Case-marking and object interpretation in Nez Perce[*]

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0.   Introduction

A long tradition in linguistic research teaches us the importance of discerning grammatical relations within a transitive clause. Languages vary in the dimension along which they oppose the arguments of a transitive verb (e.g. subject/object, or agent/patient in many ergative languages), as well as in the morphosyntactic terms in which the opposition is expressed. However, it has widely been assumed to be the case that all languages somehow allow "recovery" of grammatical relations, whether by "syntactic" means, i.e. word order, or "morphological" means, i.e. case-marking. Thus Jespersen, for instance, writes that the "simplification of grammatical structure, abolition of case distinctions, and so forth, always go hand in hand with the development of a fixed word order" (1922:361).

The starting point of this paper is a sentence type in Nez Perce (Penutian) which flies in the face of this apparent universal. In clauses like (1), neither nominal is case-marked, and verbal marking fails to differentiate subject from object, since both are 3rd person. Rude (1992:196-197) shows that word order is not fixed in this type of clause, a conclusion replicated in my own field research.[1]

[1] Abbreviations used in this and following examples are: SUBJ transitive subject case, OBJ objective case, GEN genitive case, INST instrumental case, LOC locative case, 3SUBJ 3rd person subject prefix, 3OBJ 3rd person object prefix, 3/3 3rd person subject and 3rd person object portmanteau prefix, S.PL plural subject prefix, DESID desiderative, HAB habitual aspect, INC incompleteaspect, INC.PL incompleteaspect and plural subject portmanteau, COND conditional mood, Q question particle. Note that Nez Perce verbs do not show overt person agreement with 1st or 2nd person arguments. See the extensive discussion of morphology in Crook (1999).

(1)   Iin-im   ciq'áamqal   hi-p-teetu   núkt   *ANTIP type*
            1SG-GEN dog   *3SUBJ-eat-HAB* *meat*
            'My dog eats meat'

This clause type in Nez Perce is known as the antipassive, following Rude (1985, 1986). It contrasts morphologically with the transitive clause type, Rude's "ergative" type, shown in (2).

(2)   Iin-im   ciq'aamqal-**nim** **pée**-p-teetu   nukú-**ne**   *TRANS type*
            1SG-GEN   *dog-SUBJ*   *3/3-eat-HAB*   *meat-OBJ*
            'My dog eats meat'

Rude has shown that on a variety of discourse diagnostics, antipassive clause objects are "demoted" by comparison to transitive clause objects: in particular, their referents are more likely to be discourse-new, and less likely to persist in discourse. This finding underlies his application of the term "antipassive" to clauses like (1).

      However, as many have noted, the Nez Perce antipassive construction identified by Rude does not conform to the morphology typical of antipassive clauses in other languages. Most notably, no antipassivizing morpheme is found on the verb, and the object does not appear in an otherwise attested oblique case (despite the fact that the language has several oblique case-markers used in other languages' antipassives: GEN, INST, LOC, etc.). The object is indeed optional (in accordance with an antipassive diagnostic identified by Bittner and Hale 1996), but even this does not argue for an antipassive analysis of the Nez Perce phenomenon, as objects in morphologically transitive clauses in Nez Perce are equally optional. Thus, despite the discourse evidence considered by Rude, a full-fledged argument for the assimilation of Nez Perce clauses like (1) with the cross-linguistic phenomenon of Antipassive has been lacking.

      This paper offers a new perspective on this debate: antipassives, I will claim, can be diagnosed purely semantically, even in the face of recalcitrant morphology. The next section introduces Wharram's (2003) semantics for antipassive, and section 2 provides preliminary semantic evidence that an antipassive is indeed in play in Nez Perce. Section 3 then examines the transitive construction of Nez Perce, arguing that it stands in a relation of PRIVATIVE OPPOSITION with the antipassive construction, in accordance with which antipassive clauses are acceptable in a proper subset of contexts in which transitive clauses are acceptable.

