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Person-Number Agreement Markers in Hawa-Nokte

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Abstract

This paper is a descriptive analysis of the morpho-semantic properties of Person-Number Agreement Markers in Hawa-Nokte. The language shows a cross-referencing system where the subject is indexed on the verb. Generally, the finite verbs take agreement markers, for person and number of subject, in form of suffix to the grammatical particles of verb which mark tense/aspect, mood, and other verbal categories. In most cases, the agreement marker suffixes are obligatory and their alteration or deletion lead to ungrammaticality of the sentence. The agreement paradigm for transitive and intransitive sentence varies. In intransitive verbs, agreement is directly with the subject, whereas in case of transitive, it is not the same. It shows split agreement pattern based on person hierarchy. This paper is intended to highlight the various forms of markers which are used for marking Person-Number Agreement system, rather than dealing with theoretical analysis of the agreement system itself.

Keywords: Morphosemantics, Agreement, Markers.

Introduction

Hawa-Nokte, a Tibeto-Burman Language is spoken in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Besides Tirap district, Noktes are also found in neighboring Changlang district under Bordumsa circle in Rajanagar of Arunachal Pradesh and in bordering area of Assam (in Joipur under Dibrugarh district of Assam). Earlier, Noktes were also known by different names such as Namsangia, Mohongia, Borduria, and Paniduria as reported in old administrative record (Grierson, 1903). Nokte language is generally comprises of five variations/dialectic groups namely: Hawa, Laju, Tang, Khapa and Phothung. According to 2001 Census, the overall population of Nokte is 33,680, out of which Hawa-Nokte constitute around 40% (13446 speakers)[1]

In brief about person and number in Hawa-Nokte, the language distinguishes three persons (first, second and third person) and three numbers (singular, dual and plural). Singular and plural number are present for all the three persons (1st, 2nd and 3rd) but it is interesting to note that dual is present only for first and second person and not for third person. Under third person, not only human, but non-human (such as animals, birds and reptiles), and natural objects (such as rain, wind, sun, etc.,) are also included. The following table represents the person, number and pronouns (subject) in Hawa-Nokte.

Person	***Singular***	***Dual***	***Plural***

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[1] Excluding Khonsa and Deomali town which have heterogeneous or mix population.

1st Person	ŋa 'I'	ɣʰəni 'we (two)'	ni/nikʰu 'we'
2nd Person	nəŋ 'you'	neɣʰe 'you (two)'	ne/nekʰu 'you'
3rd Person	əte '(s)he/it	--------	ɣʰənin/tʰənin 'they'

Personal pronouns in Hawa-Nokte

Paradigm of person-number with different tenses

As said above, in Hawa-Nokte, *Person-Number Agreement Markers* are generally suffixed to the finite verbs. The pattern of this agreement can be analyzed under two paradigms namely – (1) intransitive and (2) transitive.

1. Intransitive paradigm

In intransitive, every person-number agreement has two agreement markers. One is for present and future tense and another is for past tense. This is to say that agreement marker for present-future tense differ from that of past tense. This tense led variation in person-number agreement is same for all 1st, 2nd and 3rd person. This is represented in the data below:

(i) First person

Singular:

As said above, 1st person singular has two Person-Number agreement markers: /əŋ/ and /ək/. /əŋ/ marks the agreement in ***present*** and ***future tense*** as shown in (1 & 2) and /ək/ marks in ***past tense*** as shown in (3):

1. ŋa dʒup- əŋ (Present)
   1st.SG sleep- Agr
   'I sleep'

2. *ŋa* *e-dʒup-* *əŋ* (Future)
   1st.SG FUT-sleep- Agr
   'I will sleep'

3. *ŋa* *dʒup-* *t-* *ək* (Past)
   1st.SG sleep- PST- Agr
   'I slept'

Dual:

The 1st person dual and plural uses the same Person-Number agreement marker /i/ in both present and future tense as shown in (4 & 5) and (7 & 8) whereas in past tense, marker /iʔ/ is used as shown in (6) and (9):

4. *ɣʰeni* *dʒup-* ***i*** (Present)
   1st. DL sleep- Agr
   'We (two) sleep'

5. *ɣʰeni* *e-dʒup-* ***i*** (Future)
   1st.DL FUT-sleep- Agr
   'We (two) will sleep'

6. *ɣʰeni* *dʒup-t-* ***iʔ*** (Past)

1st.DL sleep-PST- Agr
'We (two) slept'

Plural:

7. *ni* *ʤup-* ***i*** (Present)
   1st.PL sleep- Agr
   'We sleep'

