

# Mon-Khmer Studies

## VOLUME 43.2

The journal of Austroasiatic  
languages and cultures  
1964—2014 50 years of MKS

Author: *P. K. CHOUDHARY*  
Title: *Agreement in Ho.*  
Pages: 8-16

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Volume 43.2 Editors:  
Paul Sidwell  
Brian Migliazza

ISSN: 0147-5207  
Website: <http://mksjournal.org>

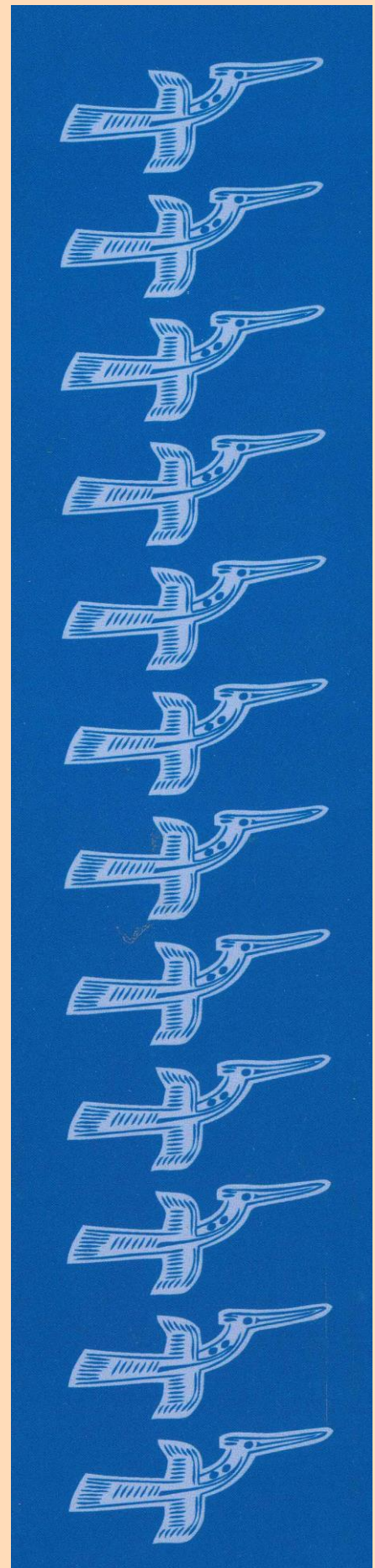
Published by:



Mahidol University (Thailand)



SIL International (USA)



# Agreement in Ho

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show the conditions of agreement marking in Ho, an Austroasiatic language. Pronominal clitics are attached as an agreement marker on the preverbal word, the verb and may be before or after the finite marker. The agreement morpheme allows Subject, Object or both to be dropped. There is no inflectional agreement marker in Ho. The agglutinating nature of the morpheme makes North-Munda languages in general and Ho in particular, morphologically very rich. Negation too, can host agreement clitic. The function of these clitic is twofold; one is to carry the load of the NP and another is to allow that NP to be dropped.

**Key words:** Agreement, Pro-drop, Animacy

**ISO 639-3 language codes:** hoc, mai

## 1. Introduction

Ho<sup>1</sup> language is very rich in agreement. It shows that lexical case marking may not block the agreement between the NP and the verb like Hindi. 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 paper 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 paper also discusses the pro-drop parameter to show that there are languages such as Ho in particular and North-Munda<sup>1</sup> languages in general where the subject clitic attached to the first material preceding the verb, which sometimes may be an object NP, and then it agrees with the verb. A subject may or may not be overtly realised.

## 2. Definition of Agreement

There are so many definitions of the term *Agreement*. According to Crystal’s 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”. 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 mentions that *agreement* plays a major role in “Binding and Case Theory”, which are components of Government and Binding theory.

All definitions, in fact, focus on one important point, that is, the covariance of matching of features between separate elements, such as a Noun, subject NP, a Verb 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Mundari is a main language of Kherwari group of North-Munda along with Santhali language of Austroasiatic family. Grierson (1906), in Linguistic Survey of India mentioned it as a close dialect of Ho and Bhumij. Anderson (2001) and Diffloth (2005) put it under North-Munda group of Kherwarian in their classification.

became the focal point in the *Minimalist Program*. Chomsky (1981) treats *agreement* with superscripts in part because it fails to serve as an antecedent for the Binding Theory. Chomsky (1995a) has explored the idea that functional categories like Complement(C) and Inflection (I) are regular in terms of X-bar theory and constitute heads of phrases. Because of this analysis the subject NP is the specifier of IP. Koopman (1987) asserts that all *agreement* relations are Spec-Head *agreement*. This proposal certainly makes sense for subject-verb *agreement*.

