Marking the boundaries: Blackfoot preverbs in narratives and elicitation[*]

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Certain verbal prefixes in Blackfoot are found more frequently in narratives than in elicitation contexts. This paper explores this distributional difference for the spatiotemporal linker *it-*, and argues that its high frequency in narratives reflects a particular discourse use of *it-*, as an episode-boundary marker. Moreover, it is claimed that this use of *it-* is a predictable by-product of its core semantic function as encoding spatiotemporal boundedness.

1 Introduction

Many field linguists have had the experience of collecting a narrative text in a language whose morphology they take to be familiar only to find that a "simple" task like morpheme breakdown can pose unexpected challenges. The jumping off point for this paper is one such experience. In analyses of Blackfoot narratives, it has been observed that certain verbal prefixes (PREVERBS) are found more frequently in narrative texts than in elicitation contexts (Bullshields et al 2008). Specifically, the spatiotemporal preverb *it-* is found in high frequency in narratives, appearing in morphosyntactic contexts that are unattested in elicitation. In this paper, I explore this distributional difference, and I argue that the high frequency of *it-* in narrative contexts reflects a particular discourse use of this preverb, as an episode-boundary marker. Furthermore, I claim that the use of *it-* as an episode-boundary marker is a predictable by-product of its core semantic function as a marker of spatiotemporal boundedness (Bliss 2012).

The paper proceeds as follows. In §2, I introduce the collection of narrative texts from which I draw my current findings and in §3, I discuss the distribution and interpretation of *it-*, both in elicitation and in narratives. In §4, I focus on the discourse function of *it-* in texts, concluding that *it-* can be used an episode-boundary marker in these contexts. In §5, I argue that the core semantic function of *it-* is to encode spatiotemporal boundedness, and I show how this analysis can account for the behaviour of *it-* in both elicitation and narrative contexts. Finally, in §6, I conclude.

2 Source of data

In addition to the elicitation data, collected in a field setting with speakers of the Siksiká and Kaináá dialects, this paper draws from four traditional Blackfoot stories: *Iinisskimm* "Buffalo Calling Stones," *Katoyissa* "Blood Clot," *Naapi* "Napi (the Old Man),"and *Naapi ki Siikokiinis* "Napi and The Black Birch." These stories are part of a larger collection of narrative texts recorded and made available through the *Niitsitapiisini: Our Way of Life* exhibit at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. Each story is transcribed in Blackfoot, with English and French translations and an accompanying audio recording. In this paper, transcriptions are presented as in the original texts, with morphological analysis and glossing added by the author.

3 Spatiotemporal *it-*

The verbal prefix *it-* belongs to the class of LINKERS (Frantz 2009) or RELATIVE ROOTS (e.g. Rhodes 2010), a closed class of morphemes found across the Algonquian language family that specify various oblique relations (e.g., instrument, means, manner, time, location). Linkers in Blackfoot are

functionally analogous to prepositions in languages like English, in that they "link" an adjunct expression to the predicate.

3.1   *it-* in elicitation contexts

In elicitation contexts, *it-* can function to introduce either locative or temporal expressions. An example of each is given in (1) and (2) below.[1]

(1) a. *Nítsooyi.*
    nit-ioyi
    1-eat.AI
    "I ate."

   b. *Nitsítsooyi anni   itáísooyo'pi.*
    nit-**it**-ioyi   ann-yi   itaisooyo'p-yi
    1-***it***-eat   DEM-INAN   table-INAN
    "I ate at the table."

(2) a. *Anna   Leo áíkskima.*
    ann-wa   L   a-ikskimaa
    DEM-PROX   L   IMPF-hunt.AI
    "Leo hunts."

   b. *Anna   Leo **it**áíkskima   omi   itáó'tsstoyi.*
    ann-wa   L   **it**-a-ikskimaa   om-yi   itao'tsstoyi
    DEM-PROX   L   ***it***-IMPF-hunt.AI   DEM-INAN   November
    "Leo hunts in November."

The distribution of *it-* varies depending on whether it has locative or temporal reference. Specifically, whereas *it-* is obligatory on verbs modified by an overt locative expression, it is optional on verbs modified by an overt temporal expression. This is shown in (3) and (4), respectively.

(3)   *Nitsiksssta   ninaahk*(it)otomiihksa'si*   omi   niyítahtaani.*
    nit-iksstaa   nit-aahk-**it**-oto-omiihkaa-hsi   om-yi   niyitahtaan-yi
    1-want.AI   1-NONFACT-***it***-go.to-do-go.fish.AI-CONJ   DEM-INAN   river-INAN
    "I want to go fishing at that river."

(4)   *Nitsiksssta   ninááhk**(it)**otomiihkaa'si*   omi   ayíípoosii.*
    nit-iksstaa   nit-aahk-**(it)**-oto-omiihkaa-hsi   om-yi   ayiipoosi-yi.
    1-want.AI   1-NONFACT-**(it)**-go.to.do-go.fish.AI-CONJ   DEM-INAN   summer-INAN
    "I want to go fishing this summer."

When *it-* has temporal reference, it gives the temporal expression a flavour of specificity, or what I later refer to as "boundedness." More precisely, *it-* restricts or emphasizes the time of the event, or picks out a specific interval within the timespan denoted by the temporal expression. Examples illustrating both of these interpretations are given in (5) and (6).

