

Case Suffixes as Discourse Markers in Jingulu*

0. Abstract

Jingulu exhibits a pattern of Focus marking quite different to anything found in adjacent or closely related languages. The Ergative, and to a lesser extent the Dative, case suffixes have

* Abbreviations used in this paper:

1	first person	IMPV	imperative
2	second person	Inc	inclusive
3	third person	INST.....	Instrumental
ACC.....	Accusative	INV.....	inverse
ALL.....	Allative	IRR.....	irrealis (used as IMPV)
anaph.....	anaphoric	m.....	masculine
DAT.....	Dative	n.....	neuter
DEM.....	demonstrative	narr	narrative (tense)
dl.....	dual	NOM.....	Nominative
ERG.....	Ergative	NOML.....	nominaliser
f	feminine	Obj.....	object
FOC.....	focus	pl.....	plural
FUT.....	future	PRIV.....	Privative
GEN.....	Genitive	sg	singular
HAB.....	habitual	v.....	vegetable (gender)

come to be used as optional indicators of contrastive focus in addition to their original case-marking uses. Some other head-marking non-Pama-Nyungan languages (such as Jaminjungan, distantly related to Jingulu, Rembarrnga, and Gooniyandi) also use case markers to indicate discourse functions, but the Jingulu system differs from these in two important respects: the Jingulu innovation appears to be extremely recent (30-40 years) and the Jingulu system uses all core case markers, not just one particular marker, for this function. One possible explanation for this innovation in Jingulu involves re-analysis of the case markers resulting from the dominant and increasing influence of the English language on the final generations of Jingulu speakers.

1. Morphologically marked Focus

A pragmatic ordering principle has been held to account for the choice among permissible word orders in nonconfigurational languages. According to both Mithun (1987) and Blake (1983), in these languages it is common for the phonological word bearing contrastive focus to precede other elements of the clause (not the theme(topic)-rheme(comment) structure of Eastern European languages, as Austin (in press) notes). In

Jingulu, a non-Pama-Nyungan language spoken in the Barkly Tableland of Australia's Northern Territory, the suffixes /rni/, /rna/¹, and less commonly /rlu/, can mark an element as bearing contrastive focus. These elements, contrary to the predictions of Mithun and Blake, are almost as likely to occur clause-finally (as in (1a)) as clause-initially (1b), and can commonly be found in other positions in the clause (1c).

(1) a. *Kirlikirlika darra-ardi jimi-rna urrbuja-ni.*

galah eat-go that(n)-FOC galah_grass-FOC

'Galahs eat this grass.'

b. *Jama-rni karriba maya-nga-yi*

that-FOC white_person hit-1sg-FUT

mulyumulyubi.

cripple

'I'm going to smash up that white person there.'

c. *Ngindi-nama wumbuma-yi nganga-rni*

¹ Allomorphs [ni] and [na], respectively, follow a syllable whose final consonant is coronal.

this(m)-time cook-FUT meat-FOC

wurraka-na ya-yi.

3plGEN-m 3sg-FUT

‘Then he’ll cook the meat for these people, he will.’

d. *Jiminaka-rlu bikirra karriyaku jiminiki-rna,*

this(n)-FOC grass bad(n) this(n)-DAT

darrangku karriyaku, bundurru-jija.

tree bad(m) food-PRIV

‘This kind of grass is bad for it, this plant has no food on it.’

Morphological Focus marking was found in just under one third of Jingulu sentences in Pensalfini’s (1997) grammar. Narrative texts have a lower incidence than elicited sentences and single sentence utterances, with just under one fifth of sentences in narratives displaying focus morphology. Morphological marking of focus is quite optional, and an element can be interpreted as focused whether or not it is thus marked:

(2) a. *Aja(-rni) ngaba-nya-jiyimi nginirniki(-rni)?*

what(-FOC) have-2sg-come this(n)(-FOC)

‘What’s this you’re bringing.’

b. *Wawa(-rni) nguka-ju.*

child(-FOC) cry-do

‘The boy is crying.’