### 3. Subject-Verb Agreement

The *Agreement* is overtly realized between an NP and a Verb; the most frequent pattern of this type is Subject-Verb agreement. The verb changes its form according to person, number and gender of the Subject. Some of these features may not be overtly present in all languages. Since Ho is an agglutinating language there are no such morphological modifications, but, its agreement feature occurs as an affix to the verbal root, though the place of occurrence of agreement is not fixed. Ho is also a pro-drop language, where agreement enables the subject to be dropped.

1. *aŋ<sub>i</sub>*    *uli*            *-ŋ<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-ke*    *-d*    *-a*  
I        mango        1SG    eat     PST    TR    FM  
'I ate a mango'.

In the above sentence subject pronoun is *aŋ*. 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. *pro<sub>i</sub>*    *uli*    *-ŋ<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-ke*    *-d*    *-a*  
mango    1SG    eat     PST    TR    FM  
'I ate a mango'.

The subject can be dropped as in (2). Some more examples of subject pro-drop are given below:

3. (*am*)<sub>i</sub>    *ma:di:*    *-m<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-ke*    *-d*    *-a*  
you    meal        2SG    eat     PST    TR    FM  
'You have eaten meals'/'You ate meals'
4. (*ini*)<sub>i</sub>    *laq*    *-ai<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-a*  
he    bread    3SG    eat     FM  
'He eats bread.'
5. (*inku*)<sub>i</sub>    *laq*    *-ko<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-e*    *-a*  
they    bread    PL    eat     3SG    FM  
'They eat bread.'
6. (*ako*)<sub>i</sub>    *pa:iti*    *-ko<sub>i</sub>*    *na:m*    *-ke*    *-d*    *-a*  
they    work        3PL    get     PST    TR    FM  
'They got a job.'

In sentences (3) - (6), subject pronouns can be dropped; because the subject agreement marker is coded on the object NP. For example, in sentence (6), *ako* 'they', an NP, is subject of the sentence and it can be dropped, because the agreement marker is present on object NP *pa:iti*.

### 4. Person Agreement and Honorific Agreement

Languages make three way distinction in person namely first person (speaker), second person (hearer) and third person (listener). There are languages called gender sensitive like Hindi where gender plays an important role in agreement marking. There are languages like Maithili where honorific marker plays an important role in agreement marking. As far as Ho is concerned, it makes a distinction of inclusive or exclusive pronoun; Inclusive includes the hearer whereas exclusive excludes the hearer. Ho also makes distinction in honorific and non-honorific pronoun.

7. *ako<sub>i</sub>*    *laq*    *-ko<sub>i</sub>*    *jom*    *-e*    *-a*  
they    bread    3PL    eat     3SG    FM  
'They eat bread.'

In sentence (7), *ako* is third person non-honorific plural pronoun and it agrees with the object. 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. For example:

8. *ini(NH)* *seno* *-ja* *-n* *-a*  
 he go PST INTR FM  
 'He had gone/He went'.
9. *in-kin(H)* *seno* *ja* *-n* *-a*  
 he go PST INTR 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 a dual marker. However, the verb does not exhibit any agreement. In Ho too honorific marker plays a role in agreement marking as shown in example (5) and (6).

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. i.e.:

10. *ale* *an* *-lagte* *vo:ta* *-ke* *-d* *-a*  
 we I for vote PST TR FM  
 (inclu) '\*We voted for me.' (Literal meaning)
- \*ale<sub>i</sub>* *an* *-le<sub>i</sub>* *sa:la:* *-ke* *-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.

## 5. Number Agreement

Ho has three way number distinctions i.e. singular, dual and plural. Number agreement correspond the number of entities, which are referred to in a NP through an agreement marker. As we have shown above there are separate agreement markers for each pronoun. We have given details of pronouns and their agreement suffixes in Anaphors and Pronouns in Mundari in Choudhary (2005).

## 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. e.g.:

12. *repo* *ini* *-e* *koʔari* *-tan* *-a*  
 Repo he POSS criticise PRS FM  
 'Repo criticises him'
13. *na:masi* *ini* *-e* *koʔari* *-tan* *-a*  
 Namsi he POSS criticise PRS FM  
 'Namsi criticises him'
14. *ini* *na:masi* *-ke* *koʔari* *-tan* *-a*  
 he Namsi ACC criticise PRS FM  
 'He criticises Namsi.'

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

## 7. Subject-verb agreement in intransitive verbs

In Ho, if the verb is intransitive it carries subject agreement provided there is no other constituent available to host the agreement. For example:

15. *repo<sub>i</sub> ja:piɔ̄ -a -e<sub>i</sub>*  
 Repo sleep FM 3SG  
 'Repo sleeps.'

