

## Focus in Ecuadorian Quechua

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### 1. Introduction

This paper provides a brief description of how pragmatically marked focus is encoded in Ecuadorian Quechua.<sup>1</sup> While this is a preliminary study based on data from one speaker, this variety of Quechua is under-documented, and this in-progress study is a contribution nonetheless. Clauses with focus reveal pragmatic nuances that differ from other clause types.<sup>2</sup> I will illustrate the effects of focus by contrasting focused and unfocused sentences.

Marked focus can occur in two different scopes. If the entire clause is focused, the scope is truth-value focus.<sup>3</sup> Example (1) shows an unfocused sentence, while (2) asserts the truth-value of the focused statement.

- |     |   |        |           |                          |
|-----|---|--------|-----------|--------------------------|
| (1) | wawa-kuna                                 | katuna | wasi-mañ  | zi-rka-kuna <sup>4</sup> |
|     | child-pl                                  | market | house-DAT | go-PAST-3pl              |
|     | The children went to the market.          |        |           |                          |
|     |   |        |           |                          |
| (2) | wawa-kuna                                 | katuna | wasi-mañ  | zi-rka-kuna- <b>mi</b>   |
|     | child-pl                                  | market | house-DAT | go-PAST-3pl-FOC          |
|     | The children <i>did</i> go to the market. |        |           |                          |

If a constituent smaller than a clause is focused, we describe it as constituent focus.<sup>5</sup> This type of focusing serves to add emphasis, as illustrated below. In example (3), the adverb *utkata*, “quickly,” is unfocused. In (4), it is focused.

- |     |                                    |                   |          |                |
|-----|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------|
| (3) | njuka                              | utkata            | atʃku-ta | kati-rka-ni.   |
|     | 1sg                                | quickly           | dog-ACC  | chase-PAST-1sg |
|     | “I quickly chased the dog.”        |                   |          |                |
|     |                                    |                   |          |                |
| (4) | njuka                              | utkata- <b>mi</b> | atʃku-ta | kati-rka-ni.   |
|     | 1sg                                | quickly-FOC       | dog-ACC  | chase-PAST-1sg |
|     | “I <i>quickly</i> chased the dog.” |                   |          |                |

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<sup>2</sup> Payne. pp. 268

<sup>3</sup> Ibid pp. 268

<sup>4</sup> The examples in the paper are given using IPA rather than any official orthography.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid pp. 268

At present, we have identified several morphosyntactic structures that can be used for focus. These focusing methods include affix addition (primarily *-mi*, *-ka*, *-tʃu*), negation positioning, clefting, fronting, and intonation. I outline each of these methods in the following sections.

Note that previous research of Ecuadorian Quechua is not plentiful. The description in Carpenter 1982, a reference grammar, is based on an overview of Quechua dialects; it is not specific to the one described here. Throughout, I compare and contrast Carpenter's data with my own data, which was elicited through work with a native speaker consultant.

## 2. Affixes

In this section, we will discuss how affixes are used to focus constituents. The affixes we will investigate are *-mi*, *-ka*, *-ʒa-mi*, *-piʃ*.

### 2.1 *-mi*

#### 2.1.1 Non-verbal usage of *-mi*

In Carpenter's book, the morpheme *-mi* is described as a "witness" particle, implying that the speaker was a witness to an event. It may also be used to express certainty. This can be seen in example (5), where the speaker had witnessed the event and is making an observation.

- (5) [w]armi-kuna-mi  
women-PL-WITNESS  
It is the women.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, Carpenter describes it as the marker for information that is the answer to a question. This is shown in examples (6) and (7).

- (6) kikin-pak-[tʃ]u?  
1sg-GEN-INT  
Is this yours?

- (7) ari [nj]uka-mi.  
yes 1sg-FOC  
Yes, it's mine.<sup>7</sup>

Carpenter describes *-mi* as a "witness" particle, but this contrasts with our study because we found that *-mi* could be used regardless of whether the speaker had witnessed an event. Instead, this affix served to emphasize or highlight the constituent to which it was attached. Furthermore, the native speaker we worked with described it as an emphatic particle.

