Some Uses of Case-Marking in Northern Pomo

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0. Introduction

In his 1979 paper "Ergativity", R.M.W. Dixon describes several types of "split ergative systems". One of these is conditioned by the semantic content of the nominal. That is, NP's will be treated\(^1\) in a nominative/accusative fashion if they are inherently likely to be agents. The O-function is marked\(^2\), while A's and S's are unmarked. This reflects the fact that NP's which rank high on the agency/animate hierarchy are more likely to be actors and experiencers than they are to be objects and patients. NP's which are lower on the animate hierarchy will be marked in an ergative/absolutive fashion. That is, S's and O's will be unmarked; when an NP occurs in the unaccustomed role of agent, it will be marked with the ergative. (For a detailed discussion, see also Silverstein, 1976).

Another major type of split ergativity, not usually found in languages which have a nominally based split, is conditioned by the semantic content of the main verb. That is, typically, NP's in A and O function are marked invariantly, but S's can be marked like A's or like O's, depending on the degree to which the action described by the verb involves agent-like qualities (volition, control, responsibility etc.) or patient-like qualities. Verbs like swim, stand up, and shout, which usually involve conscious control by the subject would be marked like A-function nominals. Verbs like burp, dream, and blush, which do not typically involve control, are then marked as O-function nominals. A rare form of this "split S-marking" is "fluid S-marking", in which the case choice for the subjects of certain intransitive verbs is determined by the nature of the particular instance of the verbal action to which the speaker is referring. That is, if the speaker decides that the subject was particularly involved in, responsible for, or controlling of the action in the clause, that speaker will mark the subject in the nominative case. If the subject was more passively involved, or had no control over the action, the speaker might mark the hearer in the accusative case.

After Dixon describes these splits, he speculates as to their distribution in the languages of the world:

I know of no examples of languages that combine a split conditioned by semantic content of verb with a split conditioned by semantic content of NP's, where both splits are realized in terms of morphological marking of the same kind....In one instance, [the first] semantic nuances in intransitive sentences are, as it were, calibrated against a constant transitive schema; in the other the semantic orientation within transitive
sentences is brought out against an invariable intransitive matrix. If both were allowed to vary simultaneously—useful as this would be, to bring out all the relevant semantic niceties—there would be no constant element, and surely a likelihood of confusion and ambiguity. Dual conditioning of case-marking 'splits' of the type just suggested, might lead to irresolvable anarchy, i.e. to semantically-sponsored variation that could go beyond the limits allowable by a grammar. (Dixon, 1979, p.91)

Northern Pomo has just such a combination of 'splits', both of which are realized through the same morphological device: the case-marking of nominals. In the rest of this paper, I will present a preliminary investigation of such semantically-sponsored variation in N. Pomo. A description of both case-marking splits and their interactions may provide the basis for an understanding of how this variation succeeds in staying within "the limits allowable by a grammar", whatever those limits may be.

1. Case-marking split conditioned by the semantic content of NP's

Dixon states that nominally based splits usually have the NP appear in its unmarked case when it is in S-function. NP's low in agentivity will appear in the absolutive case in S-function, and in the ergative case in A-function. In N. Pomo, this pattern is not so clearly evident. A-function, or subjects of transitives, can be absolutely marked (1), whereas subjects of intransitives are sometimes ergatively marked (2).

1) biťanam misăxală nan ćabăne³ "The bear killed the snake"
   bear+det snake+det. kill+past

2) hayunam ya? thā?ye "The dog played"
   dog+det Erg play+vis.evid.

The interaction of the two types of splits makes it difficult to use arguments based on cooccurrence of NP's with transitive or intransitive verbs to establish whether certain categories of nominal participants pattern nominatively or ergatively. Therefore, I will present evidence based on morphological markedness.

1.1 Patterning of nominals.

Dixon argues that in nominative/accusative systems, not only does the S pattern with the A, but the O-function NP is morphologically marked with respect to the S/A nominals. In an ergative/absolutive system, the A-function NP is morphologically marked. As seen in table 1, the nom/acc pattern of markedness applies to the categories of the NP hierarchy starting at the top.

