

# The verbalizers in Trio (Cariban): a semantic description

Eithne B. Carlin  
Leiden University

## 1 Introduction

Trio has a range of verbalizers, many with aspectual meanings, which are suffixed to a nominal to form a verb.<sup>1</sup> Some of the verbalizers are more productive than others; some result in a transitive, others in an intransitive verb. This paper deals in particular with the semantics of the verbalizers showing how much cultural information can be gleaned from the specific semantics of both the verbalizers and the resultant verbs.

Many of the verbalizers encode various states of being or becoming, for example, one is used to express a ‘sensory state’ (*-pami*), another a ‘change into a state’ (*-ma*), yet another ‘entry into a state with endpoint highlighted’ (*-ta*). Others have benefactive meaning, namely, *-pa*, *-htë* and *-ntë* the latter two of which are used for concrete concepts, resulting in verbs with the meaning ‘to X-provide s/o’, whereas the verbalizer *-pa* differs from these two in that it is much more restricted in its usage. The verbalizer *-pa* is non-productive and can be used with only a few nouns, among which the nouns *jo(tti)* ‘meat’, *joo(ki)* ‘drink’, *(j)omi* ‘language, word’, and *ënu* ‘eye’ four concepts which form the cornerstone of the Trio worldview, namely the first two refer to sustenance of the physical body, whereas the latter two refer to providing sustenance to the spiritual side of man; the latter two have the meaning ‘speak (give voice to)’ and ‘teach (provide insight)’ respectively. In Trio culture the eye embodies the ability to see, not just the visible in this human world but also the ‘invisible’ in the other, the spirit world. Language, for the Trio, is the seat of the soul, how one speaks reveals the soul, or the essence, of the speaker. These latter two nouns, *ënu* ‘eye’ and *(j)omi* ‘language, word’ can also be suffixed by the benefactive *-htë* resulting in the meanings ‘provide with an eye (e.g., when making a doll)’ and ‘translate’.

This paper will investigate how the Trio classify and categorize the world in which they live, and will show how the worldview of the Trio, which includes a place for the spiritual and the physical, can be elucidated through looking at structures within the language itself. §2 gives an overview of some typological characteristics of the language. In §3 I deal with

---

<sup>1</sup> Trio is a Cariban language that is spoken by approximately 2,000 speakers in the southern rainforest of Suriname and across the border in Brazil.

verb types and verb formation, including processes that are marked on finite verbs. In §4 I look at the verbalizers themselves and their aspectual meanings. §5 deals with the non-aspectual verbalizers. In §6 I summarize the conclusions.

## 2 Typological features of Trio

Trio is an agglutinative language which uses mostly suffixes; there are two kinds of prefixes, namely those for person marking and three prefixes to mark diathesis. Those affixes relating to verb morphology are dealt with in more detail below. The unmarked word order in Trio is OVA or VS, whereby word order in general is subject to pragmatic considerations; new information tends to be found at the beginning of the clause. The language uses postpositions, some of which can be inflected for person; locative postpositions tend not to be inflected for person. Within the noun phrase there is a strict word order, namely Possessor – Possessum, with head-marking, and although Trio does not have adjectives as such since adjectival concepts are expressed by means of nouns, adverbs or verbs, it does have the word order Modifier – Modified when, for example, a demonstrative pronoun modifies a noun. Tense is not only a feature of verbs, rather there is obligatory past marking on nominals (mostly but not only) in possessive phrases whereby reference is made to a deceased possessor; a past relationship; or something that is old and useless. There are four clause types, namely, non-verbal clauses, clauses with the verb ‘be’, verbal clauses, and quotative clauses. Embedded clauses are based on nominalizations. In general, nominalizations allow much more detailed aspectual distinctions than finite verbs.