As shown in (1a) and (2a), more than one word can bear morphological focus marking, as long as all the marked words have the same reference. The sentences in (2a) and (3) show that these marked elements need not even be adjacent to one another (Jingulu freely allows non-adjacent co-referent nominals (‘discontinuous NPs’)).

(3) a. *Ngininiki-rni ibilka ya-marriyimi ngawu-mbili-rni,*

this(n)-FOC water 3sg-went(dist) home-LOC-FOC

ngardajkalu.

.big(n)

‘There was once water running here at our camp, lots of it.’

b. *Jamaniki-rni Jiminginja-na ngarnu jamaniki*

this(m)-FOC skin-DAT 3sgACC this(m)
Jalyirringinja ngarnu biwurla-ni.
 skin 3sgACC son-FOC
 'Jiminginja's son is Jalyirringinja.'

While focus marking is most commonly found on demonstratives, any word may bear a focus morpheme. These morphemes are occasionally found on non-nominals, such as verbal roots (4a-c), inflected verbs (4d-e) and adverbs (4f-g).

(4) a. *Ardjuwa-rna ya-ju.*
 throw_away-FOC 3sg-do
 'He's failing, stuffing it up.'

b. *Banybili-nidarrangku karnawunji ardbija*
 find-FOC tree lancewood mid-distance
wirri!
 go(IMPV)
 'Go find a lancewood over that way.'

c. *Walarra-jujamaniki-rni, marliya-rna ya-ju.*

scream-do this(m)-FOC sick-FOC 3sg-do

‘He’s screaming in pain, he must be sick.’

- d. *Ngarriya-nga-nu nyinda nyinda-rlu nga-rruku-rni*
 tell-1sg-did DEM(m) DEM(m)-FOC 1sg-went-FOC
indal ngaba-nga-nu ngunu kuyu-warlu marrinjku.
 tell_straight-1sg-did DEM(n) DEM(anaph)-pl word
 ‘I told you that, told you those words right.’

- e. *Nyamba-arndi-kajinya-rriyi-rni.*
 what-INST-through 2sg-will_go-FOC
 ‘How will you go?’

- f. *Ilu-wurru-marriyimi larrba-rni janbarra-ngka.*
 put-3pl-went(dist) previously-FOC nest-ALL
 ‘They used to put dead people in trees.’

- g. *Ngunu-baju wamba-rdarra nangka-nga-yi*
 DEM(n)-pl snappy_gum-pl chop-1sg-FUT
Jadadayi-rni.
 Saturday-FOC
 ‘I’ll cut those snappy gums on Saturday.’

There seems to be a general restriction that only one element can be associated with morphologically marked focus. A subject and an object can not both bear focus marking. However, there are some rare instances when a clause is focused, in which case, as in (5) (and also (4c)), each constituent in that clause bears the focus morpheme.

- (5) a. *Mindi-mi nyamirningirrma-mi ngayirni*
 1dInc-IRR 2sgERG make-IRR 1sgERG
ngini-ni, ngirrma-nya-mi-rni jimirniki-rni
 that(n)-FOC make-2sg-IRR-FOC this(n)-FOC
bambu.

didgeridoo

'You and I will make it, you'll make it too, this
 didgeridoo.'

- b. *Jamarniki-rni bunbaku miyu-ngurru-nku-nu*
 this(m)-FOC fight hit-1plInc-REFL-did
bunbaku, jamarniki-rni mankiyi-rni-kaji ya-ju,
 fight this(m)-FOC sit-FOC-through 3sg-do
bujarriya-ju.

sulk-do

‘This guy was vicious in the fight we all had, but now
he’s just sitting right down sulking.’