1.   A semantics for antipassive
Following a tradition of work on Inuit and West Greenlandic (Bittner 1987, Van Geenhoven 1998), Wharram (2003:69) proposes a semantics for Antipassive according to which the antipassive morpheme existentially closes the object of a transitive verb and requires that the "antipassive object" (typically marked in oblique case) be interpreted as

a property. The antipassive morpheme is thus as follows:[2]

(3)   ANTIPASSIVE: $\lambda P_{<e<st>>} \lambda Q_{<et>} \lambda e . \exists x (P(x)(e) \& Q(x))$

An example is given below for the hypothetical VP *pick-ANTIPASSIVE berry* (which may be thought of as roughly equivalent to English "berry-picking"):

(4) $\lambda e . \exists x (pick(x)(e) \& berry(x))$

$\lambda Q \lambda e . \exists x (pick(x)(e) \& Q(x))$ berry
                                                                     $\lambda y . berry(y)$

        pick   ANTIP
$\lambda z \lambda e . pick(z)(e)$ $\lambda P_{<e<st>>} \lambda Q_{<et>} \lambda e . \exists x (P(x)(e) \& Q(x))$

The overall meaning of the antipassive VP in (4) is a function to events of picking something berry-y, so to speak.[3] The definition of ANTIPASSIVE given in (3) thus preserves the long-standing insight that antipassivization involves detransitivization, or "demotion" of the object: by existentially closing the verb's argument, the antipassive morpheme brings about semantic detransitivization. Antipassive objects are "weak" -- they are not referential, but rather receive a property interpretation. Thus the antipassive (3) retains earlier findings on the transitivity status of antipassivizes, and provides a precise characterization of object "demotion".[4]

Wharram's dissertation provides a detailed analysis of Inuktitut and West Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) data based on (3). Rather than reviewing his findings for those languages here, let us consider the further predictions we might make based on this analysis of antipassive.

A first finding comes from the interaction of antipassivization with thematic relations. Baker (1988, §7.2.3.2) notes a curious generalization: antipassivization seems to be restricted to themes, not direct objects in a morphosyntactic sense. Even in cases where non-theme arguments may be marked with object case and agree like objects (e.g., goal or source arguments in ditransitive constructions), non-theme arguments remain inaccessible to antipassivization.[5] Why should this be? In a framework such as Kratzer's

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[2] Types are: *e*, individuals; *s*, events; *t*, truth-values.

[3] A similar meaning may be found in incorporation constructions in other languages; I speculate that differences between incorporation and antipassive may be entirely morphological, not semantic. However, see Dayal (2003) for discussion of cross-linguistic variation in the semantics of (pseudo)-incorporation.

[4] In this discussion and throughout the paper I abstract away from the many interesting issues surrounding intensional verbs, which on some analyses require arguments of a property type quite independently of antipassivization (Zimmermann 1993); I hope to address some of these issues in future work.

[5] This effect may be approximated with English incorporating agentives such as *money sender,* but **home sender* (except on the reading 'someone who sends homes').

(2003), we arrive at a simple solution: only themes may antipassivize because only themes are true arguments of verb roots.[6] Assuming non-themes are introduced by Voice/Applicative heads (e.g. Kratzer 1996, 2003, Pylkkänen 2002) and that antipassive selects for (verbal) roots (see Marantz 1997), the type-definition of antipassive will prohibit it from bringing about existential closure of non-theme arguments. Thus, the relation between thematic role and antipassivization falls out as predicted by the combination of (3) and Kratzer's arguments that verbs introduce all and only theme arguments. Insofar as Baker's generalization is valid, then, it constitutes novel support for both Kratzer's and Wharram's proposals.

Further predictions of the analysis in (3) concern the types of object DPs that are admissible in antipassive clauses. If the "antipassive object" is interpreted as a property, typically referential terms such as proper names should only be possible in antipassives if they may be coerced into a property reading. Objects that cannot be so coerced should be ungrammatical under antipassive. This includes any truly quantificational phrases, e.g. most universally quantified DPs.[7] Also to be prohibited from antipassives are truly referential terms, e.g. names which have no associated property (for whatever cultural, pragmatic or discourse-related reason), 1st or 2nd person pronouns,[8] or terms which take scope over intensional verbs or modals.

