

Nheengatú, a Tupi-Guaranian mixed language heavily influenced by Portuguese, has gone through dramatic and rapid changes because of its use as a lingua franca in Northern Brazil over the past three centuries. Taking a functionalist approach, I show how, as the analogical extension of Portuguese Nominative-Accusative case-marking has replaced the Active-Inactive system of Tupinamba, a number of interesting subsidiary effects have emerged in the behavior of the postpositional cases. Firstly, a number of the postpositions are neutralized by inherent lexical features of their nominal complement.

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| 1. *se-kisé u-pita yawara- upe 1 st .s.poss-knife 3 rd .S/A-be dog-loc Target: My knife is in the dog. | 3. ixé a-wata yawara- piri /* kiti I 1 st .S/A-walk dog-allative Target: I walk to the dog. |
| 2. se-kisé u-pita igara- upe 1 st .s.poss-knife 3 rd .S/A-be canoe-loc Target: My knife is in the canoe. | 4. ixé a-wata igara- kiti /* piri I 1 st .S/A-walk canoe-allative Target: I walk to the canoe. |

Sentence 1 is ungrammatical because *yawara* “dog” is ‘animate’ whereas sentence 2 is fine because *igara* “canoe” is not. Similar conditions apply for the allative doublet, as shown in sentences 3 and 4. There is also a split for the dative with 1st and 2nd persons being treated with one form while all lower NP-types are given a different treatment. Postpositions did not subcategorize for the ‘animacy’ of their complements in Tupinamba. The emergence of this pattern is tied to the loss of the inverse case-marking of speech-act participants, including underlying oblique complements which were coded for in Tupinamba verbal morphology. While inverse case-marking in Tupinamba foregrounded an NP-type high on the referential hierarchy as standing in the ‘counter-intuitive’ position of a benefactive, recipient, allative or locative goal, it is now by means of neutralizations conditioned by the lexical semantics of the postpositions expressing these peripheral case-relations that such ‘counter-intuitive’ recipients and allative goals are differentially marked.

Relativization on postpositions in Nheengatú are also of interest. Again we see morpheme doublets, but here they are not conditioned by the ‘animacy’ of their complement but rather by its underlying syntactic role within the relative clause.

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| 6. ixé a-sikie apiga u-ma’a wa’a kunya sui I 1 st S/A-fear man 3 rd S/A-see Relz woman from I fear the woman that the man saw. | 7. ixé a-sikie apiga u-ma’a wa’a kunya rese I 1 st S/A-fear man 3 rd S/A-see Relz woman from I fear the man that saw the woman. |
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The form *rese* as can be seen from sentence 7 picks out an underlying A while the unmarked ablative *sui* and the [+3rd] dative *supe*, which is not shown here, pick out underlying S and O arguments. This ergative alignment in relativization on dative and ablative postpositions is reminiscent of the ergative alignment which was characteristic of Tupinamba relative clauses, though, much like in split-ergative systems it foregrounds the ‘counter-intuitive’ cross-referencing of a dative or ablative argument to an agent-argument, as opposed to all others, and is thus not simply a relic of the old system.

These historical developments in the morphology and syntax of Nheengatú postpositions are interesting because they show different formal strategies being employed towards similar functional ends—the differential case-marking of NPs as a function of their intuitiveness to stand in such relations. Perhaps only in such a context of rapid linguistic change, as is characteristic of creoles and mixed languages, could such functional equivalence of morphosyntactically unrelated formal strategies be shown. The study thus argues strongly for the reality of the functional motivations said to underlie case-marking splits.