

## Addressee markers on verbs: a form of agreement?

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There are varieties of Tamil, primarily non-Brahmin, wherein a visitor might take leave of a host with the utterance in (1b), rather than (1a):

1. a.      seeri, naan    var-            een.  
              okay, I        come.nonpst. 1sg.
- b.      seeri, naan    var-            een-go.  
              okay, I        come.nonpst. 1sg.-go
- ‘Okay, I shall take leave now.’

In (1), the verb is marked for agreement with the first person singular subject *naan*, by the morpheme *-een*. The present tense is marked by the *r* (the residue of *kir*) in *var*. What then is the function of the morpheme *go* in (1b)?

This morpheme evidently functions here as some kind of addressee marker. In the dialects under discussion, *go* is a variant of standard Tamil *gaL* (*kaL/ kkaL*). *GaL* is the plural morpheme, which surfaces on plural nouns (irrespective of person),<sup>1</sup> and on verbs with plural subjects as plural agreement (for second and third person subjects only). Notice in (2), *go/ gaL* on the subject noun (which is plural), and on the verb (which agrees with its plural subject).

2. a.      avan-go        varaan-go.  
              3masc.-pl.    come- pl.
- b.      avar-gaL      varaar-gaL. (Std. Ta.)<sup>2</sup>  
              they-pl.        come- pl.  
              ‘They come.’
- c.      nii -ngo        varee-ngo.  
              you-pl.        come-pl.
- d.      nii -ngaL      variir-gaL. (Std. Ta.)  
              you-pl.        come-pl.  
              ‘You (pl.) come.’

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<sup>1</sup> Compare:

	singular	plural	
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	kuzhandai ‘child’	kuzhandaigaL ‘children’	
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	nii ‘you (sg.)’	niingaL ‘you (pl.)’	
1 <sup>st</sup> person	naan ‘I’	naangaL ‘we’	

<sup>2</sup> In old (standard) Tamil, *gaL* attached as a redundant plural marker to the verbal morphemes *-aar* and *-iir*, which themselves signified the plural. Currently, however, the latter convey only honorificity, and *gaL* is required for plural agreement (it may optionally mark honorificity). See Lehmann (1989:20) and Caldwell (1913:402-403) for discussion.

Comparing (1b) with (2), we notice that in (1b) there is no plural noun phrase in the sentence at all, which the verb can be said to be agreeing with. (We have noted that the verb in (1) has a first person singular subject with which it is marked for agreement.) It carries the plural morpheme *go* as an *optional* additional marker; it should be noted that *go/ gaL* is not optional when the subject is plural (cf. n.2).

The morpheme *go* in (1b), then, is not an instance of number agreement, but (apparently) a marker of “agreement” with an inferred addressee who is accorded respect.<sup>3</sup> Thus (1b) would be inappropriate if the addressee were a child, or a social inferior. The *go* would then be omitted (as in (1a)), or perhaps substituted by some other appropriate addressee marker (we return to this below). Compare also the following discourse which may occur between an employer and a domestic help:

3. a. *dhoobi vandirukk-aan- aa?*  
 washerman has.come -3m.sg.- Q  
 ‘Has the washerman come?’
- b. (pro) *vandirukk-aan- go.*  
 (he) has.come -3m.sg.- *go*  
 ‘He has come.’

In (3), the subject of the question (and the understood *pro* subject of the answer) is the third person masculine singular noun *dhoobi*, and the verb is marked for agreement with this subject, by *aan*. But notice the presence, in the answer, of *go*. This *go* is clearly understood to refer, not to the subject (which is neither honorific nor plural), but to the addressee. It is interesting (thus) to find, on switching the roles of the employer and employee in (3), that *go* now appears on the question:

4. a. *dhoobi vandirukk-aan- aa- ngo?*  
 washerman has.come -3m.sg.- Q - *go*  
 ‘Has the washerman come?’
- b. (pro) *vandirukk-aan.*  
 (he) has.come -3m.sg.  
 ‘He has come.’