2. Three forms, three sources?

One possibility is that /rna/, /rni/ and /rlu/ have distinct sources as focus markers but equivalent interpretations. There is certainly some evidence from neighbouring languages which would support this. According to McConvell (1983), the Ngumpin languages Gurindji and Mudburra, close neighbours of Jingulu (indeed Jingili and Mudburra people have been living together for several generations, sharing a home and ritual life for at least three generations), have a discourse suffix /rni/ which translates as ‘just, only, exactly, still’. Western Gurindji, not in direct contact with Jingulu, has /lu/ in the same function, which is a possible source for Jingulu /rlu/. Finally Jingulu /rna/ could be an adaptation of Kriol /na/ (from English /now/), an emphatic marker. This hypothesis provides a clear local source for each of the three morphemes used in this function (although there does not seem to have been any direct contact between Western Gurindji and Jingulu), but it does not explain why Focus is expressed not only by /rni/

and /rna/, homophonous with ERG and DAT respectively, but also by /nga/, the feminine allomorph of ERG and DAT in Jingulu:

(6) a. *Jajka-mi jama-rni Jamirringinja dardawu-nga.*

ask_for-IRR that-FOC skin_name axe-FOC

‘Ask Jamirringinja for that axe.’

b. *Mankiyi-mindi uku-nga-mbili.*

sit-1dInc humpy-FOC-LOC

‘We’re sitting in the humpy.’

c. *Kirinijunguma-nga-nu ngarnu,*

catfish show-1sg-did 3sgACC

lambarra-nga ngarri-rnini.

daughter_in_law-FOC 1sgGEN-f

‘I showed the catfish to my daughter-in-law.’

d. *Ngaya-rna kanya yaba-nga Jingila,*

1sgNOM-DATuncle man-FOC Jingili

ambaya-nga-ju Jingulu ngayarni.

speak-1sg-do Jingulu 1sgERG

‘My uncle (mother’s brother) was a Jingila, and that’s why I can speak Jingulu.’¹

The use of /nga/ as a Focus marker suggests that something other than straightforward borrowing has occurred, and that Focus marking is somehow related to syntactic case marking. Section 4 considers another process by which syntactic case markers might come to be used as discourse markers, based on the homophony between case and focus marking which is discussed in the next section.

3. Homophony between Focus and Case marking

Curiously, the most common focus-marking morpheme (/rni/) is homophonous with the Ergative marker. As the sentences in (7) show, an intransitive predicate can occur with an unmarked nominal word as its subject (7a), but the subject

¹ The use of [nga] on a masculine nominal is surprising. As a marker of ERG or DAT case, [nga] can only ever appear on feminine nominals, and its appearance as FOC on nominals of other genders is exceedingly rare (this is one of two clear examples in the corpus). This cross-gendered use of [nga] was not accepted in elicitation, and may be a speech error.

of transitive predicate must bear the morpheme /rni/ (same allomorphs as the Focus marker)¹.

(7) a. *Wawa jarrkaja-ardu.*

child run-go

'The child is running.'

b. *Wawa-rni warlaku ngaja-ju.*

child-ERG dog see-do

'The child sees the dog.'

c. **Wawa warlaku ngaja-ju.*

child dog see-do

¹ Sentence (7c) is grammatical (with any word order) only under one very bizarre interpretation, where the nominals are co-referent: 'The child who is a dog (or the dog who is a child) sees him/her/it/them.' It is also grammatical as a rendition of 'The child sees the dog' if there is a significant intonation break between the first two words of the sentence (what Pensalfini 1997 calls a 'dislocation' structure, in which dislocated elements appear in the nominative (unmarked) case).

The sentences in (8) show that there really are separate uses of /rni/ as a marker of contrastive focus and as a marker of Ergative arguments.

