

Inceptive construction with *maND* in Gujarati¹

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1. Introduction

In this paper I aim to characterize the structure and Case marking properties of the inceptive construction in Gujarati formed by the verb *maND* when it takes an infinitival clause as complement. I will first examine the different plausible hypothesis for the structure of this construction, and conclude that *maND*, although acting as a main verb in other contexts, has lexicalized as an auxiliary in the inceptive construction. The second part of the paper is concerned with the Case of the subject in this construction. Although Gujarati is a clear case of ergative/nominative (or absolutive) system, semantic factors such as singularity or plurality of the subject play a role on Case marking,² overriding more general principles. Following Hook and Koul (1997) for the data, and Woolford (to appear) for the analysis, I will show that an OT-based analysis can better explain the data at hand.

2. The Inceptive Construction

According to Cardona (1965: 121), the verb *maND*, ‘place’, can be combined with an infinitive to form the inceptive construction, with the meaning “beginning of the verbal activity of the infinitive”.³

1. warsad paDwa maNDyo

‘if began to rain’ (lit. The rain began to fall)

Cardona 1965

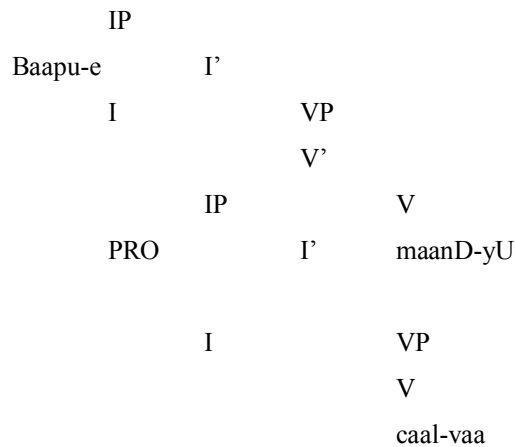
¹ I follow Hook and Koul (1997) in symbolizing retroflex consonants with capital letters.

² The pattern presented below ignores interactions between case marking and aspect of the verb and ergative case. Specifically, the subjects of transitive predicates are marked ergative only in a non-durative aspect of the past or perfect. Subjects of intransitives are marked absolutive in all cases. The analysis of this interaction is not the focus of the paper, but what will be said below about the interaction of case marking and certain semantic treats could be extended to treat it as well.

³ In the examples of this paper, glosses will include as much information as given in the original sources. Unfortunately, only Hook and Koul (1997) provide us with word-by-word glosses of the Gujarati sentences. For this reason, most of the sentences belong to this single source.

view, the Gujarati sentence in (3), repeated here as (5), will have a parallel structure to its gloss in (4). A (rough) tree diagram of (5) is given below:

4. Gandhi began [PRO to walk]
 5. Baapu-e [PRO caal-vaa] maanD-yU

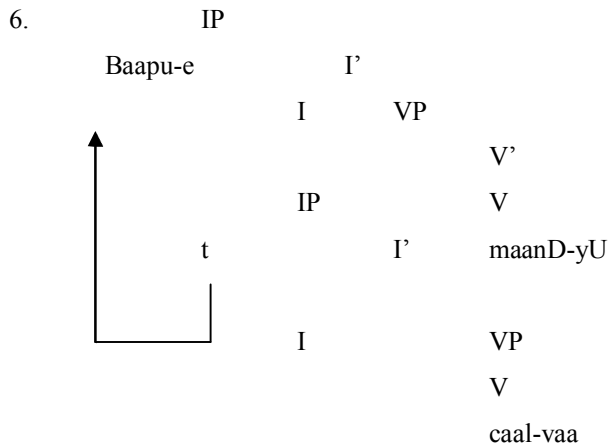


The subject of the main clause, *Baapu*, is originated in the upper sentence, and checks its case in it. Being transitive, the verb *maanD-yU* requires an ergative subject, supposedly the only available in the checking site of the subject.