## 3 Verb types

There are three morphophonological verb classes, namely (a) those that under certain circumstances (for example, before non-past tense marking) drop the final CV syllable (whereby V has the value *i*, *u*, or *ə*), replacing it by compensatory lengthening or by *n* if the onset of the final syllable is a nasal; (b) those that end in *e*, *ə*, and *a*, which class also includes verbs that are formed by means of a verbalizer ending in *Ca*, and the benefactive verbalizers *-htə* and *-ntə*; and (c) a small class of transitive verbs that have an initial syllable *tɪ-* in the absence of a person marker. The latter class of verbs is not represented in verbs derived by means of verbalizers and so is left out of consideration here.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Trio has seven vowel phonemes: *i*, *ɪ*, *u*, *e*, *ə*, *o*, and *a*, whereby the graphemes *ɪ* and *ə* represent the high central and the mid central (schwa) vowels respectively. The

Before discussing the details of the verbalizers, I give in the following paragraphs an overview of the categories and processes that are required for a finite verb. All inflectional morphology occurs on the outer edges of the verbal word, derivational morphology is closest to the verb root. Derivational prefixes are the diathesis markers, *i-* for transitive, *e-* (*et-*, *es-*) for middle, and *ë-* (*ët-*, *ës-*) for reflexive. To the left of these prefixes in linear order are the personal prefixes. All verbs in Trio, whether finite, non-finite, or nominalized, must be marked for person, that is, there is a person marking slot on the verb that must be filled; the absence of a specific person marker is also marked morphologically.

Trio distinguishes four exponents of the category of person, namely first (1), second (2), first and second (1+2), and third (3). With transitive verbs, both the A and the O are marked in a portmanteau prefix; a list of the transitive prefixes encoding A and O is given in (1).<sup>3</sup> The intransitive prefixes which refer to the S are given in (2); the object prefixes are identical to the intransitive prefixes with the exception of the third person where the object prefix is *in-* and the intransitive prefix is *n-*.<sup>4</sup>

---

series of plosive consonants is unaspirated. The grapheme *hp* represents a voiceless bilabial fricative. There is a morphophonological rule that causes a change of vowel to all *ë*-initial nouns and verbs before person marking, namely: *ë* → *e* / person-marking for 1,2, and 3 (non-coreferential); retention of the *ë* vowel indicates the lack of a specific person marked on the noun or verb, see Carlin (2004).

<sup>3</sup> While it is evident that a third person object of person 1+2 is marked by means of the morpheme *-t-* or its allomorph length, the portmanteau analysis is applied here for ease of representation in the glosses; for details on person 1+2 marked on verbs, see Carlin (2004:275ff.).

<sup>4</sup> In the examples throughout this paper, the arrow symbol (→) with a preceding number, for example, 3→, indicates an intransitive verb and is to be read as ‘third person acting’; the arrow symbol with a preceding and following number, e.g., 3→3, indicates a transitive verb and is to be read as ‘third person (A) acting on a third person (O)’. The symbols ⊃ and ↔ express middle and reflexive, respectively. Abbreviations used are: A = agent, BEN = benefactive, CAU = causative, CERT = certainty, CESS = cessative, EU = euphonic, I.PST = immediate past, INCH.STAT = inchoative stative, MID = middle, NCERT = non-certainty, NOM = nominalizer, NR.PST = non-recent past, O = object, PL = plural, PROV = providative, PST = past, POSS = possessive, PRES = present, REFL = reflexive, REVERS = reversative, S = subject, SAP = speech act participant, SENS.STAT = sensory stative, STAT = stative, TERM = inchoative terminative, TR = transitive, TRANS = transitivizer.

- (1) Transitive prefixes
- |     |                   |            |
|-----|-------------------|------------|
| 1   | <i>w-</i>         | 1→3        |
| 2   | <i>m-</i>         | 2→3        |
| 1+2 | <i>k(i)-</i>      | 1→2 or 2→1 |
| 1+2 | <i>k:- / kīt-</i> | 1+2→3      |
| 3   | <i>n-</i>         | 3→3        |
- (2) Intransitive prefixes
- |     |                           |
|-----|---------------------------|
| 1   | <i>j(i)-</i>              |
| 2   | <i>ë- / :<sup>5</sup></i> |
| 1+2 | <i>k(i)-</i>              |
| 3   | <i>n-</i>                 |

In addition to person marking, each non-past finite verb requires an evidentiality marker, namely a certainty marker *-e* that is used with speech act participants (SAPs) only, and a non-certainty marker *-n(ë)* that is used with the third person and with SAPs in interrogative clauses. In the past tenses a different strategy is used to express evidentiality, namely finite, tense- and person-marked verbs are used to indicate eye-witness, and a specialized non-finite form of the verb is used to express non-eye-witness evidentiality (see Carlin 2004 and to appear).

The minimal and maximal forms of a finite verb are given in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively, and are exemplified in (3) through (6).