(8) a. *Miringmi-rni darra-nga-yi bardakurri-mi.*

gum-FOC eat-1sg-FUT good-v

'I'll eat the sweet gum.'

b. *Bulama-nga-nu jama-rni junma-rni.*

miss-1sg-did that(m)-FOC wallaby-FOC

'I missed that wallaby.'

c. *Nyamina-rni nayuni ya-jiyimi.*

DEM(f)-FOC woman 3sg-come

'Here comes that woman.'

d. *Jama-rni warlaku-rni-ni nganya ngaba-ju*

that-FOC dog-ERG-FOC fur have-do

ngamurlu.

big(n)

'That dog has long fur.'

e. *Nganya-marrimarlaluka-rni kujika-rni.*
 sing-did(dist) old_man(pl)-ERG song-FOC
 ‘The old men sang songs.’

f. *Darra-ardi jamaniki-rni mirdimirdi-ni,*
 eat-HAB this(m)-FOC cricket-FOC
wangkulayi-rni, dirdingarnu-ni darra-ardi --
 crow-ERG hawk-ERG eat-HAB
walanja-ni, jurrkubadi-ni darra-ardi.
 goanna-ERG goanna-ERG eat-HAB
 ‘The cricket is eaten by crows and hawks - yellow and
 plains goannas eat it too.’

g. *Jalykaji ngirrma ya-marri marlarluka-rni*
 woomera make 3sg-did(dist) old_men-ERG
lawa-rni.
 cattlebush-FOC
 ‘Olden day folk made cattle-bush woomeras.’

In (8a-b), the transitive subject is clearly the first person singular, as indicated by agreement within the head-word, and

the element bearing /rni/ is the direct object¹. In (8c), the element bearing /rni/ is the subject of an intransitive clause, which, unlike the subject of a transitive clause, need not bear the suffix /rni/ (compare with (7)). In (8d), the word for 'dog', the transitive subject, is marked twice with /rni/, once for focus and once for ergativity. In (8e-f), both the subject and the object of the transitive predicate are marked with /rni/. In (8g), one of the words construed with the object is marked with /rni/.

The next most commonly used focus marker is /rna/. This morpheme is the marker of Dative case, and appears on nominals referring to indirect object arguments (9a-b), as well as on oblique nominals representing causes, purposes or beneficiaries (9c-d) and nominal possessors (9e-f).

(9) a. *Jamarniki-rni wawa-rniambaya-jkala jami-rna*

¹ Once again, there is a possible interpretation with the /rni/-marked element construed as subject: 'I, the gum, eat the good one.' However, this sentence was produced by a human speaker who was declaring her intention of eating some acacia gum which had just been collected.

this(m)-FOC boy-ERG talk-NOML that(m)-DAT
marluka-rna.

old_man-DAT

'This kid is always talking to that old man.'

b. *Jama wardaju ngarnu wawa-rna.*

that(m) yell-do 3sgACC child-DAT

'She's yelling at the children.'

c. *Marliya-nga-ju ngawu-rni-na ngawu-rna.*

sick-1sg-do home-FOC-DAT home-DAT

'I'm homesick.'

d. *Nga-rruku Kulayi-ngka,ngirrikingangi-rna.*

1sg-went Kulayi-ALL hunting meat-DAT

'I went up to Kulayi to try to find meat.'

e. *Jama-rni Jurlinginja-ni jami-rna*

that(m)-FOC skin-FOC that(m)-DAT

Jamirringinji-na biwurla.

skin-DAT son

'Jurlinginja is Jamirringinja's son.'

f. *Karnarrinymin ganu ngarri-ni-na kanyi-rna.*
 spear DEM(n)1sgGEN-m-DAT uncle-DAT
 ‘That spear is my uncle’s.’

Uses of /rna/ to mark contrastive focus are seen in (1a-b) and (10). Examples such as those in (10) demonstrate the use of /rna/ unambiguously as a focus marker.