The particle *-mi* is allowed to function in only one type of structure in a sentence. In example (8), the presence of *-mi* on both the subject and object of the sentence make it ungrammatical.

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<sup>6</sup> Carpenter pp. 315

<sup>7</sup> Ibid pp. 316

- (8) \*njuka-mi      atʃku-ta-mi      kati-rka-ni.  
          1sg-FOC          dog-ACC-FOC      chase-PAST-1sg

This supports the claim that *-mi* is a focus particle rather than a “witness” particle. When *-mi* occurs on words in one grammatical category, such as the nominative subject in example (8), the particle cannot be attached to any objects or to the verb. This is particularly interesting given that the suffix can serve both functions described above; it can be used to convey truth-value focus, emphasizing that the statement is true, or to achieve constituent focus, emphasizing that a particular constituent in a statement is true. In each case, the *-mi* morpheme is attached terminally after all other suffixes.

Both subjects and objects can be focused using the *-mi* morpheme. This is shown in examples (9) through (11) below. By comparing (9) with (10) and (11), we see the unfocused sentence (9) with the focus on the subject (10) as well as the object (11).

- (9) njuka                  atʃku-ta                  kati-rka-ni.  
      1sg                      dog-ACC                  chase-PAST-1sg  
      “I chased a dog.”

- (10) njuka-**mi**          atʃku-ta                  kati-rka-ni.  
      1sg-FOC              dog-ACC                  chase-PAST-1sg  
      “*I* chased a dog.”

- (11) njuka                  atʃku-ta-**mi**          kati-rka-ni.  
      1sg                      dog-ACC-FOC          chase-PAST-1sg  
      “I chased *a dog*.”

In these cases, the information in focus can be the desired answer to a question or new information in the clause. It can also be used contrastively, showing that it was *a dog* that was chased, not something else.

Only the noun in a DP can take this focus. Numbers and adjectives in DPs cannot be focused in this way, as illustrated in the examples below.

- (12) atʃku-kuna-ka wawa    yurax      misi-ta                  kati-rka.  
      dog-PL-TOP    young    white      cat-ACC                  chase-PAST.3sg  
      “The dogs chased the young, white cat”

- (13) \*atʃku-kuna-ka wawa-**mi**    yurax      misi-ta                  kati-rka.  
      dog-PL-TOP    young-FOC    white      cat-ACC                  chase-PAST.3sg

- (14) \*atʃku-kuna-ka wawa      yurax-**mi**      misi-ta                  kati-rka.  
      dog-PL-TOP    young          white-FOC      cat-ACC                  chase-PAST.3sg

- (15) atʃku-kuna-ka      wawa      yurax      misi-ta-**mi**          kati-rka.  
      dog-PL-TOP      young      white      cat-ACC-FOC          chase-PAST.3sg  
      “The dogs chased the *young, white cat*.”

Examples (13) and (14) show that adjectives in DPs cannot take the *-mi* particle. These are focused using intonation rather than a particle. It is not clear in (15) whether the entire DP is focused or solely *misi* “cat”, or if both are possibilities.

It is also ungrammatical to affix this particle to WH-question words.

(16) kaŋ ima-ta kati-rka-ŋgi.  
2sg what-ACC chase-PAST-2sg  
“What did you chase?”

(17) \*kaŋ ima-ta-*mi* kati-rka-ŋgi.  
2sg what-ACC-FOC chase-PAST-2sg

Example (16) already contains a focused WH-question word, *ima*. This blocks further focusing with *-mi*, as seen in (17).

Adpositions can be focused, however, by adding *-mi* after the postposition as in (19):

(18) kamu-ka pataku-pi.  
book-TOP table-on.PP  
“The book is on the table.”