The problem with this analysis is that the subject of the construction is not always ergative. As we saw before, the case of the subject varies depending (in part) on the characteristics of the infinitive heading the complement clause, to the extent that if this infinitive is intransitive, the subject appears some times in nominative, others in ergative. This role of the infinitive in determining the case of the subject is unexpected if the structure of the construction is that in (5) above. In it, the infinitive does not play any role in the case of the subject. This hypothesis must therefore be abandoned.

3.2. The raising predicate analysis

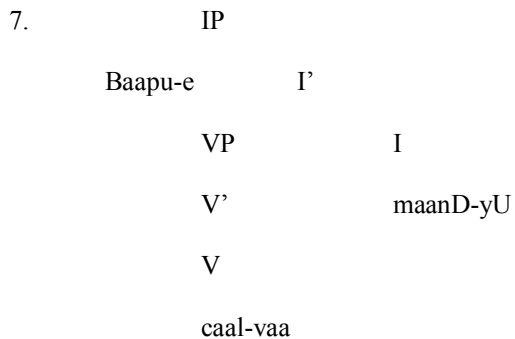
A second possibility is that *maND* is a one-place raising predicate, similar to the English verb *seem*. If so, the subject will be originated as an argument of the infinitive, and raised to the [Spec, IP] of the main clause, presumably for case reasons:



In this case, *maND* is a one-place predicate, and as such demands a nominative subject. The problem is that, as we saw, the subject can appear in ergative case in some instances of the inceptive construction. This is not compatible with the structure in (6), and thus this analysis should be abandoned too.

3.3. The auxiliary analysis

One last possibility is that *maND* in this construction is a lexicalized auxiliary. This is indeed the analysis that Cardona (1965) adopts. Not being a predicate, the subject is not an argument of the verb *maND*, but of the single verb of the sentence, that appears as an infinitive. According to this hypothesis, the structure is roughly as follows:



In this structure, the case-marking properties of the subject depend completely on the characteristics of the infinitive. The challenge now is to test whether this factor alone can

explain the fact that when the infinitive is intransitive, the subject can be optionally marked with ergative or nominative Case (recall examples (2) and (3)). To that end, the rest of the paper will take a closer look at the factors that determining the surface case of the subject, centered on the properties of the infinitive and the subject itself. It will be shown that the Case of the subject depends on two factors: the accusative/unergative classification of the intransitive infinitive, and certain traits of the semantics of the subject

4. Case Marking

Gujarati is a language of the type ergative/nominative. This means that it presents the following basic pattern of case marking (Hook and Koul 1997):

- a. The subjects of transitive predicates are in ergative case
- b. The subject of intransitive predicates are in nominative (a.k.a. absolutive) case
- c. The object of transitives are in nominative case

An example is given below:

8. mE ghaNaa kaagaLo lakh-yaa
I.Erg many.Mpl.[Nom] letters(Mpl)[Nom] write.PstMpl
'I wrote many letters' (Hook and Koul)

9. ame jaldi caal-yaa
We.Nom quickly walk.Pst.Mpl
"We walked quickly" (Hook and Koul)

For my analysis of the inceptive construction, I will focus on subject Case marking, leaving aside completely the object of transitives. Furthermore, those cases of transitive

infinitives will be left aside as well, since they present complications that require further research and are not clear to me at this point.⁴

Hook and Koul (1997) give a closer look at this construction. They follow Van Valin (1990), in trying to identify the conditions of the Case marking of the subject. They show that neither volitionality, nor Aktionsarten, nor Scope considerations play any role in it. They reach the conclusion that syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors intervene in the Gujarati inceptive construction with *maND*, and give the following “nested conditions”:

- a. If the complement predicate⁵ is a passive, use nominative for the subject
- b. If the subject refers to a source of experience or a sensation, use nominative
- c. If the predicate is one that selects only ‘unaccusative’ subjects, use nominative
- d. Otherwise, if the subject is singular, use ergative
- e. If the subject denotes a group acting in concert, use ergative
- f. If the subject is a plural or mass noun, use nominative

Since there is a great deal of evidence that passive verbs and experiencer verbs can in fact be considered unaccusatives, the conditions a-c can be abbreviated in the following a’:

- a’. If the infinitival is an unaccusative, use nominative for the subject

One question that immediately arises is whether we need to draw the distinction between unaccusatives and unergatives or the condition on a’ would apply to all intransitives. The answer is given in the data: in (10) and (11) below, from Hook and Koul (1997),⁶ we see that two intransitive verbs behave differently with respect to Case marking of their

⁴ Specifically, Case marking of the subjects in inceptive constructions involving a transitive infinitive are claimed (by Hook and Koul 1995, for example) to be totally optional, as opposed to cases with intransitive infinitives. It could be that this is the case, or that the factors that determine Case marking in these cases are still to be discovered.

