

Case-marking and object interpretation in Nez Perce: towards an antipassive analysis*

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1 The phenomenon

Nez Perce has two types of two-argument clauses:

1. “Ergative” type. Subject and object are case marked; subject and object agreement appear on the verb.
2. “Antipassive” type. Neither subject nor object is case marked; subject agreement appears on the verb, but object agreement does not.

	subject agr	subject case	object agr	object case
“ergative”	Y	Y	Y	Y
“antipassive”	Y	n	n	n
intransitive	Y	n		

- (1) *lin-im ciq’amqaal-nim pée-p-teetu nukúu-ne* *ERG (TRANS) type*
1SG-GEN dog-SUBJ 3/3-eat-HAB meat-OBJ
 ‘My dog eats meat’
- (2) *lin-im ciq’amqaal hi-p-teetu nukt* *ANTIP type*
1SG-GEN dog 3SUBJ-eat-HAB meat
 ‘My dog eats meat’
- (3) *hi-páayna háama* *INTRANSITIVE*
3SUBJ-come man
 ‘The man arrived’ (Rude 1986: 126)

In this talk, I will present novel data from my fieldwork on the clause type alternation.

From this data, I will argue that Nez Perce clauses like (2) are indeed antipassives, akin to better known examples from West Greenlandic and Inuktitut (Bittner 1987, Wharram 2003).

We will see evidence for antipassivization in the following domains:

- proper name referentiality
- the preferences of the verbs *héki* ‘see’ and *haní* ‘make’
- the scope of intensional transitives and *héenek’e* ‘again’
- the distribution of *oykala* ‘all’ [preliminary]

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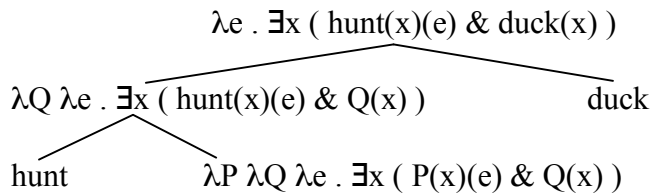
2 A semantics for antipassive

I adopt Wharram's (2003) semantics for antipassive:

(4) ANTIPASSIVE: $\lambda P \lambda Q \lambda e . \exists x (P(x)(e) \ \& \ Q(x))$

This antipassive denotation takes the verb and then the object NP. The theme argument of the verb is existentially closed, and the object NP is interpreted as a property.

(5) A structure for hypothetical VP *hunt-ANTIP duck*



Predictions:

1. There will be no truly referential objects under antipassive: true definites and true proper names should be out.
2. There will be no truly universally quantified objects under antipassive: they will be of too high a type.
3. No objects under antipassive will take scope over anything else; properties are scopeless.
4. If the antipassive morpheme can only attach to verb roots (as pictured above), then it should only apply to theme arguments. Goal arguments should behave differently from theme arguments in this respect.

2 Object referentiality

2.1 No referential objects in antipassive

When a proper name is truly referential, antipassive cannot be used.

In reference to a known individual named Angel, (6) is acceptable and (7) is not:

(6) Weet 'e'-cukwe-ce Angel-ne? TRANS
Q 3OBJ-know-INC A-OBJ
 Do you know Angel?

(7) #Weet cukwe-ce Angel? ANTIP
Q know-INC A

Similarly, in reference to tribal linguist Harold Crook, (8) is acceptable and (9) is not:

(8) Context: we're organizing a ballgame and picking players for our teams.
 nuun 'e-wewluq-siix Harold-ne poxpok'liit-ki TRANS
IPL 3OBJ-want-IMP.PL H-OBJ ballgame-INST
 We want Harold for the ballgame

- (9) #nuun wewluq-siix Harold ANTIP
IPL want-IMP.PL H

Finally, in reference to a cat named Fili, (10) is acceptable but (11) is not. Note that by contrast, if no particular cat is intended, such a sentence becomes acceptable, (12).