- (10) a. *Jamabili-na birri-wunya-na-miki*
 that-dl(anim)-FOC visit-3dl-1Obj-came
marluka-yili-ni.
 old_man-dl-ERG
 ‘Those two old people came to see me yesterday.’
- b. *Dunja-ni-ngurru-numurrkunbala-na,*
 kiss-INV-1plInc-did three-FOC
dunja-ni-ngurru-nu.
 kiss-INV-1plInc
 ‘They kissed us three.’

The element marked with /rna/ is construed with the Ergative subject of the clause in (10a) and with the direct object in (10b). Neither of these positions are associated with Dative case-marking.

Ergative and Dative marking share a feminine allomorph. As the sentences in (11) show, [nga] appears on feminine nominals in the Ergative and Dative (replacing the characteristic feminine ending /rni/ (homophonous with the regular Ergative marker)). No other inflectional suffix shows this kind of suppletive allomorphy.

- (11) a. *Nyami-nga nayu-nga yawulyu-kaji ya-ju,*
 DEM-**fERG** woman-**fERG** love_song-through 3sg-do
ngarnu wardinja-na.
 3sgGENboyfriend-DAT
 ‘The women are doing a love song in order to attract
 boyfriends.’
- b. *Karnanganja-nga darra-ardi bundurru*
 emu-**fERG** eat-HAB food

karnanganja-nga ngininiki-rni marlungkarru-nu.

emu-**fERG** this(n)-FOC emu_plum-did

‘Emus eat the food from this emu plum plant.’

c.*Jama-rni bininja-ni ijajkala nayu-nga.*

that(m)-FOC man-ERG adulterous woman-**fDAT**

‘That man is always chasing women.’

This allomorph of the case markers is also used to mark contrastive focus in the same environments¹, as shown in (6).

¹ However, Ergative and Focus morphemes differ here in one important respect. A feminine nominal in Ergative form always drops the characteristic feminine ending /rni/ (and any vowel harmony that it induced) and substitutes [nga] in its place. In texts, this is also used to express contrastive focus on a feminine noun in Absolutive case, as in (6a, c), although speakers rejected the construction when presented with it. Contrastive focus on a feminine noun is usually expressed by adding /rni/ to the nominal with its characteristic ending:

Ngaba-nya-ju ngarnu biwurlini-ni.

have-2sg-do 3sgGEN daughter-FOC

‘You have his daughter.’

Ergativity can not be thus expressed:

The homophony between case and focus morphology can result in instances where it is unclear whether a particular morpheme is to be interpreted as marking focus or case. Usually (as in (12a-b)), there is no ambiguity with regard to subjecthood. In sentences like (12c-e) ambiguity can arise, though in context the ambiguity almost always disappears.

(12) a. *Nyaami-nga nayu-nga ngaba-ju*
 DEM(f)-fERG/FOC woman-fERG/FOC have-do
kunyaku kujkarrabilarni bayiny-bila.
 2dlACC two(m) man-dl(anim)
 ‘That woman has two men.’

b. *Nyaami-nga nayu-nga ngaba-nu*
 DEM(f)-fERG/FOC woman-fERG/FOC have-did
wunyakukujkarrani manjala-ala.

**Ngarnu biwurlini-ni ngaja-ana-ju.*

3sgGEN daughter-FOC see-1Obj-do

‘His daughter sees you.’

3dIACC two(m) baby-pl

‘That woman had twins (two babies).’

c. *Larrba dirri-wurru-marri nyamina-ni*

previously eat-3pl-did(narr) DEM(f)-FOC

burrunjawurni-rni, larrba marlarluka-rni.

plains_wanderer-FOC previously old_man(pl)-ERG

‘Long ago people would eat the plains wanderer, in
olden times.’

d. *Nganya-marrimarlaluka-rni kujika-rni.*

sing-did(narr) old_man(pl)-ERG song-FOC

‘The old men sang songs.’

e. *Jaminiki ngamurla-nikijikijiba-rda-wurra*

this big(m)-ERG tease-go-3pl

jama-baja-niyabanja-la wawa-la.

that-pl-FOC young(m)-pl child-pl

‘That big guy’s annoying the little kids.’

