

Selective marking in Tima

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Information structural devices in Tima

- a-centre (cf. Himmelmann and Primus 2015) (sentence-initial position)
- focus marker & **selective marker** (clitics)

The focus marker

The focus marker in Tima seems to be exhaustive; it excludes other than the current alternatives.

The selective marker

(Schneider-Blum 2018)

- The selective marker signals alternatives.
- 🗨️ At first sight, it may appear as another focus marker in Tima, since it occurs in questions and oppositions.
- However, we will show that the selective marker occurs in a variety of contexts that are not relevant for focus. In addition, it can co-occur with the focus marker.
- 🗨️ The two markers show how alternatives are relevant for discourse structuring in two distinct but interacting ways.

Relevant notions

Focus and other relevant notions

☞ **The concepts are based on alternatives** (Krifka 1993; Rooth 1992)

(1) **Focus**

“Focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions.” (Krifka 2007: 18)

Tim went shopping this morning.

Other people who may have gone shopping: {*Ewa, Tom, Mike, Renata, ...*}

(2) **Contrast**

The current alternative is compared to another explicit/implicit alternative; the proposition cannot hold for both at the same time.

(Usually, Tim makes dinner.) Tonight, Lea made dinner.

(3) **Selection**

The current alternative is compared to another set of explicit alternatives which it is part of; the proposition can only hold for the current alternative.

Do you want tea or coffee? Tea.

Focus and other relevant notions

(4) **Correction**

“ $d2$ rejects $d1$ because certain background assumptions for the felicitous use of $d1$ are not met, or because the propositions associated with $d1$ and $d2$ cannot both be true in the evaluation world.” (Repp 2016).

Lea did not make dinner, Tim made dinner.

(5) **Opposition**

“The proposition associated with $d2$ and the proposition associated with $d1$ can both be true in the evaluation world; $d1$ and $d2$ make opposing contributions to the current question under discussion” (Repp 2016).

Lea went shopping, Tim visited his parents.

(6) **Similarity**

“The proposition associated with $d2$ and the proposition associated with $d1$ can both be true in the evaluation world; $d1$ and $d2$ make the same kind of contribution to the current question under discussion” (Repp 2016).

I made the muffins and I also made the cake.

Focus marking in Tima

The Tima focus marker

Exponents of the focus marker

	1/2/3 PRO	proper nouns	oblique	ERG A	unmarked S/A/O
SG		=(G)ʌ/=(G)a			=li/=li
PL		=(y)e/=(y)ε			

Contexts that license the focus marker

- answers to WH-questions and alternative questions
- contrast
- correction

☞ These contexts all seem to involve exhaustive focus, i.e. the proposition can only hold for the current alternative.

The Tima focus marker

Answers to WH-questions

- (7) A: Who did he see?
B: kàpí[↓]η=á ùkúmùn (mínλ) (tìín)
Kaping=**FOC** 3P:saw ERG3SG only
'He saw (only) Kaping.'

Answers to alternative questions

- (8) A: Is this a sheep or a goat?
B: káηàl=**Íí**, kí=címìì=**Íí**=ìη
sheep=**FOC** NEG=goat=**FOC**=NEG
'A sheep (it's not a goat).'

The selective marker in Tima

$=(G)I$

The selective marker: not marking focus

At first sight, the selective marker appears to be a focus marker in non-exhaustive contexts:

- It indicates existing alternatives.
- The alternatives can be explicit or implicit.
- There is no restriction that would only evaluate the proposition containing the current alternative as true.

It typically occurs in

- WH-questions
 - marking modified nouns (e.g. with possessives, specifying adjectives, etc.)
- different types of alternative-sensitive contexts
- subordinate clauses (especially relative clauses)
 - marking oppositions on the level of discourse relations

The selective marker =(G)i in WH-questions

Object question

- (12) yèé[↓]mé úkùmùn mǐnλ=yì?
who 3P:saw ERG3SG=**SEL**
'Who did he see?' (animate)
- (13) mà à-pǎlà mà à-mók=ì
what 2SG-want what 2SG-drink=**SEL**
'What do you like to drink?' (inanimate)

Subject question

- (14) yèé[↓]mé úkòyò kùrtú=yí?
who 3P:did house=**SEL**
'Who built the house?' (implicit alternatives)
- (15) yèé[↓]mé ìcòó kirkí=yí?
who 3P:pierced lie=**SEL**
'Who (of you two people standing in front of us) lied?'
(explicit set of alternatives)

The selective marker with nominal modifiers

The selective marker is systematically used with modified nouns expressing referents selected from a set of alternatives.