Given that the *go* in (1b), (3b) and (4a) refers to the addressee, what is the relationship, if any, between this element and the plural agreement marker *go* in the sentences in (2)? Should the former also be considered some sort of “agreement” marker? The issue arises not merely because of the homophony of the two *gos*, and the (putative, but plausible) genesis of the one

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<sup>3</sup> The use of the plural as a marker of honorificity or politeness towards the addressee is of course well-instantiated in languages in the pronominal system, where the plural pronoun is used for singular referents. Compare the Tamil *nii-niingaL* distinction, which corresponds to the French *tu-vous* distinction. Plural marking for honorificity may lead also to “agreement conflict,” with plural verb agreement surfacing for singular third person subjects. Cf. a Hindi sentence like *masterjii ayee he~* ‘Mr. Teacher have come,’ as against *masterjii ayaa he*. The difference between examples like this Hindi sentence and our (1b) in the text, however, is that in (1b), the subject is a first person singular pronoun, and the sentence is not understood to mean that the speaker is according himself respect!

from the other. It arises out of the fact that the “agreement” of a verb with an addressee who is not an overtly expressed argument in the sentence appears to be a phenomenon not unnoticed in the typology of agreement.<sup>4</sup>

It must surely be of interest to find such a kind of “agreement” (apparently) in a language as well-studied as Tamil, and to note, moreover, the dialect-specificity of this phenomenon (it is absent in standard Tamil). I shall however show that it is inappropriate to extend the notion of “agreement” to addressee markers like *go*, notwithstanding their origin; and illustrate how “addressee agreement” differs from conventional agreement in three Dravidian languages, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu.

I shall argue that the data pertaining to addressee markers which mimic agreement morphemes are nevertheless of theoretical interest. Plural agreement markers (to begin with) appear to be predisposed to take on the function of honorificity. Thereafter, they appear to embark on a journey to freedom, evolving into “addressors” or vocatives in their own right, and losing altogether their bound morpheme status. The violation by the “addressee agreement” morpheme of the sentence-bound anaphoric link that characterizes the canonical agreement morpheme is, I suggest, a sign of the setting-in of this process.

It has been persuasively argued by Givon (1976) that agreement markers on verbs originate from pronouns serving as topic markers, in “topic-oriented” constructions such as left-dislocation. The reduction of pronominal forms into clitics and agreement markers is a process of grammaticalization which parallels (e.g.) the evolution of the topic into the subject of the sentence. What we see in the case of plural agreement markers which emerge as indicators of honorificity, first for subjects and later for addressees, is the reverse of this process: a process of “degrammaticalization,” with the erstwhile agreement morpheme first enabled to find its referent in discourse (outside the sentence) and then to stand on its own as a vocative, along with other bonafide vocative expressions in the language.

The Tamil sentence (1b) (repeated as (5a)) immediately brings to mind the corresponding Kannada example (5b) and the Telugu example (5c).

- |             |        |          |                             |           |         |
|-------------|--------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 5. a. (=1b) | seeri, | naan var | -een-go.                    | Tamil     |         |
|             | okay,  | I        | come.nonpst-1sg.- <i>go</i> |           |         |
|             | b.     | sari,    | naan(u) bart                | -iin-rii. | Kannada |
|             | c.     | sare,    | neen(u) vastaa              | -n-aNDi.  | Telugu  |

The morphemes *rii* and *aNDi* above have the same function that we have identified for *go*, of indicating respect towards the addressee.<sup>5</sup> We shall see that all these three morphemes originate from plural agreement morphemes. But in their extended function of honorific addressee agreement, they all now appear (i) in sentences where the verb does not show any agreement at all, and (ii) on “hosts” other than the verb.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the discussion of addressee agreement in Magahi in M. K. Verma (1990).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Krishnamurti and Gwynn (1985:70): “*aNDi*/*aNDii* at the end of a sentence denotes politeness in address. It is roughly equivalent to ‘Sir/Madam’ or ‘please’ in English.” Again, on p.301, *aNDi* is discussed as a “vocative clitic.” No relationship (functional or genetic) is postulated by these authors between the vocative clitic *aNDi* and the second person plural imperative suffix *aNDi*.

It is well-known that in Tamil, Kannada and Telugu, verb phrases with the negative morphemes *ille*, *illa* and *leedu* (respectively) exhibit no agreement.<sup>6</sup> These environments do, however, allow the occurrence of the addressee markers *go*, *rii* and *aNDi*.

6. a. Tamil dhoobi varalle-ngo / vandille-ngo.  
 washerman come.not-go came.not-go  
 ‘The washerman did not come/ has not come.’  
 b. Kan. dhoobi baralilla-rii. / bandilla - rii.  
 c. Tel. dhoobi raaleed - aNDi.

Constructions with modals are another instance in these languages wherein the usual verb agreement is absent, but addressee markers are allowed to occur. The examples in (7) have a prohibitive modal, those in (8) an optative.