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[1] Unless otherwise cited, data are from the author's fieldwork with native speakers of Siksiká and Kaináá Blackfoot. Text examples are referenced by the name of the story and sentence number. Abbreviations are as follows: 1,2,3,4= 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th person; ACCOMP(animent); AI = animate intransitive; BEN(efactive); CONJ(unct); DEM(onstrative); IC = initial change; IMPF = imperfective; II = inanimate intransitive; INAN(imate); INTS = intensifier; INV(erse); MANR = manner; NEG(ation); NOM(inalizer); NONFACT(ive); NP = non-particular; PL(ural); POSS(essive); PRN = pronoun; PROX(imate); REP(ortative); RR = relative root; TA = transitive animate; TI = transitive inanimate; VOC(ative) .

(5) *Nitsikssta ninááhkitotomiihkaa'si omi ayíípoosii.*
 "That's when I want to go fishing, this summer."

(6) *Anná   Anna **it**sisttohkopii   matónni.*
 ann-wa   A   **it**-isttohkopiiyi matonni.
 DEM-PROX A   ***it**-fall.down.AI yesterday
 "Anna fell down at a particular time yesterday."

Without an overt nominal expression, *it-* cannot receive a locative interpretation. However, it can receive a temporal interpretation. Just as when a temporal expression is expressed overtly, *it-* provides a specific (and contextually-determined) temporal reference for the eventuality denoted by the predicate. In (7), *it-* highlights the fact that Leo's broom-dancing takes place at the time of speaking:

(7) *Anna   Leo ihp**(it)**á'paihpiyi   anníhkayi   ihtáyaamaahkimao'pi.*
 ann-wa   L   ihp-**(it)**-a'p-a-ihpiyi   annihkayi   ihtayaamaahkimao'p-yi
 DEM-PROX L   ACCOMP-***(it)**-around-IMPF-dance.AI DEM.INAN broom-INAN
 "**(Right now)** Leo is dancing around with a broom."

In sum, in elicitation contexts, *it-* consistently has spatial or temporal reference, either by licensing a locative expression or providing a specific temporal reference for an eventuality. As shown in the following section, this generalization does not seem to extend to narrative contexts.

3.2   *it-* in narratives

As in elicitation contexts, in narratives *it-* serves a licensing function for locative expressions, consistently appearing in the narrative texts whenever there is an overt locative expression. Examples of this are given in (8) and (9).

(8) *Katoyisa   anohk   ii**it**ayo'kayihk   omistsi Katoyissiksi.*
 K   annohk ii-**it**-a-yo'kaa-ihk   om-istsi Katoyiss-iksi
 K   now   IC-***it**-IMPF-sleep.AI-REP DEM-PL sweet.pine-PL
 "Katoyissa now sleeps at Sweet Pine Hills."   (Katoyissa, 19)

(9) *Moi   saokiohtsi ii**kit**akayimmi   iinisskimmiksi.*
 amo-yi   saokiohtsi iik-**it**-waakayimm-yi   iinisskimm-iksi
 DEM-INAN prairie   INTS-***it**-be.many.AI-3PL buffalo.stone-PL
 "There are many buffalo stones on the prairie."   (Innisskimm, 13)

The narratives also parallel elicitation contexts in that *it-* appears on a number of verbs that are modified by a temporal expression.

(10) *Kana'paisiisi   ii**it**aisspiipiohsiwa   maka'pii.*
 kana-a'paisii-hsi   ii-**it**-a-isspiipiohsi-wa   mak-a'pii
 all-time.passes.II-CONJ IC-***it**-IMPF-get.into.crisis.AI-PROX bad-act.II
 "All the time, he was getting into trouble."   (Naapi, 4)

(11) *Anniyai mattsiksistsikoyihk   ma   omahkinaawa   ii**tsit**ohkoonimayihk …*
 anniyai matt-iksistsiko-yi-hk   om-wa   omahk-(n)inaa-wa   ii-**it-it**-ohkoonimaa-ihk
 DEM   also-day-INAN-HK   DEM-PROX old-man-PROX   IC-***it-it**-find.AI-REP
 "One day the old man found …

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…katoyisi   mi   saokiohtsi.
katoyis-yi   om-yi   saokihtsi
blood.clot-NP   DEM-INAN prairie
"…a blood clot on the prairie."   (Katoyissa, 6)

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However, the distribution of *it-* in narratives is much broader than that in elicitation contexts, and many instances of *it-* seemingly do not have any spatiotemporal reference.