⁵ Hook and Koul do not give any syntactic account of the construction, but seem to assume that there are two predicates, the infinitive and *maND*. For us, ‘complement predicate’ translates into ‘infinitive’, the only predicate of the construction.

⁶ The original sources of the examples are included within brackets for each example, as given in the cited article.

subject, when they would be expected to show the same result if the conditions in a-f above apply to them equally. Mainly, they both have a singular subject, but in (10), the verb *cry* takes an ergative subject, as demanded by condition d., while in (11), the verb *laugh* has a subject in nominative, therefore seeming to ignore the condition d, that demands of singular subjects to be in ergative:

10. andar gay-AA ty-AA [j **baaLak-e raDvaa maanD-yU]**
 inside went-Npl there Emp **child-Erg cry-Inf** begin-Pst.Nsg.Def
 ‘When (they) went inside, the child began to cry’ (from Chavada 1953:224)

11. Kaantaa paN has-vaa maanD-I
 Kanta-Nom too **laugh-Inf** begin-Pst.Fsg
 “Kanta, too, began to laugh” (from Joshi 1992: 89)

The answer to this puzzling data demands that we recognize a case of split intransitivity. Verbs like *cry* in (10), which are subject to condition d., are unergatives, while those like *laugh* in (11), that ignore condition d., are unaccusatives. The reason to divide the data this way is that passives, experiencer verbs and lexical unaccusatives pattern with (11) in ignoring condition d., as shown in the examples below: a passive in (12), and experiencer subject in (13) and a lexically unaccusative in (14), all from Hook and Koul (1997):

12. te (vaanU) vanc-aa-vaa maaND-yU
 it **thing.Nom** read-Pass-Inf begin-Pst-Nom
 “It (the article) began to be read” (from Tripathi 1887:77)

13. parantu buddhidhan-ni bik te-ne laag-vaa maaND-I
 but **Buddhidhan-Gen fear.Fsg.Nom** him-Dat **feel-Inf** begin-Pst.Fsg
 “... but he began to be afraid of Buddhidhan” (from Tripathi 1887:100)

14. guru-sevaa-ni aakari kasoTi tha-vaa maaND-i
 guru-service-Gen difficult **test.Fsg.Nom** **become-Inf** begin-Pst-Fsg

“the tough test of service to the guru began (to be carried out) (from Chavada 1953:63)

On the other hand, the list of nested condition given above can be further simplified. Conditions d. and e. will be here subsumed under b’:

b’. If the subject is singularized, use ergative

where ‘singularized’ includes singular subjects and groups acting in concert. The semantic basis for this assumption will not be addressed here, and neither will the generality of such a claim that these two categories should be unified. I will just rely on an intuitive idea that a group acting in concert can be conceptualized (and subsequently grammaticalized) as a singular entity.⁷ Condition f. will be left as it is, although it should be noted that there is the same semantic basis to include mass nouns and plurals in the same group as there were to include groups acting in concert and singular nouns in one group.⁸

We can now sum up the situation with the following conditions for the Case marking of the subject of intransitive verbs in the Gujarati inceptive construction:

a’. If the infinitive is an unaccusative, use nominative for the subject

b’. If the infinitive is unergative:

- i. if the subject is singularized, use ergative
- ii. if the subject is pluralized, use nominative

⁷ Some support for this idea is the fact that in some languages we do indeed find such phenomena. For example, in Spanish the group of people, when referred to as an homogeneous entity, is singular (as shown by the number agreement in the verb), even though the referent is clearly plural:

i. La gente no sabe cuidar de si misma
The.fem.sing people.fem.sing not know.3p.sing take-care.inf of her.3p.sing self.fem.3p.sing
‘People does not know how to take care of themselves’

⁸ It could also happen that one didn’t have to justify the inclusion of plurals and mass nouns in one single group; condition f. could be referring to a ‘waste basket’ category, being grammatically undefined.

