

Interaction of Animacy and Number: The Case of Odia, a Classifier Language

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Road Map

- Introduction
- Empirical Domain
- Central claims
- Data
- Literature Review
- Animacy: Importance of Morphosyntactic *-e* and Agreement
- Animacy as a formal feature
- Position of Anim(acy) head
- Conclusion
- Way Forward

Introduction

- Languages are sensitive to animacy factor of Nouns
- Honorificity, Classifier, Gender, etc. are the devices for animacy identification
- Distinct classifiers used with numerals in CL languages

[+human]

(a) *teen jon chhele*
three CL_{+human} boy
'Three boys'

[-human]

(b) *teen te/*jon goru*
three CL/ CL_{+human} cow
'Three cows'

(Bangla, EIA)

Cntd...

- In plural contexts, without numerals, Bangla uses plural markers. The plural markers show the animacy distinction as well.

2. (a) *chhele/*goru/*tebil -ra*
boy/cow/table-PL_{+human}

(b) *chhele/goru/tebil-gulo*
boy/cow/table-PL

(Bangla)

- Similar case in Persian

3. (a) *mard/tan/ raxt-ha*
man/body/garment-PL

(b) *mard/*tan/*raxt-an*
man/body/garment-PL_{+animate}

(Persian, Bayanati & Toivonen, 2019: 159)

- Goal of this presentation: Behaviour of **Animacy** in a Classifier language, Odia

Empirical Focus

- Odia, primarily spoken in central Odisha (Bhubaneswar) in the state of Odisha in India
- Eastern Magadhan language of Eastern Indo-Aryan family
- Sister language of Assamese and Bangla
- Nominative-accusative case alignment with SOV word order



Central Claims

- Animacy is a formal feature in Odia

Animacy on DP:

- Odia has an animacy marker on DP
- Independent of plural marker and classifier

Animacy on TP:

- Animacy agreement is present in guise of number agreement

Odia is the only EIA language that shows clausal number agreement

Structure of Odia DP

I. Singular DP

<i>pila-Ti</i> boy-CL 'the boy'	<i>bilei-Ti</i> cat-CL 'the cat'	<i>patra-Ti</i> leaf-CL 'the leaf'
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Table 1

II. Plural DP

	<i>dui jaNa pila</i>	<i>dui-Ti bilei</i>	<i>dui-Ti patra</i>
Type 1	two CL _{+human} boy	two-CL cat	two-CL leaf
	'two boys'	'two cats'	'two leaves'

Table 2

	<i>pila-maane</i>	<i>bilei-maane/guDika</i>	<i>patra-*maane/guDika</i>
Type 2	boy-PL	cat-PL/ CL _{PL}	leaf-PL/CL _{PL}
	'boys'	'cats'	'leaves'

Table 3

Structure of Odia TP

Singular

4. *se skul-ku* *jaa-e*
he school-DAT go-PRS.3Sg
'he/she goes to school' 3 Sg, Present

5. *ram skul-ku* *jaa-e*
ram school-DAT go-PRS.3Sg
'Ram goes to school' 3 Sg, Present

Plural

6. *se-maane skul-ku* *jaa-nti*
they-PL school-DAT go-PRS.3PL
'They go to school' 3 PL, Present

7. *pila-maane skul-ku* *jaa-nti*
boy-PL school-DAT go-PRS.3PL
'The boys go to school' 3 PL, Present

- PL agreement in the TP
- Unique to Odia among EIAs

Comparison with sister languages

	Bangla	Assamese	Odia
Singular	8. <i>se</i> <i>skul-e</i> <i>jaa-e</i> he/she school-DAT go-PRS.3 'He goes to school.'	10. <i>xe/tae</i> <i>skul-loi</i> <i>jaa-e</i> he/she school-DAT go.PRS-3 'He/She goes to school.'	12. <i>se</i> <i>skul-ku</i> <i>jaa-e</i> he/she school-DAT go-3SG 'He goes to school.'
Plural	9. <i>o-ra</i> <i>skul-e</i> <i>jaa-e</i> they-PL school-DAT go-PRS.3 'They go to school.'	11. <i>xihote</i> <i>skul-loi</i> <i>jaa-e</i> they.PL school-DAT go-PRS.3 'They go to school.'	13. <i>se-maane</i> <i>skul-ku</i> <i>jaa-nti</i> they-PL school-DAT go-3PL 'They go to school.'
Number Agreement	X	X	✓

Table 4

Condition on PL Agreement

- Plural agreement possible only with [+Animate] Nouns

14. *train-guDika jaa-uchi/ *jaa-uchh-anti*
train-CL_{PL} go-PROG-PRS.3.SG/go-PROG-PRS.3PL
'Trains are moving.'