OR ‘The little kids are annoying those big guys.’

In (12a-b), the first two words are co-referent and both are suffixed with [nga], the allomorph of /rni/ which appears on feminine nominals. In Jingulu, if co-referent words are also adjacent, any or all of these words can bear the appropriate case suffix (though if only one is marked it is almost always the last in the sequence). In each of the above sentences, both occurrences of [nga] might mark Ergative case, or one might be an Ergative marker and the other an indicator of contrastive focus (if the discourse permitted such an interpretation). It is most likely that the first occurrence marks focus and the second marks case, given that case is generally marked on the last element in a sequence of co-referent elements (if not all of them), and that focus-marking is most commonly found on demonstratives (see sentence (1b) for an example of focus-marking on a demonstrative followed by an unmarked co-referent element). They could not both be interpreted as marking contrastive focus, however, as the predicate requires an Ergative subject.

In (12c-d) it is only our knowledge of the world, which tells us that small fowl do not eat old men, and songs do not sing old men, that gives the correct interpretation. The sentence in

(12e), on the other hand, with no context to guide it, could be interpreted with either nominal as the subject, and the other a focused object, giving rise to the two possible translations given (the verb morphology tells us that the object must be plural, but plural nominals need not be marked for plurality, hence the second possible interpretation). Such truly ambiguous sentences are very rare and only ever ambiguous out of context.

Before leaving the discussion of homophony between focus-marking and case-marking, it is important to note that the Jingulu situation represents something different from what is found in other languages where case-markers also have a discourse function. Jaminjungan (XXXreference), Rembarnga (XXXref) and Gooniyandi (XXXref) also use case-markers to indicate discourse prominence, but in each of these cases it is only the markers of one core case, the Ergative, that is used in this manner XXX.

4. The role of Colonialism in the rise of Jingulu Focus morphology

The hypothesis which I wish to consider in this section is that focus marking has arisen in the speech of the last few

generations of Jingulu speakers as a result of the increasing functional load of English and concomitant decrease in Jingulu's functional load among Jingulu speakers. Jingulu is currently a severely endangered, in fact moribund, language, and all of its speakers use English or Kriol rather than Jingulu on a daily basis for all communicative purposes (Pensalfini 1997). Many writers have noted that in such circumstances of obsolescence, language change can be accelerated (Dorian 1981, Schmidt 1985, Maandi 1989, for example). Under this hypothesis the re-analysis described in this section that led to Jingulu case marking was as yet uninstantiated when Hale (1960) encountered Jingulu, and only beginning when Chadwick (1975) did his research.

As mentioned in section 1, just under one third of sentences were found to have morphological marking of focused elements in the mid-1990s (under one fifth in narratives). However, sentences collected by Hale (1960) do not show even one instance of this use of the Ergative and Dative markers in some hundred or so sentences. Reporting on data collected in the late 1960s, Chadwick (1975), lists /ni/ and /na/ among a list of emphatic suffixes (including the suffixes /kaji/ and /nama/

that Pensalfini (1997) analyses as adverbial-forming particles). Chadwick says that /ni/ is commonly found on nominals in the Locative, Allative and Ablative cases. It appears, then, that it is only over the last forty years that the Ergative and Dative case markers have come to be used to mark contrastive focus in addition to case.

In all likelihood, this situation is the result of the reduced functional load of the Jingulu language and the introduction of English as the dominant language culturally. This led to a re-analysis of core case marking as marking pragmatic prominence.