(12)   *...**ii**tanistsiihk*   *mi oppitaam*   *maahksiksistokomssaksai*   *aohkii*
        ii-**it**-waanist-yii-hk   omi w-ippitaam   m-aahk-iksistokomssaki-ayi   aohkii
        IC-**it**-tell.TA-3:4-REP   DEM 3-elderly.wife 3-NONFACT-heat.water.AI-3PRN water
        "…(and) he told his wife to heat some water…"   (Katoyissa, 7)

(13)   *Amohkai aakiihk*   *anistayihk*   *Aapaiaiaakii iita'kissiihk*   *aohkii.*
        amohkayi aakii-hk   waanista-yiihk aapaiai-aakii ii-**it**-otáakissi-hk   aohkii
        DEM   woman-REP name-REP   weasel-woman IC-**it**-go.for-water.AI-REP water
        "This woman named Weasel Woman went to gather water."   (Innisskimm, 4)

Examples like (12) and (13) are unexpected given that *it-* always has spatiotemporal reference in elicitation contexts. Further, the presence of *it-* in narratives without either locative or temporal reference seems inconsistent with its characterization as a spatiotemporal linker. Whether overt or not, in elicitation contexts *it-* has the "linking" function characteristic of linkers. With locative reference, the linked argument is overtly expressed and with temporal reference, it may be null but is nevertheless specific. In the following section, I look in more depth at these unexpected uses of *it-* in narratives, and I argue that they do indeed have spatiotemporal reference, referring to the temporal boundaries of an episode in the narrative.

4   *it-* as an episode-boundary marker

In this section, I argue that *it-* takes on a discourse function in narratives, namely as an episode-boundary marker. First, I introduce the notion of EPISODE in narrative structure and discuss the properties of episode-boundary markers more generally. I argue that the spatiotemporality encoded by *it-* makes it an ideal candidate to function as an episode-boundary marker in narratives, and I demonstrate that *it-* functions to demarcate salient episodes in narratives.

4.1   What is an episode-boundary marker?

Just as sentences have internal structure, so do narratives. Narratives consist of EPISODES, intermediate constituents of narrative structure between the level of the sentence and the level of the text, often corresponding to paragraphs in written texts. The defining characteristic of an episode is an internal continuity in participants, time, or location (Fabb 1997), and shifts in episodes are typically correlated with changes in one or more of these deictic features.

Episodes can be delineated via EPISODE-BOUNDARY MARKERS, whose occurrence may correspond not only with changes in participants, time, or location, but also with changes in the action sequence, changes in the possible world (e.g. real-world to fictional or dream world), or changes in perspective or point-of-view (Brinton 1989). As such, episode-boundary markers fulfill "guidepost" or framing functions in the narrative, by providing overt signals of the structural divisions, or constituency, in the text (Brinton 1996).

Linguistic elements of various syntactic categories can function as episode-boundary markers, but most share the property of referring in some sense to the deictic features of person, time, or location (Brinton 1989, 1996; Fabb 1997). Examples of previously recognized episode-boundary markers include clausal constituents (e.g., *And so it happened that…)*, discourse particles (e.g., *now, y'know*), spatial or temporal adverbs (e.g., *then*, Old English *þa*), and tense shifts (e.g., English historical present), (Brinton 1996). Specifically in the Algonquian languages, temporal adverbs, the changed conjunct, and shifts in

the obviation and/or animacy status of participants have been discussed in the context of episode-boundary marking (cf. Goddard 1990; Dahlstrom 1991, 1996; Mühlbauer 2008; Russell 1991).

Although, to the best of my knowledge, linkers (or relative roots) have not been previously discussed in this context, *it-* fits within the class of linguistic elements that typically function as episode-boundary markers, as it has spatiotemporal reference. Further, because *it-* can function to restrict or emphasize temporal parameters (as seen in examples such as (14) below, repeated from (7)), it seems a natural candidate for serving as an episode-boundary marker.

(14) *Anna*   *Leo*   *ihp**(it)**á'paihpiyi*   *anníhkayi*   *ihtáyaamaahkimao'pi.*
      ann-wa   L   ihp-**(it)**-a'p-a-ihpiyi   annihkayi   ihtayaamaahkimao'p-yi
      DEM-PROX   L   ACCOMP-***(it)**-around-IMPF-dance.AI   DEM.INAN   broom-INAN
      "**(Right now)** Leo is dancing around with a broom."

To put things another way, the discourse function of *it-* as an episode-boundary marker can be seen as a by-product of its core function as a spatiotemporal linker. Just as *it-* can emphasize the temporal boundaries of an eventuality, it can also highlight the boundaries of salient episodes in a narrative.

4.2   Marking main episode boundaries (*Innisskimm*)

Of the four narratives analysed here, *it-* is found with the highest frequency in *Innisskimm* "Buffalo Calling Stones." This narrative tells the story of how the Blackfoot people came to use *pisskaan*, or buffalo jumps, in the hunting of bison. The narrative can be segmented into three episodes: (1) a scene-setting episode, which gives a description of the difficulties people faced long ago, (2) a main episode, which tells the story of how a woman finds and shares with her people an *innisskimm*, or buffalo-calling stone, and finally a closing episode, which provides a commentary on how the event has changed the lives of the people, shaping contemporary experiences.

In this story, *it-* is prefixed to every verb in the story, with the exception of those that are in the scene-setting and closing episodes at the beginning and end of the story, respectively. As such, *it-* demarcates the main episode from the scene-setting and closing episodes. In other words, it functions as an episode-boundary marker. Example sentences from each of the three episodes are given below. Note that *it-* does not appear on verbs within the scene-setting and closing sentences in (14) and (17), respectively, but it does consistently appear on every verb in the main episode sentences in (15) and (16).