Possessives

- (16) kùrtú láá[↓]η=í à-mál
house your=SEL STAT.SG-nice
'Your house is nice.'

Other specifying modifiers

- (17) iháwùk=í=yé, mák kùlná=nà ì=ìlùbá=yí àbllr úkóyò jì=ìhwáà
many=SEL=FOC but feast=DEM DIR=seeds=SEL still 3P:do ERG=people
'There are many, but the harvesting feast is still celebrated.'
- (18) bòmól=↓nó ú=kònkòk[↓]ó ú=kùhùl=í à-tààtán
goodness=DEM DIR=future DIR=government=SEL STAT.SG-short:COMPL
á=bòmól=↓nó ú=kònkòk[↓]ó í=ìhwáá=yí
SOURCE=goodness=DEM DIR=future DIR=people=SEL
'The fate of the government is less important (shorter) than the fate of mankind.'

The selective marker =(G)i marking oppositions

With spatial relations that have implicit, context-independent alternatives (e.g. cardinal points), the use of the selective marker has been conventionalised.

The informant was shown two pictures, one with a lion and one with a horse. He was asked to say where the horse is and where the lion is.

- (24) kámpìŋ=li dǔwá áyíŋtàlì=nà í=káwúh-í
lion=FOC stand in.front.of=DEM DIR=stone=**SEL**
'The *lion* is standing in front of a stone.'



Example (25) was elicited without a preceding question.

- (25) cǒró ñkó náhí é=pàŋkà=**yí**
basket COP ground DIR=table=**SEL**
'The basket is underneath the table.'

The selective marker =(G)i in subordinate clauses

The selective marker also occurs at the edge of subordinate clauses.

- (26) címií=nà [ɲ-kéél[↓]káá=yáŋ=[↓]ná í=kí[↓]bállɛ=í] à-kwòlón
goat=DEM P-sell:INS=LOC3P=ERG1SG DIR=friend=**SEL** STAT.SG-big
'The goat which I sold to the friend is big.'
- (27) kóyò dàrkónà [à-pó[↓]lá máà-kóyó=**yí**], ká=à-híyànàà=dá=àŋ
do like 2SG-want OPT2SG-do=**SEL** NEG=2SG-ask:INS=1SG=NEG
'Do what you want to do, but don't ask me.'
- (28) háámìt kúùh à-ròòr=yáŋ, [ɲkóó[↓]nó díí[↓]k-áá=**yí**]
Hamid bone STAT.SG-bad=LOC3P because walk-INS=**SEL**
'Hamid is sad, because he is leaving.'

Possibly, this is an extension from its use with nouns having phrasal modifiers to nouns having clausal modifiers.

☞ This could account for the fact that the marker systematically occurs with relative and adverbial clauses.

The selective marker =(G)i marking similarities

The selective marker is also used to indicate two alternatives that make similar contributions to the current question under discussion.

- (29) kùlná=nà ù=kúú=yí nà kùlná=ná í=ihòòk=í jì=ihwáá
feast=DEM DIR=dog=**SEL** and feast=DEM DIR=birds=**SEL** ERG=people
kàrkàmán=nà ùkóyò, ádí kùlná=nà í=ilùbá=yí
Karkaman=DEM 3P:did also feast=DEM DIR=seeds=**SEL**
'The feast of the dog and the feast of the bird were organized by the
Karkaman clan, also the feast of the seeds.'

- (30) ihwáá=nà hámbér=í ñcè kóyò kùlná=nà í=ímíí=yí ná
people=DEM Hamber=**SEL** COP do feast=DEM DIR=goats=**SEL** and
kùlná=nà yánjál=í
feast=DEM sheep=**SEL**
'The Hamber organized the feast of the goat and that of the sheep.'