8. *ni* *e-ʤup-* ***i*** (Future)
   1st. PL FUT-sleep- Agr
   'We will sleep'

9. *ni* *ʤup-t-* ***iʔ*** (Past)
   1st. PL sleep-PST- Agr
   'We slept'

(ii) Second person

The 2nd person singular use Person-Number agreement marker /o/ in present and future as shown in (10 & 11) whereas in past, /oʔ/ is used as shown in (12). Likewise, the 2nd person dual and plural has two Person-Number agreement markers such as /en/ and /et/; the first one occurs in present and future as shown in (13 & 14) and (16 & 17), whereas the second one occurs only in past as shown in (15) and (18):

Singular:

10. *nəŋ* *ʤup-* ***o*** **(**Present)
    2nd.SG sleep- Agr
    'You sleep'

11. *nəŋ e-ʤup-* ***o*** (Future)
    2nd.SG FUT-sleep- Agr
    'You will sleep'

12. *nəŋ ʤup-t-* ***oʔ*** (Past)
    2nd.SG sleep-PST- Agr
    'You slept'

Dual:

13. *neʃʰe* *ʤup-* ***en*** (Present)
    2nd.DL sleep- Agr
    'You (two) sleep'

14. *neʃʰe* *e-ʤup-* ***en*** (Future)
    2nd.DL FUT-sleep- Agr
    'You (two) will sleep'

15. *neʃʰe* *ʤup-t-* ***et*** (Past)
    2nd.DL sleep-PST- Agr
    'You (two) slept'

Plural:

16. *nek^{h}u* *ʤup-* ***en*** (Present)
    2nd.PL sleep- Agr

    'You (all) sleep'

17. *nek^{h}u* *e-ʤup-* ***en*** (Future)
    2nd. PL FUT-sleep- Agr
    'You (all) will sleep'

18. *nek^{h}u* *ʤup-t-* ***et*** (Past)
    2nd. PL sleep-PST- Agr
    'You (all) slept'

(iii) Third person

In case of 3rd person, both singular and plural use Person-Number agreement marker /a/ in present and future tenses as shown in (19 & 20) and (22 & 23), whereas in past tense, Person-Number agreement marker /aʔ/ is used as shown in (21) and (24). However, in case of third person plural, if required, the plurality may be indicated by employing an additional morpheme /vək/ which immediately follows the verb root as shown in (22, 23 & 24). However, it is not obligatory and is rather optional. Verb agrees with the subject.

Singular:

19. *əte* *boəŋ-* ***a*** (Present)
    3rd.SG dance- Agr
    '(S)he dances'

20. *əte* *e-boəŋ-* ***a*** (Future)
    3rd.SG FUT-dance- Agr
    '(S)he will dance'

21. *əte* *boəŋ-t-* ***aʔ*** (Past)
    3rd.SG dance-PST- Agr
    '(S)he danced'

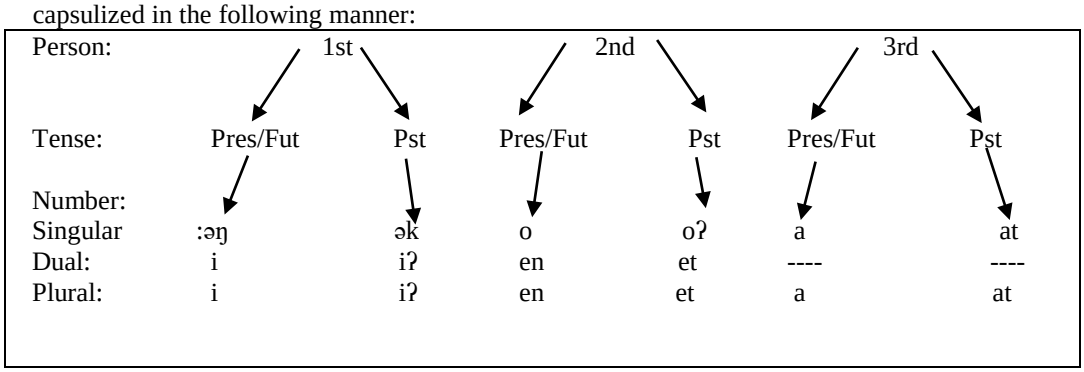
Plural:

22. *əʧ^{h}in* *boəŋ-(vək)-* ***a*** (Present)
    3rd.PL dance-(3PL)- Agr
    'They dance'

23. *əʧ^{h}in* *e-boəŋ-(vək)-* ***a*** (Future)
    3rd.PL FUT-dance-(3PL)- Agr
    'They will dance'