(19) kamu-ka pataku-pi-**mi**.  
book-TOP table-on.PP-FOC  
“The book is *on the table*.”

The focus resulting from this suffixation occurs naturally in a response to a question, as seen in (20) and (21)

(20) kamu-ka marpitaŋ.  
book-TOP where  
“Where is the book?”

(21) kai-pi-**mi** kamux.  
here-on.PP-FOC book  
“The book is *here*.”

The conclusion that can be drawn from the data presented above is that our research confirms Carpenter’s claim—that *-mi* is used in focusing answers to wh-questions.

### 2.1.3 Verbal and predicate usage of *-mi*

There seem to be two main scopes of focus which can be achieved through affixation of *-mi* on the verb. One is truth-value focus and the other is constituent focus. The examples below illustrate constituent focus.

(22) par kalpa-rka

3sg run-PAST-3sg  
 “He ran.”

(23) *paɪ kalpa-rka-mi*  
 3sg run-PAST-3sg-FOC  
 “He *ran*.”

(24) *paɪ kalpa-rka-mi mana puri-rka-tʃu.*  
 3sg run-past-3sg-foc NEG walk-PAST-3sg-NEG  
 “He *ran* not walked.”

The particle attaches after all other verbal affixes, and emphasizes that it was the particular type of action denoted by the verb rather than any other action which has occurred. This is contrastive focus, and is shown clearly in (24).

In order to differentiate between constituent and truth-value focus usage of *-mi*, context is essential. As we see below in (25) and (26), the same addition of *-mi* expresses truth-value focus rather than constituent focus.

(25) *wawa-kuna katuna wasi-maŋ zi-rka-kuna*  
 child-PL market house-DAT go-PAST-3pl  
 “The children went to the market.”

(26) *wawa-kuna katuna wasi-maŋ zi-rka-kuna-mi*  
 child-PL market house-DAT go-PAST-3pl-FOC  
 “The children did go to the market.”

Thus positive truth-value focus is achieved simply through suffixing *-mi* to the verb in an appropriate context. As seen in both (23) and (26) this verbal suffixation can either convey focus or assert truth value depending on the context.

In a sentence that contains an imperative with an embedded clause, *-mi* is blocked on the imperative:

(27) *nipa-ɪ xoze-ka ekwador-manta kaŋ*  
 tell-IMPER.1sg Jose Ecuador-from COP.3sg  
 “Tell me Jose is from Ecuador.”

(28) \**nipa-ɪ-mi xoze-ka ekwador-manta kaŋ*  
 tell-IMPER.1sg-FOC Jose Ecuador-from COP.3sg

(29) *nipa-ɪ xoze-mi ekwador-manta-mi kaŋ*  
 tell-IMPER.1sg Jose-FOC Ecuador-from-FOC COP.3sg  
 “Tell me *Jose* is from Ecuador.

(30) *nipa-ɪ xoze-ka ekwador-manta-mi kaŋ*  
 tell-IMPER.1sg Jose Ecuador-from-FOC COP.3sg  
 “Tell me Jose is *from Ecuador*.”

- (31) nipa-i                    xoze-ka                    ekwador-manta                    kaŋ-mi  
 tell-IMPER.1sg        Jose                    Ecuador-from                    COP.3sg-FOC  
 “Tell me Jose *is* from Ecuador.”

Comparing (27) and (28), we see that *-mi* is blocked on the imperative verb form. It is allowed on all the other constituents in (27), however, as shown in (29) through (31). Future investigation into this area will help shed light on these data; at present, it is not clear why this blocking occurs.

Predicate adjectives are focused by adding *-mi*:

- (32) pai-ka                    sumay-**mi**.  
 3sg-TOP                    beautiful-FOC  
 “She is *beautiful*.”

- (33) pai-ka                    sumay-**mi**                    mana                    mizanaɪ-tʃu.  
 3sg-TOP                    beautiful-FOC                    NEG                    ugly-NEG  
 “She is *beautiful* not ugly.”