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

### 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) from Ho.

16. *kowa:<sub>i</sub> -hon kita:b -e<sub>i</sub> paɣa:w -e -a*  
 boy man book 3SG read 3SG FM  
 'A boy reads a book'.

17. *ini<sub>i</sub> laɔ̄<sub>j</sub> -ai<sub>i</sub> jom -e<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 he bread 3SG eat 3SG 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 in the verb. The object is in the third person.

### 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 necessitates the verb to agree with its direct object in languages such as Hindi. In Ho, however there is no ergative marker. The subject agreement marker does not occur on the DO or IO if it is dative case marked.

18. *repo<sub>i</sub> na:masi -ke kita:b -e<sub>i</sub> ema:ɔ̄ -i -e*  
 Repo Namasi DAT book 3SG give PST FM  
 'Repo gave a book to Namsi.'

19. *(a<sub>n</sub>) (a<sub>m</sub> -ke) miad' uli -ŋ<sub>i</sub> em -le -ɔ̄ -me<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 I you DAT one mango 1SG give PST TR 2SG FM  
 'I gave a mango to you.'

In sentence (18) the subject agreement marker occurs on direct object. There is a lexical case marker on the indirect object; it does not have agreement with the verb. But in (19) except subject agreement marker on the DO, a dative case marked IO is also occurring on the verb as an agreement marker. In Ho, there are some sentences, which exhibit agreement when an NP is even lexically case-marked as in (19) above, where *am* 'you' is lexically case marked but it agrees with the verb. Thus there is no blockage of agreement even an NP is lexically case marked as shown above.

### 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.

20. *a<sub>n</sub> hapnam -ko<sub>i</sub> -ŋ<sub>i</sub> nel -le -ɔ̄ -ko<sub>i</sub> -a*  
 I girl PL 1SG see PST TR 3SG FM  
 'I had seen girls'.

21. *ale<sub>i</sub> am<sub>j</sub> -le<sub>i</sub> dula:r-te -m<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 we you 2PL love PRS 2SG FM  
 ‘We love you.’
22. *ini<sub>i</sub> laq<sub>i</sub> -e<sub>i</sub> jom -a*  
 he bread 3SG eat FM  
 ‘He eats bread’.
23. *inku<sub>i</sub> laq<sub>i</sub> -ko<sub>i</sub> jom -a*  
 they bread 3PL eat FM  
 ‘They eat bread’.

In sentence (20), the pronoun *an* ‘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.

### 11. Agreement in Small Clause and ECM constructions

Radford (1998) has defined Small Clause (SC) as a clause which neither has a 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 agreement in such cases in Ho.

24. *an -re aṭkarai -min -a [(an<sub>i</sub>) sugra:-n<sub>i</sub>]*  
 I PP believe be FM I good-1SG  
 ‘[I believe [myself to be good]]’
25. *ini [a:j-a:j-ge sugara:] aṭkarain ke -ḍ -a*  
 he himself-EMP good believe PST TR FM  
 ‘He believed [himself to be smart]’

In sentence (24), there is an agreement marker on the embedded verb but in (25), there are no agreement markers either on matrix verb or embedded verb.

### 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 sepeḍ bugin -a*  
 that boy good FM  
 ‘That boy is good’.
27. *bugin sepeḍ*  
 good boy  
 ‘Good boy’.

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

### 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.

### 14. Possessive Agreement

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. *so.ma: ama: ti:ji: a:buŋ -ke -d̥ -a -i*  
 Soma your hand wash PST TR FM 3SG  
 ‘Soma washed your hands.’
29. *so.ma: aŋa: ti:ji: abuŋ ke -d̥ -a -i*  
 Soma my hand wash PST TR FM 3SG  
 ‘Soma washed my hands’.

### Maithili (mai)

30. *si.ta: həm<sub>i</sub> -ər ha:th dho -l -ək<sub>i</sub>*  
 Sita I GEN hand wash PST 1SG  
 ‘Sita washed my hands’.

In (30), verb agrees with the possessor *həmər*, thus we have an example of possessive agreement in Maithili but there is no such agreement in example (28) and (29).

### 15. Long-Distance Agreement

There are instances of long distance agreement in some South-Asian languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Maithili, Mizo, Hmar and Telugu (Subbarao, 2001). Let us consider the case of Ho.

