

THE MORPHEME {TI-} IN KARITIANA

GOAL: The goal of this paper is to account for the behavior and distribution of the morpheme {*ti-*} in Karitiana (Tupi-Arikém).

OVERVIEW: This morpheme has been given several names in the literature: a topicalizer (D. Landin 1984), a semi-passive (R. Landin 1982), an object focus marker (Storto 1999; Everett 2006), and an inverse voice marker (Storto 2005). One reason for this terminological profusion is that {*ti-*} exhibits several properties throughout the language: for instance, it appears in three different constructions, namely object WH- questions (1), narrow focus of the object (2), and object relative clauses (3).

(1) *WH- object question*

Mora-mon taso ti-oky-t?
WH-INT.COP. man TI.NOM-kill-ABS.AGR.
'What did the man kill?'

(Storto 1999)

(2) *Narrow focus of the object*

'Ep i-ti-pasangã-t João.
tree 3-TI-count-NFUT João
'Trees, João is counting.'

(Storto 1999)

(3) *Object relative clause*

Yn Ø-na-aka-t i-pyting-Ø [Luciana pykyp ti-pipãram]- aty.
1s 3-DECL-COP-NFUT NOM-want-ABS.AGR. [Luciana clothes TI-sew]-OBL
'I want the shirt that Luciana sewed.'

(Vivanco 2014)

The morpheme {*ti-*} has also two other properties that are relevant for our account. First, it seems to require the existence of the object, as speakers reject relative clauses with {*ti-*} in contexts where the object does not exist:

(4) *{ti-} with non-existent object*

a. *Context*

[Thiago wanted a canoe. Ivan was a famous carpenter in the region, so Thiago asked Ivan to build a canoe for him. He paid Ivan to build a canoe, but Ivan didn't hear his request very well... He thought Thiago wanted a house! So Ivan built a house instead.]

b. *Sentence with {ti-} in context (4a)*

#Thiago Ø-naka-pagn-Ø gooĵ Ivan ti-m-'a
Thiago 3-DECL-pay-NFUT canoe Ivan TI-CAUS-make
Intended: 'Thiago paid the canoe that Ivan made.'

Another property of {*ti-*} is that it is related to split ergativity in the language (Storto 2005). Karitiana has been classified as an ergative language since Landin (1984), mainly because verbs agree with absolutive arguments (i.e., intransitive subjects and objects).

However, whenever *{ti-}* appears and agreement is possible in that context, verbs agree with the ergative argument (i.e., transitive subjects) (Storto 2005):

(5) *{ti-}* and split ergativity

Sepa y-ti-m-‘a ty-ḵa-t
 basket 1s-TI-CAUS-make IMPERFVE-sitting-NFUT
 “A basket, I am weaving.”

(Storto 1999)

PROPOSAL: Our proposal is that *{ti-}* implements movement of the object to a position adjoined to *vP*, and that this operation is exploited in the language for several purposes.

Specifically, we posit that *{ti-}* has an EPP feature (in the sense of Chomsky 2001) that has to be checked through movement of the object to the border of *vP*. This would explain why *{ti-}* is used in WH- questions and focus constructions: assuming that there are syntactic principles that constrain long-distance movements (such as the Phrase Impenetrability Condition from Chomsky 2000), objects would firstly have to move to this intermediate position whenever WH- movement to Spec, CP takes place. In this sense, the difference between languages like English and Karitiana is that in the latter, this first step of WH-movement occurs overtly, and that it is implemented through the morpheme *{ti-}*.

On the other hand, the operation executed by *{ti-}* can be explored for semantic purposes as well. Specifically, we posit that *{ti-}* is used for the object to acquire a specific interpretation. According to Diesing’s (1992) Mapping Hypothesis, different parts of the syntactic representation will be mapped into different parts of the logical form. Therefore, NPs will have different readings depending on their position in the syntactic tree.

Importantly, the IP region comprising both Spec, IP and adjuncts of *vP* is mapped into the restrictive clause of an operator, the locus of presuppositions. That said, languages with overt movement to this position (such as languages with scrambling or object shift) only allow definite NPs or specific indefinites to undergo this operation (Fanselow 2010, Holmberg 1999). We argue that this is the case for Karitiana as well, and that the requirement of existence observed for *{ti-}* is the presupposition of existence characteristic of NPs allowed in this position.

IMPLICATIONS: This account also sheds some light onto the relation between *{ti-}* and split ergativity. Assuming a version of Béjar and Rezac’s (2009) Cyclic Agree, we may posit that in Karitiana, a *v* probe first tries to agree with the closest argument in its c-command domain. When the object has previously vacated VP (a consequence of having *{ti-}* in the structure), this probe looks up to find another argument to check its ϕ -features. Since the transitive subject in Spec, *vP* is the closest argument in this case, *v* agrees with it:

(6) OBJ [_{vP} SUBJ *v* [_{VP} V *t*OBJ]

Hence, the superficial split ergativity context in Karitiana would result from an interaction between *{ti-}* and the cyclic behavior of *v*.

IN SUM: The morpheme *{ti-}* would execute an operation - namely, movement to the edge of *vP* -, which stems from other syntactic and semantic motivations: it can either implement WH-movement or be used when the object needs to acquire a special type of interpretation. Under this account, we are able to explain the aforementioned properties associated with this morpheme, as well as to capture the intrinsic core that connects all these constructions.