7. a. Tamil kuzhandai/ avan/ naango ippaDi seyya-kkuDaad-ngo.  
 child / he / we like this do-must not -go  
 ‘The child/ he/ we should not act in such a way.’  
 b. Kan. magu/ avanu/ naavu hiige maaDa baaradu- rii.  
 c. Tel. pilla/ aayana/ manamu ilaa chey-kuuDad(u)- aNDi.  
 8. a. Tamil kuzhandai/ avan/ naango ippaDi seyya-llam-aa-ngo?  
 child / he / we like this do- may - Q - go  
 ‘May the child/ he/ we do this?’ (= is it right for the child ...)  
 b. Kan. magu/ avanu/ naavu hiige maaDa bahudaa- rii?  
 c. Tel. pilla/ aayana/ manamu ilaa chey-wocch-aa- aNDi?

Evidently, then, the above addressee markers on verbs are not ‘agreement’ in the same sense as person-number-gender agreement. That is, if conventional agreement originates as AGR under INFL (in a GB-type analysis), these markers are not generated there. Thus whatever blocks AGR under INFL (such as Modal or Neg) does not block the surfacing of these markers.

With regard to their surface position, we must note that these markers do not appear in the same position or ‘slot’ in the verbal complex as other agreement morphemes. This is attested to by examples which are questions. Notice thus the examples in (8) above, which are questions; as also example (4a) (repeated here):

9. (=4a) a. dhoobi vandirukk-aan -aa- ngo?  
 washerman has.come -3m.sg.- Q - go  
 ‘Has the washerman come?’

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the range of persons, numbers and genders of subjects for the invariant VP ‘did not come’ in these languages:

1p. Tamil	naan/ naangaL	<b>varalle</b>	Kannada	naanu/ naavu	<b>baralilla</b>	Telugu	neenu/ meemu	<b>raa-leedu</b>
2p.	nii/niingaL	<b>varalle</b>		niinu/ niivu	<b>baralilla</b>		nuvvu/ miiru	<b>raa-leedu</b>
3p.	avan/avargaL	<b>varalle</b>		avanu/avaLu	<b>baralilla</b>		atanu/ vaLLu	<b>raa-leedu</b>
	avaL/ adigaL	<b>varalle</b>		avaru/adu	<b>baralilla</b>		avi/adi/ aame	<b>raa-leedu</b>

In (8) and (9), the addressee marker *follows* the question morpheme, whereas regular agreement morphemes cannot be so separated from the verb; they precede the question morpheme (cf. the position of *-aan*, 3sg.m. agreement, in (9)).

Further evidence for the independence of these markers from the regular complex of agreement markers on the verb is the possibility of their surfacing on nouns (cf. 10), wh-question words (cf. 11), and expressions such as *yes*, *no*, *alright* (cf. 12).

10. i. (In answer to a 'who' question)

a. Tamil            inda payyan-ango.  
                          this boy    -go  
                          '(It is) this boy, sir/ madam.'

b. Kan.            ii    huDugaa-rii.

c. Tam.            ii    pillawaaD- aNDi.

ii. (In answer to a 'when' question)

a. Tamil            neet-ango.  
                          yesterday-go  
                          '(It was) yesterday, sir/ madam.'

b. Kan.            nenne-rii.

c. Tel.            ninna- aNDi.

11. a. Tamil            yeppaDii-ngo?        yennatkki -ngo?  
                          how -go                why        -go  
                          'How, sir/ madam?' 'Why, sir/ madam?'

b. Kan.            heege-rii?            yaatakke-rii?

c. Tel.            yeTla-NDi?            yendukk-aNDi?

12. a. Tamil            aaman-ngo; ille-ngo; serii-ngo  
                          yes -go    no -go    okay-go  
                          'Yes, sir/ madam; no, sir/ madam; alright, sir/madam.'

b. Kan.            houdu-rii; illa - rii; sari-rii.

c. Tel            awun(u) -aNDi; leed(u)-aNDi; seri(le)-aNDi.

Although (thus) the addressee markers *go*, *rii* and *aNDi* are no longer part of the person-number-gender agreement complex, they have undeniable affinities with verb agreement systems. There is, first of all, evidence for their origin from plural agreement markers. We have seen the homophony in Tamil between the addressee marker *go* and the plural marker. Kannada *rii* and Telugu *aNDi* similarly have counterparts in second person plural agreement markers which, moreover, convey honorificity. While *aNDi* surfaces only in imperative verb forms, *rii/ ri* occurs in the present and past tenses as well as (optionally) in imperative sentences.