Example of scene-setting
(15) *Kiiwa*   *makoyiwa*   *otaistamattsookihpi*   *aahkanistaipaitapiiyo'pi.*
      kiiwa   makoyi-wa   ot-wai'stamatts-ok-i-hp-yi   aahk-anist-a-ipaitapii-o'p-i
      VOC   wolf-PROX   3-instruct.TA-INV-2:1-NOM-INAN   NONFACT-MANR-IMPF-live.AI-INCL-INAN
      "We had wolf's instructions for us about how to live."   (Innisskimm, 1)

Examples of main episode
(16) *Maanisto**i'ts**satsapssi*   *miiyai*   *ohkotokini*   *ota**it**satsipssak.*
      m-aanist-o'-**it**-issa'tsi-hsi   amiiyai   ohkotok-in-yi   ot-a-**it**-sitsipssat-ok
      3-MANR-***it**-look.at.TI-CONJ   DEM   stone-NOM-OBV   4-IMPF-***it**-speak.to.TA-INV
      "When she looked at the stone, it spoke to her."   (Innisskimm, 6)

(17) *Ii**t**aistamattsiihkaiksi*   *ki*   *maats**it**sisamoyihka* ...
      ii-**it**-wai'stamattsi-yii-hk-aiksi   ki   maat-**it**-isamo-ihk-wa
      IC-***it**-instruct.TA-3:4-REP-3PL.PRN   CONJ   NEG-***it**-be.long.time.AI-REP-PROX
      "She instructed them, and it wasn't long before..."

          ... *iitsskainoksiihkiaawa*
            ii-**it**-ssk-a-inokssi-hk-yi-aawa
            IC-***it**-return-have.appealing.food.supply.AI-REP-3PL-3PL.PRN
            "They returned to having lots of food."   (Innisskimm, 11)

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Examples of closing

(18) *Aakaitapi   matapiiksi   aisaakiohtayissitapiiyaawaiksi.*
      waaka-itapi   matapi-iksi   a-isaaki-oht-ayissitapii-yi-aawa-aiksi
      many-person   person-PL   IMPF-still-RR-keep.as.bundle.AI-PL-3PL.PRN-3PL.PRN
      'Many people still keep them as sacred bundles.'   (Innisskimm, 14)

In this narrative, *it-* demarcates the boundaries of the main episode from the scene-setting and closing
episodes. Seen in this way, the spatiotemporal reference of *it-* is clear; it highlights the time of the events
described in the story as distinct from that of the previous and resulting state of affairs. As such, *it-* has a
BRACKETING function, to relate the time of the narrated world from the time of the narration (Fabb 1997).
In the following section, it is observed that bracketing is only one of the functions that *it-* serves as an
episode-boundary marker.

4.3   Marking (sub-)episode boundaries

In the other three narratives, *it-* is found less frequently than in *Innisskimm*[2]. However, its
distribution supports the claim that it can function as an episode-boundary marker. In these narratives, *it-*
does not demarcate a single main episode from the scene-setting and closing episodes, but rather, it marks
the boundaries of specific salient (sub-)episodes within the main episode.[3]

4.3.1   *Naapi ki Siikokiinis* "Napi and the Black Birch"

Naapi ki Siikokiinis tells the story of how birch trees came to have striped bark, and partitions
into three episodes. The first episode I refer to as the "action;" it describes a time when Napi, the trickster,
is caught in a storm. The second episode is coined the "reaction," as it describes how Napi reacts after the
storm dies down, by beating a birch tree with a stick. Finally, as in *Innisskimm*, there is a closing episode,
in which the narrator reflects that Napi's beating of the birch resulted in the striped bark we see on birch
trees today.
In the action episode I refer to as the "action;" it describes a time when Napi, the trickster,
Although *it-* occurs less frequently in *Naapi ki Siikokiinis* than in *Innisskimm*, it shows the same
pattern of appearing on a series of verbs to demarcate an episode. In this narrative, *it-* is prefixed to the
series of verbs within the "reaction" episode, as shown in (19)-(21) below.

(19) *Otaipanissi,*   *Naapiowa iitsinisaatsiih   mi   siikokiinis ...*
      ot-a-ipani-hsi   N-wa   ii-**it**-inn-isaatsii   om-yi   siikokiinis
      3-IMPF-die.down.II-CONJ   N-PROX   IC-**it**-down-climb   DEM-INAN   birch
      "When it died down, Naapi climbed down from the birch, …"

          ... iito'kaasiihk   miistsisi   itomatapipotsiihkai.
          ii-**it**-o'kaasi-yiihk   miistsis-yi **it**-omatap-ipot-yii-yiihk-ayi
          IC-**it**-pick.up.AI-REP stick-INAN   **it**-start-beat.TA-3:4-REP-3PRN
          "…picked up a stick, and began beating it."   (Naapi ki Siikokiinis, 8)

(20) *"Kimo'kattsitssikaakssi,*   *noohkitsit a'paohpapokay!*
      kit-mao'k-att-**it**-ssikaa(ttsi)-ok-i-hsi   n-ohkit-**it**-a'p-a-ohpapokai'
      2-why-again-**it**-stop.TA-INV-2:1-CONJ 1-upon-**it**-around-IMPF-be.blown.AI
      "Why did you stop me from being blown around there?"   (Naapi ki Siikokiinis, 9)

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[2] In fact, in *Naapi* "Old Man," *it-* is only found with overt locative and temporal expressions, and appears not to
have an episode-boundary marking function. This is perhaps not surprising, given that this narrative doesn't tell a
particular tale consisting of episodes, but rather discusses the importance of the Napi figure within Blackfoot
culture.
[3] This distinction corresponds with Dahlstrom's (1996) distinction between *acts* (major components of the story) and
scenes (smaller sections of a narrative that comprise the acts).