- (10) Fili-ne iceyeye-nm paa-p-sa-qa TRANS
F-OBJ coyote-SUBJ 3/3-eat-INC-PST
 A coyote ate Fili

- (11) #iceyeye hi-p-saqa Fili ANTIP
coyote 3SUBJ-eat-INC-PST F

- (12) iceyeye hii-p-teetu picpic ANTIP
coyote 3SUBJ-eat-HAB cat
 Coyotes eat cats

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 “thing named X” or “the word X” reading.

- (13) Pre-context: Lini, a student, is preparing for a test on Nez Perce and English place names.

Context: Pasxa hii-we-s Boise
Pasxa 3SUBJ-be-INC Boise
 Pasxa is Boise

... kaa Lini hi-tmípní-se Boise kaa weet'u hi-tmípní-se Pasxa
 ... and Lini 3SUBJ-remember-INC Boise and not 3SUBJ-remember-INC Pasxa
 Lini remembers “Boise” but she doesn’t remember “Pasxa” (ANTIP)

Non-referential names fail to scope over *wewluq* ‘want/need’:

- (14) kismis-pe sapatk’ayn wewluq-siix Meli kaa Cosef ANTIP
christmas-LOC show want-IMP.PL Mary and Joseph
 ‘For the Christmas show we want a Mary and a Joseph’

To get a minimal pair for the proper name referentiality effect without the influence of Nez Perce vs. English names, I asked about Rhode Island (where my informant once lived):

- (15) Weet timípn’ise Rhode-Island ANTIP
Q remember RI
 Do you remember Rhode Island?
 Comment: “Sounds more like you’re asking about the word ‘Rhode Island’”

- (16) Weet 'e-tmípn'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 may not.

3. Case studies: *heki* ‘see’ and *hani* ‘make’

The behavior of the verbs *heki* ‘see’ and *hani* ‘make’ provide a pair of contrasting case studies of the felicity conditions for antipassive.

The verb *heki* ‘see’ was notable in that my informants were unwilling to accept any antipassive clauses containing it, including those containing less-than-definite objects (e.g. ‘something big’, ‘nothing’). Two possible explanations:

1. Antipassive objects are interpreted as properties. However, one sees objects, not properties.
2. The object argument of *heki* is actually a goal, not a theme.

Further research will have to clarify this issue.

In contrast to *heki*, the verb *hani* ‘make’ was almost universally given as antipassive. However, in an instance where the object of creation was clearly definite and referential, an TRANS-type clause was volunteered:

- (17) Haaniy-aw'aat-óm paa-ni-ya weetes-ne¹ TRANS
make-AGT-SUBJ 3/3-make-PERF world-OBJ
 The creator made the world

A transitive clause was also volunteered in the context below, where the TRANS-clause object scopes over *héenek'e* ‘again’:

- (18) wepsimeywi kaa héenek'e 'aa-niya samaḥ-na TRANS
make.mistake and again 3OBJ-make-PERF shirt-OBJ
 I made a mistake and then I made the shirt again (same shirt)

The evidence from *hani* ‘make’ supports the view of antipassive as involving referentiality. Typically, the object of making is not conceptualized as referential; the creation of a truly definite object trumps this preference, however, as does the need to let the object scope over some other element.

¹ The morphology of this example proved problematic for my informant, given the complex morphology of verb stems beginning in hV, in this case *hani*. She originally considered *pániya* and *pahaniya* before consulting a reference work (Aoki 1994) and insisting, presumably based on that work, on *haaniya*. At the same time, she continued to insist on SUBJ case. Given the case-marking and the originally volunteered transitive verb form, I conclude that she meant to produce an TRANS-type clause here.

4 Antipassive objects are scopeless

4.1 *Intensional transitive verbs*

Bittner (1987) argues extensively for narrow scope of antipassive objects with respect to negation and “world-creating predicates” such as intensional verbs.

