



Ā-POSITIONS AND CASE: AMAHUACA NOMINATIVE AS CASE + FOCUS

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THE PUZZLE

The Amahuaca suffix *-x* has properties of a nominative case marker but also of a focus marker

1. AMAHUACA CASE MORPHOLOGY

- Amahuaca (Panoan, Peru) has two case-related suffixes
 - x* can appear only on intransitive subjects
 - n* can appear only on transitive subjects
- DPs can also appear in an unmarked form

- (1) **vaku-x**=mun raku=xo=nu
child-NOM=C be.afraid=3.PST=DECL
'The CHILD was afraid.'
- (2) **xano-n**=mun **kunti** choka=hi=ki=nu
woman-ERG=C pot wash=IPFV=3.PRES=DECL
'The WOMAN is washing the pot.'

- These facts suggest an underlying tripartite case system with nominative, ergative, and accusative

(3) Amahuaca case markers

Case	Argument marked	Form (SG/PL)
NOM	S	-x / -vax
ERG	A	-n / -van
ACC/default	S/A/O	-∅ / -vo

2. SECOND POSITION EFFECTS

- Amahuaca has a second position clitic =mun
- This clitic must be preceded by exactly one XP

- (4) Initial DP
[xano-n ino]=**mun** jiri=hi=ki=nu
woman-GEN dog=C eat=IPFV=3.PRES=DECL
'The woman's dog is eating.'
- (5) Initial PP
[nihi mura]=**mun** joni-n jiriti
forest inside=C man=ERG food
vuna=xo=nu
look.for=3.PST=DECL
'The man looked for food in the woods.'
- (6) Initial embedded clause
[oko=xon]=**mun** yohi=hi joni=ki=nu
cough=SS.ERG=C say=IPFV man=3.PRES=DECL
'The man says that he coughed.'

- The syntactic second position effects suggest that =mun is in C, and that C has an EPP feature

3. INITIAL FOCUS POSITION

- The initial position in Amahuaca is associated with focus
- The constituent in an answer corresponding to the *wh*-word in a question appears initially (Rochemont, 1998)

- (7) Object focus
- a. jau=ra joni-n rutu=hax
what=INT man-ERG kill=PERF
'What did the man kill?'
- b. **jono**=mun joni-n rutu=xo=nu
peccary=C man-ERG kill=3.PST=DECL
'The man killed a PECCARY.'
- (8) Subject focus
- a. tzova-n=ra jono rutu=hax
who-ERG=INT peccary kill=PERF
'Who killed the peccary?'
- b. **jaa joni-n**=mun jono rutu=xo=nu
DEM man-ERG=C peccary kill=3.PST=DECL
'That MAN killed the peccary.'

4. NOMINATIVE AND FOCUS

- Only focused intransitive subjects receive nominative

- (9) a. tzova-x oxa=hax=ra=ki
who-NOM sleep=PERF=INT=3.PRES
'Who is sleeping?'
- b. **xano-vaux**=mun oxa=hax=ki=nu
woman-PL.NOM=C sleep=PERF=3.PRES=DECL
'The WOMEN are sleeping.'

- In pragmatically neutral contexts, unfocused initial subjects appear without nominative marking

- (10) **xano(#-x)**=mun koshi ka=hi=ki=nu
woman-NOM=C quickly go=IPFV=3.PRES=DECL
'The woman is running.'

- The interaction of case and focus, rather than position, suggests that nominative is not assigned due to A-like properties of Spec,CP (cp. van Urk's (2015) account of A-like properties of Spec,CP in Dinka)

THE PROPOSAL

Amahuaca nominative marking is sensitive to both case and focus. It expones agreement with two heads:

- Intransitive *v* (Legate, 2008)
- C that bears a [Focus] feature

5. NOMINATIVE IS NOT FOCUS ONLY

- x* is not a general focus marker and can only appear on DPs that have agreed with an intransitive *v*

- (11) a. jau choka=hi=ra xano=ki
what wash=IPFV=INT woman=3.PRES
'What is the woman washing?'
- b. **kari(*-x)**=mun choka=hi
yam-NOM=C wash=IPFV
jan=ki=nu
3.SG=3.PRES=DECL
'She is washing YAMS.'
- (12) a. atza=mun choka=hi xano=ki=nu
manioc=C wash=IPFV woman=3.PRES=DECL
'The woman is washing manioc.'
- b. maki, **joni-n(*-x)**=mun atza
no man-ERG-NOM=C manioc
choka=hi=ki=nu
wash=IPFV=3.PRES=DECL
'No, the MAN is washing manioc.'

6. ABSTRACT CASE AND *v*

- Amahuaca grammar shows independent evidence of intransitive subjects agreeing with *v*
- A series of switch reference markers encode coreference of embedded clause subjects with any argument of matrix verbs
- These markers show agreement with matrix nominative DPs that have agreed with *v* even when those DPs are unmarked

- (13) Embedded subject coreferential with matrix nominative
[oxa=shara=**hax**]=mun ka=hi
sleep=well=SS.NOM=C go=IPFV
xano=ki=nu
woman-3.PRES=DECL
'Having slept well, the woman goes.'
- (14) Embedded subject coreferential with matrix ergative
[oxa=shara=**xon**]=mun kunti choka=hi
sleep=well=SS.ERG=C pot wash=IPFV
xano=ki=nu
woman=3.PRES=DECL
'Having slept well, the woman is washing pots.'

7. VOCABULARY INSERTION

- In order for a DP to receive nominative marking it must be an intransitive subject bearing the feature [*v*_{INTR}] from an Agree operation with *v*
- Nominative marked DPs must also be focused, bearing a bundle [C,Focus] from an Agree operation with a C that bears a [Focus] feature

- (15) Vocabulary Items
- | | | |
|--|---|------|
| [D],[<i>v</i> _{INTR}],[C,Focus] | ↔ | /-x/ |
| [D],[<i>v</i> _{TR,φ}],[T] | ↔ | /-n/ |
| [D] | ↔ | /-∅/ |

CONCLUSIONS

- Amahuaca nominative expones both case and focus
- The incompatibility of nominative with arguments other than intransitive subjects can be derived via features received from agreement with *v*
- The infelicity of nominative on unfocused DPs can be derived from agreement with C that bears [Focus]
- Amahuaca case morphology expones bundles of features received from agreement with multiple heads

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