

Variation in left-branching bound complementizers: बात बताने की (about *batānā* 'to report')

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ABSTRACT: This squib is a preliminary description of a phenomenon in Hindi-Urdu journalistic prose. It is focussed on the complements that are projected by the evidential hedging or framing verb बताना *batānā* 'to report'. Data from three different left-branching constructions is presented in order of increasing degrees of aberrance or deviation from what is found in non-journalistic prose and is presented in non-formalist detail.

Keywords

left-branching, projects, complement, complementizer, embed, homomorphic, concord, small clauses

Introduction

Like most verbs of speech and communication the verb बता- freely projects a right-branching *ki*-clause:

- (1) बताया गया कि उन्हें तीन रात-चार दिन का कंप्लीमेंट्री हॉलिडे स्टे के लिए चुना गया है ✓¹

batāyā gayā **ki** [unhẽ tīn rāt-čār din-kā kamlīmētrī hōḷiḍe sṭe ke.liye čunā gayā hai]
told PASS **that** [them.ACC 3 night-4 day-GEN complimentary holiday stay for chosen PASS PRES.PRF]

'It was reported that [they were selected for a complimentary holiday stay of three nights and four days].'

[navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/business/business-news/couple-invited- ... /articleshow/134689806.cms]

This squib is concerned not with *ki*-clauses like the one in (1) whose contents are in no way different from the normal grammar of independent sentences but with morphologically bound left-branching complementizers and the contents of the clauses they embed. The verb बता- projects three different left-branching complement constructions, each of which deserves a description and (some day) an explanation.

Participial complementizers

In this - the simplest type - the complementizer is homomorphic (hamšakal) with the participial affix which comes in three different forms: the habitual -*t@* (2), the progressive *rah@* (3) and the perfect -(*y@ hu*)*y@* (4):

- (2) पास के गन्ने के खेत से मांस सड़ने जैसी बदबू भी आती बताई गई है। ✓

pās.ke ganne ke khet se māṣ saṛ-ne jaisī **badbū** bhī ā-t-ī **batā-ī** ga-ī hai
nearby cane-GEN field-from meat rot-INF like **stench.FSG** too **come-PRES.PRT-FSG said-FSG** PASS.PST-FSG PRES

'A smell like rotting meat has also been reported to be coming from a nearby sugarcane field.'

[jagran.com/uttar-pradesh/farrukhabad-14840105.html]

Compare (2) with (2') where आती *ātī* 'coming' is a participle modifying the noun खुशबू *khušbū* 'fragrance'.

- (2') आती खुशबू मस्त है, कुल्हड़ में जब चाय ✓

ā-t-ī **khušbū** mast hai kulḥaṛ-mē jab čāy

come-PRES.PRT-FSG fragrance-FSG wonderful PRES clay.cup-in when tea

'The emerging fragrance is superb when the tea is in a kulḥaṛ (a clay disposable cup).'

[sahityapedia.com/post/188515/]

Compare (3) with (3') where हो रही *ho rahī* 'occurring' modifies the noun बढ़ोत्तरी *barhottarī* 'increase'.

- (3) बढ़ोत्तरी ... वैश्विक तापमान वृद्धि के प्रभावों के नतीजन हो रही बताई गई है। ✓

barhottarī...vaiśvik tāpmān vṛddhi-ke prabhāvō-ke natījan **ho rah-ī** **batā-ī** ga-ī hai

increase.FSG global warmth increase-GEN effects-GEN resultant **occur PROG-FSG said-FSG** PASS.PST-FSG PRES

'an increase ... said to be occurring as a result of the effects of global warming.' [news.un.org/...1044222]

¹ Marking examples with "✓" indicates that their sources have been checked for validity and stability.

(3') मूंगफली तेल के दाम में हो रही बढ़ोतरी ✓

mūṅphali tel-ke dām-mē ho rah-ī baṛhottarī 'The ongoing rise in the price of peanut oil ...'
groundnut oil-GEN price-in occur PROG-FSG increase.FSG [etvbharat.com/.../20230205132511605605047]

Compare (4) with (4') where गई हुई *gaī huī* '(who) had gone' is a participle modifying the noun पत्नी *patnī* 'wife'.

