

Abstract. In South Bolivian Quechua, a nominative-accusative language, locative arguments can surface with either spatial case markers such as *-man* ‘allative’, *-manta* ‘ablative’, and *-pi* ‘locative’, or the canonical accusative suffix *-ta*. We identify three recurrent patterns: in some contexts only spatial case is grammatical, in others only accusative is acceptable, and in still others both options are possible but yield discourse contrasts. We argue that this variation follows from the interaction of three constraints plus an information-structural distinction. The Proto-Patient Constraint permits accusative marking on locative arguments when they instantiate key proto-patient properties such as being an incremental theme or undergoing a change of state. The Agreement Constraint blocks accusative but requires spatial case to satisfy lexical semantic agreement when the verb root or the verbal suffix encodes directionality. The Competition Constraint blocks accusative-marked locative argument to avoid argument structure ambiguity when another noun is already marked with accusative. Where both case options are possible, spatial case foregrounds the locative as focal or newly introduced, whereas accusative presents the event as discourse-new. Typological parallels suggest that the South Bolivian Quechua pattern belongs to a broader tendency for accusative marking to extend to non-canonical arguments under constrained semantic and discourse conditions.

Keywords. Quechua; nominal morphology; case marking; information structure

1. Introduction. South Bolivian Quechua (ISO 639-3: quh), with approximately 2 million speakers, is a Quechuan variety spoken primarily in Cochabamba, Oruro, Potosí, and Chuquisaca, Bolivia. In descriptive work on Bolivian Quechua, spatial relations are canonically marked by suffixes such as *-pi* ‘in’, *-man* ‘to’, and *-manta* ‘from’ (Lastra 1968). South Bolivian Quechua also has the accusative suffix *-ta*, prototypically used for direct objects.

The central puzzle of this paper is that some locative arguments in South Bolivian Quechua can also appear with *-ta*. In other words, a noun denoting a place, path, or goal may sometimes behave morphosyntactically like an object. The core generalization of this paper is that case choice on locative arguments is not random. It reflects the interaction of semantic proto-role properties, lexical-semantic agreement, competition within argument structure, and information structure.

The examples discussed in this paper come from elicitation and follow-up judgment tasks. The primary elicitation session was conducted via Zoom on November 8, 2024, and included sentence translation and question-answer matching tasks. Our primary consultant, Ramiro Vega-Vargas, is a middle-aged male native speaker of South Bolivian Quechua who is bilingual in Quechua and Spanish and also fluent in English. Additional judgments were obtained through follow-up discussions with the second author, who is also a native speaker of South Bolivian

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Quechua. The present study is therefore based on a small, consultant-centered dataset, and the claims advanced here should be understood as a focused analysis of a limited but internally coherent body of data.

2. Background. Locative arguments are arguments selected by a verb that encode the spatial setting, path, source, or goal of the event (Lee 2022). In South Bolivian Quechua, spatial case is expressed by at least three markers: *-pi* for location, *-man* for goal, and *-manta* for source (Las-tra 1968). The language also has the accusative suffix *-ta*, canonically used on direct objects. The contrast is illustrated in (1)-(3). Example (1) shows locative case, (2) shows source and goal marking, and (3) shows canonical accusative marking on an object.

(1) kay tutuma-s-**pi** qu-chi-sunchik
 DEM tutuma-PL-LOC drink-CAUS-1PL.INCL
 ‘We will drink in these *tutuma* bowls.’

(2) Tata Isidru Valle-**manta** llaqta-n-**man** kuti-pu-n
 Mister Isidru.TOP Valley-ABL town-3SG.POSS-ALL return-back-3SG.PST
 ‘Mister Isidru returned to his town from the Valley.’

(3) Tata Isidru sara muju-**ta** ranti-n
 Mister Isidru corn seed-ACC buy-3SG.NF
 ‘Mister Isidru bought corn seeds.’

3. The puzzle. The data show three broad patterns.

First, some locative arguments require accusative marking. In (4), the noun *yan* ‘street’ cannot take locative case and must instead bear accusative.