(21) *Nohksskaitsit'aami'tsi'pinai*   *sopoyi*   *nitsita'paohpapokaani!"*
      n-ohk-sska'-**it**-i'taam-i'tsi-hp-yini-ayi   sopo-yi   nit-**it**-a'p-a-ohpapokai'-n-yi
      1-RR-INTS-***it***-happy-feel.TI-INAN-3PRN   wind-INAN   1-***it***-around-IMPF-blown.AI-NOM-INAN
      "I was really enjoying being blown around by the wind!"   (Naapi ki Siikokiinis, 10)

In *Innisskimm*, *it-* functions to highlight the main episode, but in *Naapi ki Siikokiinis*, *it-* functions to highlight Napi's reaction to the storm, rather than the storm itself. Why might this be so? Arguably, the reaction episode is demarcated by *it-* as a way of drawing attention to Napi's exploits. The significance of this is made clear when we consider the role that Napi stories play in Blackfoot culture. According to Bastien (2004: 89-90), Napi's exploits provide a connection between the destructive aspects of human beings and the powers of the natural world. As such, Napi stories function to teach people about the purpose of their existence and their relationship to the universe; they provide a context for moral and ethical responsibility. By demarcating the episode of Napi's reaction to the storm (rather than the storm itself), the relationship between human beings and the universe is highlighted.

It is important to note that there is nothing in the semantic or pragmatic characterization of *it-* that necessitates that it demarcate the boundaries of the reaction episode, rather than the main episode of the story (i.e., the action), or that it demarcate any episode boundaries at all. Indeed on different tellings of the same story, narrators may choose to employ *it-* to highlight various other episode(s) or sub-episode(s). The claim that is being made here is that, when *it-* takes on the discourse function of an episode-boundary marker, its distribution correlates with the span of an episode that the narrator chooses to mark as salient.

4.3.2   *Katoyissa* "Blood Clot"

Katoyissa is the story of a hero who travelled around and saved people from evil captors. The narrative is structured around a particular example of Katoyissa's heroism, his rescuing of an old couple from their malicious son-in-law. Unlike the other two narratives, *it-* is not restricted to a single salient episode in this narrative, but appears throughout the story on sentences or series of sentences in which Katoyissa is featured as the main character. An example is given in (22) below.

(22) *Mattsitaikamotsiipiihk*   *anno kitsihkawayinnoon ...*
      mattsii-**it**-a-ikamotsiipi-yii-hk   anno kit-iihkawa-innoon
      and.then-***it***-IMPF-bring.to.safety.TA-3:4-REP DEM   2POSS-relative-INCL.POSS
      "And then he saved our people …

            ... niiksiskayi   onohkattayinnokiaawa   *maka'pato'siiksi.*
            anniksskayi   onnohkat-a-yinn-ok-yi-aawa   maka'pato'si-iksi
            DEM.PL   difficult-IMPF-hold.TA-INV-PL-3PL.PRN   evil.spirit-PL
      "…from the evil beings who held them captive."   (Katoyissa, 16)

In contrast, sentences that do not feature Katoyissa as the central character are not marked with *it-*, as shown in (23).

(23) *Mi   omahkinay   otaawa'komookihkai*   *iinii*
      om-yi   omahk-(n)inaa-yi ot-waawa'k(imaa)-omo-ok-ihk-ayi   iinii
      DEM-OBV   old-man-OBV   OBV-hunt-BEN.TA-INV-REP-3PRN   buffalo
      "The old man hunted buffalo for him…"

            ... ki   maataikaksiiyoyiihka   *miiksi   omahkitapiiksi.*
            ki   maat-a-ikaksii-o-yii-hk-a   om-iksi   omahk-itapi-iksi
            CONJ   NEG-IMPF-share-TA.BEN-3:4-REP-PROX   DEM-PL   old-person-PL
      "…but he didn't share with the old couple."   (Katoyissa, 4)

Although the main characters in the central plotline of the story are the old couple and their daughter and son-in-law, *it-* does not appear on verbs in sentences featuring these characters (unless there is an overt locative expression, e.g. (11) above). Rather, *it-* appears only on sentences that feature Katoyissa, the

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hero, as the main character. Assuming that changes in participants reflect episode boundaries (cf. Fabb 1997), the function of *it-* in this narrative is to demarcate episodes featuring a salient participant.

4.4   Summary: *it-* as an episode-boundary marker

To summarize, in narratives *it-* can take on a specific discourse function, as an episode-boundary marker. In the narratives discussed here, we have seen that *it-* can demarcate the main episode from scene-setting and closing episodes (*Innisskimm*), or demarcate a salient sub-episode from other parts of the story (*Naapi ki Siikokiinis*), or demarcate sub-episodes involving important characters in the story (*Katoyissa*). In other words, the narratives differ with respect to which episode(s) the narrator chooses to demarcate with an episode-boundary marker. Moreover, different telling of the same story may vary with respect to which episodes are highlighted as salient. However, what the narratives share is that, in all cases when *it-* has this discourse function, *it-* appears serially across a number of verbs which can be identified as collectively functioning in the narrative structure as an episode. In the following section, I argue that this use of *it-* in narratives is a predicted consequence of the semantic characterization of *it-* as a marker of spatiotemporal boundedness.