15. *pila-maane skul-ku jaa-uchh-anti*
boy-PL school-ACC go-PROG-PRS.3PL
'The boys go to school'

- *-mane* is important here
- *-maane* is +Animate

Analysing *maane*

- Dash (2015) takes the entire unit *maane* as a plural without dividing it. She concurs with Sahoo (1996) and describes this ‘*maane*’ as a number (plural) marker.

16. *pilaa-maane*
Child-PL
‘Children.’

(Dash, 2015)

- ‘*maane*’ cannot appear before the noun (17a). Neither with a classifier (17b).

17. a. **maane pilaa*
PL child
(intended) ‘Children’

b. **pilaa jaNa-maane*
child CL_{+human}-PL
(intended) ‘Children’

(Dash, 2015)

- Dash (ibid.): ‘*maane*’ is a plural, generated at NUM head inside DP.

Analysing *maane*

- Tripathy (1963: 126) decomposed ‘*maane*’ as a ‘compound plural’ with two plural suffixes (*maan* and *-e*)
- Interestingly, without *maan*, it can either refer to a honorific singular or plural nominal (18)
- The use of *-maane* disambiguates the plurality interpretation (19)

18. *siksak-e* *padh-anti*
teacher-E teach-PL.3P
teacher-PL/SG teach-PL/HON-3P
‘The teacher (hon) teaches’/ ‘Teachers teach’

19. *siksak-maan-e* *padh-anti*
teacher-PL-E teach-3PL
‘Teachers teach’

maan + e

- *maan* and *-e* are 2 different morphemes, deal with different grammatical features.

Examples from non-nominative DP

20. *mu pila-maan-anku dekh-il-I*

I boy-PL-ACC_{PL} see-PST-1SG

‘I saw the boys.’

Use of *-e* without *maan*

21. *pila samast-e jaa-uchh-anti*

boy all-E go-PROG-PRS.3PL

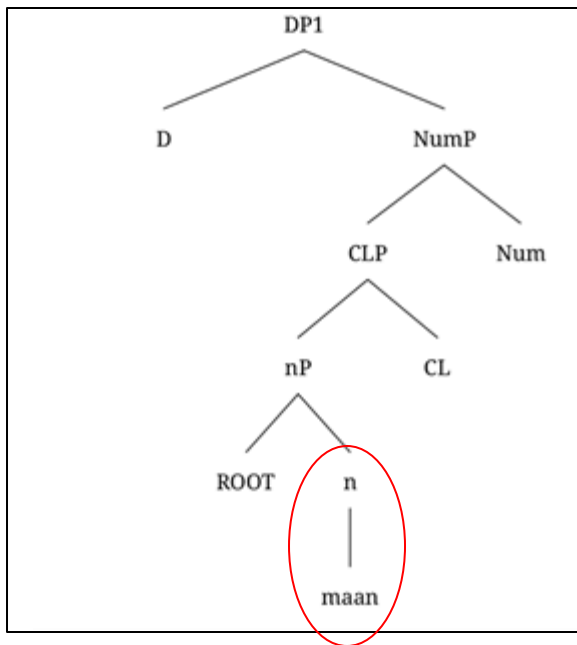
‘(All) Boys are going’

Status of *maan* and *-e*

-maan as a Plural marker

- Banerjee (diss, 2024) describes *-maan* as a plural generated at the *n* head

22.



***-e* as an Animacy Marker**

- *-e* occurs only with +animate +PL DPs
- ***-e* is an optional animacy marker in Odia**

23. *se/pila-maan-e* *skul-ku* *jaa-nti*

they/boy-PL-ANIM school-ACC go-PRS.3PL

[+Animate]

‘They/ the boys go to school.’

