

WALS Exercise (Chapter 49: Number of Cases)

“Case marking is one of the most important areas of linguistic typology and universals” (Croft 2003, p. 214). Case marking signifies the grammatical relationship between a noun or pronoun and other sentence elements. Languages mark cases in various ways, including through inflectional endings on nouns, pronouns, and adjectives; through prepositions or postpositions; through word order; or through a combination of these methods. Chapter 49 in the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) website focuses on the morphological case marking (Iggesen 2003). This essay discusses the case marking of Moroccan Arabic, Spanish, and Quechua (Imbabura).

In Moroccan Arabic, prepositions and particles are used extensively as a case marker (Harrell 1962). Taha (1993) specifies that the language has five cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and locative. Beyond these basic grammatical categories, Fassi Fehri (2011) mentions that prepositions and particles in Moroccan Arabic can be used to convey a wide range of semantic relationships. Harrell (1962) exemplifies other usage; preposition *mā* (with) is used to show instrumental relationships while particle *min* (from) is used to indicate an ablative relationship. Reviewing the above reference grammar, I would assign the feature value 7 to Moroccan Arabic.

Similar to Moroccan Arabic, for Spanish, although Butt and Benjamin (2011) do not use the traditional labels, they identify five comparable cases: nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, and locative. Moreover, Bosque and Demonte (1999), De Bruyne, Pountain, and Kattán-Ibarra (2013), and Kattán-Ibarra and Howkins (2014) discuss markers that indicate instrumental and ablative cases like *con* (with) and *de* (from), respectively. With a total of 7 cases from this observation, I believe the assigned value of “No morphological case-marking” in WALS is inaccurate.

Quechua (Imbabura) has a complex case system. Quechua marks cases through suffixes on nouns and adjectives (Sánchez-Moreno 2019). Cole (1982) identifies eight cases: nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, ablative, allative, instrumental, and comitative while Cerrón-Palomino (1994) and Adelaar and Muysken (2004) identify the ninth case: locative. Case markers in Quechua (Imbabura) are, for example, the suffix *-wan* (with) used for instrumental case, and the suffix *-pi* (from) used for ablative case. In my opinion, the feature value “8-9 cases” assigned to Quechua (Imbabura) is accurate.

In conclusion, case marking plays a crucial role in indicating the grammatical relationship between a noun or pronoun and other sentence elements. In this essay, the case marking systems of Moroccan Arabic, Spanish, and Quechua (Imbabura) were discussed. Moroccan Arabic and Spanish have five cases each, and both languages use prepositions and particles to convey different semantic relationships. On the other hand, Quechua (Imbabura) has a complex case system, with eight to nine cases marked through suffixes on nouns and adjectives. WALS assigns values to the number of cases in a language, and the observations in this essay suggest that the values for Moroccan Arabic and Spanish need to be updated.

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