These consequences of the antipassive semantics in (3) translate into the diagnostics listed below.

(5) *Semantic diagnostics of antipassive*
   a. No truly referential antipassive objects.
   b. Proper names under antipassive have a non-referential interpretation.
   c. No universally quantified antipassive objects.
   d. No antipassive objects with scope over intensionals or modals.
   e. Antipassive is restricted to themes.

In the following section, several of these diagnostics are applied to Nez Perce, arguing for an antipassive semantics even in the absence of an overt antipassivizing morpheme. This

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[6] By contrast, a definition of antipassive that treats internal arguments and agents equally, e.g. (i), slightly modified from Stiebels (2006:558), cannot capture this finding.
(i)   λP λQ λx λe . ∃y [P(x)(y)(e) & Q(y)]
[7] Distributive universals (e.g. *each boy*) provide the best test cases of this prediction. DPs quantified with non-distributive universals (*all boys*) may receive a collective interpretation; DPs with apparent existential quantification *(a boy)* could appear under antipassive if their existential force is provided DP-externally, as famously suggested by Heim (1982). See also Kratzer (2005) and references cited there for discussion of indefinites in this light.
[8] Keen (1983) claims that the language Yukulta <u>requires</u> antipassive with 1st or 2nd person objects. If this is the case, the so-called antipassive of this language cannot be analyzed on a par with the Nez Perce cases discussed below or the Inuktitut cases analyzed by Wharram. Such cases highlight the need for a semantic, not morphological, diagnosis of antipassivization.

in turn suggests the presence of a <u>covert</u> head with the form (3) in Nez Perce antipassives.

2.   Nez Perce
2.1   No referential objects in antipassive
When a proper name is truly referential, antipassive cannot be used. Thus, in reference to tribal linguist Harold Crook, transitive (6) is acceptable to my informant and antipassive (7) is not.[9]

(6)   *Context: we're organizing a ballgame and picking players for our teams.*

nuun	'e-wewluq-siix	Harold-ne	poxpók'liit-ki	TRANS
1PL	*3OBJ-want-INC.PL*	*H-OBJ*	*ballgame-INST*	

We want Harold for the ballgame

(7)   #nuun wewluq-siix Harold   #ANTIP
         1PL   *want-INC.PL*   *H*

Likewise, in reference to a cat named Fili, (8) is acceptable to my informant but (9) is not. Note that by contrast, if no particular cat is named, such a sentence becomes acceptable, (10).

(8)   Fili-ne iceyéye-nm   paa-p-sa-qa   TRANS
         F-OBJ   *coyote-SUBJ*   *3/3-eat-INC-PST*

A coyote ate Fili

(9)   #iceyéye hi-p-sa-qa   Fili   #ANTIP
         coyote   *3SUBJ-eat-INC-PST* *F*

(10)   iceyéye   hii-p-teetu   pícpic   ANTIP
         coyote   *3SUBJ-eat-HAB*   *cat*

Coyotes eat cats

These examples pattern as predicted by (5a): proper names, a classically referential class of nouns, cannot typically appear as objects in antipassive clauses.

2.2 Antipassive with non-referential proper names
In contexts where proper names could be plausibly coerced into a non-referential reading, my informant accepted antipassives with proper name objects. These typically received a

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[9] See (12) for a grammatical case of antipassivized *wewluq* 'want'. It is not my impression that antipassivization in Nez Perce is verbally governed, though some verbs are typically antipassive, e.g. *haní* 'make'.

"thing named X" or "the word X" reading.[10] A first example comes from a discussion of Nez Perce and English names for various locations. In this context, the names *Boise* and *Pasẋa* (the Nez Perce name for Boise) are plausibly interpreted as non-referential, such that the sentence in (11) is not contradictory.