24. *kaar-guDika* *jaa-e*

car-CL_{PL} go-PRS.3SG

[-Animate]

‘Cars go.’

Interim Summary

- We have shown that *-e* is an animacy marker present on Odia DP
 - But recall, that animacy on TP is expressed via plural agreement
 - In other words, animacy triggers clausal agreement
 - Animacy can only trigger such syntactic operation if we assume it to be formal feature
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- Evidence for animacy to be formal feature?

Odia animacy as a formal feature

- Wiltschko (2009): Animacy in Blackfoot is a formal feature similar to mass/count distinction (‘boundedness’) in German
- Taking cues from Wiltschko (2009), we present 3 diagnostics to show that the animacy feature in Odia is a formal feature:

I. Not a unique value for each nominal- Animacy value is not uniquely determined for the nominals. The same nominal can be considered as animate or inanimate depending on the context.

25. a. *jharaNa-maan-e* *naach-uchh-anti* [+Animate]
waterfall-PL-ANIM dance-PROG-PRS.3PL
‘Waterfalls are dancing.’

b. *jharana-guDika* *sukhi ga-l-a* [-Animate]
waterfall-CL_{PL} dry go-PST-3Sg
‘The waterfalls dried.’

Cntd...

II. Selectability- The plural agreement on clausal level is sensitive to the animacy feature of the nominal. The animate nominals trigger plural agreement

26. a. *pila-maan-e* *jaa-uchh-**anti*** [+Animate]
boy-PL-ANIM go-PROG-PRS.3PL
'The boys have run away.'

b. *tren-guDika* *jaa-uchh-i* [-Animate]
train-CL_{PL} go-PROG-PRS.3Sg
'Trains are moving'

Cntd...

Further, the plural marker also differs based on animacy.

27.	Singular	Plural
[+Animate]	<i>pila</i> ('boy')	<i>pila-maan-e</i> ('boys')
[-Animate]	<i>pathara</i> ('stone')	<i>pathara-guDika</i> ('stones')

Cntd...

III. Mismatch- The ontological properties do not always match the formal animacy value of the nominal. In certain contexts, the ontologically inanimate nouns (star, statue, waterfall etc.) can be attributed animacy interpretation when personified.

28. a. *tara-maan-e* *has-uchh-anti*
star-PL-ANIM smile-PROG-3PL

‘The stars are smiling’

b. *murti-maan-e* *table upare thia he-l-e*
statue-PL-ANIM table on stand be-PST-3PL

‘The statues stood on the table’

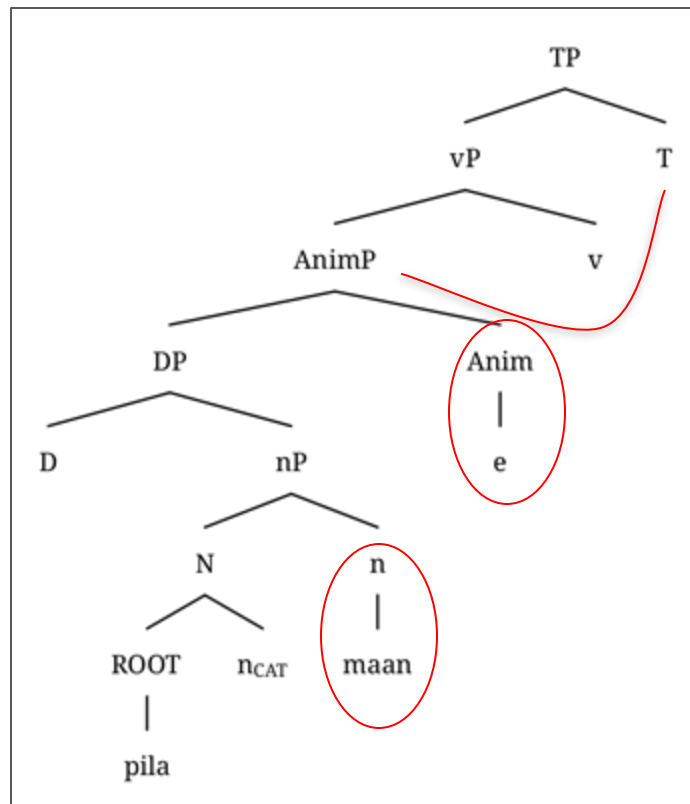
Interim Summary

- Animacy is a formal feature in Odia
- Formal features trigger agreement
- Must either be a functional head or a part of a functional head in the derivation