Personal pronouns are morphologically simple in the A-function, (as well as being the citation form) and are suffixed with /-V1/ in O-function. (The 1st and 2nd person singular depart slightly from this paradigm. The /-to/ suffix which they take appears as the O-function
marker on proper names also. Kinship terms and proper names follow this nominative/accusative pattern of markedness.

The next category, which McLendon has named personal nouns for Eastern Pomo, is a small but frequently used set of nouns that specify age and sex of the referent. The E. Pomo NP's of this sort pattern with the common nouns below them on the hierarchy, i.e. in an erg/abs fashion. The N. Pomo personal nouns have two forms; one which patterns with common nouns, in an ergative fashion, and one which suffixes an independent third person pronoun, matching in gender, and then patterns like the independent pronoun. This category, then, is the point on the nominal hierarchy at which the nom/acc and erg/abs case-marking patterns overlap.

Common nouns, the next category down the nominal hierarchy, can take an ergative suffix /-ya/? when in A-function. The unmarked absolutive form is most commonly the stem with the determiner suffix /-nam/.

**Nominals in N. Pomo**

(The A-function of the NP is listed first, then the O-function. The markedness pattern shifts in the middle of the personal nouns.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRONOUNS:</th>
<th>1s) ?a to 2s) ma mito 3s) fem: man ma:dal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1p) ya 2p) ma: ma:l</td>
<td>msc: mow nowal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p) mow p'ow</td>
<td>p'owal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KINTERMS:</th>
<th>father (of 3rd pers.) ba'e</th>
<th>ba'e:1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>younger brother (spkr) miti</td>
<td>miti:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| PROPER NAMES: | John: ¿con ¿conto |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL NOUNS:</th>
<th>young man: dakosanam+no dakosanam+mowal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>older woman: datanam+man datanam+ma:dal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| young man: dakosanam+ya? dakosanam |
| baby: kawinam+ya? kawinam |

| COMMON NOUNS: | dog: hayunam+ya? hayunam |
| arrow: ñunam+ya? ñunam |

1.2 The ergative marker in a transitive clause.

Examples (3) and (4) illustrate case assignment in a normal transitive clause with two human participants. Notice that in (4), baby, a personal noun, is in its common noun form, and takes the ergative marker.

(3) man mowal çabane "She killed him." 3sfNOM 3smACC kill+pst.
(4) mowel kawánnya? sipuni "the baby kissed him."
3sm ACC baby ERG kiss+pst.

In many transitive clauses the ergative marker seems to be optional. In (5) it can be used or not, depending on contextual ambiguity.

(5) biñam na? misálxalámam čabane "The bear killed bear+det. ABS snake ABS kill+pst. the snake."

However, in (6), where the agent is counter to our expectations, the ergative marker must be used.

(6) čítnam na? biñam čabane "the bird killed the bird+det. ERG bear ABS killed bear."

In section 3.1 I will say more about the ergative marker in other contexts.

2. Case-marking split conditioned by semantic content of main verb

In evaluating Dixon's assertion that split and fluid S-marked systems are calibrated against a constant transitive schema, one must draw together evidence of all case-marking patterns, for both transitive and intransitive subjects. In addition, if the language has very productive word-formation processes that detransitivize verbs, these must be considered, since they will bear on the question of invariance of transitive and intransitive schemata.

In what follows I will take the tack of maximizing the semantic distinctions that are conveyed by variation in case-marking, instead of trying to reduce all uses to one unitary category.

2.1 Implicit causes.

In the case of some intransitive verbs, the unmarked form of the subject seems to be the nom/erg form. The use of the acc/abs seems to indicate a heightened patientivity; this in some way implicitly raises the issue of a cause for the action:

(7) mow kala khe'mna "He will die"
3sm NOM die future

mowel kala khe'mna "He has done something or eaten something that will result in his death."
3sm ACC die future

(8) man pikái "She laughed."
3sfNOM laugh+past

ma:dal pikái "She laughed (at something; some thing made her laugh.)"
3sf ACC laugh+past

Notice that in (7) and (8), although there is an implicit cause of the action, there is no explicit verbal indication such as a causative or passive marker. The presence of an unspecified agent or cause is
accomplished through changing the case role of the subject from that which is usually for agentive Actors, to that which is usually used for Patient-like objects of action.