Table 1. Minimal marking on finite verb

| person | valency prefix | root | tense | number | evidential |
|--------|----------------|------|-------|--------|------------|
|        |                |      |       |        |            |

<sup>5</sup> Vowel-initial verbs that begin in *a* or *o* take the allomorph length in the second person, here represented by the colon symbol.

Table 2. Maximal marking on a finite verb

|        | STEM    |   |               |           |                      |            |
|--------|---------|---|---------------|-----------|----------------------|------------|
| person | valency | verb root<br>noun + verb root<br>noun root + verbalizer | transitivizer | causative | tense/aspect/ number | evidential |

- (3) *s-e-pahka-ne*  
1 $\supset$ -MID-break-NR.PST  
'I broke myself (i.e. I broke my ankle, leg, etc.).'
- (4) *m-e-po-ntë-Ø-ti*  
2 $\supset$ -MID-clothes-BEN-I.PST-PL  
'Did you dress yourselves?'
- (5) *w-i-po-ka-Ø-e*  
1 $\rightarrow$ 3-TR-clothes-REVERS-PRES-CERT  
'I am undressing him.'
- (6) *poto w-eeku-ta-ni-po-Ø-e*  
butter 1 $\rightarrow$ 3-juice-term-TRANS-CAU-PRES-CERT  
'I am melting the butter.'

### 3.1 Verb formation

According to Dixon (2000: 23) Amazonian languages are predominantly intransitive. However, in Trio the majority of non-derived monomorphemic verbs are transitive and the majority of intransitive verbs are not monomorphemic but derived, mostly by means of verbalizers. Noun incorporation also occurs in Trio but this does not seem to be a productive process and is generally restricted to body-part nouns; verbs based on noun incorporation are not dealt with in this paper. One general comment is valid for almost all

of the verbalizers that are discussed in the remainder of this paper: there are many verbs in Trio where one can recognize a given verbalizer although the nominal root is no longer found independently of the verb. Such cases are not discussed here because they do not give us additional information on the meaning of the verbalizing suffixes.

There are nine more or less productive verbalizers, four of which form transitive verbs, and five of which form intransitive verbs; these are given in Table 3 and Table 4 respectively.

Table 3. Transitive verbalizers

| Verbalizer         | Meaning                                   | Gloss     |
|--------------------|---|-----------|
| <i>-ka</i>         | reversative, (un-, de-)                   | REVERS    |
| <i>-htë / -ntë</i> | benefactive (concrete)                    | BEN       |
| <i>-pa</i>         | providative (abstract)                    | PROV      |
| <i>-ma</i>         | inchoative stative<br>(causative meaning) | INCH.STAT |

Table 4. Intransitive verbalizers

| Verbalizer     | Meaning                | Gloss     |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------|
| <i>-pa(mi)</i> | sensory stative        | SENS.STAT |
| <i>-ta</i>     | inchoative terminative | TERM      |
| <i>-wa</i>     | stative                | STAT      |
| <i>-na</i>     | producing              | PRODUCE   |
| <i>-ke(pi)</i> | cessative (stop)       | CESS      |

#### 4 Aspectual features of the verbalizers

As can be seen in the two tables above, all of the intransitive and one of the transitive verbalizers, namely *-ma*, have some sort of aspectual meaning. The non-aspectual verbalizers are dealt with in §5 below. In the following sections I would like to show, by examining the aspect semantics of the resultant verbs, what kinds of verb type categorizations are salient for the Trio, in other words, how the Trio perceive and categorize the world of states and activities.

The types of aspect expressed in the verbalizers are listed in (7). Each of the verbalizers is dealt with in turn below.

- |     |                |                        |
|-----|----------------|------------------------|
| (7) | <i>-ma</i>     | inchoative stative     |
|     | <i>-ta</i>     | inchoative terminative |
|     | <i>-pa(mi)</i> | sensory stative        |
|     | <i>-wa</i>     | stative                |
|     | <i>-na</i>     | (stative) producing    |

The first two in this list, *-ma* and *-ta* have inception into a state as part of their meaning. The inchoative stative *-ma* has the meaning ‘put s/one into a state of’ or ‘induce s/one’s state’ thus many verbs formed by means of this verbalizer express experiencer states, as can be seen in examples (8a-c). What is highlighted with this verbalizer is entry into a state, the ensuing state having no inherent endpoint, or being unbounded, so to speak. Due to the causative nature of this verbalizer the actual experiencer, that is, the person who is sad (8a) or embarrassed (8b), is the object of the verb and the person inducing or causing the state is the subject. Example (8c) is a middle-marked verb and is used, for example, to express that someone became a totally acculturated Amerindian, or in religious terms that Jesus became man.