(4) a. *Tata Isidru yan-pi pasa-sha-n
 Mister Isidru street-LOC cross-PROG-3SG.PRS
 Intended: ‘Mister Isidru is crossing the street.’
 b. Tata Isidru yan-ta pasa-sha-n
 Mister Isidru street-ACC cross-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘Mister Isidru is crossing the street.’

Second, some locative arguments require spatial case. In (5), the goal argument with *yayku-* ‘enter’ must be allative.

(5) a. Tata Isidru wasi-man yayku-n
 Mister Isidru house-ALL enter-3SG.PST
 ‘Mister Isidru entered the house.’
 b. *Tata Isidru wasi-ta yayku-n
 Mister Isidru house-ACC enter-3SG.PST
 Intended: ‘Mister Isidru entered the house.’

Third, some predicates allow either spatial case or accusative on a locative argument.

Example (6) shows that the locative case marker *-pi* can alternate with the accusative case marker *-ta* in certain contexts.

- (6) a. Tata Isidru-q llajta-n-pi para-sha-n
Mister Isidru-GEN town-3SG.POSS-LOC rain-PROG-3SG.PRS
'It is raining in Mister Isidru's town.'
- b. Tata Isidru-q llajta-n-ta para-sha-n
Mister Isidru-GEN town-3SG.POSS-ACC rain-PROG-3SG.PRS
'It is raining in Mister Isidru's town.'

In (7a), *Buffalo* is marked in allative case with the suffix *-man*, which also makes sense as it is the location towards which Mister Isidru is going. In (7b), *Buffalo* is marked with accusative *-ta* rather than allative *-man*, showing that a goal-denoting argument may surface with object-like case marking.

- (7) a. Tata Isidru Buffalo-man ri-sha-n
Mister Isidru Buffalo-ALL go-PROG-3SG.PRS
'Mister Isidru is going to Buffalo.'
- b. Tata Isidru Buffalo-ta ri-sha-n
Mister Isidru Buffalo-ACC go-PROG-3SG.PRS
'Mister Isidru is going to Buffalo.'

These three patterns define the analytical target: why is accusative possible on some locative arguments, impossible on others, and pragmatically contrastive in still others?

4. Analysis. The proposed account consists of three constraints plus an information-structural distinction. The first explains when accusative is licensed, the second and third explain when it is blocked, and the discourse-pragmatic component explains why some alternations remain available.

4.1. THE PROTO-PATIENT CONSTRAINT. Accusative is permitted on a locative argument when that argument instantiates one or more proto-patient properties in the sense of Dowty (1991). The relevant properties in the present data include being an incremental theme, undergoing a change of state, being causally affected, and remaining stationary relative to another participant in motion, as illustrated by the South Bolivian Quechua examples in (8).

- (8) a. change of state (also causally affected)
Yaku-ta t'impu-chi-ni
water-ACC boil-CAUS-1SG.PST
'I boiled the water.'
- b. incremental theme (also stationary)
Tata Isidru yan-ta pasa-sha-n
mister Isidru street-ACC cross-PROG-3SG.PST
'Mister Isidru was crossing the street.'

- c. causally affected by another participant (also change of state)
 Chay chiri saray-ta qasarpa-chi-n
 that cold corn-ACC frost-CAUS-3SG.PST
 ‘The cold frosted the corn.’
- d. stationary relative to movement of another participant
 Sara muju jusk’u-ta urma-yu-n
 corn seed hole-ACC fall-PFV-3SG.PST
 ‘The corn seed fell into the hole.’

Recall Example (4), the street is not merely the setting of the crossing event: it is the path traversed by the moving participant and behaves like an incremental theme. This makes accusative appropriate.

The same logic extends to the alternations in (9)-(10). In both examples, the location can be conceptualized as more tightly integrated into the event than a neutral setting. The ground in (9) is the endpoint on which leaves accumulate; the hole in (10) functions as the spatial endpoint implicated in the seed’s motion. Both are stationary, undergoing a change of state, and causally affected.