5   The semantics of *it-* and episode-boundary marking

Recall from §3 that in structured elicitation contexts, *it-* functions either to license locative expressions, or to provide a specific temporal reference for an eventuality denoted by a predicate. The question addressed in this section is how this distribution fits with the use of *it-* in narratives as an episode-boundary marker. The answer I argue for here is that these two generalizations about *it-* are not inconsistent, but rather, both reflect the spatiotemporality of *it-*. In particular, I claim that the episode-boundary marking function of *it-* is predictable from its semantic characterization as a marker of spatiotemporal boundedness.

5.1   *it-* encodes spatiotemporal boundedness

In this section, I argue that, whether locative or temporal, *it-* makes a consistent semantic contribution. Specifically, I claim that under both interpretations, *it-* provides spatiotemporal boundaries for the eventuality denoted by the predicate. In other words, *it-* locates the eventuality at a bounded place or time.

If a unified semantics of the locative and temporal uses of *it-* is possible, what accounts for the different distribution of *it-* with locative versus temporal reference? I propose that the distributional differences are a consequence of a difference in how times and places are grammaticized. Specifically, the linguistic encoding of the boundaries of an eventuality differs depending on whether the boundaries are spatial or temporal, and the distribution of *it-* reflects this difference. In what follows, I use specific examples of *it-* in its locative and temporal uses to explain how spatial and temporal boundaries differ.

First, consider the examples in (24), which demonstrate the licensing function of *it-* with locative reference.

(24)   a.   *Nit(*sit)ááhksaissaotooyi.*
              nit-aahksa-issaot-ooyi
              1-always-outside-eat
              "I always eat outside."

        b.   *Nits*(it)ááhksa-issaot-ooyi   ánna   ookóówayi.*
              nit-**it**-aahksa-issaot-ooyi   anna   w-ookoowa-yi
              1-**it**-always-outside-eat   DEM   3-house-INAN
              "I always eat outside, at his place"

In both (24a) and (24b), a location for the event is provided by an adverbial prefix *issaot-* "outside." However, only in (24b), in which there is an overt locative expression, is *it-* grammatical. Why is this so?

Arguably, without specifying "at his place," the location of the event is unbounded; it doesn't have any spatial boundaries. In other words, "outside" refers not only to the location *at his place*, but also the wider spatial context, e.g. *in Gleichen, in Alberta, in Canada, on Earth*, etc. Whereas each of these locations have defined spatial boundaries, as schematized in (25), the locative expression "outside" does not.

(25) Representation of spatial boundaries
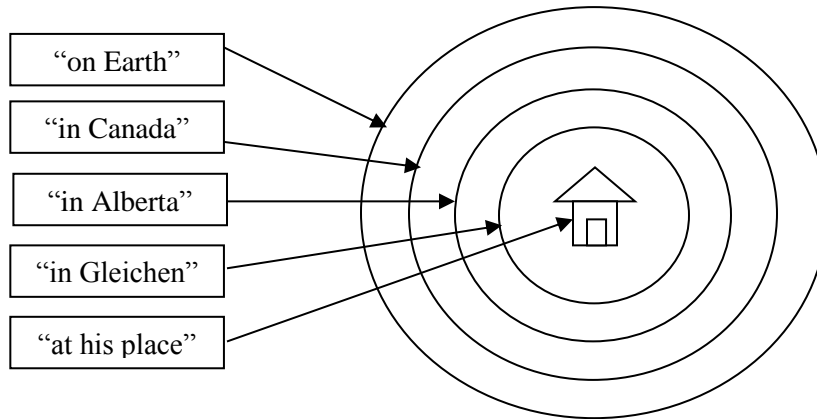
A locative expression such as "at his place" or "on Earth" confines the event to a bounded spatial context. Thus, by licensing the locative expression, *it-* provides spatial boundaries for the event.

Now consider the distribution of *it-* with temporal reference. Recall from §3.1 that, in elicitation contexts, *it-* restricts or emphasizes the time of the event, or picks out a specific interval within the timespan denoted by the temporal expression. I propose that these various interpretations reflect the core semantic function of *it-* as encoding (spatio)temporal boundedness, and that the differences arise depending on the discourse context and/or the aspectual properties of the verb. In what follows, I give some examples that highlight the ways in which *it-* marks temporal boundaries. First consider an example with a stative predicate, as in (26).

(26) a.   *Anná   Beth iikóki'taki   matónni.*
           ann-wa   B.   iik-ok-i'taki   matonni
           DEM-PROX B.   INTS-bad-feel yesterday
           "Beth was really mad yesterday."

       b.   *Anná   Beth **it**siikóki'taki   matónni.*
           ann-wa   B.   **it**-iik-ok-i'taki   matonni
           DEM-PROX B.   **it**-INTS-bad-feel yesterday
           "Beth got really mad yesterday."

