The role of tense and agreement in the licensing of subjects: evidence from participial clauses in Bangla

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Abstract This paper examines the subject-licensing properties of Bangla non-finite participles. In this paper, I show that tense plays a pivotal role in explaining the distribution of subjects in participles. Three participles, the imperfective participle, the perfective participle and the conditional participle, have been examined regarding their different choices of (c)overt subjects, and their compatibility with different types of control. Following the 'T-Agr calculus' of Landau (2000, 2004), I show that tense unifies the different types of participles. Clausal selection along with the presence of tense, also has a crucial role in the distribution of subjects across the participles. I suggest that tense is not only vital in licensing the subjects, but also pivotal for their compatibility with different types of predicates. Additionally, I show that a temporal restriction, in the guise of covert agreement, motivates different subject selection in the participles in Bangla.

Keywords Subject licensing · Finiteness · Participles · Tense · Agreement · *pro* · PRO · Bangla

1 Introduction

Standard approaches to the licensing of subjects, which rely on Case and finiteness, have been challenged on the basis of crosslinguistic investigations (Sigurðsson 1989, 2008, 2012; McFadden 2004; Landau 2000, 2004, 2006; Sundaresan and McFadden 2009, among others). Here I present further evidence from Bangla bearing on the issue of subject licensing.[1] The distribution of subjects has an interesting pattern:

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[1]Bangla (Bengali) is spoken primarily in the Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura, and in Bangladesh. The data in this paper represents a variety spoken near Kolkata, which is considered to be the standard variety spoken in West Bengal.

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