- (9) a. sach’a laqhi-s pampa-man urma-yu-sha-nku
 tree leaf-PL ground-ALL fall-PFV-PROG-3PL.PRS
 ‘The leaves are falling onto the ground.’
- b. sach’a laqhi-s pampa-ta urma-yu-sha-nku
 tree leaf-PL ground-ACC fall-PFV-PROG-3PL.PRS
 ‘The leaves are falling onto the ground.’
- (10) a. Sara muju jusk’u-man urma-yu-n
 corn seed hole-ALL fall-PFV-3SG.NF
 ‘The corn seed falls into the hole.’
- b. Sara muju jusk’u-ta urma-yu-n
 corn seed hole-ACC fall-PFV-3SG.NF
 ‘The corn seed falls into the hole.’

In sum, the Proto-Patient Constraint states that accusative on locative arguments is favored when the location is construed as event-internal and affected rather than as a purely external setting. This connects the South Bolivian Quechua pattern to broader work linking accusative to affectedness and transitivity (Hopper & Thompson 1980).

4.2. THE AGREEMENT CONSTRAINT. Accusative is blocked when the verb root or verbal morphology encodes directionality, source, goal, or location in a way that requires overt spatial case. On this view, spatial case marking is not optional decoration; it is part of the morphosyntactic realization of the verb’s lexical semantics.

The clearest cases involve inherently directional verbs. Examples for such verb roots include *yayku-* ‘enter’ in (5) and *viaja-* ‘travel’ in (11).

- (11) a. Tata Isidru tarpúy tuku-ytawan Buffalo-man viaja-nqa
 Mister Isidru plant.ACC finish-NOMLZ Buffalo-ALL travel-3SG.FUT
 ‘Mister Isidru will travel to Buffalo after finishing planting.’
 b. *Tata Isidru tarpúy tuku-ytawan Buffalo-ta viaja-nqa
 Mister Isidru plant.ACC finish-NOMLZ Buffalo-ACC travel-3SG.FUT
 Intended: ‘Mister Isidru will travel to Buffalo after finishing planting.’

The same restriction appears with directional morphology. In (12), the directional suffix *-mu* requires an ablative-marked source rather than an accusative-marked noun.

- (12) a. chaqra-manta papa-ta apa-mu-sha-n
 crop.field-ABL potato-ACC take-DIR-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘He is taking potatoes from the crop field.’
 b. *chaqra-ta papa-ta apa-mu-sha-n
 crop.field-ACC potato-ACC take-DIR-PROG-3SG.PRS
 Intended: ‘He is taking potatoes from the crop field.’

Example (13) shows the same effect with *ranti-mu-* ‘go and buy’. Although *ranti-* ‘buy’ does not itself encode a location, the directional suffix contributes motion and requires the market noun to surface with locative case.

- (13) a. Tata Isidru sara muju-ta qhatu-pi ranti-mu-n
 Mister Isidru corn seed-ACC open.market-LOC buy-GO&DO-3SG.NF
 ‘Mister Isidru goes and buys corn seed in the open market.’
 b. *Tata Isidru sara muju-ta qhatu-ta ranti-mu-n
 Mister Isidru corn seed-ACC open.market-ACC buy-GO&DO-3SG.NF
 Intended: ‘Mister Isidru goes and buys corn seed in the open market.’

The same logic extends to forms where both the root and the suffix encode directionality, such as *kuti-pu-* ‘return back’ in (2). In such cases the goal is obligatorily spatially marked.

4.3. THE COMPETITION CONSTRAINT. A second source of blocking arises when another noun in the clause is already accusative-marked. In these contexts, assigning accusative to a locative noun creates competition with the direct object and risks an argument-structure reanalysis in which the locative is interpreted as a second object rather than as an oblique spatial argument.

This is especially clear in (14). With locative case, *yaku* ‘water’ is understood as the medium or location in which the dried potato is soaked. With accusative, that reading collapses because the clause already contains an accusative direct object.

- (14) a. Tata Isidru ch’uñu-ta yaku-pi chullu-chi-n
 Mister Isidru dried.potato-ACC water-LOC soak-CAUS-3SG.NF
 ‘Mister Isidru soaks the dried potato in water.’
 b. *Tata Isidru ch’uñu-ta yaku-ta chullu-chi-n
 Mister Isidru dried.potato-ACC water-ACC soak-CAUS-3SG.NF
 Intended: ‘Mister Isidru soaks the dried potato in water.’