To appreciate this possibility, it is important to remember that Jingulu, being a typical nonconfigurational language in the sense of Hale (1980), is an aggressively pro-drop language. Discourse topics (the 'given' information) are generally not expressed by free nominals, their existence in the discourse being already established and their presence not required by the grammar. Overt nominals associated with argument positions (particularly demonstratives) are generally only present if they represent new information or if the speaker wishes to draw

attention to them or to describe some property associated with them. Overt nominal arguments are therefore generally associated with focus. While morphological case on free nominals is distinguished on an Ergative-Absolutive basis (free pronouns make a three way Ergative-Nominative-Accusative distinction), case is distinguished for bound pronominals in the verb-word (which are for the most part obligatory) on a Nominative-Accusative basis¹.

English, on the other hand, requires argument positions in matrix clauses to be filled with overt lexical material, but does not mark this material for case by means of morphology. It distinguishes case structurally on a Nominative-Accusative basis, like the obligatory bound agreement markers on the Jingulu verb.

Having grown up as bilingual speakers of Kriol/Aboriginal English and Jingulu, with significantly greater exposure to Kriol/Aboriginal English than to Jingulu, it is conceivable that

¹ Detailed information on the structure of Jingulu clauses can be found in Chadwick (1975) or Pensalfini (1997).

learners mistakenly analysed Jingulu as an entirely Accusative language, based on English and the structure of the Jingulu verb-word. They re-analysed the Ergative (and Dative) marker as indicating contrastive focus. Eventually, the Ergative use of /rni/ was also learned, but not until /rni/ as a Focus marker had become established in the grammar. In a thriving linguistic community, such an analytical ‘error’ on the learner’s part would be corrected before the ‘error’ became ‘grammar’, but in a community where the language is rarely spoken, such ‘errors’ might conceivably lead to linguistic innovations¹.

Typologically, Jingulu is a hybrid between a head-marking and a dependent-marking language (in the sense of Nichols 1986), and may represent a language moving from a system of linking nominals to empty positions by case-marking to a

¹ Danny Fox (personal communication) has suggested that morphological focus-marking in Jingulu could be considered compulsory, with all core case markers being available as markers of contrastive focus. We have seen that markers of both Ergative and Dative case are available for this purpose, but that only some 30% of sentences make use of such case-marking. Fox’s suggestion is that the third core case, Absolutive, marks contrastive focus in all other cases. The marker of Absolutive case is null.

system of dislocation of nominals and verbal agreement (see Pensalfini 1997). In functional terms, the increased importance of verbal agreement reduces the load on the case morphology. Once the verbal agreement becomes fully grammaticalised, as in languages which obey Baker's (1996) Morphological Visibility Condition, nominal case morphology becomes redundant and may be lost altogether, or case markers may be reanalysed and come to be used as markers of other properties such as discourse prominence of various sorts.

The Jingulu situation is not quite as straightforward, because /rni/ and /rna/ retain their uses as markers of syntactic case in addition to being markers of contrastive focus. The proposal here is that, in an environment of impoverished input, the analysis of the morphemes on the learners' part as discourse markers and later re-analysis as case markers led to a split in functions of these morphemes, so that they now serve to indicate both contrastive focus and their original syntactic cases.

It is worth noting in this regard that Jaminjung, Rembarnga, and Gooniyandi, other languages which permit

Ergative morphology to be used to mark discourse prominence
XXX, are all head-marking languages¹.

The analysis of Jingulu focus marking set out in this section is an alternative to the 'three sources' analysis proposed in section 2. It has the advantage of explaining the occurrence of /nga/ as a focus marker which the former analysis does not. However, it leaves us with no explanation of the use of the rarest focus marker, /rlu/. It appears that under either analysis, /rlu/ must be analysed as a Western Gurindji borrowing.

References

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¹ A different example of case-marking developing extended functions as the nominal case system degenerates is found in (Eastern) Aleut. Aleut developed from a proto-language which had a rich case-marking system (still found in Eskimo languages), but retains the distinctions only on a restricted number of closed class items (positional nouns). Remaining case morphology (Relative versus Absolutive) appears to have extended to marking verbs as well, with matrix verbs bearing Absolutive marking and dependent verbs bearing Relative (\approx Ergative) marking.

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