24. *əʧ^{h}in* *boəŋ-(vək)-t-* ***aʔ*** (Past)
    3rd.PL dance-(3PL)-PST- Agr
    'They danced'

From above data, it is seen that when it comes to ***Tense***, the agreement marker for present and future tense remain same. And when it comes to ***Number***, the agreement marker for Dual and Plural remain same. But when dual number is absent as in case of third person, plural Person-Number agreement marker is same as that of singular. Also, one important phonological feature to be noticed is that the glottal stop /ʔ/ function as phoneme as its occurrence and absence change the meaning as in /i/ - /iʔ/, /a/ - /aʔ/ in the instances above. It is surprising to note that Hawa-Nokte has dual for first and second person but not for third person. The whole Intransitive agreement marking system of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person in Hawa-Nokte can be capsulized in the following manner:



Person-Number Agreement Markers in Hawa-Nokte.

2.Transitive paradigm

In transitive, the agreement patterns behave differently. The same agreement marker can occur either with the *Agent* or the *Patient*. Whether it will occur on the agent or the patient is conditioned by the person hierarchy. Suppose if the *Agent* is *First person* and the *Patient* is *Second person*, the agreement marker occurs on *Agent* as first person is higher to second person in person hierarchy. In reverse, if *Agent* is *Second person* and *Patient* is *First person*, then the marker occurs on *Patient*. This shows that the agreement is not clearly directed to the subject but it rather exhibit split agreement pattern. To understand the nature of this split agreement pattern, the agreement may be analyzed based on semantic relationship of the core arguments such as *Agent* and *Patient* relationship.

(i) Agent [1st person] and Patient [2nd and 3rd person]

When the *Agent* is 1st person singular or plural and the *Patient* is 2nd person singular then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /i/ in present and future tenses as shown in (25a & b), whereas in past, it is marked by morpheme /iʔ/ as shown in (25c). Here, the verb agrees with the subject (the agent).

(25) a. *ŋa/ni- ma nəŋ-nəŋ vat-k-**i*** (Present)
1st.SG/PL -ERG 2nd.SG -OBJ beat-PRES-Agr
'I/we beat you'

b. *ŋa/ni- ma nəŋ-nəŋ e-vat-**i*** (Future)
1st.SG/PL- ERG 2nd.SG -OBJ FUT-beat- Agr
'I will beat you'

c. *ŋa/ni- ma nəŋ-nəŋ vat-t-**iʔ*** (Past)
1st.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG -OBJ beat-PST- Agr

'I/we beat you'

When the *Agent* is 1st person singular or plural and the *Patient* is 2nd person plural, then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /a/ in present and future tenses as shown in (26a & b), whereas in past, it is marked by morpheme /aʔ/ as given in (26c). The verb agrees with the subject (the agent).

(26) a. *ŋa/ni- ma ne-nəŋ vat-k-**a*** (Present)
1st.SG/PL -ERG 2nd.SG –OBJ beat- Agr
'I/we beat you'

b. *ŋa/ni- ma ne-nəŋ e-vat-**a*** (Future)
1st.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG -OBJ FUT-beat- Agr
'I/we will beat you'

c. *ŋa/ni- ma ne-nəŋ vat-t-**aʔ*** (Past)
1st.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG -OBJ beat-PST- Agr
'I/we beat you'

When the *Agent* is 1st person singular and the *Patient* is 3rd person singular or plural, then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /əŋ/ in present and future tenses as shown in (27a &b), whereas in past, it is marked by morpheme /ək/ as shown in (27c). The verb agrees with the subject (the agent).

(27) a. *ŋa-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ vat-k-**əŋ*** (Present)
1st.SG -ERG 3rd.SG/PL -OBJ beat-PRES-Agr
'I beat him/them'

b. *ŋa-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ e-vat-**əŋ*** (Future)
1st.SG -ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ FUT-beat-Agr
'I will beat him/them'

c. *ŋa-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ vat-t-**ək*** (Past)
1st.SG -ERG 3rd.SG/PL -OBJ beat-PST-Agr
'I beat him/them'

When the *Agent* is 1st person plural and the *Patient* is 3rd person singular/plural then the *Agent* is marked by /i/ in present and future tenses as shown in (28a & b) and in past, it is marked by morpheme /iʔ/ as given in (28c). The verb agrees with the subject (the agent).