13. a. Kan. i.            *niivu bar-utt -iiri.*  
                               you.pl.come-nonpst-2pl.  
                               ‘You come.’
- ii.            *niivu ba -nd-iri.*  
                               you.pl.come-pst-2pl.  
                               ‘You came.’
- iii.            *niivu banni-ri.*  
                               you.pl.come.imp.-pl.  
                               ‘You (pl.) please come.’
- b. Tel.            *miiru raa-NDi.*  
                               you.pl.come.imp.-pl.

In postulating the above plural markers as the source for the corresponding addressee markers, we are of course making a much stronger claim than is strictly entailed by the observation of homophony between them. It appears unlikely, however, that there is any other explanation of the data of comparable generality. Thus consider an explanation which takes into account the fact that verb agreement suffixes are themselves pronominal in origin (Caldwell op.cit.:481ff.); recall also Givon’s suggestion, noted above, that all verb agreement originates as pronominal topic-marking. We may thus ask whether the homophony of addressee markers and verb agreement suffixes in Dravidian is attributable to a shared pronominal source.

Such a view is perhaps plausible in the case of *aNDi*. This is because, as noted by Caldwell (op.cit.:531), the second person plural imperative suffix *aNDi* is in fact “the vocative of an obsolete noun, *sirs* (used honorifically to mean sir).” The survival of this obsolete vocative form as an addressee marker, parallel with its recruitment as an agreement marker, might conceivably explain the Telugu facts.

But this explanation does not carry over to *go* and *rii* (i.e. to Tamil and Kannada). *Go* (*gaL*) is not remotely (pro)nominal; it is a marker of plurality, which attaches to nouns and verbs. Suppose (now) we maintain that it is the plural morpheme *go per se* (rather than the verb agreement marker *go*) that underlies addressee *go*. The advantage (or otherwise) of this is not clear, since now (in any case) we have lost sight of a common explanation for *go* and *aNDi*; viz., that they both function both as plural agreement markers *and* as addressee markers. Moreover, if it is the nominal plural marker *go* rather than the verb agreement morpheme *go* which has extended its function to include reference to the addressee, the question arises why the Telugu nominal plural marker *lu* (a derivative of *gaL*, cf. Caldwell op.cit.:245) does not occur in this function. (Observe that our analysis predicts that *lu* will not take on this function, as it is not a marker of verb agreement.)

As for Kannada *rii*, this appears transparently the closest to the second person plural agreement marker *ri* on the verb. Its relation to the plural pronominal forms *niivu* (second person) and *avaru* (third person) is less obvious, and it differs in the vowel from the third person plural agreement morpheme *ru*.

The hypothesis that the addressee markers in question arise from plural agreement markers (in particular, second person plural agreement markers) thus appears to be the most general. It accounts for the commonality in behaviour of three morphemes, which differ in their remote origins, in terms of their functional coincidence as verb agreement markers.

Of the three morphemes *go*, *rii* and *aNDi*, Kannada *rii* appears to have moved away the farthest from its plural agreement progenitor. It not only has a long vowel /i:/, contrasting with the short /i/ of verb agreement; *rii* may appear as a free morpheme, i.e. as a vocative, whereas *go* and *aNDi* may not:

14. a. Kan. *rii!* *nimage ondu phone call bandide rii.*  
       voc. you.dat. a phone call has.come *rii*  
       ‘Sir/ Madam! There is a phone call for you.’
- b. Tel. \**aNDi!* *miiku oka phone call wacchind-aNDi.*
- c. Tam. \**go!* *ungaLkki oru phone call vandirkki-ngo.*

In the Kannada example (14a), *rii* functions on par with “addressors” or vocatives like *saar* ‘sir,’ *ayya* ‘sir’ or *amma* ‘madam.’ The latter are also capable of initiating an utterance in Telugu and Tamil. *aNDi* and *go*, however, can appear as utterance-initiators only when encliticized to wh-words: *yeemaNDi!* (lit. *what+aNDi*), *yennango!* (lit. *what+go*).<sup>7</sup>

In spite of their enclitic status, however, it is with the vocatives that *aNDi* and *go*, like *rii*, now form a natural class, in their extended function of “addressee agreement.”<sup>8</sup> Thus *rii* in Kannada is in complementary distribution with *saar/ ayya* ‘sir’ or *amma* ‘madam,’ and similar data obtain for Telugu and Tamil. That is, there appears to be a ‘slot’ in the sentence for an addressor, which accommodates only one such expression.<sup>9</sup> In (15-17), the difference in acceptability between the examples in (a) and those in (b) (which have the sequence *rii/ aNDi/ go* + *saar/ amma*, both terms intended to refer to the addressee) is palpable. The examples in (15-17 c) show that the reverse sequence is clearly ungrammatical.

