construction	One-place construction
Agentive perceptions		X	X[2]		
Non-agentive perceptions	X	X			
Sensations Hunger/ Thirst	X				X
Sensations Hot / Cold	X				
Sensations Pain / Itch	X	(X)[3]		X	

[2] Only for visual perceptions
[3] Stimulus as the subject / Expertum as the direct object / Experiencer marked with the genitive

1. The transitive construction is the most frequently used for the encoding of perceptions (both agentive and non-agentive), even if other more semantically fitting frames are available in Hindi.

2. Nonetheless, the transitive construction seems to be marginal in the encoding of these two experiential subdomains, with only perceptions allowing for its use.

3. Bodily sensations can be expressed by a large number of constructions, but only the dative construction, which occurs in 50% of the times, is used for the encoding of every type of bodily sensations. The remaining 50% is split among the other constructions.

4. The fact that the dative construction cannot be used for the encoding of agentive perceptions suggests that the semantic constraints that allow this construction are stronger than the constraints of the transitive pattern (which can be extended to non-transitive events like (non-agentive) perceptions).

5. However, even if the transitive pattern seems to be less semantic than the other constructions investigated, its use is still limited by some constraints in Hindi: unlike in many SAE languages, this pattern cannot be extended to the opposite edge of the transitive hierarchy (bodily sensations).

REFERENCES

Donohue, M. & Wichmann, S. (2008) *The Typology of Semantic Alignment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **Goldberg, A. (1995)** *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. **Luraghi, S. (2020)** *Experiential verbs in Homeric Greek, A constructional approach*, Brill's Studies in Language, Cognition and Culture. vol.27, Brill, Boston. **Montaut, A. (2004a).** *A Grammar of Hindi*. LINCOM EUROPA. **Malchukov (2005)** "Case Pattern Splits, Verb Types and Construction Competition", *Competition and Variation in Natural Languages, The Case of Case*, M. Amberber – H. De Hoop (eds.), Elsevier Science, pp. 73-117.

Lucrezia Carnesale UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

Fifth Pavia International Summer School for Indo-European Linguistics 5-10 September 2022