As they are, these nested conditions are just a list of descriptive generalizations. To integrate them in a grammar that explains why they apply is the challenge I will address next. Following the development in Woolford (to appear) of an OT-based grammar for Case marking, I will now extend the theory presented there to the Gujarati case.

4.1 OT account

Woolford (to appear) presents a grammatical analysis of constructions in which more than one Case is potentially licensed for a particular argument. She argues that a somehow automatic theory of Case assignment (or its minimalist version, Case checking) does not properly reflect this property of many languages to Case mark their arguments according to factors other than Case feature checking. Rather, an account based in Optimality Theory considerations of violable markedness and faithfulness principles is more adequate to capture this situation.

To explain the situation described in a' and b' above, I will follow Woolford in two assumptions. The first one concerns a cross-linguistic generalization that captures the fact that nominative is preferred over more marked cases, whenever possible. This state of affairs is reflected in a family of markedness Case constraints of the form *accusative, *dative, *ergative, etc. that ban the realization of the relevant Cases. Nominative, in this hierarchy, is either unmarked or the least marked case. This set of negative requirements has as a consequence that languages avoid using Cases more marked than nominative whenever possible. Intuitively, this renders nominative as somehow the 'default' Case.

The second assumption is that ergative is a lexical case, associated with agent arguments. In the case of Gujarati, those verbs that subcategorize for an argument in ergative case are the ones included in the unergative group. As a lexical Case, ergative is specified in the input and a Case faithfulness constraint will preserve this lexical case in the output.

Which Case will finally surface will depend on the interaction of markedness and faithfulness constraints. For the case of Gujarati, we need an additional markedness constraint:

*ergative-plural: plural arguments cannot be marked with ergative case.

This constraint is designed to capture the generalization of (b'ii).

Now we are in a situation of explaining the patterns characterized by the generalizations in a' and b', repeated here for convenience:

a'. If the infinitive is an unaccusative, use nominative for the subject

b'. If the infinitive is unergative:

- i. if the subject is singularized, use ergative
- ii. if the subject is pluralized, use nominative

The cases captured by a' are to be explained by regular Case checking mechanisms, if we assume that the default Case marking in Gujarati is the nominative for the subjects. Simply the subjects of unaccusative verbs (including passives) will get their (default) Case features checked in the corresponding configuration for nominative case (either AgrS or an extension of VP, see Chomsky 1995).

The cases in b' need more elaboration. Assuming that unergatives subcategorize for ergative Case in the lexicon, the desired result in (b'ii) is reached by ranking the markedness constraint *ergative-plural above Case Faith. As seen in Tableau 1, this has the effect of eliminating the candidate with an ergative plural argument, and the emergence of the unmarked candidate, which in this language translates into nominative:

Tableau 1: unergative infinitives in Gujarati inceptive construction

NP-erg Vinf maND	*erg-plural	Case Faith
NP-erg Vinf maND	*!	
→ NP Vinf maND		*

In the case of a singular argument, the constraint *erg-plural will have no effect, and the surfacing candidate will be the one that does not violate Case Faith, mainly, the one with an ergative subject, as captured by (b'i).

In sum, Gujarati Case marking of intransitive subjects in the inceptive construction with the auxiliary *maND* can be explained by the interaction of lexical properties of the verb that appears in infinitival form, and grammatical constraints that select the optimal candidate from the potentially possible ones.

5. Conclusion

This paper presented an analysis of the inceptive construction in Gujarati. It was first argued that from all possible analyses, the most suitable one considered *maND* as a lexicalized auxiliary constructed with an infinitival main verb. In the second part of this paper, we saw that subject case marking in this construction depends on both syntactic and semantic factors, following and expanding on Hook and Koul (1997). This situation suggested that an OT-based account of Case marking in the line of Woolford (to appear) suited the data best.

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