

Scope and dummy verbs in Carrier

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In Carrier, an Athabaskan language of the Central Interior of British Columbia, the negative particle *?aw* as well as some adverbs has rightward scope. As a result, material within the scope of negation other than the verb must follow *?aw*, though topicalized constituents fall within scope even though they precede *?aw*. Other scope-bearing elements, including *ča* “also” and *za* “only”, have leftward scope. These particles underlie the constructions *S za V_{aux}* “to keep on S-ing” and *S ča V_{aux}* “to S also”, in which the choice of dummy verb *V_{aux}* is determined by the event type, valence, and aspect of the main clause. It is suggested that the use of the dummy verb results from the interaction of leftward scope with the requirement that the clause be verb final.

1 Scope-Bearing Elements

In Carrier¹, an Athabaskan language of the Central Interior of British Columbia, there are both elements that have scope over the material that follows them and elements that have scope over the material that precedes them.

1.1 Rightward Scope

An example of an element with rightward scope is the negative particle *?aw* “not”. Carrier verbs are inflected for negation, so when the scope of negation is restricted to the verb, *?aw* is unnecessary and is used only for emphasis. In (1) negation is marked on the verb, which is also marked for the unspecified object. (“to smoke” is strictly transitive in Carrier.) The negative particle *?aw* is therefore optional.

- (1) *?aw* *hɛʔzast'at*
(not) I-do-not-smoke-unspecified-object
I do not smoke.

However, if material other than the verb is to fall within the scope of negation, *?aw* must be used and must precede whatever is within the scope of negation. In (2), the assertion is not that the speaker does not smoke, which indeed is explicitly contradicted, but that he or she does not smoke kinikkinik. The particle *?aw* is therefore obligatory, as seen in (3), and must precede *dɔniht'an* “kinikkinik”, as seen in (4).

- (2) *Dek'a ast'at; ?aw dɔniht'an hɔzast'at.*
Tobacco I-smoke not kinikkinik I-do-not-smoke
I smoke tobacco; I don't smoke kinikkinik.

¹ Carrier exhibits considerable dialectal diversity. The dialect described here is the Nak'albɔn/Dzinɣɔbɔn (Stuart/Trembleur Lake) dialect.

- (3) *Dek'a ʌst'ʌt; dʌniht'an ʎʌzʌst'ʌt.
 Tobacco I-smoke kinikkinik I-do-not-smoke
 I smoke tobacco; I don't smoke kinikkinik.
- (4) *Dek'a ʌst'ʌt; dʌniht'an ʔaw ʎʌzʌst'ʌt.
 Tobacco I-smoke kinikkinik not I-do-not-smoke
 I smoke tobacco; I don't smoke kinikkinik.

The item following *ʔaw* need not be a direct object. In (5) it is a comitative PP.²

- (5) Nyun dʌne ʔʌninʒʌn k'et ʔaw bʌʎ neʔts'ut'en ait'oh.
 that man he-is-mean so not with-him we-work cannot
 That man is so mean we cannot work with him.

It is possible for multiple phrases to be within the scope of negation. In (6) the numeral *ʔilo huloh* “nine”, the noun *ʔʌt'en-i* “tasks”, and the adverb *ʔʌlgoh* “together” are all within the scope of negation and all follow *ʔaw*.

- (6) ʔAw ʔilo huloh ʔʌt'en-i ʔʌlgoh ʔʌts'uʎ'en ait'oh.
 not nine tasks together we-do cannot
 We cannot do nine things at once.

The rule that anything within the scope of negation must follow *ʔaw* does not hold of topicalized material. In (7) *dʌniht'an* “kinnikinnik” is topicalized and precedes *ʔaw*; nonetheless, it is within the scope of negation.³

- (7) Dek'a ʌst'ʌt; dʌniht'an ʔi ʔaw ʎʌzʌst'ʌt.
 Tobacco I-smoke kinikkinik it not I-do-not-smoke
 I smoke tobacco; I don't smoke kinikkinik.

Similarly, adverbs precede whatever they modify. If they modify more than the verb, what they modify follows them.

- (8) ʔʌk'ʌnadʌdliʔ ʔet hʌwa su nedo k'ʌyʌdʌk ʒʌliʔ.
 he-imitates because well white-person he-speaks-like he-became
 She learned to speak good English by imitating others.

