

Focus Phenomena in Karitiana

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Karitiana (Arikém family, Tupi stock) is a verb-final language in which the verb moves, along with all functional heads (tense, agreement, aspect, negation, mood, and evidentials) to a second structural position in finite clauses (V2). The preverbal position in matrix clauses is associated with focus semantics in wh-questions and answers to wh-questions that can be SVO or OVS, the latter marked by special verb morphology in a sentential type we have called the object focus construction (OFC) (Storto 1999). Biclausal structures such as clefts and copular sentences can also be used as answers to wh-questions, and for that reason we have argued that the subject of a copular verb is in the same left periphery focus position as that occupied by wh-phrases (Storto 2010). In embedded environments, which are always non-finite, there may also be movement of NPs to a left periphery position in head-internal relative clauses (SOV, OSV), marked by special focus morphology (OFC) whenever the moved argument is the object. This morphosyntactic evidence for focus explains, in large part, the constituent order variation found in Karitiana texts, but there is one kind of movement of objects to the left periphery that crucially does not trigger the OFC, such as when a moved NP is quantified by 'only'. This type of quantification is discussed and compared with the clausal construction used for universal quantification (Muller, Storto & Coutinho-Silva 2006, Coutinho-Silva 2008), which may also display movement to the left periphery.

References

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