If a causative is added to the verb, as in (9):

9) ma:dal pikai ka "Someone made her laugh (deliberately)."
     3sf ACC laugh caus.

then this is in some sense still intransitive, as in (7) and (8), but her patientivity is foregrounded. This tends to make (8) look like more of an experiencer role; perhaps passive experience, but still, less patient-like than (9).

2.2 Lack of control.

Another set of intransitive verbs is different from the above, in that the use of the acc/abs does not emphasize patient-hood so much as it does lack of control over the action. There is no implicit cause as there was above.

10) man xa da loka "She fell in the river."
     3sfNOM river loc. fall
     ma:dal xa da loka "She (accidentally) fell in the river."
     3sf ACC river loc fall

11) mow ši?udi "He didn't know; he was incapable."
     3sm NOM 'can't'
     mowel ši?udi "He didn't know anything; he was really out of it, lost."
     3sm ACC 'can't'

12) to toxa mow pitika "He belched at me."
     1s ACC dir.3smNOM belch
     to toxa mowel pitika "He couldn't help it, he belched at me."
     1s ACC dir 3sm ACC belch

13) man ditale "She is sick."
     3sf NOM be sick
     ma:dal ditale "She is feeling the sickness."
     3sf ACC be sick

14) a. mow ši?u čade "He is going to get drunk('tie one on')."
     3sm NOM-be drunk-nr.fut.
     b. mowel ši?u čade "He is going to get drunk ('oh, no, he's losing control')."
     3sm ACC be nr.fut. drunk

As the sentences in (14) show, the case marking interacts not just with the verb, but with the tense markers (and other parts of the verbal morphology; see below). In (12a), the near future marker is interpreted as signalling intention in the part of the nominally marked subject. In (12b) the near future is interpreted as signalling the approach of an event seen as 'befalling' the subject.
2.3 Agentivity and volition.

In 2.2, the accusative signalled lack of control over internal states and conditions. In (14) it was apparent that the nominative can signal intention when paired with the indicator of future tense. Other verbs, which do not have a basic connotation of lack of control, unlike the verb in (14), can also convey volition through the use of the nom/erg case marking; however, the use of the acc/abs does not convey such a strong sense of lack of control:

15) mowal ?a źi?uči?i
  3sm ACC 1sNOM forget
  "I will forget him (I'll ob-
  literate his memory)."

mowal to źi?uči?i
  3sm ACC 1sACC forget
  "I will forget him (I'm not
  interested enough to rememb.)"

With predicates that do seem to have an inherent degree of lack of control it is sometimes possible to get a reading of heightened volition or agentivity even without the future tense markers.

16) kaweyónam ya? źi?uči?i
  horse ERG be crazy
  "The horse gets crazy, acts
  crazy."

kaweyónam źi?uči?i
  horse ACC be crazy
  "The horse is crazy."

2.4 Interaction of case-marking with person-marking: speculations about some secondary meanings.

With many of these fluid S-marked verbs, the nominative form of the 1st person, when used with the future or near future markers, indicates willfulness or volition:

17) ?a pitík čade
  1s NOM belch nr.fut.
  "I am going to belch (rude:inten-
  tional action)."

to pitík čade
  1s ACC belch nr.fut.
  "I am going to (be overcome by) a belch."

18) ?a kelu čade
  1s NOM cough nr.fut.
  "I am going to cough.(unmarked
  announcement)"

to kelu čade
  1s ACC cough nr. fut.
  "I feel a cough coming up."