Another related example with *manka* ‘pot’ is provided in (15), where accusative on the locative noun yields a coerced reading roughly like ‘put the potato and the pot (somewhere)’ on (15b).

- (15) a. Unáy t’impu-chi-ytawan papá manka-man kacha-yu-ni
 long.time.ACC boil-CAUS-NOMLZ potato.ACC pot-ALL send-PFV-1SG.NF
 ‘I put the potatoes in the pot after boiling them for a long time.’
- b. Unáy t’impu-chi-ytawan papá manka-ta kacha-yu-ni
 long.time.ACC boil-CAUS-NOMLZ potato.ACC pot-ACC send-PFV-1SG.NF
 ‘I put the potatoes and the pot (in someplace) after boiling them for a long time.’ (Intended:
 ‘I put the potatoes in the pot after boiling them for a long time.’)

The Competition Constraint captures the intuition more generally: once an accusative object is present, accusative on an oblique locative becomes costly because it invites object-like interpretation.

4.4. A DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC ACCOUNT. Where both case options remain available, the alternation is not free. Spatial case foregrounds the locative as focal or newly introduced, whereas accusative presents the event as discourse-new. In other words, spatial case answers a ‘where?’ question more naturally, whereas accusative answers a broader ‘what is happening?’ question.

This is illustrated in (16) for the weather predicate and in (17) for the motion predicate.

- (16) a. Context: Where is it raining?
 Tata Isidru-q llajta-n-pi para-sha-n.
 mister Isidru-GEN town-3SG.POSS-LOC rain-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘It is raining in Mister Isidru’s town.’
- b. Context: What is happening?
 Tata Isidru-q llajta-n-ta para-sha-n.
 mister Isidru-GEN town-3SG.POSS-ACC rain-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘It is raining in Mister Isidru’s town.’
- (17) a. Context: Where is Mister Isidru going?
 Tata Isidru Buffalo-man ri-sha-n.
 mister Isidru Buffalo-ALL go-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘Mister Isidru is going to Buffalo.’
- b. Context: What is Mister Isidru doing?
 Tata Isidru Buffalo-ta ri-sha-n.
 mister Isidru Buffalo-ACC go-PROG-3SG.PRS
 ‘Mister Isidru is going to Buffalo.’

This discourse-pragmatic account reconciles the descriptive observation that the English translations are often the same with the judgment data showing that speakers nonetheless prefer different case forms in different contexts. It also aligns naturally with broader work on information structure and discourse packaging (Givon 1984; Lambrecht 1994).

5. Conclusion. The South Bolivian Quechua pattern is typologically plausible rather than exceptional. Across languages, accusative often extends beyond canonical patients under semantic or constructional pressure. Comparable patterns have been noted for directional locatives and resultative constructions in other language families, including Japanese (Takahashi 2011) and crosslinguistic discussions of case extension (Levin & Hovav 1995; Malchukov & Spencer 2008). What South Bolivian Quechua adds is especially clear evidence that semantic, syntactic, and discourse factors may all be needed at once to model the distribution.

At the same time, we identified several residual cases that remain difficult for the present analysis. Some examples with the verb *fall*, causativization, or resemblance verbs were judged marginal or ungrammatical in ways not yet fully explained. There is a possible contact-related tendency whereby some Quechua-Spanish bilinguals prefer wider use of accusative over spatial case markers. Both issues point toward future work with a larger speaker sample and with naturalistic conversational and narrative data.

Accusative case marking on locative arguments in South Bolivian Quechua is not arbitrary. It reflects the interaction of four pressures: semantic compatibility with proto-patienthood, lexical-semantic agreement with directional meaning, competition within argument structure, and information structure. Accusative is favored when a locative is construed as proto-patient-like; spatial case is required when the verb or verbal morphology demands an overt spatial relation; a second accusative is blocked when it would compete with an existing object; and in alternating contexts, case choice tracks what is discourse-new. Taken together, these generalizations offer a compact explanation of the main patterns observed in our dataset, while also showing how differential case marking on locative arguments can emerge from the interaction of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

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