(28) a. *ni-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ vat-k-**i*** (Present)
1st.PL-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ beat-PRES-Agr
'we beat him/them'

b. *ni-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ e-vat-**i***
(Future)
1st.PL -ERG 3rd.SG/PL -OBJ FUT-beat-Agr
'we will beat him/them'

c. *ni-ma əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ vat-t-**iʔ*** (Past)
1st.PL-ERG 3rd.SG/PL -OBJ beat-PST-Agr
'we beat him/them'

(ii) Agent [2nd person] and Patient [1st and 3rd person]

When the *Agent* is 2nd person singular and the *Patient* is 1st person singular, then the *Patient* is marked by morpheme /əŋ/ irrespective of tense/aspect as shown in (29). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(29) a. *nəŋ-ma ŋa-nəŋ vat-h-**əŋ***
2nd.SG-ERG 1st.SG-OBJ beat-INVS- Agr
'You beat me'

b. *nəŋ-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**əŋ***
2nd.SG -ERG 1st.SG -OBJ FUT-beat-INVS- Agr
'You will beat me'

c. *nəŋ-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**əŋ***
2nd.SG -ERG 1st.SG -OBJ beat-PST-INVS- Agr
'You beat me'

When the *Agent* is 2nd person singular or plural and the *Patient* is 1st person plural, then the *Patient* is marked by morpheme /i/ irrespective of tense/aspect as shown in (30). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(30) a. *nəŋ/ne-ma* *ni-nəŋ* *vat-h-**i***
2nd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL-OBJ beat-INVS- Agr
'You (pl) beat me'

b. *nəŋ/ne-ma ni-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**i***
2nd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL-OBJ FUT-beat-INVS- Agr
'You (pl) will beat me'

c. *nəŋ/ne-ma ni-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**i***
2nd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL -OBJ beat-PST-INVS- Agr
'You(pl) beat me'

When the *Agent* is 2nd person plural and the *Patient* is 1st person singular, then the *Patient* is marked by morpheme /a/ irrespective of tense/aspect as shown in (31). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(31) a. *ne-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *vat-h-**a***
2nd.PL-ERG 1st.SG -OBJ beat-INVS- Agr
'You (pl) beat me'

b. *ne-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**a***
2nd.PL-ERG 1st.SG -OBJ FUT-beat-INVS- Agr
'You (pl) will beat me'

c. *ne-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**a***
2nd.PL-ERG 1st.SG -OBJ beat-PST-INVS- Agr
'You (pl) beat me'

When the *Agent* is 2nd person singular and the *Patient* is 3rd person singular or plural, then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /o/ in present and future as shown in (32a & b), whereas in past, it is marked by morpheme /oʔ/ as given in (32c). The verb agrees with subject (the agent).

(32) a. *nəŋ-ma* *əte/əɟʰin-nəŋ* *vat-**o*** (Present)
2nd.SG-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ beat- Agr
'You beat him/them'

b. *nəŋ-ma* *əte/əɟʰin-nəŋ* *e-vat-**o*** (Future)
2nd.SG-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ FUT-beat- Agr
'You will beat him/them'

c. *nəŋ-ma* *əte/əɟʰin-nəŋ* *vat-t-**oʔ*** (Past)
2nd.SG-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ beat-PST- Agr
'You beat him/them'

When the *Agent* is 2nd person plural and the *Patient* is 3rd person singular or plural, then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /en/ in present and future as shown in (33a & b), whereas in past, it is marked by morpheme /et/ as shown in (33c). The verb agrees with the subject (the agent).

(33) a. *ne-ma* *əte/əɟʰin-nəŋ* *vat-**en***
(Present)
2nd.PL-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ beat-INVS-Agr
'You (pl) beat him/them'

b. *ne-ma* *əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ* *e-vat-**en*** (Future)
2nd.PL-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ FUT-beat-Agr
'You (pl) will beat him/them'

c. *ne-ma* *əte/əʧʰin-nəŋ* *vat-t-**et*** (Past)
2nd.PL-ERG 3rd.SG/PL-OBJ beat-PST-Agr
'You (pl) beat him/them'

(iii) Agent [3rd person] and Patient [1st and 2nd person]

When the *Agent* is 3rd person singular or plural and the *Patient* is 1st person singular, then the *Agent* is marked by morpheme /əŋ/ irrespective of tense/aspect as given in (34). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(34) a. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *vat-h-**əŋ***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.SG-OBJ beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat(s) me'

b. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**əŋ***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.SG-OBJ FUT-beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they will beat me'

c. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ŋa-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**əŋ***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.SG-OBJ beat-PST-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat me'