15. Kan. a. *nimage ondu phone call bandide rii/ saar/ amma.*  
       b. ?? *nimage ondu phone call bandide rii saar/ rii amma.*  
       c. \**nimage ondu phone call bandide saar rii/ amma rii.*
16. Tel. a. *miiku oka phone call wocchind aNDi/ saar/ amma.*  
       b. ?? *miiku oka phone call wocchind aNDi saar/ aNDi amma.*  
       c. \* *miiku oka phone call wocchind saar aNDi / amma.aNDi*
17. Tam. a. *ungaLkki ori phone call vandirukk-ngo/ saar/ amma.*

<sup>7</sup> We may contrast the requirement of a wh-‘host’ for *aNDi* in Telugu with the absence of such a requirement for *raa*, an informal vocative, which can surface either as *yeemraa* (‘*what+raa*’) or *oree*, where it requires only a euphonic vowel to surface independently, cf. Krishnamurti and Gwynn 1985:300).

<sup>8</sup> We observed, in connection with example (1b), that a child addressee for this sentence would necessitate either the omission of *go*, or the substitution of some other appropriate marker. Two such markers are the morphemes *Dii* (feminine) and *Daa* (masculine), which are also free morphemes (vocatives).

<sup>9</sup> This was pointed out to me by K. G. Vijaykrishnan.

b. ?? ungaLkki ori phone call vanderukk-ngo saar/ ngo amma.

c. \* ungaLkki ori phone call vanderukk saar-ngo / amma- ngo.

When comparing the acceptability of examples parallel to the sentences in (b) of (15-17), care must be taken to avoid contexts where the first addressee marker can be construed as a bonafide agreement marker. The clearest examples of such occurrences are imperative sentences (cf. (18-20)), where *rii/aNDi/go* occur as plural agreement markers (albeit here as “mere” honorific plurals!). We have seen that canonical agreement markers occupy a surface position other than that of addressee markers; it is therefore unexceptionable to find the sequence *rii/aNDi/go + saar/ amma* in (18-20):<sup>10</sup>

18. Kan. a. togoLramma (tegedukoLLi-ri-amma).

take.2p.pl. *amma*

‘Amma, please take (it).’

b. banrissar; kuutkoLri saar.

come.2p.pl. *saar* sit.2p.pl. *saar*

‘Sir, please come in; sir, please sit down.’

19. Tel. a. teeskoNDi amma.

take.2p.pl. *amma*

‘Amma, please take (it).’

b. kuuchaNDisaar.

sit 2p.pl. *saar*

‘Sir, please sit down.’

20. Tam. a. eDuttukoongoo amma.

take.2p.pl. *amma*

‘Amma, please take (it).’

b. ukkarungo saar.

sit 2p.pl. *saar*

‘Sir, please sit down.’

Data such as (15-17) (compared with (18-20)) thus argue for a single position for addressor morphemes, wherein they are in complementary distribution. Obviously, however, the position for addressors cannot be simply a surface position that is fixed at any point (or to any one element) in the sentence, given the variety of such positions noted in the data in (10-12). We shall maintain that these morphemes have “a” position in the following sense: they are linked, wherever they occur in the sentence, to a sentence-initial ADDRESSEE position, analogous to a sentence-initial TOPIC position. As regards the precise location of the addressee marker in the sentence, we shall say that it typically appears attached to that element in the sentence which receives focus.

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<sup>10</sup> There is apparently a constraint against a sequence of two *riis*, *aNDi*s or *gos* on the surface: *?togoLririi*; *?teeskoNDaNDi*; *?yeDikoongongo*

To see this, we must consider two types of data, both pertaining to restrictions on the occurrence of addressee markers. So far, the data showed that addressee markers are less restricted than agreement, in that they appear in clause-types (modals and negatives) where agreement does not occur. However, these markers are also subject to a stricter restriction than agreement, in that they occur in main clauses only: they do not “go down” into embedded clauses. (Recall that agreement, across languages, is normally restricted only with respect to finiteness; it appears in all tensed clauses.) Thus in (21), the addressee marker *go* cannot occur in the complements to the verbs ‘looked to see (if),’ ‘asked,’ ‘said,’ ‘thought,’ and ‘misthought;’ it occurs only on the matrix verb.