(11) Context: Pasẋa   hii-we-s   Boise
                    Pasẋa   *3SUBJ-be-INC   Boise*
                    Pasẋa is Boise

      … kaa Lini hi-tmíipn'ise   Boise kaa weet'u   hi-tmíipn'ise   Pasẋa
      … and Lini 3SUBJ-remember Boise and   not   3SUBJ-remember   Pasẋa
      Lini remembers "Boise" but she doesn't remember "Pasẋa"   ANTIP

Similarly non-referential uses of names are found in (12).[11] In this case, non-referential names fail to take scope over the verb *wewluq* 'want/need'; this is as predicted on the assumption that antipassive objects are interpreted as properties, which do not take scope.

(12) kismis-pe   sapatk'ayn   wewluq-siix Meli kaa Cosef   ANTIP
      christmas-LOC   show   want-INC.PL Mary and Joseph
      'For the Christmas show we want a Mary and a Joseph'

A final illustration of the effect of antipassive on name referentiality comes from the minimal pair in (13)-(14), where my informant noted an interesting contrast:

(13) Weet   timíipn'ise   Rhode-Island   ANTIP
      Q   remember   RI
      Do you remember Rhode Island?
      Comment: "Sounds more like you're asking about the word 'Rhode Island'"

(14) Weet   'e-tmíipn'ise   Rhode-Island-ne   TRANS
      Q   3OBJ-remember RI-OBJ
      Do you remember Rhode Island?
      Comment: "That's more like a direct question about Rhode Island"

In accordance with what we have seen so far, the TRANS-clause object *Rhode-Island-ne* may be interpreted referentially, whereas the ANTIP-clause object must be interpreted as a property.[12]

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[10] Since the property associated with a particular name is produced by coercion, and not lexically stored, variation is expected in the exact interpretation assigned to a name under antipassive.
[11] Thanks to Cathy O'Connor for suggesting I elicit this example.
[12] Example (13) might be compared to an case of coercion such as 'Do you remember a Bob?'

2.3 Antipassive objects scope under intensional verbs (preliminary evidence)
Bittner (1987) argues extensively for narrow scope of antipassive objects with respect to negation and "world-creating predicates" such as intensional verbs. Although I was largely unsuccessful in eliciting contrasts with negation, an interesting effect was found with *'ipew'i* 'look for'. Without any background context implying the existence of purple cats, my consultant offered an antipassive for (15):

(15) 'ipéew'i-se cíiciyele pícpic   ANTIP
       seek-INC   purple   cat
       I'm looking for a purple cat

The transitive counterpart of this example, perhaps tellingly, seemed to commit the speaker to the existence of a purple cat:

(16)   'e-'péew'i-se   cíiciyele picpíc-ne   TRANS
        3OBJ-seek-INC purple   cat-OBJ
        I'm looking for a purple cat
        Comment: "There's a cat out there that is purple and you're looking for it"

This contrast is again as predicted by the antipassive semantics in (3). Because antipassive objects denote properties, and hence are scopeless, the antipassive clause (15) cannot commit the speaker to the existence of a purple cat in the actual world. (In section 3, I will argue that the transitive clause does not semantically commit the speaker to the existence of a purple cat in the actual world either, but that the perceived wide scope with the transitive form is due to a pragmatic inference.)

2.4 Summary
Thus far I have given data to confirm three predictions of the antipassive analysis in (3). Referential proper names are disallowed under antipassive; only names which can receive a property interpretation can appear as antipassive-clause objects. Additionally, antipassive objects take scope below predicates such as *'ipew'i* 'look for', as predicted by Wharram's analysis as well as Bittner's (1987) account. I believe the predictions regarding universal quantifiers and non-theme objects will be confirmed as well, though future fieldwork is needed to provide complete paradigms in these respects.