However, when a parallel construction is done with the third person, the conveyed intentionality does not emerge. Instead, prediction, assertion or possibility take over:

19) man yath kḥemma
  3sf NOM vomit future
  "She will vomit."

maːdal yath kḥemma
  3sf ACC vomit fut.
  "She is prone to vomit."
20) man šikík čade "She will have a fit."
   3sf NOM have nr. fut.
   fit
   maːdal šikík čade "She might have a fit."
   3sf ACC

When the notion of possibility is made explicit, then constructions in
the accusative are consistently glossed by our consultant as being less
probable:

21) man du šikíkči kʰemna "She might have a fit."
   3sfNOM mod. have fit fut.
   maːdal du šikíkči kʰemna "She might have a fit."
   3sf ACC

Another difference between the third and first persons emerges
when these verbs appear without a future marker. With many of the fluid
S-marked verbs, the nominative, agentive form of the 1st person is not
felicitous. When used with such verbs as cough, burp, belch, hiccups,
fell, vomit, have diarrhea, be unable/incapable, get sick, catch cold,
be injured, be crippled, and be annoyed, among others, the first person
must appear in the accusative form. However, this restriction does not
exist in the 3rd person.

Instead, sentences in which the nominative and accusative 3rd per-
son pronouns can very often have a force that does not at first seem
to be directly related to the patient/experiencer distinction.

22) mow ˈoka "He fell and you saw him fall. (You might
   3smNOM fall
   say this if you see someone fall, and then
   you're reporting it to someone else.)"
   mowal ˈoka "He fell (and you're telling about it
   3sm ACC fall
   later. You didn't necessarily see it.)"

It is possible to provide contexts for this distinction; e.g. if a little
girl enters your presence and you can see that her knees are skinned,
you can ask her mother

23) ta man miːćčeį "Did she slip?"
   Q 3sfNOM slip+smlf

If, on the other hand, the girl is not there, but you have heard that
something happened to her, you could inquire:

   ta maːdal miːćče ċi "Did she slip?"
   Q 3sfACC slip+smlf

I would like to suggest an analysis of such uses. The meaning
potential for nom/acc case alternation is different for 1st and 3rd
persons, because the 1st person has access to his or her internal states,
is able to judge just how volitional some activity was or will be, and is
generally able to state with certainty the degree to which he or she was
a patient or experiencer in some instance. The speaker cannot posit an
internal state of another person with the same certainty. Therefore,
in many cases the intentional meaning dissipates in the 3rd person case,
and is replaced by a category which the speaker has control over;
e.g. judgements as to the possibility of some event. In cases where the 1st person would only use the accusative for him or her self, the distinction between nominative and accusative for 3rd person carries some constraints that are linked to justification of assertions based on source of evidence. That is, there are certain contexts in which it is less acceptable to take the liberty of predicating an internal state or experience of someone else. A Kashaya Pomo speaker offered this sort of explanation when asked why, in her language, one couldn’t say the equivalent of mowal xa’anči or "He(ACC) dreamed". She asserted that one couldn’t say that because one couldn’t know for sure whether 'he' had dreamed for certain, or that he was just telling you that he dreamed.4

It is difficult to adduce proof for this distinction. The judgments are heavily contextually determined, and the distinction is a subtle one. However, there is a clear direction in our consultant's glosses. The nominative is used for the speech situation where the speaker is reporting the facts as observed. The language has a well-developed evidential system, and this provides some of the basis for the argument. If speakers consistently pay attention to the source of information, and mark this grammatically, then a framework would already exist within which this distinction would make sense. There is sketchy evidence that the accusative form is disfavored with the visual evidential, and with the inferential/perfective /-na/.

Of course, if this concern to not go beyond one's ability to verify exists in the language, there must also be a context in which a speaker can assume the perspective of another, and can describe the internal experience of another. This is the narrative context, in which the speaker has license to portray such things.

Unfortunately, conversational contexts would have to be examined in order to fully bear this out, and because there are only a few speakers of this language, it will probably not be possible to fully verify the analysis.

2.5 Additional uses.

There is another distinction that is somewhat less clear, yet it too is glossed consistently when it appears. In the following examples there seems to be an attempt on the part of our consultant to portray the action either as something which is a completed action on the part of the subject (nominative) or as something which is in an imperfective state, that the subject may still be experiencing.