Co-occurrence of the selective and the focus marker

If two or more explicit alternatives are contrasted (and not only opposed), the selective marker co-occurs with the focus marker:

- (31) lùwì lèèn=ì kòkòlòŋ=í ñkò kúún, kú=lùwì lèèn=ì kètè?éŋ=í=Íí=íŋ
sister my=SEL big=SEL COP give.birth NEG=sister my=SEL small=SEL=FOC=NEG
'My eldest sister gave birth, not my younger one.'
- (32) kùlál ihwáá=[↓]ná ihá[↓]wóík=f=yé ù=ṭòndòò; ínà ihá[↓]wóík=f úkòkwéé ídék,
yesterday, people=DEM many=SEL=FOC DIR=road PL:DEM many=SEL 3P:held necks
ìbè?éŋ=í ípàkàkàà yáwùh
few=SEL 3P:threw:AP:INS stones
Yesterday, lots of people were in the streets. While most of them were peaceful (did nothing), some threw stones.
- (33) ihwáá=[↓]ná á=pàrná=yí ihìná=yé í-còr, ihwáá=[↓]ná
people=DEM SOURCE=wilderness=SEL PRON3PL=FOC STAT.PL-right people=DEM
nṭí=tììn=í ihìná=yé íyírki
PREP=inside=SEL PRON3PL=FOC liars
'People from the countryside are honest, town's people are liars.'

Discussion

Summary

Focus marker

- answers to WH-questions
 - contrastive constructions
 - corrections
- (exhaustivity seems to play a role)

Selective marker

- WH-questions
- alternatives with modified nouns
 - selections
 - oppositions (also on discourse level)
 - similarities
 - marking subordinate clauses

Both the focus marker and the selective marker indicate alternatives:



The focus-marked constituent not only highlights the alternative in question, but at the same time excludes other alternatives.

Focus marking can be understood as emphatic in the sense of Zimmermann (2007): The speaker suspects that the hearer will be surprised by the assertion of the current alternative.



The selective-marked constituent highlights the current alternative and relates it to a set of alternatives (without excluding them).

The other alternatives can, but do not have to be relevant in the given context.

Concluding remarks & outlook

Alternatives, the focus & selective marker in Tima

- Tima is a showcase of how alternatives are relevant for information structure and discourse structure on different levels.
- Highlighting alternatives may be a function of focus, but it is not restricted to focus.
- 👉 Therefore, the highlighting of alternatives deserves to be treated as a phenomenon independent of focus.

Outlook

The next steps involve investigating the interaction between the selective marker and:

- tones and prosodic patterns
- word order and certain syntactic structures (e.g. clefts)

Thank you!

References

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A-centre

- grammatical, conventionalized correlate of attentional centres (Himmelmann and Primus 2015)
- in the case of Tima, the sentence-initial position is the a-centre
- i.e. the first argument in the sentence can be the topic; but we would like to argue for a broader attention-lending function of the sentence-initial position
- by default, the A argument occurs in that position (1):

(1) wéén àη-κλίίík cíbλ
mother 3PRF-lie.CAUS child
A V O

‘The mother has put the child to sleep.’

- if the P argument is intended as the attentional centre, it can occur in the sentence-initial position with a postverbal A argument that is additionally ERG-marked (2):

(2) cíbλ àη-κλίίík ñ=wéén
child 3PRF-lie.CAUS ERG=mother
O V A

‘The child has been put to sleep by the mother.’

Oppositions without the selective marker

The selective marker does not necessarily occur with all oppositions (in the sense of discourse structure). For instance, if answering a question, we find the focus marker:

- (34) háámít kày kàrtú=**lí** mák yúsíf kày náhàn=**lí**
Hamid the.one labour=**FOC** but Yusif the.one laziness=**FOC**
'Hamid works hard, but Yusif is lazy.'

- (35) wòdóŋ iwármáádóh=**é** díík íkλtùkwèél, ihlúnén úkòyò ηύηάη wúdu kurtú
formerly men=**FOC** walk DIR=hunting women 3P:did work beneath house
'In former times, men went hunting, women worked in the gardens.'

Oppositions can also be made in parallel constructions containing neither the selective nor the focus marker:

- (36) wàrtémáádóh, án-dinè néé kòmèrtáà; kλhúnén án-dihè néé ájàlà
man 3PRF-climb onto horse woman 3PRF-climb onto bicycle
'The man, he has climbed onto the horse, the woman, she has climbed onto the bicycle.'