Both (26a) and (26b) are grammatical, but when *it-* appears on the stative verb in (26b), it yields an inchoative reading. Arguably, this is a reflex of the temporal boundedness contributed by *it-*; in this sentence, *it-* provides a starting point, or a temporal boundary, for the state. This can be schematized as in (27).

(27)   Representation of temporal boundaries in (26)
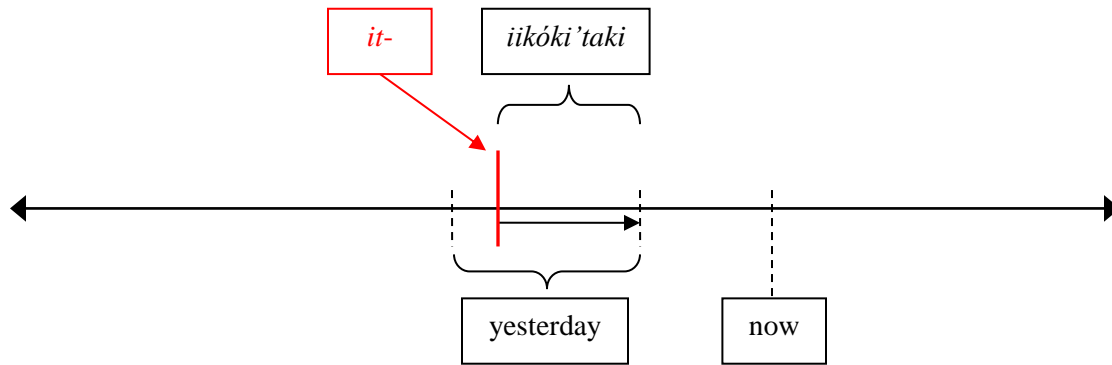
The figure in (27) depicts the temporal span of the eventuality denoted by the predicate *iikóki'taki* "be really mad" in (26). The contribution of *it-* is to mark the left boundary, or the starting point, of this eventuality.

  With non-stative verbs, *it-* also picks out specific temporal boundaries. Consider the example in (28) (repeated from (6)):

(28) a. *Anná* *Anna* *isisttohkopii* *matónni.*
     ann-wa A   isttohkopiiyi matonni.
     DEM-PROX A   fall.down.AI yesterday
     "Anna fell down yesterday."

   b. *Anná* *Anna* ***it**sisisttohkopii* *matónni.*
     ann-wa A   **it**-isttohkopiiyi matonni.
     DEM-PROX A   ***it**-fall.down.AI* yesterday
     "Anna fell down at a particular time yesterday."

In both (28a) and (28b), the time of the event is specified by the temporal expression *matónni* "yesterday." However, whereas in (28a), the temporal expression provides a time span in which the event occurred in (28b), *it-* picks out a specific point within that time span. In other words, *it-* provides temporal boundaries for the event. This is depicted in (29).

(29)   Representation of temporal boundaries in (28)
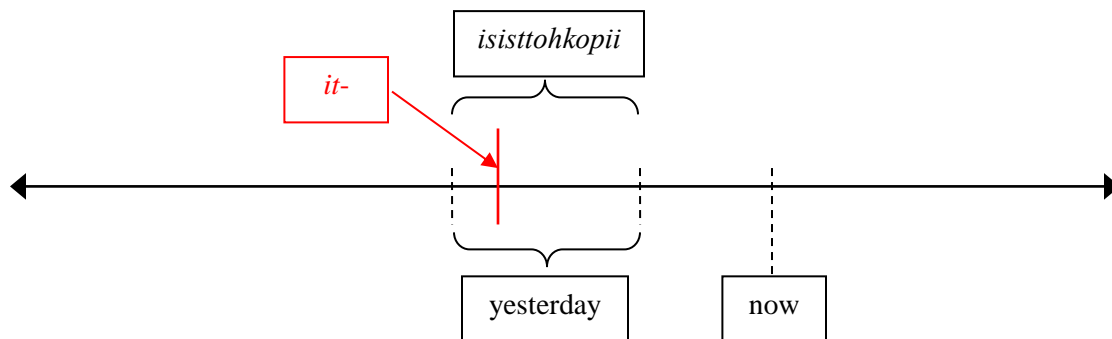
  The same can be said for the contribution of *it-* with predicates that express non-instantaneous events (e.g., activities or accomplishments). Again, *it-* provides temporal boundaries, effectively restricting the time span of the event. An example is given in (30), with a representation of the temporal boundaries in (31).

(30) a. *Apistsiskitsááto'si*   *nitáákotomiihka.*
        apistsiskits-aato's-yi   nit-aak-oto-mii-hkaa
        blossom-month-INAN   1-FUT-go.to.do-fish-acquire.AI
        "I'm going to go fishing in May."

    b. *Apistsiskitsááto'si*   *nitáák**it**otomiihka.*
        apistsiskits-aato's-yi   nit-aak-***it***-oto-mii-hkaa
        blossom-month-INAN   1-FUT-***it***-go.to.do-fish-acquire.AI
   "I'm going to go fishing (at a certain time) in May."