21. Tam. a. dhoobi vandiṛukk-aan -aa-nni paartt-*een-go/ keeTT-*een-go*.*  
 washerman has.come-3m.sg. -Q-COMP saw-1sg.-*go* asked-1sg.-*go*  
 ‘I looked to see if/ I asked if the washerman had come.’

b. dhoobi vandiṛukk-aan -nni sonn-*een-go/ nenacch-*een-go/ yeemand-*een-go*.**  
 washerman has.come-3m.sg.-COMP said-1sg.-*go/ thought-1sg.-*go/misthought**  
 ‘I said/ thought/ mistakenly thought that the washerman had come.’

It is possible, in the case of complements to verbs like ‘ask’ or ‘say,’ for an addressee marker to occur on the embedded verb. But now, the “complement” clause is understood as direct discourse; a “quoted” clause, which is not subordinate to the main verb.<sup>11</sup>

22. a. dhoobi vandiṛukk-aan -aa -ngo -nni keeTT-*een.*  
 washerman has.come-3m.sg.-Q-*go* COMP asked-1sg.-*go*  
 ‘I asked, “Has the washerman come?”’

b. dhoobi vandiṛukk-aan-*go* -nni sonn-*een.*  
 washerman has.come-3m.sg. -*go* -COMP said-1sg.  
 ‘I said, “The washerman has come.”’

Similar data hold for Kannada and Telugu. The restriction of addressee markers to main clauses calls to mind the many “root S” phenomena first noted by Emonds (1976), including ‘focusing’ constructions such as Topicalization and Left Dislocation. Main clause-only phenomena have also been argued to be subject to (ill-understood) semantic constraints.<sup>12</sup> Whether the appropriate restriction for addressee markers turns out to be in terms of a structural notion or a semantic notion, such a restriction appears natural for a class of elements sensitive to a discourse element such as “addressee.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The use of a complementizer or complementizer-like element to introduce direct discourse as well as indirect discourse is a feature of many Indian languages, including Hindi and Oriya. Koopman (1984:90) notes similar data in Vata, a Kru language spoken on the Ivory Coast. She observes that despite parallel surface structure, the two types of clauses differ with respect to grammatical processes such as pronominalization and extraction, with direct discourse complements functioning as islands.

<sup>12</sup> Hooper and Thompson (1973) and others argue that the relevant notion for “root phenomena” is that the clause is “asserted.”

<sup>13</sup> That the domain for examining addressee-marking phenomena is larger than the sentence is suggested by the following data. Consider again utterances such as in (14), where a vocative is followed by a sentence carrying

Even within the main clause, addressee markers cannot surface indiscriminately in all the environments where they are permissible. Thus we saw that they may attach variously to nouns, wh-words, etc., in addition to the verbal complex. But as (23) shows, they cannot surface simultaneously in all these positions (care must be taken to exclude other readings for *go*<sup>1</sup> and *go*<sup>3</sup> such as the noun plural and its corresponding agreement marker):

23. Tam. \*inda payyan-*go*<sup>1</sup> yengee-ngo<sup>2</sup> poonaan-*go*<sup>3</sup>?  
 this boy - *go* where - *go* went.3sg.m.-*go*  
 ‘Where did this boy go?’

In fact, the addressee marker most naturally surfaces cliticised to the sentence-focused element. Typically, nouns with addressee markers occur in utterances where the nominal expression is the focused phrase in a cleft construction.

24. Tam. inda payyan-ee-ngo neetti naan paartt-adi.  
 this boy -acc. -*go* yesterday I saw-nom.  
 ‘It is this boy, sir/ madam, that I saw yesterday.’

It is close to impossible to place *go* on the non-focused clause in the cleft construction. *Go* on wh-words is also most natural when the wh-word is cleft-focused. In neutral statements, *go* ordinarily appears cliticised to the verbal complex (or VP), which is arguably the focus in such constructions.

To sum up, we have evidence that certain addressee markers originate from plural agreement morphemes, but move away from the AGR complex of person-number-gender features. They pattern with other free morphemes (vocatives), although they may vary among themselves in their status along the bound morpheme – free morpheme axis. They typically appear attached to the focal element in the sentence; and they are very probably linked to a topic-like sentence-initial addressee position.

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an addressee marker. Where the vocative and the addressee marker are not the same, the result is varying degrees of unacceptability:

- (i) rii! nimage ondu phone call bandide rii.  
 (ii) ?saar! nimage ondu phone call bandide rii.  
 (iii) \*rii! nimage ondu phone call bandide saar.

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