In this vein, an interesting effect was found with *'ipewí* ‘look for’. In a context where cats of unusual colors had not been discussed, sentence (19) was volunteered as an antipassive:

- (19) *'ipewi-se ciciyele picpic* ANTIP
seek-INC purple cat
I'm looking for a purple cat

The transitive counterpart of this example commits the speaker to the existence of a purple cat:

- (20) *'e-pewi-se ciciyele picpic-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 follows if the antipassive object in (19) is scopeless, whereas the transitive object in (20) can/must scope over the intensional verb.

We saw similar effects above with proper names. In the following cases, case-marked objects receive a referential (de re) interpretation in the intensional context, whereas non-case-marked objects do not:

- (21) *kismis-pe sapatk'ayn wewluq-siix Meli kaa Cosef* ANTIP
christmas-LOC show want-IMP.PL Mary and Joseph
‘For the Christmas show we want a Mary and a Joseph’
- (22) *nuun 'e-wewluq-siix Harold-ne poxpok'liit-ki* TRANS
IPL 3OBJ-want-IMP.PL H-OBJ ballgame-INST
We want Harold for the ballgame
- (23) *#nuun wewluq-siix Harold* ANTIP
IPL want-IMP.PL H

4.2 *Again*

An example above with *haní* shows how transitive objects can scope over *héenek'e* ‘again’, giving a reading where the same artifact was made twice:

- (24) *wepsimeywi kaa héenek'e 'aa-niya samaḥ-na* TRANS
make.mistake and again 3OBJ-make-PERF shirt-OBJ
I made a mistake and then I made the shirt again (same shirt)

My attempts to elicit contrasts with ‘again’ were partially foiled by Nez Perce phonology. I asked my informant to consider the sentence “I wrote a word again” in same-word and different-word readings. These were intended to have the word-type (not token) reading in each case.

Same word condition

(25) Context: I write the word *lepít* ‘two’, and then I write *lepít* again underneath it.
 lepehe ’e-tim’e c’iqin-e TRANS
twice 3OBJ-write word-OBJ
 I wrote a word twice
 Comment: “you wrote it two times”

Different word condition

(26) Context: I write the word *yosyós* ‘blue’ and then *k’uyc* ‘nine’ underneath it. And I say, “I wrote a word again.”
 tim’e yosyos kaa k’uyc kaa heenek’e tim’e sik’em ANTIP
write y. and k’. and again write s.
 I wrote “yosyos” and “k’uyc” and then I wrote again, “sik’em”

The origin of *sik’em* [sikʔem] ‘horse’ in this example is almost certainly due to my grievous mispronunciation of *c’iqin* [tsʔiqm] ‘word’ in the elicitation prompt.

However, in this case the judgment was still on a different-word scenario, and it is interesting that ANTIP was used. Thus, *sik’em* ‘horse’ does not scope over *heenek’e* ‘again’, as predicted.

4.3 Negation

I was unable to obtain much data on negated predicates due to my informant’s insistence on paraphrasing them with affirmatives. I cannot say for sure whether they follow the prediction my analysis would make, viz. scope under negation only.

However, my attempts to elicit contrasts did yield the interesting result that transitives (i.e. non-antipassives) are not restricted to wide scope (contra Bittner 1987 on West Greenlandic):

- (27)a. weet’u ’itúu-ne ’e-wéwluq-se TRANS
not INDEF-OBJ 3OBJ-want-INC
 I don’t want anything

- b. 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)

- c. 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)

Whatever the scopal status of antipassive objects, transitive objects are not restricted to purely wide-scope readings.

5 Universal quantifiers

Because universally quantified objects are generalized quantifiers which take the transitive verb as argument, antipassivization as in (4) should rule out universally quantified antipassive objects.

Some hedging is in order, though, given the diversity of universal quantifiers:

- Distributive universals (*each*) are not coercable into a property type.
- Non-distributive universals (*all*) may be coercable into a property type.

I attempted to test the antipassive analysis in Nez Perce with the common universal *'oykala* 'all'.

