1. Amahuaca Case Morphology

- Amahuaca (Panam. Perú) 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=mum raku=x=xuu`
  Child-NOM=C be.afraid=3.PST=DECL
  ‘The CHILD was afraid.’

- (2) `xano-n=mum kuntu choka=hi=ki=mu`
  woman-GEN=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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Argument marked Form (SG/PL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>-x / -ox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>-n / -own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC/default</td>
<td>S/A/O / -v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 inde=mum jiri=hi=ki=mu]
  woman-GEN=C dog=3.SG=PRES
  ‘The man says that he coughed.’

  (5) Initial PP

  `[nih mun]=mum joni-n jiri=hi=ki=mu
  forest inside=C man=ERG food
  vana=x=xuu
  look for=3.PST=DECL
  ‘The man looked for food in the woods.’

3. Initial Focus Position

- The initial position in Amahuaca is associated with focus

- The constituent in an answer corresponding to the wh-words in a question appears initially (Rochemont, 1998)

  (7) Object focus

  a. `jau=ra joni-n ruti=huax
  what.INT man-ERG kill=PERF
  ‘Who did the man kill?’

  b. `jono=mun joni-n ruti=x=xuu
  peccary=GEN man-ERG kill=1.PST=DECL
  ‘The man killed a PECCARY.’

- Subject focus

  a. `tava-n-ra jono ruti=huax
  who-ERG=INT peccary kill=PERF
  Who killed the peccary?’

  b. `jaa joni-n=x=xuu jono ruti=x=xuu
  DEM man-GEN=C peccary kill=1.PST=DECL
  That MAN killed the peccary.’

4. Nominative and Focus

- Only focused intransitive subjects receive nominative

  (9) a. `tava-x=x=xuu jono=x=xuu
  who-NOM sleep=PERF=1.INT=3.PRES
  ‘Who is sleeping?’

  b. `xano-vax=x=xuu xono=x=xuu
  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=mu
  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)

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
  ‘The woman is washing?’

  b. `kari(*-x)=mun choka=hi
  yam=NOM=C wash=IPFV
  ‘She is washing YAMS.’

- Initial embedded clause

  `[ok=x=xuu=x=xuu=xuu]
  woman=y=hi joni=ki=x=xuu
  cough=88.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

6. Abstract Case and v

- Amahuaca grammar shows independent evidence of intransitive subjects agreeing with v

  (12) `ata=mun choka=hi xano=ki=mu
  man=ACC=C wash=IPFV woman=3.PRES=DECL
  ‘The woman is washing manioc.’

- 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=huax]=xuu xono=x=xuu
  who=SS=NOM=C go=IPFV
  ‘Having slept well, the woman goes.’

- Embedded subject coreferential with matrix ergative

  `[oxa=shara=x=xuu]=mun kuntu choka=hi
  sleep=well=SS.ERG=C pot wash=IPFV
  xano=ki=mu
  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 `[vax]` 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][vax]+[C,Focus]` ↔ /α/
- `[D][ε],[D],[D]` ↔ /α/ /α/
- `[D]` ↔ /β/

Conclusions

- Amahuaca nominative exposes 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 indeclinability of nominative on unfocused DPs can be derived from agreement with C that bears [Focus]

- Amahuaca case morphology exposes bundles of features received from agreement with multiple heads

References


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The Proposal

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

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

The Puzzle

The Amahuaca suffix `–x` has properties of a nominative case marker but also of a focus marker.

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