- (8a) *m-emu-ma-∅*  
 2→3-sad-INCH.STAT-PST  
 ‘You made him sad (caused him to be in a state of sadness).’
- b *w-i-püi-ma-∅*  
 1→3-TR-shame-INCH.STAT-PST  
 ‘I embarrassed him (caused him to be in a state of shame).’
- c *n-e-toto-ma-ne*  
 3⇨MID-human.being-INCH.STAT-NR.PST  
 ‘He became an Amerindian (=he amerindianized himself).’  
 (‘He caused himself to be in a state of being human (Amerindian).’)

Some body parts that take the inchoative stative *-ma* have specialized meanings, as shown in (9)-(10) below. The verb *pana-ma* ‘turn’, which is marked with a transitive (*i-*) or a middle (*-e*) diathesis prefix, is based on the noun *pana* ‘ear’, whereby the ear is taken as the most salient cardinal point of the body which changes its position when one turns either one’s body or head; the verb *enpata-ma* ‘go down slope of mountain’ is made up of a lexicalized nominal compound, *enu* ‘eye’ and *pata* ‘place’, together meaning ‘face’, which is then verbalized with *ma-*; thus coming down the slope of a mountain is akin to moving along its face.

- (9) *ji-n-muku*                      *w-i-pana-ma-∅-e*  
 1POSS-3O-bear.NOM              1→3-TR-ear-INCH.STAT-PRES-CERT  
 ‘I am turning my child around.’
- (10) *pīi*                      *w-en-pata-ma-∅*  
 mountain 1→3-eye-place-INCH.STAT-I.PST  
 ‘I went down the slope of the mountain.’

Furthermore, several verbs are based on the body part *ëre* ‘liver’, often with an indeterminate intervening element between the noun and the verbalizer, as shown in (11). It is not clear what these intervening elements are, nor are they productive. Other verbs based on the body part *ëre* ‘liver’ are given in the relevant sections below.

- (11) *n-ë-ere-ko-ma-∅-n*  
 3↔3-REFL-liver-unease-INCH.STAT-PRES-NCERT  
 ‘He is worried, upset.’

The terminative verbalizer *-ta*, on the other hand, which forms telic intransitive verbs, also has entry into a state as part of its meaning but it highlights the endpoint of a change of state or an action, that is, it is bounded. The nouns that take the verbalizer *-ta* mainly fall into two groups that I have subsumed under the names: relations (as in kinship or interpersonal relations) and body emissions or body-related, as shown in (12) and (13).

- |      |               |            |                |                   |
|------|---------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (12) | <i>injo</i>   | ‘husband’  | <i>injo-ta</i> | ‘marry (a man)’   |
|      | <i>pī(tī)</i> | ‘wife’     | <i>pīh-ta</i>  | ‘marry (a woman)’ |
|      | <i>eemi</i>   | ‘daughter’ | <i>eemi-ta</i> | ‘have a daughter’ |
- 
- |      |                  |            |                  |                                     |
|------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (13) | <i>su(ku)</i>    | ‘urine’    | <i>suh-ta</i>    | ‘urinate’                           |
|      | <i>ëramu(ku)</i> | ‘sweat’    | <i>eramuh-ta</i> | ‘sweat’                             |
|      | <i>ëta(ku)</i>   | ‘spittle’  | <i>etah-ta</i>   | ‘slobber’                           |
|      | <i>munu</i>      | ‘blood’    | <i>mun-ta</i>    | ‘bleed’                             |
|      | <i>ëre</i>       | ‘liver’    | <i>ëre-ta</i>    | ‘rest’                              |
|      | <i>(j)omi</i>    | ‘language’ | <i>(j)omi-ta</i> | ‘speak’                             |
|      | <i>waku</i>      | ‘belly’    | <i>waku-ta</i>   | ‘get a big belly<br>(in pregnancy)’ |