- (9) ʔʌdʌʔ dʌkʌne xʌnʌ-i hʌt'i x^we
 long-ago Indians animals they-have while
 su dʌʔʌnʌʔ ʔʌhinli inleʔ.
 well their-animals they-care-for used-to
 Long ago when Indians had cattle they took good care of their beasts.

- (10) Čiʎ tʌbe su saldan ʌnli.
 young-man very well soldier he-is
 The young man is a good soldier.

² Notice that here the main verb is not negative; the negation results from the use of the particle *ait'oh* “cannot”, which follows an inflected non-negative verb in the optative mode.

³ Topicalization in Carrier is accomplished by resuming the full noun phrase by the appropriate independent pronoun. Here the NP *dʌniht'an* is resumed by the non-human pronoun *ʔi*.

1.2 Leftward Scope

Particles with leftward scope include *za* “only” and *ča* “also”. In (11), *za* “only” has scope over the pronoun *ʔi* “it” to its left.

- (11) Betanaʔagag-i ʔi za haʔninzan.
washing-machine it only he-wants
The only thing she wants is a washing machine.

In (12), *ča* “also” has scope over *sasčo* “large bear” to its left.

- (12) ʔatai ʔaʔanyaih x^we sasčo ča siʔi.
uncle he-brings-in-kill while big-bear too he-killed
While my uncle was bringing in the meat he killed a large bear too.

Such particles may follow \bar{S} as well as NPs and PPs. (14) follows (13) in a story about an owl that kidnaps a little boy. In (14), *ča* “also” follows the \bar{S} *Taʔusda te* “when he was thirsty”, making a semantic contribution equivalent to that of English sentence-initial “and”.⁴

- (13) Goh idzih te ʔatsaj ʔi yaʔaʔ
rabbit he-caught when meat it he-eats-it
ʔink'ez yamek nanki ʔi yaba x^wasanainlih.
and its-kidneys two them for-him he-brought-back
When he caught a rabbit he would eat the meat and bring back
the two kidneys for him.

- (14) Taʔusda te ča datsankests'oh be
he-is-thirsty when also leaf by
tu yats'adagaikaih-i yatnai.
water he-brought-up-to-him he-drinks-it
And when he was thirsty he drank water
that he brought up to him in a leaf.

2 The Keep-on-V-ing Construction

Carrier has a construction meaning “to keep on V-ing” in which the particle *za* “only” plays a crucial role. The construction may be schematized as in (15).

- (15) S za V_{aux}

The most interesting and complex aspect of this construction is the choice of auxiliary verb.

2.1 States

If the main clause describes a state, a form of the verb “to be” is used, as in (16)-(18).

⁴ These two sentences contain two words too nice to pass over in silence. The word *mek* in (13) does not mean “kidney” in general; it refers specifically to rabbit kidneys. The gloss “leaf” does not do justice to the word *datsankests'oh* in (14). Literally meaning “crow moccasins”, it refers to leaves of the Trembling Aspen *Populus tremblens* that curl up to form a bowl.

(16) Čalts'əl ʌsti za ʔʌnt'oh.
 baby sleeps only he-is
 The baby kept on sleeping.

(17) ʌsyin za ʔʌnt'oh.
 he-stands only he-is
 He keeps on standing.

(18) ʌtso za ʌnli.
 he-cries only he-is
 He keeps on crying.

2.2 Sounds

If the main clause describes a sound, a form of the verb “to make a noise, to say” is used, as in (19).

(19) ʌjʌn za ʔʌtni.
 he-sings only he-says
 He just keeps on singing.

The auxiliary verb may take on other tenses, as in (20), and it may take various subject forms, as in (21)-(23).

(20) Tijʌn za ʔʌdʌtiniʌ.
 he-will-sing only he-will-say
 He is going to keep on singing.

(21) Yʌdʌk za ʔʌtni
 he-talks only he-says
 He keeps on talking.

(22) Yʌhʌdʌk za ʔʌhʌtni.
 they-talk only they-say
 They keep on talking.

(23) Yʌsdʌk za ʔʌdʌsni.
 I-talk only I-say
 I keep on talking.

