Disagreeing in Hindi-Urdu

We show that Hindi-Urdu has a presuppositional negation $\text{thor. i}$: along the lines of Italian $\text{mica}$ (Cinque 1976, Frana & Rawlins 2015). Like $\text{mica}$, it is elsewhere in the language a nominal modifier that denotes a small quantity with meaning ‘a few/little’. We demonstrate its presuppositional nature, delimit its distribution, and compare it to Italian ‘mica’ with which it shares a number of properties but from which it differs in its inability to appear in questions. $\text{thor. i}$: imposes a requirement that its prejacent have been entertained in the context and that the utterance it appears in expresses a disagreement with the entertained prejacent.

The distribution of $\text{thor. i}$: to a first approximation tracks that of the default negation $\text{nah\text{"i}}$: – like $\text{nah\text{"i}}$:,

$\text{thor. i}$: appears in the verbal complex when it negates the sentence and is right adjacent to a constituent that it negates when it functions as constituent negation.

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. sentential negation:
\begin{verbatim}
Mona=ne Gita=ko ḍāːt-a:  \text{thor. i}: \text{thaa}
\end{verbatim}
Mona=Erg Gita=Dat scold-Pfv little be.Pst
\begin{verbatim}
‘Mona hadn’t scolded Gita.’
\end{verbatim}
\item b. constituent negation:
\begin{verbatim}
[[Mona=ne] \text{thor. i}:] Gita=ko ḍāːt-a:  \text{thaa}
\end{verbatim}
Mona=Erg little Gita=Dat scold-Pfv be.Pst
\begin{verbatim}
‘It wasn’t Mona who scolded Gita. (Someone else had.)’
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}

But differences emerge when we consider the demands that $\text{thor. i}$: puts on the preceding context. Consider a situation where I ask you to tell me something about your friend Mayank, who I don’t know anything about. Then to tell me that Mayank does not like lazy people, you can use the default negation but not $\text{thor. i}$:.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Mayank=ko aalsi: log pasand $\text{nah\text{"i}}:/\text{thor. i}: \text{ha}i$
Mayank=Dat lazy people like Neg/little be.Prs.Pl
\begin{verbatim}
‘Mayank doesn’t like lazy people.’
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}

The intuition is that no proposition involving Mayank has been under consideration as far as I am concerned and this is what makes $\text{thor. i}$: infelicitous here. The relevance of the preceding context and prior expectations is also shown by the following sequence used by Frana & Rawlins 2015 for $\text{mica}$.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Background: S and A live in Amherst and want to go to a party in NYC.
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. no prior expectation that my sister has a car:
A: How are we going to get there?
S: pata: $\text{nah\text{"i}}$: aajkal meri: behen=ke paas car $\text{nah\text{"i}}:/\text{thor. i}: \text{h}ai$
\begin{verbatim}
\begin{verbatim}
know Neg these.days my sister=Gen near car Neg/little is
\end{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}
\begin{verbatim}
‘I don’t know. These days my sister does not have a car.’
\end{verbatim}
\item b. prior expectation that my sister has a car:
A: How are we going to get there? Couldn’t your sister give us a ride?
S: meri: behen=ke paas car $\text{nah\text{"i}}:/\text{thor. i}: \text{h}ai.$
\begin{verbatim}
my sister=Gen near car Neg/little is
\end{verbatim}
\begin{verbatim}
‘My sister does not have a car.’ (response is ‘emphatic’ with $\text{thor. i}$:)
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

In (3b), the preceding question shows that a discourse participant presupposes that my sister has a car. But it is not necessary for the proposition negated by $\text{thor. i}$: to be explicitly articulated/presupposed. Here are two cases where $\text{thor. i}$: is infelicitous even though the proposition it negates has not been explicitly articulated/presupposed by any discourse participant.
(4)  

a. context: S tries to pick up a cat. The cat looks scared (from Frana & Rawlins 2015).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dāro mat! mē tumhē maṛūga: thori:} \\
\text{fear not I you.Dat hit.Fut.1Sg little}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Don’t be afraid. I’m not going to hit you.’

b. context: at dinner with my mother, I assert that making a certain kind of cake at home is difficult. Then I realize that she has made this very cake and she will interpret my comment to mean I think her cake is bad.

\[
\begin{align*}
aap=\text{kaa kek kharab thori: hai you.Hon=Gen cake bad little is }
\end{align*}
\]

‘Your cake isn’t bad.’

In both (4a, b), thori: can be used to negate a proposition which is not ever expressed but which the speaker has reason to believe is held by a discourse participant. To an initial approximation, the presuppositional semantics suggested in Cinque 1976 and articulated in Frana & Rawlins 2015 for mica work for thori: – it is felicitous only if the proposition is negated is assumed by some discourse participant.

Apart from its presuppositional nature, thori: differs from nahī: in how it interacts with PPIs: PPIs can normally outscope nahī: and hence ‘rescue’ themselves, they cannot do so with thori:. The intuition that we are pursuing is that thori: takes highest scope within its clause making it impossible for the PPI to scope over it. thori: does not differ from nahī: wrt NPI-licensing; both license NPIs.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(5) Ram=ne [kuch kita:bē]\text{ppī nahī:/#thoriː parhī:}}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Ram didn’t read some books.’

Finally, we turn to the distribution of thoriː in questions and in embedded clauses. Unlike mica, thoriː is categorically ruled out in questions, both Y/N questions and wh-questions. This follows from the presuppositional nature of thoriː – there is a conflict between the information seeking properties of questions and the presuppositional requirements of thoriː.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(6) kyaa Mohit=ne Rina=se baat nahī:/#thoriː kīi? Q Mohit= Erg Rina= Inst talk.F Neg/little did.F }
\end{align*}
\]

‘Did Mohit not talk to Rina?’

The distribution of thoriː in embedded clauses is also very limited – it is not possible in if-clauses, when-clauses, because-clauses, or relative clauses. It is, however, possible in complements of verbs like think but not emotive factives like be happy/sad (see Frana 2016 for similar restrictions on mica).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(7) context: A: It’s raining. B: mujhe lagtaa hai ki baarish thoːriː ho rahii hai me.Dat seem Prs that rain little be Prog.F is }
\end{align*}
\]

‘I think that it is not raining.’

We believe that these restrictions on embedding reveal a further aspect of thoriː - in addition to its presuppositional requirements by which the prejacent of thoriː must have been entertained in the discourse, an utterance in which thoriː: appears must be used to express disagreement with the entertained proposition. The disagreement requirement holds in (7) - B disagrees with A, but it would not hold for if/when/because/relative clauses even if the presuppositional requirement held. Note that we need both components – emotive factives would have disagreement but the factivity would be incompatible with the presuppositional requirement.