3.   The status of transitive objects
In her pioneering work on the semantics of antipassive, Bittner (1987) argues for the Scope Generalization given below:

> If an argument can be expressed either by an NP in the case predicted by the parameter settings for
> the language or by some other kind of the phrase, then the parametric alternant [i.e. the transitive
> object] will obligatorily take wide scope with respect to sentential operators, such as negation,

> tense, aspect, modals, the distributive operators, etc., while the nonparametric alternant [i.e. the antipassive object] will be permitted to take scope under those operators. It may in fact be restricted to take narrow scope. (Bittner 1987:230)

Note that the claim is that transitive objects ("parametric alternants") <u>must</u> take wide scope, whereas antipassive objects ("nonparametric alternants") <u>may</u> take narrow scope.[13]
    Although we have seen preliminary evidence for narrow scope of antipassive objects in Nez Perce, evidence for obligatory wide scope of transitive objects is lacking. Examples (17) show that transitive objects may take scope below negation:

(17)a. weet'u   'itúu-ne   míne   póo-pciy'aw-cix   TRANS
        not   INDEF-OBJ where   3/3-kill-INC.PL
        They didn't shoot anything anywhere (Aoki and Walker 1989, 230.60)

   b. weet'u   'itúu-ne   'e-wéwluq-se   TRANS
        not   INDEF-OBJ 3OBJ-want-INC
        I don't want anything

   c. weet'u   'ituu-ne   'e-ki-ce   ('etke   hii-wes   cik'éet'is)   TRANS
        not   INDEF-OBJ 3OBJ-see-INC because   3SUBJ-is   dark
        I don't see anything (because it's dark)

In a similar vein, examples (18) show transitive objects which apparently take scope below intensional operators, viz. the verb *wewluq* 'want' in (18a) and the desiderative suffix in (18b).

(18)a. hi-pe-eyéex̱-ne   titóoqan kaa nukú-ne   pée-wewluq-sene   TRANS
        3SUBJ-S.PL-hunger-ASP person   and meat-OBJ 3/3-want-REMOTE.PAST
        The people were hungry and wanted meat (Aoki and Walker 1989, 243.84)

   b. Floríin   pee-p-t'ipéecwi-tetu   k'ok'cac-na   TRANS
        F   3/3-eat-DESID-HABIT   pear-OBJ
        Florine likes to eat pears   (Crook 2006)

    The fact that transitive objects do not show a uniform semantic behavior is not surprising on the account explored here. Antipassive objects, in languages whose

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[13] Note too that this generalization is stated in a purely morphological way. As I have discussed in previous work (Deal 2006), data from Nez Perce problematize any reliance on surface case in the assessment of semantic properties such as scope. In particular, in addition to its antipassive construction discussed here, Nez Perce requires the exact same type of morphology (no case-marking, subject-only agreement) in clauses where the subject binds the possessor of the object; a number of diagnostics show that such clauses are syntactically distinct from antipassive clauses. See Deal (2006) for data and discussion.

lexicons contain a morpheme as in (3), are restricted in their scopal behavior by virtue of the property interpretation brought about by the lexical entry for antipassive, (3). Yet nothing in the transitive combination of verb with object rules out narrow scope in this case as well, as English easily shows us (e.g., *I don't see a purple cat*).[14] All theories of intensionality must somehow enable transitive predicates to deliver wide and narrow scope readings for their objects. That the lexicon of a particular language contains an antipassive morpheme should not interfere with a narrow-scope interpretation of objects in sentences without any such morpheme.

There does remain an important insight behind the Scope Generalization, however, as cases like (16) have shown. If the transitive clause does not entail wide scope for the object, what explains the intuition that (16) commits the speaker to the existence of a purple cat? I argue that the explanation here must be pragmatic. By the semantics of antipassive, ANTIP (15) has only the scopal option *look for > purple cat*; TRANS (16), however, may have either *look for > purple cat* or *purple cat > look for*. If the speaker does not wish to commit herself to the existence of a purple cat, she will use the antipassive, (15), by the maxims of Quantity and Manner: she conveys that there is not a specific purple cat that she is seeking. If she chooses instead the TRANS form (16), she implies by the maxims of Quantity and Manner that she is not licensed to state the clause in a more informative (w.r.t. scopal possibilities), less ambiguous way.