All manner of sounds fall into this category. It includes not only singing (20) and speaking (21)-(23), but hollering (24), telling stories (25), crying (26), barking (27), sirens blowing (28) and even involuntary sounds such as burping (29), farting (30), and coughing (31).

(24) Nyun dʌne ʌndisdaʔ-ʌn dʌlʔi za ʔʌtni.
 that man who-got-hurt hollers only he-says
 The man who was hurt keeps on hollering.

(25) Naxʷʌlnʌk za ʔʌtni.
 he-tells-stories only he says
 He just keeps on telling stories.

- (26) Ts'udΛn ʌtso za ʔΛtni.
 child he-cries only he-says
 The child keeps crying.
- (27) Li sγʌ yʌtse za ʔΛtni.
 dog at-me he-barks only he-says
 The dog keeps on barking at me.
- (28) ʌzʌʃ za ʔΛtni.
 it-blows only he-says
 The siren keeps on blowing.
- (29) Natʌk'wʌʃ za ʔΛtni.
 he-burps only he-says
 He keeps on burping.
- (30) ʌt'et za ʔΛtni.
 he-farts only he-says
 He keeps on farting.
- (31) ʔʌz nʌsʌyʌ xʷʌts'ʌn dʌlkʷʌs za ʔΛtni
 outside he-went since he-coughs only he-says
 He has been coughing ever since he went outside.

2.3 Events Other Than Sounds

If an event other than a sound is involved, the auxiliary verb is derived from the root *-ʔen* “do”. In most cases, this root is preceded by the valence prefix *d*.⁵ Examples (32)-(35) illustrate the range of events that fall into this category.

- (32) ʔʌt'en za ʔʌt'en.
 he-works only he-does
 He just keeps on working.
- (33) Nʌlgaih za ʔʌt'en.
 He-runs only he-does
 He keeps on running.
- (34) Yo dildʌs za ʔʌt'en.
 down he-falls only he-does
 He keeps on falling.
- (35) Ndʌda xʷe dʌdʌldʌs za ʔʌt'en.
 he-is-sick while he-shivers only he-does
 He keeps on shivering from his sickness.

In certain cases, in addition to the valence prefix *d*, the absolutive classifier prefix *xʷ* is present. This is one of several prefixes (sometimes called “gender” prefixes) that agree with the absolutive argument of the verb. For example, in (36) the verb *nʌlat* has no classifier prefix and is therefore

⁵ The *d* valence prefix combines with the initial glottal stop of the stem to form a glottalized *t'*.

generic. In (37) the verb includes the *d* classifier prefix, usually associated with stick-like things. In (38), the verb includes the *n* classifier prefix associated with round things. In (39) the verb includes the *x^w* classifier prefix associated with saliently areal or spatial things. In these cases, the verb is intransitive and the classifier prefix agrees with the subject.

- (36) T'et n^llat
 young-woman it-is-floating around
 A young woman is floating around.
- (37) D^lč^lan n^dlat
 log it-d-class-is-floating-around
 A log is floating around.
- (38) L^lbrot nⁿlat
 ball it-n-class-is-floating-around
 A ball is floating around.
- (39) Yoh n^{x^w}lat
 house it-x^w-class-is-floating-around
 A house is floating around.

When the verb is transitive, the classifier prefix agrees with the object. In (40), there is no classifier prefix and the verb is therefore generic. However, in (41) the *x^w* classifier prefix is present, in agreement with the object *yoh* “house”, which is saliently areal.

- (40) Č^lanke^l ʔ^lle.
 box he-is-making
 He is making a box.
- (41) Yoh ʔ^{x^w}le.
 house he-is-making-x^w-class
 He is building a house.

The sentences in which the *x^w* classifier prefix is present are those in which the subject is areal or spatial. The main verb may itself contain the *x^w* classifier prefix, as in (42), but it need not, as in (43).

- (42) N^{x^w}at^{ih} za ʔ^{x^w}at'en.
 it-rains only it-wh-does
 It just keeps on raining.
- (43) Naj^las za ʔ^{x^w}at'en.
 it-snows only it-wh-does
 It just keeps on snowing.