What all the verbs formed by means of this verbalizer have in common is their ‘point of no return’, when the consequences of the process become



as can be seen in the list in (15), and exemplified in (16). Note that also the notion ‘lazy’ is expressed as a state undergoing a mental sensation. Most of the states expressed with this verbalizer are seen as undesirable or unpleasant states. The noun (*tī*)*no(tī)* has the meaning ‘shiver from cold or fear’, hence when suffixed with the verbalizer *-pami* it has the literal meaning ‘be in a shivering sensation (due to cold)’.

|      |                   |                  |                        |               |
|------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| (15) | <i>(tī)no(tī)</i> | ‘cold’           | <i>-:noh-pa(mi)</i>    | ‘feel cold’   |
|      | <i>këi</i>        | ‘fever’          | <i>këi-pa(mi)</i>      | ‘be feverish’ |
|      | <i>akunu</i>      | ‘laziness’       | <i>akun-pa(mi)</i>     | ‘be lazy’     |
|      | <i>ëre(-ko)</i>   | ‘liver(-unease)’ | <i>ëreko-pa(mi)</i>    | ‘be restless’ |
|      | <i>(j)emi</i>     | ‘hunger’         | <i>-jemi-pa(mi)</i>    | ‘be hungry’   |
|      | <i>kirikiri</i>   | ‘tremble’        | <i>kirikiri-pa(mi)</i> | ‘be atremble’ |

- (16) *ji:-noh-pain-ja-e*<sup>6</sup>  
 1→shiver-SENS.STAT-PRES-CERT  
 ‘I am cold.’

The stative verbalizer *-wa* is not productive and has only been found on one noun, namely (*wi*)*karau* ‘anger’ resulting in the verb meaning ‘be angry’, as shown in (17).<sup>7</sup>

- (17) *ni-karau-wa-Ø-n*  
 3→anger-STAT-PRES-NCERT  
 ‘He is angry.’

The verb given in (17) has a counterpart with the terminative verbalizer *-ta*, given in (18) which has the meaning ‘become really angry’. The difference between the two verbs is that the verbalizer *-wa* expresses totally stative aspect, whereas that with *-ta* expresses terminative stative aspect. This latter verb expresses the type of anger a person feels when it is the last straw, when one is about to explode, this is the degree of anger that forces one to take action. Culturally, for the Trio, anger is a very undesirable and also

<sup>6</sup> The verbalizer *-pa(mi)* replaces the final syllable with *n* before present tense marking (*-ja*). In Trio orthography an *i* is inserted before the *n* to represent palatalization of the nasal before the glide, resulting in the form given here.

<sup>7</sup> There is another verbalizer *-ma(mi)* which is likewise only found on one noun, namely *koko* ‘night’, the resultant verb *ko:mami* meaning ‘spend the night’ or ‘get dark’.

dangerous state. A person who has become *karau-ta* can no longer contain his anger and thus is a very real threat to the causer of his anger.

- (18) *ni-karau-ta-∅*  
 3→anger-TERM-PST  
 ‘He has become really angry.’

The final one of the stative verbalizers is *-na*. It is a little-used verbalizer that is not attested frequently in the corpus but most attestations tend to have the meaning ‘physically produce something so that it becomes visible or audible’. Some examples are given in (19). The verb *awaina* ‘dawn’ is semantically somewhat obscure but it seems to have something to do with ‘being met by the spreading out of the light of the new day’. As an intransitive verb, it is inflected for person as shown in (20).

- |      |              |               |                 |                                    |
|------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| (19) | <i>ërei</i>  | ‘smoke’       | <i>ërei-na</i>  | ‘produce smoke’                    |
|      | <i>awain</i> | ‘dawn’        | <i>awain-a</i>  | ‘to dawn’                          |
|      | <i>ëremi</i> | ‘spirit-song’ | <i>ëremi-na</i> | ‘produce spirit-song (physically)’ |
|      | <i>poti</i>  | ‘lip’         | <i>ipoti-na</i> | ‘whistle’                          |

- (20) *anpo j-awaina-∅-n*  
 where 1→-dawn-PRES-NCERT  
 ‘Where will I wake up (where will I be as it is dawning)?’

The verb *ëremi-na* ‘produce spirit-song’ expresses the notion of actually singing a spirit-song. This verb has a counterpart with the providative verbalizer *-pa*, as shown in (21), which has the meaning ‘evoke, call up the spirits’.

- (21) *mëhparë*                      *∅-eren-pa-∅-n*<sup>8</sup>  
 tree.animals                      3→3-spirit.song-PROV-PRES-NCERT  
 ‘He is evoking the spirits of the tree animals.’