In a nutshell, then, (16) but not (15) leaves the option of wide scope open to the object 'purple cat', and in doing so, produces the pragmatic impression that wide scope is the only possibility. The relation between the antipassive and transitive clause types is thus one of PRIVATIVE OPPOSITION: of the two alternating clause types, only one, the antipassive, is semantically "marked" (i.e., commits the speaker to a particular interpretation of the object NP). Yet the particular meaning brought about by the antipassive is nevertheless also possible in the transitive construction: the transitive is felicitous in a superset of the contexts in which the antipassive is felicitous. Unlike the antipassive, the transitive does not commit the speaker to any particular object semantics (and so may be described as semantically "unmarked").[15]

This pragmatic approach to the apparent wide scope of transitive objects in languages with antipassive constructions explains how cases like (17) and (18) are possible, where transitive objects clearly scope below negation and intensional operators. It also explains the intuitions behind the Scope Generalization, in that it provides a simple

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[14] See Pereltsvaig (2006) for arguments that certain bare nominals in Russian and other languages receive a property interpretation even as true objects of (extensional) transitive verbs; see van Geenhoven (1998) for a discussion of such cases as "semantic incorporation". Pereltsvaig does not discuss the interpretive process by which the property-denoting nominal and the verb are combined; if the combination may be done by mere Predicate Modification (Heim and Kratzer 1998:65), we see again that transitivity is not itself sufficient to produce object referentiality or wide scope.

[15] See O'Connor (1993) for an application of the privative opposition model to pronoun/anaphor contrasts and switch reference in Northern Pomo, and von Stechow (2001) for similar reasoning applied to perfective/imperfective constrasts in Russian.

explanation for why the presence of an antipassive in a language seems to be tied to wide scope for transitive objects.

4.   Conclusions

With its free word order and impoverished morphology, the Nez Perce antipassive has long eluded recognition as such. This paper has given evidence from proper names and intensional contexts in favor of an antipassive analysis along the lines of Wharram (2003). Despite the differences in morphology between Nez Perce antipassives and the more well-known forms in Inuktitut and West Greenlandic, a common semantic thread unites the antipassive across the three languages. In pursuing this thread, we have been able to see past language-particular morphological encodings and recognize the deeper semantic similarities uniting antipassive constructions.

I hope to have shown in this short paper that the adoption of a semantic definition of antipassive, rather than a morphological one, increases the predictive power of the antipassive label. We are now able to recognize antipassivization in the absence of an overt marker, as in the Nez Perce case; I suspect other cases of "pseudo-incorporation" may well fall into this class.[16] On the other hand, once semantic criteria are brought to bear, many purported antipassives may in fact prove not to be antipassives at all. This is probably the case for the Australian language Yukulta, as mentioned in fn 8. In a language with ergative case patterning (i.e., where subject ERG case is dependent upon object ABS case, morphologically or syntactically), any of a variety of case alternations in the object will produce the appearance of detransitivization, much like a true antipassive. Thus if Finnish were an ergative language, it would not be surprising to find its partitive-object construction classified as an antipassive, despite the fact that the function of case-marking here is aspect-related (Kiparsky 1998) and not merely referentiality-related, as above. As long as our primary diagnostics for antipassivization remain morphological and not semantic, such mis-classified antipassives will probably remain all too common, giving the appearance of semantic variation within a single type of construction when in fact multiple constructions have been conflated.

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[16] See Dayal (2003) for a discussion of "pseudo-incorporation" in Hindi; like the Nez Perce antipassive, incorporation in Hindi may only be identified by semantic diagnostics. Again, I suspect that the labels "antipassive" and "incorporation" may refer to the same semantic process; important work remains to be done in assessing the range of variation in the semantics of this process. Doubtless such work will yield yet further cases of antipassive/incorporative semantics behind the veil of morphology.

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