24) baka? ši’ući "The grandfather forgot"
   gr,father forget
   NOM

   baka?al ši’ući "The grandfather has forgotten."
   gr.f. ACC forget

25) mow pa‘ipi?i?na "He has staggered."
   3smNOM stagger+perf/inf.

   mowal pa‘ipi?i?na "He has been staggering."
   3sm ACC stagger+perf/inf.
When the construction is one in which the subject in the nominative is glossed as being one which is in a certain state, then the corresponding accusatively marked subject will yield some kind of process or experience interpretation:

26) mow ści?uʔna  "He is crazy."
3smNOM  crazy+cop.
mowal ści?uʔna  "He went crazy."
3smACC  crazy+cop.

(This use, however, does not seem to be very productive, and interacts with the position of the NP in the animacy hierarchy. See ex. 16)

3. Grammatical uses of case-marking in Northern Pomo

The previous section detailed many semantic distinctions available in the language through manipulation of case assignment. The following section will be concerned with more grammaticalized uses of case marking. Although some of the uses can still be semantically motivated, and are often verbally governed and not fully generalizable into a purely grammatical rule, still, these uses are not as semantically volatile. Instead, they can be said to function in establishing relations of subordination and coordination, for example.

There are a few verbs which trigger acc/abs case marking of the subject of their sentential complement. Among these are 'want' /daʔade/ and 'desire/prefer' or 'attempts' /mayušin/. These verbs also require the causative to be suffixed onto the lower verb.

27) man mowal duhuكا daʔade  "She wants him to leave."
3sfNOM 3smACC  leave+Caus.  want

However, the verbs wish, hope, fear, etc. do not follow this pattern. Neither do the verbs see, know, hear, etc. when these take a sentential complement.

The verb 'force' is realized as the causative morpheme suffixed onto the subordinate verb. The NP that is the subject of the lower clause, is raised to object of the causative clause through accusative case-marking. The subject of the matrix clause must be marked in the nominative or the ergative. As noted in sect. 1.1, subjects of transitives which are from the lower portion of the animacy hierarchy do not have to be marked in the ergative in many cases, unless some ambiguity exists. However, when the causative is suffixed onto the verb, the ergative marker is obligatory.

28) phitanam mul yaʔ daʔtanam maʔdal iška
flower  delc.ERG old woman ACC sneeze+Caus.
"Those flowers made the old woman sneeze."

29) xanam yaʔ to sičuktə  "The water made me hiccup."
water ERG 1sACC hiccup+Caus.
Certain verbs which are highly transitive semantically, (i.e. their
subjects must be agentive or forceful, and their objects are totally
affected patients) may call for the ergative marker with inanimate
or non-human subjects:

30) yanam ya? čanam madovol "The wind destroyed the
wind ERG houseACC destroy house."

This can be contrasted with the perspective change provided by use of
the instrumental:

31) yanamili čanam šama "The wind destroyed the house;
wind+inst.houseACC fall through the wind, the house fell."

and also with (32):

32) yanam ya? čanam šamka "The wind caused the house to fall"
wind ERG houseACC fall+Caus.

(However, as usual, there are exceptions:

33) mul ma?anam to pilikika "That food made me belch."
delc. foodACC 1sACC belch+smlf+Caus.

I do not know at this point whether these are systematic exceptions or
not.) When the cause is in the instrumental (that is, if it is followed
by one of the instrumental type postpositions, it cannot take the caus-
ative.

34) hai wei ma:dal dikelvi (*ka) "The stick scraped her."
stick instr. 3sfACC scrape (*Caus)

3.1 The 'passive'.

We have seen that the causative sets up a highly transitive,
nom/acc type semantic schema, and calls for the case-marking which
would correspond to such a schema. The accusatively marked NP's in
causative sentences are clearly patient-like. This can be contrasted
with the semantic import of the accusative in section 2. The fluid
S-marked verbal subjects are not characterizable in the same unified
way. Instead, their semantic role seems more experiencer-like.

There is one more construction I would like to present as part
of this scale of semantic and grammatical role distinctions: a passive
construction. This is not a full Indo-European type passive: the
agent can never appear on the surface, the NP which does remain on the
surface is not advanced to nominative case; however, the verb does
have a passive suffix attached (/-ya/, nearly homonymous with the erga-
tive).