(4) सात दिन पूर्व ही उसकी पत्नी अहमदाबाद गई हुई बताई गई है। ✓

sāt din pūrv.hī uskī patnī ahmadābād ga-ī hu-ī batā-ī ga-ī hai.
seven days before his wife.FSG Ahmedabad gone-FSG been-PRF.FSG said-FSG PASS.PST-FSG PRES
'His wife reportedly left for Ahmedabad seven days ago.'

[bhaskar.com/news/raj-oth-mat-latest-parbatsar-news-045504-860750-nor.html]

(4') मायके गई हुई पत्नी ने पति को फोन किया "क्यों जी, कब लेने आ रहे हो मुझे?" ✓

māyke ga-ī hu-ī patnī-ne pati-ko phon.kiyā kyō jī, kab le.ne ā.rahe.ho mujhe?
Mom's.home gone-FSG been-PRF.FSG wife-ERG husband-DAT phoned well Sir when take-INF coming me.ACC
'A wife who'd gone to her parents' home called her husband, "So when are you coming to pick me up?"'
[quora.com/ ... पति-क्यों-पत्नी-लडाई-करने-का-जो-मजा-आपक]

Participial complementizers preserve the broader aspectual properties of the embedded clause's verb but do not preserve specific TAM (tense, aspect, mood) information nor the person, gender and number agreement features that corresponding *ki*-clauses would keep. According to Rajesh Bhatt (p. c.), the intercalation of any auxiliary having finitizing properties into left-branching participial constructions is not possible. Indeed, the result of doing so in (2), (3) or (4) is the creation of two independent sentences with default to the masculine singular form बताया *batāyā* in the former matrix. (Concord does not normally cross over intersentential gaps)

Infinitival complementizers

There are two embedding patterns in which the complementizer is homomorphic with the infinitival affix *n@*. In one of them (the more commonly occurring one) the infinitive agrees in gender and number with the subject of the complement. TAM features of the complement are not preserved. They may be inferred from TAM features of the matrix बताया *batānā*, from immediate context, or from general knowledge of the world.

(5) युवक की मौत डेढ़ दिन पहले होनी बताई गई है। ✓

yuvak.kī maūt ḍeṛh din pahle ho-n-ī batā-ī ga-ī hai.
youth's death.FSG 1.5 days before occur-INF-FSG said-FSG PASS-FSG PRES
'The young man's death is said to have occurred a day and a half before.'

[navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/state/uttar-pradesh/ghaziabad/woman-and-husband-.../66610583.cms]

If the complement is a "small clause" (Shah 1995) then the subject of the complement is marked with the accusative postposition को *ko*, the agreement pattern that is seen in (5) is blocked, and the passive or preterite participial of बताया *batānā* assumes the invariant masculine singular default form बताया *batāyā* seen in (6):²

(6) जिस स्थल-से महिला को गिरना बताया जा रहा है ... ✓

(report of 10 June 2023)

jis sthal-se mahilā-ko gir-nā batā-yā jā rah-ā hai
which place-from woman.FSG-ACC fall-INF.DEF.MSG say-DEF.MSG PASS PROG-DEF.MSG PRES

'The spot from which the woman is being said to have fallen ...' [patrika.com/raipur-news/...-8300142]

² Although less commonly encountered as matrices, other verbs of communication such as कहना *kahnā* 'to say' and सूचित करना *sūcīt karnā* 'to indicate' exhibit a multiplicity of complementizers and complement constructions similar to what we see for बताया *batānā*. Compare (i)'s small clause infinitival structure with the infinitival small clause structure in (6):

(i) उन मतों की उचित बातों को उन्होंने वेदों में पहले से उपलब्ध होना सूचित किया है ✓

un matō-ki učit bātō-ko unhō-ne vedō-mē pahle.se uplabdh ho-nā sūcīt.ki-yā hai
those views-GEN correct things.FPL-ACC he-ERG Vedas-in already available be-INF.DEF.MSG indicated-DEF.MSG PRES
'He has stated that the correct points of those views are already available in the Vedas.'