1. If *'oykala* is okay as the object of an antipassive, we cannot conclude anything: it could be that *'oykala* is collective (like *all*), or it could be that the clauses in question are not antipassive.
2. If *'oykala* is not okay as the object of an antipassive, we can conclude that *'oykala* is obligatorily distributive (like *each*) and that antipassivization obtains.

In a first case, my informant accepted only the transitive version of 'I forget all the towns':

- (28)a. *'oykala-na itemyaanwas-na 'a-toola-sa* TRANS
all-OBJ town-OBJ 3OBJ-forget-INC
 I forget all the towns (or: names of all the towns)
- b. **'oykala itemyaanwas titola-sa* ANTIP
all town forget-INC

In a similar vein, she preferred (29a), though she did not entirely reject (29b):

- (29)a. *picpíc-nim pée-wewluq-se 'oykala-na cu'yem-ne* TRANS
cat-OBJ 3/3-want-INC all-OBJ fish-OBJ
 The cat wants all the fish
- b. *?? Picpic hi-wewluq-se 'oykala cu'yem* ANTIP
cat 3SUBJ-want-INC all fish

In a second instance, my informant volunteered a transitive, and only found an antipassive acceptable with stress on the quantifier and a following pause:

- (30) Context: you are planning a party, so you go into the store and say...
- a. *'oykalo-na cu'yem-ne 'e-wewluq-se* TRANS
all-OBJ fish-OBJ 3OBJ-want-INC
 I want all the fish (that you've got)
- b. *OYKALA, cu'yem wewluq-se* ANTIP
all fish want-INC

Perhaps antipassive (30b) contains an adverbial or dislocated quantifier?

Possible support for the view that *'oykala* is not a nominal modifier in (30b) comes from (31), which has the distinction of being the only example my informant volunteered with an apparently discontinuous noun phrase.

- (31) *'oykala* Steve haani-ya coqoycoqoy ANTIP
all S 3SUBJ.make-PERF teepee
 Steve made all the teepees

This could be a crucial clue, if “object” quantifiers in antipassive clauses are in reality not associated with object NPs, but have clausal-adverbial status

The evidence from universally quantified objects remains tentative, but points in the predicted direction: universally quantified DPs are disfavored or disallowed in antipassives, and the apparent quantifiers of antipassive clauses may best be analyzed as adverbials or otherwise non-object-internal elements.

6 Summary and conclusions

I have shown that on a variety of diagnostics, Nez Perce caseless clauses behave as though antipassivization has occurred, understood semantically as property-interpretation plus existential closure.

On the status of antipassive objects, we have seen that

1. Referential proper names are disallowed under antipassive.
2. Proper names under antipassive are interpreted non-referentially.
3. Although the verb *haní* seems to “prefer” antipassive, this preference is overridden in cases where its object is clearly unique (‘the world’) or scope-taking (as when making the same shirt twice).
4. Antipassive objects have narrow scope with respect to intensional transitive verbs *ipewí* ‘look for’ and *wewluq* ‘want/need’ and the operator *héenek’e* ‘again’.
5. The presence of *'oykala* ‘all’ in an antipassive object is not immediately acceptable; dislocation may be involved.

Two further notes are in order as we conclude.

First, we have seen evidence from negation that transitive objects are not restricted to wide scope interpretations; they may have either wide or narrow scope. Thus, the alternation between transitive and antipassive is not binary. I argued in Deal (2006) that it is PRIVATIVE: under negation, transitive has a wider range of possible meanings than antipassive does. Transitive objects have both scope under negation (at first Merge) and scope over negation (via QR).

A prediction that I have not had enough data to test is that this privative opposition might not crop up in intensional contexts, if de re readings in intensional contexts do not involve movement. I am currently exploring whether de dicto readings can be seen as always involving antipassivization (versus default transitivity), even in languages where this does not have any clear morphosyntactic reflexes (Deal in prep).

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