## 5 The non-aspectual verbalizers

The non-aspectual verbalizers are the reversative *-ka*, the cessative *-ke(pi)*, the benefactive *-htë* and *-ntë*, and the providative *-pa*, all of which form transitive verbs. These are dealt with in turn in the following paragraphs.

<sup>8</sup> In the third person, when a lexical object immediately precedes the verb, the personal prefix *n-* is dropped.

The reversative *-ka* is derived from the verb *ka* ‘to remove, take away’ and can be added to virtually any noun. It has separative meaning, that is, the meaning of the resultant verb is that of to un-Verb or de-Verb someone or something as shown in (5) above, or ‘to lose something’, as shown in (22). Some verbs with *-ka* have specialized meaning, such as *inta-ka* ‘translate’ based on the noun *mīta* ‘mouth’, which reduces the first syllable to *n*, and which literally means ‘to un-mouth’. This verb is used with the meaning ‘to translate from a European language such as Dutch or English into Trio’.

- (22) *s-e-mēnparë-ka-∅*  
 1▷-MID-things-REVERS-NR.PST  
 ‘I lost my stuff.’

The cessative verbalizer *-ke(pi)* is derived from the reducing intransitive verb *ke(pi)* meaning ‘to stop’. Although verbs forms by means of this verbalizer are not abundant in the corpus, it is productive. An example with the noun *munu* ‘blood’ is given in (23).

- (23) *ni-mun-kepi*  
 3→-blood-CESS.I.PST  
 ‘It has stopped bleeding.’

There are two benefactive verbalizers, similar in form, *-ntë* and *-htë* that in principle can be added to any noun. It seems to be lexically determined which of these two a noun takes, although some nouns have been found in the corpus that can take either of the forms. While there is no difference in meaning between the two forms, the variant with the nasal is found more frequently. It is also the variant with the nasal that is suffixed to more recent loanwords such as *oroko* ‘work’ from *wroko* in Sranantongo, the lingua franca of Suriname, resulting in the verb given in (25). These verbalizers are highly productive. The beneficiary of the benefactive suffixes is a direct object. Some examples can be found in (24).

- (24)
- |               |            |                  |             |                    |
|---------------|------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| <i>amore</i>  | ‘spirit’   | <i>amore-htë</i> | ‘dream’     | (soul-provide)     |
| <i>po</i>     | ‘clothes’  | <i>-po-ntë</i>   | ‘dress’     | (clothes-provide)  |
| <i>menu</i>   | ‘design’   | <i>menu-htë</i>  | ‘write’     | (design-provide)   |
| <i>ari</i>    | ‘contents’ | <i>ari-htë</i>   | ‘fill’      | (content-provide)  |
| <i>(j)omi</i> | ‘language’ | <i>jomi-htë</i>  | ‘translate’ | (language-provide) |

- (25) *w-i-j-oroko-ntë-∅-e*  
 1→3-TR-EU-work-BEN-PRES-CERT  
 ‘I am providing him/her with work.’

These benefactive verbalizers contrast with another verbalizer that is similar in meaning but which is not at all productive, namely *-pa* which I call the providative verbalizer. This verbalizer can only combine with very few words, namely those in (26a-e). Those words that end in the syllable *mi*, (*jomi* ‘language’ and *ëremi* ‘spirit-song’, reduce that syllable to *n*. The final vowel of the noun *ënu* ‘eye’ is dropped.

- (26)
- |    |               |               |                |                 |                           |
|----|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| a. | <i>(j)omi</i> | ‘language’    | <i>jon-pa</i>  | ‘speak’         | (voice-provide)           |
| b. | <i>ënu</i>    | ‘eye’         | <i>en-pa</i>   | ‘teach’         | (insight-provide)         |
| c. | <i>jo(ki)</i> | ‘drink’       | <i>joh-pa</i>  | ‘give drink to’ | (drink-provide)           |
| d. | <i>o(tü)</i>  | ‘meat’        | <i>oh-pa</i>   | ‘give meat to’  | (meat-provide)            |
| e. | <i>ëremi</i>  | ‘spirit-song’ | <i>eren-pa</i> | ‘evoke’         | (spirit presence-provide) |

It is clear that the meaning of this verbalizer is very close to that of the benefactive verbalizers discussed above, indeed, two of the nouns given in (26), namely (*jomi* ‘language’ and *ënu* ‘eye’, have also been found in the corpus with the benefactive verbalizers, however, the meaning of the resultant verbs is very different, as can be seen in (27a-b). The transitive verb *ijomi-htë* ‘translate’ is synonymous with the verb *inta-ka* ‘translate’, formed with the reversative verbalizer, given above.