As we see from (32) and (33), *-mi* conveys only constituent focus when affixed to adjectival predicates. Furthermore, as shown in (34), it can appear twice when modifying coordinated adjectives.

- (34) pai-ka                    sumay-piʃ-mi                    kwiza-piʃ-mi  
 3sg-TOP                    beautiful-CONJ-FOC                    nice-CONJ-FOC  
 “She is *beautiful and nice*.”

Adverbial time expressions can also be suffixed with *-mi*. As represented in (35), this simply indicates that that word is the important or new information in the clause, rendering this another example of constituent focus.

- (35) kama-**mi**                    njukantʃix-ka                    atʃku-ta                    kati-rka-ŋtʃix                    mana                    kunaŋka.  
 yesterday-FOC                    1pl-TOP                    dog-ACC                    chase-PAST-1pl                    NEG                    TODAY  
 “Yesterday, not today, we chased the dog”

Overall, then, the “witness” terminology used by Carpenter does not fit with the data outlined above. The speaker cited herein can use this particle when referring to situations that she did not experience firsthand. Its primary use seems to be as a focus particle, as shown through the investigations above.

## 2.2 *-ka*

Carpenter describes *-ka* as a topic and focus particle. This morpheme is a suffix and attaches both to the nominative and accusative cases as shown in examples (36) and (37) respectively:

(36) **par-ka** rasu-ta jakuja-tfi-rka.  
 3sg-TOP ice-ACC melt-PAST-1sg  
 “He melted the ice.”

(37) atfku-ta-**ka** njuka kati-rka-ni  
 dog-ACC-TOP 1sg-NOM melt-PAST-1sg  
 “It is the dog I chased.”

The *-ka* particle can also appear in a sentence with *-mi*:

(38) **par-ka** sumay-**mi**.  
 3sg-TOP beautiful-FOC  
 “She is *beautiful*.”

Example (38) suggests that *-ka* is likely not a focus particle, because it appears with *-mi*. The sentence already contains focus, expressed with *-mi*; *-ka*, on the other hand, seems to act as a topic marker rather than a focus particle. Speaker intuitions about the interpretation of (38) seem to indicate that *-ka* marks the topic of discourse while *-mi* is used to focus new information about that topic.

Recall that it is grammatical to use *-mi* multiple, as shown in (34). This was only in a coordinated phrase, however, and it is in fact ungrammatical to affix both *-mi* and *-ka* on the same DP, as shown below.

(39) **wawa-kuna-ka** tulu-pi xatuŋ miŋkimuru-kuna-ta njuka-man apamu-rka-kuna  
 child-PL-TOP bag-GEN big apple-pl-ACC 1sg-DAT bring-PAST-3pl.  
 “The children brought me a bag of big, delicious apples.”

(40) \***wawa-kuna-ka-mi** tulu-pi xatuŋ miŋkimuru-kuna-ta njuka-man apamu-rka-kuna  
 child-PL-TOP-FOC bag-GEN big apple-pl-ACC 1sg-DAT bring-PAST-3pl.

(41) \***wawa-kuna-mi-ka** tulu-pi xatuŋ miŋkimuru-kuna-ta njuka-man apamu-rka-kuna  
 child-PL-FOC-TOP bag-GEN big apple-pl-ACC 1sg-DAT bring-PAST-3pl.

Examples (39) through (41) show that *-ka* and *-mi* cannot cooccur on a single constituent. The appearance of one of these particles blocks the appearance of the other. In many instances when *-ka* appears, it cannot be focused because of the presence of *-mi* on a different constituent. This initial analysis is limited, yet indications thus seem to affirm Carpenter’s claim that *-ka* is a topic particle, but contradict the claim that it focuses.

### 2.3 -tfu

A constituent in an affirmative question is focused by affixing the morpheme *-cu*, as shown in examples (42-46).