It is possible to show that the surface argument in this passive
construction is not a "subject" in the same sense as are the nominat-
evely marked subjects of transitives, active intransitives, and nominat-
ively and accusatively marked subjects of fluid S-marked verbs.
Although I will not go into the details here, the Actor, (a category which includes nominatively marked NP's) and the Experiencer (NP's which are the accusatively marked subjects of fluid S-marked verbs) both are able to trigger a special set of pronouns that are coreferential to these arguments. The surface "subjects" of passives cannot trigger these. In addition, the surface NP of a passive can not trigger the same reference verbal suffix marker within the switch reference system. That is, it cannot occur in a construction where it would have to be interpreted as being coreferential with the subject of an adjacent clause.

In conclusion, I have presented a selection of data which exemplifies the range of clause-level semantics that are accomplished through case-marking in Northern Pomo. The verbally and nominally based case-marking splits are interacting in a complex but fluid fashion; they together produce a range of configurations that convey a wide variety of semantic perspectives on the clause. More research is required to determine the best theoretical approach to such a richly varied, yet unified set of semantic phenomena.

Financial support for this fieldwork in Northern Pomo was provided by the Survey of California and other Indian Languages, University of California, Berkeley. I would like to express deep gratitude to Mrs. Edna Guerrero, both for her insights into her language, and for her patience and humor while delivering those insights. I would also like to thank Michelle Caisse, whose company during this fieldwork has been both intellectually rewarding and personally encouraging.

Notes
1) In this paper I will refer only to case-marking as a reflex of ergativity. There are other devices, such as verbal agreement, etc. that are equally important, but do not figure in this paper.
2) In Dixon's terms, A-function is the syntactic/semantic relationship carried by the subject of a transitive verb. O-function is the name for the object of a transitive verb, and S-function is that slot for the principle argument of an intransitive verb.
3) Order of elements does not seem to be a device which figures very much in the disambiguation of semantic/grammatical relations.
4) I thank Robert Oswalt for recounting this to me at the HOKAN conference in June, 1980.
5) The details of subordination and coordination in this language have not yet been worked out; want /da?ade/ is one of the only clear cases where a verb is clearly in a superordinate relationship to a sentence. Many details have been collected on this general issue, but remain to be analyzed.
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PREFACE

Unfortunately, everyone who presented a paper at the 1980 Hokan Languages Workshop was not able to prepare a final version for inclusion in this volume. All papers in this volume except two were presented in an earlier version at the 1980 workshop. The papers are arranged in the order they appeared on the program.

The paper by Birgitte Bendixen was presented at the 1979 Hokan Languages Workshop. The camera-ready manuscript for her article arrived at the editor's office more than three months before the publication deadline. The editor is so used to having to call up contributors and begging them to get their manuscripts in that he totally forgot Dr. Bendixen's paper was in his files and left it out of the 1979 volume. The editor humbly apologizes for this oversight. The second paper by Pamela Munro was discussed in part at the 1980 workshop, and the editor asked her to include it in this volume.

The participants of the 1980 Hokan Languages Workshop gratefully acknowledge all the work done by Leanne Hinton and several of her students, which made the workshop run so smoothly and enjoyably. We also wish to thank the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of California, Berkeley, for a grant to help defray the costs of holding the workshop.

Copies of the 1977, 1978, and 1979 workshop proceedings are still available from the Department of Linguistics, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901. The volumes for the 1975 and 1976 workshops, which appeared in the SIU-C series, University Museum Studies, are now out of print, but copies may be obtained in microfiche or hardbound volumes from ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, 3250 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, DC 20007.

The 1981 Hokan Languages Workshop will meet jointly with the Penutian Language Conference at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California, June 29 to July 2, 1981. The proceedings of the 1981 workshop will appear in Occasional Papers On Linguistics in early 1982. For the first time, the papers of the Penutian Language Conference will be published in the same volume as the Hokan papers. Copies may be ordered from the Department of Linguistics, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901.

James E. Redden
Carbondale, June 1981
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