When the *Agent* is 3rd person singular/plural and the *Patient* is 1st person plural, then the *Patient* is marked by morpheme /i/ irrespective of tense/aspect as shown in (35). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(35) a. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ni-nəŋ* *vat-h-**i***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL-OBJ beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat(s) us'

b. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ni-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**i***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL-OBJ FUT-beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they will beat us'

c. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *ni-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**i***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 1st.PL-OBJ beat-PST-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat us'

When the *Agent* is 3rd person singular/plural and the *Patient* is 2nd person singular then the *Patient* is marked by morpheme /o/ irrespective tense/aspect as shown in (36). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(36) a. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *nəŋ-nəŋ* *vat-h-**o***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG-OBJ beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat(s) you'

b. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *nəŋ-nəŋ* *e-vat-h-**o***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG-OBJ FUT-beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they will beat you'

c. *əte/əʧʰin-ma* *nəŋ-nəŋ* *vat-t-h-**o***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.SG-OBJ beat-PST-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat you'

When the *Agent* is 3rd person singular or plural and the *Patient* is 2nd person plural then *Patient* is marked by morpheme /en/ irrespective of tense/aspect as given in (37). The verb agrees with the object (the patient).

(37) a. *əte/əʃʰin-ma ne-nəŋ vat-h-**en***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.PL-OBJ beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat(s) you'

b. *əte/əʃʰin-ma ne-nəŋ e-vat-h-**en***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.PL-OBJ FUT-beat-INVS-Agr
'He/they will beat you'

c. *əte/əʃʰin-ma ne-nəŋ vat-t-h-**en***
3rd.SG/PL-ERG 2nd.PL-OBJ beat-PST-INVS-Agr
'He/they beat you'

Based on the data presented above, the *Agent* and *Patient* relationship of transitive paradigm and its split agreement pattern can be capsulized for better observation as:

Agent	**Patient**	**Agreement Marked on Agent/Patient**	**Marker**	**Tense**
1st SG/PL	2nd SG	Agent is marked by	/i/	Present and Future
			/iʔ/	Past
1st SG	2nd PL	Agent is marked by	/a/	Present and Future
			/aʔ/	Past
1st SG	3rd SG	Agent is marked by	/əŋ/	Present and Future
			/ək/	Past
1st SG &	3rd SG/PL	Agent is marked by	/i/	Present and future
			/iʔ/	Past
2nd SG	1st SG	Patient is marked by	/əŋ/	All three tenses
2nd SG	1st PL	Patient is marked by	/i/	All three tenses
2nd PL	1st SG	Patient is marked by	/a/	All three tenses
2nd SG	3rd SG/PL	Agent is marked by	/o/	Present and future
			/oʔ/	Past
2nd PL	3rd SG/PL	Agent is marked by	/en/	Present and future
			/et/	Past
3rd SG	1st SG	Agent is marked by	/əŋ/	All three tenses
3rd SG/PL	1st PL	Patient is marked by	/i/	All three tenses
3rd SG/PL	2nd SG	Patient is marked by	/o/	All three tenses
3rd SG/PL	2nd PL	Patient is marked by	/en/	All three tenses

Split agreement pattern in Hawa-Nokte

The table above give a clearer picture of split agreement pattern in Hawa-Nokte as the agreement is marked either on *Agent* or *Patient* based on the person hierarchy of the two. The change in the Person-Number agreement marker is the result of phonological alternation. It may be observed that the final phonological segment (ŋ) of first person singular Person-Number agreement marker /əŋ/ changes to velar voiceless stop /k/ and the final phonological segment (n) of second person plural Person-Number agreement marker /en/ changes to alveolar voiceless stop /t/ in past tense. Also, whenever the past tense marker /t/ comes in between the verb stem

and the Person-Number agreement markers (such as /i/, /a/ and /o/) then the glottal stop /ʔ/ is added to the Person-Number agreement marker. However, if the Person-Number agreement marker is immediately preceded by inverse marker /h/, then no glottal sound is added. Also, it is clear from the above data that in terms of tense, the agreement marker has two forms, one for present/future tense and another for past tense. But it is observed that there are two occasions where this variation does not occur. One, when 1st person is in *Patient* position and another is when 3rd person is in *Agent* position.

Conclusion

There are ten Person-Number agreement marker such as /əŋ/, /ək/, /i/, /iʔ/, /o/, /oʔ/, /en/, /et/, /a/ and /aʔ/ in Hawa-Nokte. All these Person-Number Agreement markers are suffixed to verb. Present and Future tense take the same Person-Number agreement marker which differ from that of Past tense. The Person-Number agreement marker can occur with both intransitive and transitive verbs. In intransitive verbs, agreement is directly with the subject, whereas in case of transitive, it is not the same. It shows split agreement pattern based on person hierarchy.

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