Position of Anim on the structure

29. *pila-maan-e* *skul-ku* *jaa-nti*
 boy-PL-ANIM school-ACC go-PRS.3PL
 ‘The boys go to school.’

30.



Cntd...

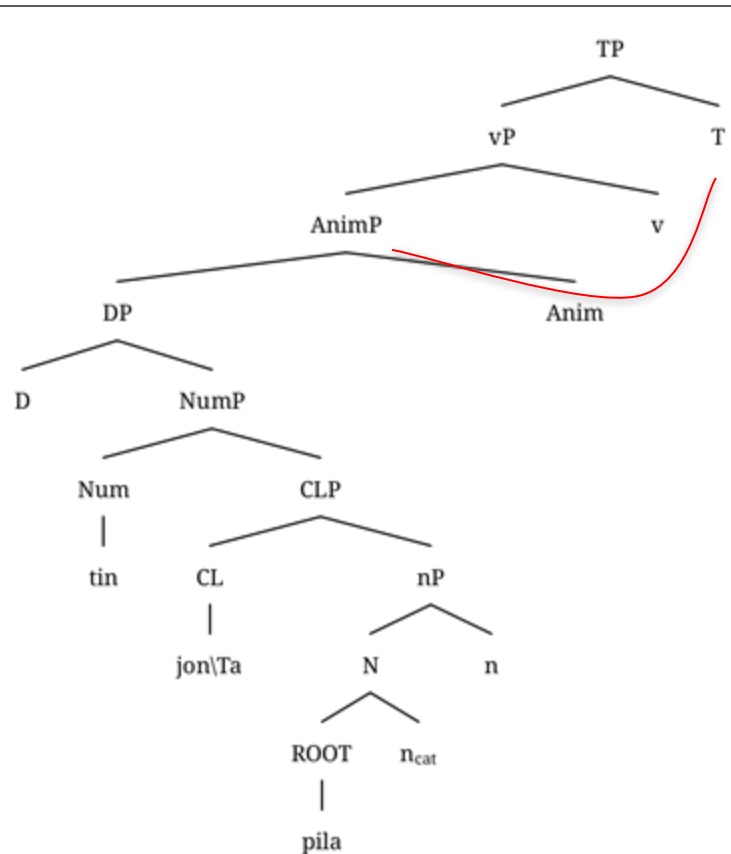
- Anim agreement happens between the Anim head and T.
- Even without the overt realization of *-e*.

31. *tin jaNa pila khel-uchh-anti*

3 CL_{+human} boy play-PROG-PRS.3PL

‘Three boys are playing’

32.



Conclusion

- All EIA languages are classifier languages, which encode animacy on DP
- What is special about Odia then → Emergence of Animacy as a formal feature, as we see via the diagnostics
- Functional head Anim has the power to trigger agreement
- This functional head triggers agreement in the guise of plural (number) agreement
- This functional head has an optional morpho-syntactic expression *-e* (with *maan*, *samasta*), triggering agreement
- It can also manifest via +Human Classifier *jaNa*, triggering agreement

Way Forward

- In certain discourse contexts, the inanimate plural classifier *guDika* shows +animate value, triggering agreement

33. *kapada-guDika ud-uchh-anti*
cloth-CL_{PL} fly-PROG-PRS.3PL
'The clothes are flying.'

34. *murti-guDika table upare thia he-l-e*
statue-CL_{PL} table on stand be-PST-3PL
'The statues stood on the table (on their own).'

- The current analysis does not explain such constructions
- How is animacy/number licensed in absence of an animate noun as well as an animate marker?
- Hypothesis: Animacy properties of Odia are not purely ontological
- The animacy comes from the discourse context and triggers agreement.

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Thank You!