(42) tapuyri-ni kamu-ka atfka kutfki kaŋ-tfu  
 wonder-1sg book-TOP very expensive COP.3sg-INT

“I wonder if *the book is very expensive.*”

- (43) tapuyri-ni kamu-ka atʃka kutʃki-tʃu kaŋ  
 wonder-1sg book-TOP very expensive-INT COP.3sg  
 “I wonder if the book is *very expensive.*”

- (44) tapuyri-ni kamu-ka atʃka-tʃu kutʃki kaŋ  
 wonder-1sg book-TOP very-INT expensive cop.3sg  
 “I wonder if the book is *very expensive.*”

- (45) tapuyri-ni kamu-tʃu atʃka kutʃki kaŋ  
 wonder-1sg book-INT very expensive cop.3sg  
 “I wonder if *the book* is very expensive.”

- (46) \*tapuyri-ni kamu-**ka-tʃu** atʃka kutʃki kaŋ  
 wonder-1sg book-TOP-INT very expensive cop.3sg

In (42), we see that the focus is on the entire copula clause when the morpheme is affixed to the verb. This could function either as constituent focus or as truth-value focus of this particular statement, and is interpreted contextually. In (43), the focus is put on the adjective by moving the -tʃu to that position. The -tʃu in (44) focuses the adverb *very*. Finally the DP is focused in (45), and the appearance of *-ka* is blocked by that of -tʃu as evidenced in (46). This is consistent with the pattern observed with the particle *-mi*.

## 2.4 Negation placement

Focus in negative sentences is achieved through placement of the negative morpheme *mana*. Starting with a simple unfocused sentence in (47), we can focus the subject as in (48), or the object as in (49).

- (47) njuka atʃku-ta **mana** kati-rka-ni-tʃu.  
 1sg dog-ACC NEG chase-PAST-1sg-NEG  
 “I did not chase the dog.”

- (48) **mana** njuka atʃku-ta kati-rka-ni-tʃu.  
 NEG 1sg dog-ACC chase-PAST-1sg-NEG  
 “I did not chase the dog.”

- (49) njuka **mana** atʃku-ta kati-rka-ni-tʃu.  
 1sg NEG dog-ACC chase-PAST-1sg-NEG  
 “I did not chase *the dog.*”

These data illustrate that *mana* focuses the element that immediately follows it. Example (47) can be interpreted as either unfocused or with truth-value focus.

In the case of negative sentences, *-mi* is blocked by *mana* as shown in example (50).

- (50) \***mana** njuka-**mi** atʃku-ta kati-rka-ni-tʃu.  
 NEG 1sg-FOC dog-ACC chase-PAST-1sg-NEG  
 “It is not I who chased the dog.”

Our speaker said that generally *-mi* cannot go along with *mana*, but she would not say it was never used in negative cases.

## 2.5 Clefts and fronting

A cleft is a predicate nominal that has a DP and a relative clause with a DP that is co-referential with the afore-mentioned DP.<sup>8</sup> There are examples in Quechua that suggest the existence of both pseudo-cleft and cleft constructions, but there is limited data in this area. In (51), we see an example of what may be a pseudo-cleft.

- (51) wayra-ka kai ima sara-ta-mi miku-rka-kuna.  
 cow-TOP DET thing corn-ACC-FOC eat-PAST-3pl  
 “The cows are the ones who ate the corn.”

This data is similar to the English pseudo-cleft construction. It follows the structure of a predicate nominative clause where the predicate is a relative clause that co-refers to the subject of the initial NP. This construction focuses on the subject of the NP, which is *waGra* in this case. This construction has not been fully investigated and more time and research is needed to confirm that this is a pseudo-cleft.

Word order in Quechua is somewhat free because of the inflected constituents. This flexibility means that some structures are translated into English with focus conveyed through the use of fronting or clefting in the translation. This is demonstrated in (52) and (53), where the object appears in front of the subject. The focused meaning that results can be conveyed in alternate ways in the English translation, as shown in these data.