Indeed, as (44) and (45) show, it is possible to get nearly synonymous pairs of verbs, one with *x^w*, the other without it, both taking the auxiliary verb with *x^w*.⁶

⁶ Although there is no difference in the English translations, these sentences are not synonymous. (44) refers to relatively dense hail, (45) to relatively sparse hail. The verb *nax^wat^{ih}* in (44) is the verb “to rain”. The verb *nanakat* in (45) is the distributive form of “plural objects fall to the ground”.

(44) ?Indlutsan nax^wAltih za ?Ax^wAt'en.
 hail rains only it-wh-does
 It just keeps on hailing.

(45) ?Indlutsan nanakat za ?Ax^wAt'en.
 hail falls only it-wh-does
 It just keeps on hailing.

The *x^w* prefix is not restricted to weather constructions. In (46) the main verb *x^wAdizk'an* takes it in agreement with the subject *yoh* "house". The auxiliary therefore takes it to. Contrast (46) with (47) in which the subject is not areal. Here neither the main verb nor the auxiliary take the *x^w* classifier.

(46) Yoh x^wAdizk'an za ?Ax^wAt'en.
 house burns only it-wh-does
 The house keeps on burning.

(47) X^wAnin?ai dizk'an za ?At'en.
 pole burns only it-does
 The pole keeps on burning.

The *x^w* classifier prefix is found on the auxiliary exclusively when the main clause is intransitive, never when it is transitive.

In certain cases, the valence prefix is *l* rather than *d*. Here are some examples:

(48) Ts'ihna yult'ah ?et hunts'i
 bee it-stings-him although
 he-carries-it-around only he-does-it-to-him
 nAyalte za yAl?en.
 Even though the bee is stinging him he keeps on carrying it around.

(49) DAni naigel za yAl?en.
 moose he-packs-it-back only he-makes-it
 He keeps on packing the moose back.

(50) NadAjAl ?et hunts'i ladi deyaldzeh za yAl?en.
 it-spills although tea he-pours-it only he-makes-it
 Although the tea is spilling he keeps on pouring it.

(51) ?Aw hisk^wAs ?et hunts'i yAnilt'i za yAl?en.
 not it-does-not-move although he-pushes-it only he-makes-it
 Although it (vehicle) does not move he keeps on pushing it.

As *l* valence is usually associated with transitive verbs, it is not surprising that all of the examples with *l* involve transitive main clauses. However, not all transitive main clauses induce an auxiliary with *l* valence, as exemplified by (52)-(55), which have *d*.

(52) ?AdAlmat za ?At'en
 he-splits-wood only he-does
 He keeps on splitting wood

4 Particle Scope and Dummy Verbs

The syntax of elements having leftward scope is more complex than that of those with rightward scope since Carrier is verb-final. An element with rightward scope can precede anything and so can have anything within its scope; a problem arises in bringing the verb within the scope of a particle with leftward scope since in order to have scope over the verb the particle must follow it, which is forbidden, since the clause would then not be verb final. I suggest that it is this conundrum that motivates the dummy verb constructions in Carrier. Adding the dummy verb after the particle satisfies the requirement that the verb be clause-final.

Post-verbal particles such as the interrogative particle *eh*, exemplified in (61), and the emphatic particle *si*, exemplified in (62), are only apparent counterexamples to this analysis. These particles are not clause-final; they are sentence-final. As such, they do not belong to any clause.

- (61) L_Δdi kaʔninz_Δn eh?
tea you-(1)-want INT
Do you want tea?
- (62) Nanyust'en si!
I-see-you (1)-optative-affirmative EMPH
I'll see you again!

A question raised by this analysis is why the dummy verb should reflect the semantic type and valence of the main clause. Several other approaches would seem to meet the constraints: (a) using a fixed verb (e.g. “do”) or (b) copying the main verb. One possibility is that all three cases are instantiated in different languages and that the Carrier case reflects an arbitrary choice. An alternative would be that there is a principled explanation. However, the complexity and nature of the rules governing the choice of the dummy verb suggest that it will be difficult to find one.⁷

⁷ To the complexity of the rules in the dialect described here we may add the fact that it appears that in the Saik'Az (Stoney Creek) dialect they are slightly different, with aspect playing no role.