- (27) a. *(j)omi* ‘language’ *i-jomi-htë* ‘translate’  
 ((Trio)language-provide)  
 b. *ënu* ‘eye’ *enu-htë* ‘put eye on’  
 (eye-provide), e.g. on doll

Meira (1999: 273) correctly points out that the verbalizer *-pa* is very close in meaning to the benefactive verbalizers *-ntë/htë*, however, there is also a major difference between the two. Hence the distinction also in the gloss: providative for the former and the benefactive for the latter. Four of the nouns which are verbalized by means of the providative suffix *-pa*, namely ‘meat’, ‘drink’, ‘insight (eye)’, and ‘language’, constitute the four absolute essentials of life, the former two being physical and the latter two being spiritual (the abstract concept of language is seen as the seat of the soul). It is in this sense that providing someone with meat and drink (fluid) is seen as

providing sustenance for the body, without which the body cannot survive. Note that this verb does not refer to giving someone a piece of uncooked meat: rather it is cooked meat ready to be consumed.

In Trio culture, the eye embodies the ability to see, not just the visible in this human world but also the ‘invisible’ in the ‘other’, the spirit, world. In fact how humans see themselves in relation to animals and spirits and how they see animals and how animals see themselves and humans or spirits is a much-discussed facet of Amazonian cultures. As an example, animals see animals as living human lives, so that for the jaguar, blood tastes as pineapple does to humans. For a discussion of perspectivism in native Amazonia, see Rivière (1994), Viveiros de Castro (1998) and others quoted there.

Language, the seat of the soul, is likewise conceived as an indispensable part of being human. Without language (in the abstract sense of faculty of language), there is no human. It is language that distinguishes ‘us’ from ‘the other’. In Trio mythology any animal that has taken on human form is not considered to be truly human. Language is the one thing that an animal does not acquire (see Rivière (1994)). Speaking amounts to manifesting one’s soul. The way in which one speaks is the way one is. For the Trio speaking harshly or angrily shows a harsh or angry soul. Speaking gently and quietly points to a circumspect person who is *junme* [juŋ.me] ‘mature, wise’. Thus the verb *ijonpa* ((*j*)*omi* + *pa*) meaning ‘speak’ could be understood as ‘give a voice to (one’s inner being or thoughts)’.

It is in this sense that providing someone with sustenance in the form of meat and drink on the one hand, and spiritual sustenance in the form of insight and language (soul) on the other is seen as having quite a different status from providing someone with a house or money which concepts take one of the other two benefactive verbalizers *-ntë* or *-htë*.

## 6 Conclusion

In the above I have shown that the verbalizers in Trio stand in a paradigmatic relation with each one either semantically or aspect-semantically just slightly different from the other. Furthermore, the differences that become evident can be shown to be culturally salient and thus give us insight into what these culturally salient aspects or categorizations are. Each verbalizer has both a specific aspectual *and* a semantic component that is relevant to the cultural facts. The type of aspect that the verbalizers express ranges from totally stative (*-wa*), through inchoative stative (*-ma*) with causative meaning, to sensory stative (*-pa(mi)*), to stative producing (*-na*), to terminative stative (*-ta*). Thus one can discern a fine-grained categorization of states within the language. The contrasting meanings of the non-aspectual bene-

factive and providative verbalizers likewise reveal linguistic distinctions based on the cultural values of the concrete versus spiritual, namely the material versus the intangible level.

### References

- Carlin, Eithne B. 2004. *A grammar of Trio, a Cariban language of Suriname*. Frankfurt, etc.: Peter Lang.
- Carlin, Eithne B. to appear. Theticity in Trio (Cariban). *International Journal of American Linguistics*.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 2000. A-constructions and O-constructions in Jarawara. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 66 (1): 22-56.
- Meira, Sérgio. 1999. A grammar of Tiriyó. Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University.
- Rivière, Peter. 1994. WYSINWYG in Amazonia. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 25/3: 255-62
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4-3: 469-88.