- (52) **atʃku-ta** njuka kati-rka-ni.  
 dog-ACC 1sg chase-PAST-1sg  
 “I chased *a dog*.”

- (53) **atʃku-ta** njuka kati-rka-ni.  
 dog-ACC 1sg chase-PAST-1sg  
 “It is a dog I chased.”

Note that this utterance can be additionally focused by using the *-mi* morpheme.

- (54) **atʃku-ta-mi** njuka kati-rka-ni.  
 dog-ACC-FOC 1sg chase-PAST-1sg  
 “It is a dog I chased.”

This is likely not clefting due to the lack of an initial pronoun; rather, it should be considered fronting because of the movement of the object to before the subject.

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<sup>8</sup> Payne. pp. 278

There is another type of movement which can be used to achieve focus, this one involving the verb. In intransitive sentences, the verb can be moved to the front to give emphasis or focus to the subject of the sentence. This is demonstrated in (55).

- (55) kalpa-rka      pai  
       run-PAST.3sg 3sg  
       “*He* ran”

Examples (56) and (57) show that this is allowed with transitive verbs only when a previously mentioned subject or object is deleted.

- (56) kati-rka                      atʃku-ta  
       chase-past.3sg            dog-ACC  
       “(something) chased *the dog*”

- (57) kati-rka                      pai  
       chase-PAST.3sg            3sg  
       “*He* chased (something)”

If both the subject and object are present such as in (58) and (59), the sentence is not grammatical with a fronted verb.

- (58) \*kati-rka                      atʃku-ta                      pai  
       chase-past.3sg            dog-ACC                      3sg

- (59) \*kati-rka                      pai                      atʃku-ta  
       chase-past.3sg            3sg                      dog-ACC  
       “(something) chased *the dog*”

This verb fronting is fully permissible for intransitive verbs, then, but only occurs when the subject or object is deleted from transitive constructions.

### 3. Intonation

For a variety of reasons which are not yet fully understood, some items cannot be focused with particles. Instead, these items are focused through an alteration of the typical stress pattern. This altered stress is perceived mainly as a change in intonation. Quechua typically has penultimate stress; focus intonation is achieved through the addition of stronger than usual penultimate stress, as shown in the examples below.

- (60) wawa-kuna    njuka-pax    kamu-kuna-ta                      kizka-katiŋ  
       child-PL      1sg-GEN      book-PL-ACC                      read-PRES.3sg  
       “The children read *my* books.”

- (61) \*wawa-kuna    njuka-pax-**mi**                      kamu-kuna-ta                      kizka-katiŋ  
       child-PL      1sg-GEN-FOC                      book-PL-ACC                      read-PRES.3sg

In (60), focus on the personal pronoun may be achieved by heavily stressing the penultimate syllable, indicated here through the use of bold text. What we see in (61) is that use of the focus particle is not allowed on this possessive; this means that intonation is the only way to grammatically focus this particular constituent.

The nuances of intonation when used for focusing purposes were not explored in this study, so more cannot be said on the topic at this point. It is clearly one means of achieving focus, however, and as such deserves investigation in future work.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The overall picture of focus in Quechua is becoming clearer. Speakers use many different ways to focus constituents. The use of the particles *-mi*, *-tʃu*, and placement of the negative morpheme *mana*, serve to focus constituents and may also be used to assert the truth-value of an utterance. The particle *-ka* appears to be a topic marker rather than a focus particle. There are constructions similar to English pseudo-clefting and fronting that are used to focus constituents. One interesting feature of the focusing system is the movement of the verb in front of a subject or an object in order to focus that constituent.

All of these areas need more complete study to understand the morpho-syntactic rules which constrain the occurrence and co-occurrence of these particles. Areas for future research include more thorough investigation into clefts, fronting, and intonation, as well as a complete comparison of how *-mi*, *-tʃu*, and *mana* differ in their usage to focus constituents in differing types of sentences and clauses.

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