[www.pravakta.com/being-theist-or-atheist-is-a-matter-of-ignorance/]

In the second infinitival pattern (a less common and grammatically more perplexing type), the complementizer is homomorphic with an affix which appears as an invariant masculine singular default form *-nā* as in example (7)'s हो जाना *ho jā-nā* 'to occur':

- (7) युवक 45 फुट नीचे जा गिरा और उसकी मौत हो जाना बताई जा रही है। ✓
 yuvak 45 phuṭ nīche jā girā aur us.kī maut ho jā-nā batā-ī jā rah-ī hai.
 youth 45 feet down GO fell and his death.FSG occur GO-INF say-FSG PASS PROG-FSG PRES
 'The young man fell 45 feet down and is being said to have died.'
 [www.patrika.com/damoh-news/stunt-in-train-latest-news-damoh-2079433]

It is to be remarked that in (7) the passive participial form of बताना *batānā*, namely बताई *batā-ī*, is a feminine singular form agreeing in gender and number with मौत *maut* 'death', the subject of its clause, while unlike what we observe in example (5) the infinitival complementizer does not agree with the subject.³

Speakers seem to find these multiplicitous concord patterns puzzling enough to omit them altogether and default to the masculine singular. Compare (8)'s concord with feminine singular आग *āg* 'fire' vs (10)'s defaults:

- (8) शॉर्ट सर्किट से आग लगनी बताई जा रही है ✓
 ṣorṭ sarkaṭ-se āg lag-nī batā-ī jā rah-ī hai
 short circuit-from fire.FSG start-INF.FSG say-PRT.FSG PASS PROG-FSG PRES
 'The fire is being said to have started from a short circuit.'
 [jagran.com/uttar-pradesh/shamli-city-11870214.html] (three similar examples)

- (9) शॉर्ट सर्किट से आग लगना बताया जा रहा है ✓
 ṣorṭ sarkaṭ-se āg lag-nā batā-yā jā rahā hai.
 short circuit-from fire.FSG start-INF.DEF say-PRT.DEF.MSG PASS PROG.DEF.MSG PRES
 'The fire is being said to have started from a short circuit.'
 [navabharat.com/?p=286187] (about a hundred similar examples)

Example (10) presents another alternative, more popular and simpler than the concord patterns in (7) and (8):

- (10) शॉर्ट सर्किट से आग लगने की बात बताई जा रही है ✓ (report of 07 Mar 2016)
 ṣorṭ sarkaṭ-se āg lag-ne-kī bāt batā-ī jā rah-ī hai
 short circuit-from fire.FSG start-INF.OBL-GEN thing.FSG say-FSG PASS PROG-FSG PRES
 'The fire is being said to have started from a short circuit.'
 [inextlive.com/uttar-pradesh/allahabad/fire-in-government-press-109934] (about 75 similar examples)

Abbreviations

In glosses small caps are used for abbreviations and for vector verbs in the senses of their etymological sources.

ACC = accusative DAT = dative DEF = default ERG = ergative GEN = genitive INF = infinitive -n@ = -nā, -ne, -nī, -nī
 OBL = oblique PASS = passive PRES = present PROG = progressive PERF = perfect PRT = participial PST = past

References

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 dspace.uohyd.ac.in/server/api/core/bitstreams/b2028fb4-083f-4eb5-813e-2a1fa5e564b2/content

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³ Perhaps the feminine singular *batā-ī* in (7) agrees not with *maut* but (as in a headline) with a silent वजह *vajah* 'reason':

(i) महिलाओं ने किया प्रदर्शन, पेमेंट में देरी होना बताई गई वजह
 mahilāō-ne kiyā pradārśan, pemeṇṭ-mē derī ho-nā batā-ī ga-ī vajah
 women-ERG made protest payment-in delay.FSG be-INF-MSG.DEF say-FSG PASS.PST-FSG reason.FSG
 'Women protested, citing delay in payment as the reason.'
 [bhaskar.com/local/uttar-pradesh/kushinagar/... -angry-due-to-non-construction-of-chhath-ghat-133906246.html]