31. *so.ma:<sub>i</sub> adana -a [S<sub>2</sub> cilke sa:ikal -ko hare -e<sub>i</sub> -a]*  
 Soma know FM how bicycle ACC drive 3SG FM  
 ‘Soma knows [how to ride a bicycle.]’
32. *so.ma: sanəŋ -tan -a [[S<sub>2</sub> am<sub>i</sub> gupui:-m<sub>i</sub> -e]*  
 Soma wants PRS FM you fight 2SG 3SG  
 ‘Soma wants [you to fight.]’ (Literally: Soma wants that I and you fight)
33. *so.ma:<sub>i</sub> sanəŋ -tan -a [S<sub>2</sub> aŋ<sub>i</sub> nikul -eŋ<sub>i</sub> ol -e<sub>i</sub> -a]*  
 Soma want PRS 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

### 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. However, Denney (2002:89) claims that when Ho properly spoken there are no relative clauses, and what we would express by the use of a relative clause in English or Hindi is expressed in Ho by the use of a participle.

34. *en uli [S<sub>2</sub> okona aŋa: juđi: jom -ke -d̥ -a]*  
 that mango which my friend eat PST TR FM  
*ena soja: -ka -n -a*  
 that useless PST INTR FM  
 ‘[That mango [which my friend had eaten] was useless.]’
35. *en tebal marəŋ -gi -a [S<sub>2</sub> okona: -re am<sub>i</sub> jom -am<sub>i</sub>]*  
 that table big EMP FM which PP you eat 2SG  
*rike -ta -d̥ -a]*  
 keep PST TR 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. 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).

### 17. Agreement and the role of [ $\pm$ Animate]

Ho is very sensitive with regard to the feature [ $\pm$ Animate]. The inanimate NP has the object agreement marker *-e/-i* in the verb in [-past] tense. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural marker *-ko* is used as an agreement marker with inanimate plural nouns.

36. *pro uri -ŋ kumbu -i -tan -a*  
 cow 1SG steal 3SG PRS PROG FM  
 'I am stealing the cow'.
37. *a:je am -a seta: -ko -e ta:m -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] direct object agreement appear after the tense marker. We find the same distinction with regard to [ $\pm$ human]. The occurrence of subject agreement marker to the left of the subject depends on the feature [ $\pm$ human] of the subject. However, in direct object agreement cases, there is no distinction between the two (human and nonhuman) subjects as shown in example (37) above.

### 18. Agreement in di-transitive verbs

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

38. *am<sub>i</sub> aŋ -ta hapnum -ko<sub>j</sub> -m<sub>i</sub> kul -le -d -ko<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 you I for girl PL 2SG send PST TR PL FM  
 'You sent girls to me'.
39. *aŋ<sub>i</sub> (am<sub>j</sub> -ke) mi:aq' uli -ŋ<sub>i</sub> ema -le -d -me<sub>j</sub> -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, subject and the DO can trigger agreement in the verb. In example (39), the lexically case marked IO can occur as an agreement clitic on the verb. Therefore, it is not clear that the lexically case marked IO can occur as agreement clitic or not.

### 19. Agreement Hierarchy

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

Sub Agr>IO Agr> DO Agr

40. *am<sub>i</sub> aŋ -ta: hapnum -ko<sub>j</sub> -m<sub>i</sub> kul -le -d -ko<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 you I for girl PL 2SG send PST TR 3PL FM  
 'You sent girls to me.'
41. *remo<sub>i</sub> a:j -ta:ɽre miqo banduk -e<sub>i</sub> jo:ga:w -le -d -a*  
 Remo he near one gun 3SG put PST TR FM  
 'Remo put the gun near him.'
42. *apuŋ<sub>i</sub> aŋ -ke am<sub>j</sub> -e<sub>i</sub> ema:d -mi<sub>j</sub> -a*  
 my father I ACC you 3SG give 2SG FM  
 'My father gave me to you.'

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



## 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 pronominal clitic either on the verb phrase or somewhere else. The agreement clitic attached with the verb, the word preceding it or may be on the verb as an affix. The pronominal agreement clitic have the same shape as personal pronouns, except that the third person is marked by *-e*, *-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 infix pronominal clitic. Direct object marked by pronominal clitic as an affix; and the indirect object, attached after the finite marker.

The Ho language developed a strict distribution of position to distinguish between Subject and Object suffixes, and in this way manages 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 may or may not block the agreement as it is shown in example (39) and (42) above; it is not constant throughout the Ho language.

### Abbreviations:

1= first person	FM = finite marker	PP = post positions
2 = second person	GEN= genitive	PROG = progressive
3= third person	INTR = intransitive	PRS = present tense
ACC= accusative	NEG = negative	PST= past tense
DAT = dative	PL = plural	SG=singular
EMP = emphatic	POSS = possessive	TR = transitive

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