(31) Representation of temporal boundaries in (30)
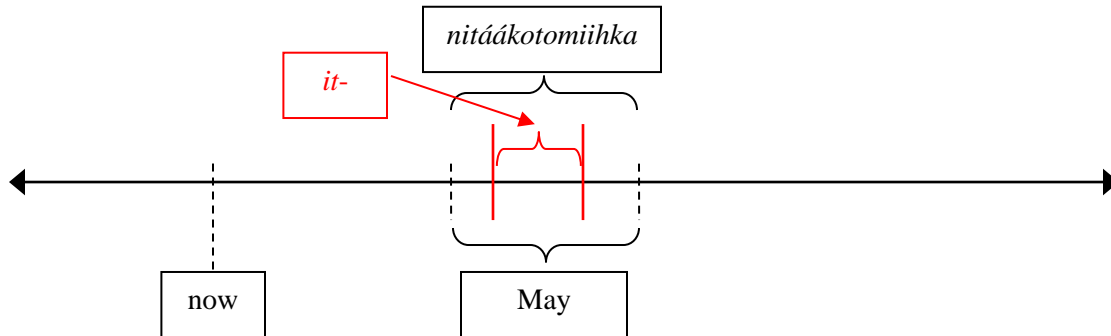
In (31), the temporal span of the event is restricted by the boundaries provided by *it-*.
    Recall from §3.1 that *it-* may also be interpreted as restricting or emphasizing the time of the eventuality, as in (32).

(32) a. *Nitsisttohkíhkiita*   *o'takóóhsin* *ni'tókska***.**
        nit-isttohk-ihkiitaa   o'takoohsin ni'tokska
        1-flat-bake.AI   hour   one
        "I made pancakes at/(around) one o'clock."

    b. *Nits**it**sisttohkíhkiita*   *o'takóóhsin*   *ni'tókska.*
        nit-***it***-isttohk-ihkiitaa o'takoohsin   ni'tokska
        1-***it***-flat-bake.AI   hour   one
        "That was when I made pancakes, at one o'clock."

In (32b) *it-* doesn't function to pick out a specific time interval, but rather, it restricts the event to occurring at exactly and only that time. Arguably, this is the same boundary-marking function as in (26)-(31). Without *it-*, the boundaries of the event are undefined; the temporal expression gives an approximate reference for the time of the event but does not restrict it to exactly that time. With *it-*, the temporal boundaries are defined and precise, as schematized in (33).

(33) Representation of temporal boundaries in (32)

11
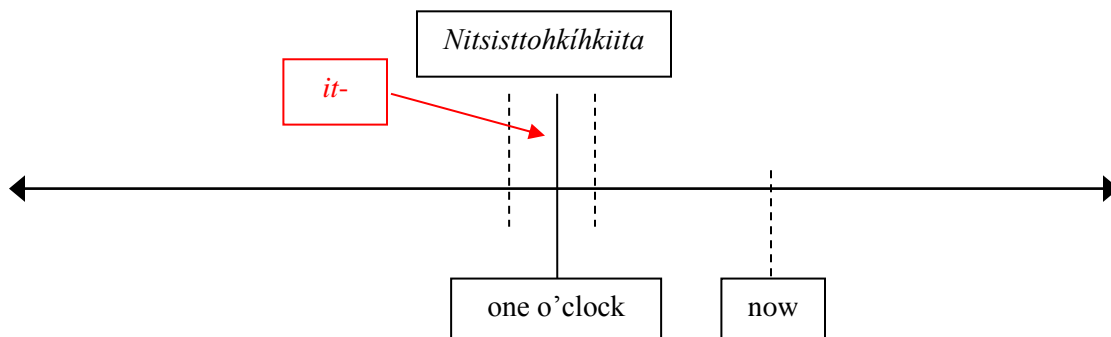
In (33), the temporal span of the event is loosely defined as sometime around one o'clock. The contribution of *it-* is to restrict to the event to precisely that time.

The claim that *it-* is sensitive to the distinction between spatial and temporal boundaries is supported by the observation that, whereas the temporal reference of *it-* is always specific, *it-* can license non-specific locations, as in (34).

(34)　*Nitsikssta　ninaahkitsipsstso'kaahsi　　　　ksikokóówayi.*
　　　nit-ikssta　nit-aahk-**it**-ipsst-yo'kaa-hsi　　ksikokóówa-yi
　　　1-want　　1-NONFACT-***it***-inside-sleep-CONJ　tent-INAN
　　　"I want to sleep in a tent."
　　　✓WIDE SCOPE READING: *There is a tent I want to sleep in.*
　　　✓**NARROW SCOPE READING:** *I want to sleep in some tent.*

Whether interpreted with wide or narrow scope, the locative expression in (34) requires *it-* in order to be licensed. This is markedly different from the temporal use of *it-*, which, whether used with an overt temporal expression or not, always has a specific reference. However, under the view that *it-* contributes spatiotemporal boundedness, and that spatial and temporal boundaries are grammaticized differently, this difference is expected. Whereas temporal boundaries are defined by picking out a specific reference point within a temporal span, spatial boundaries don't require a specific reference. Rather, spatial boundaries can be defined by confining an eventuality within a spatial parameter. As shown in (34), this location need not be specific; the location of sleeping in (34) is confined to the parameters of (some) tent. By licensing the locative expression, *it-* defines the spatial boundaries of the event.

In sum, whether used with temporal or locative reference, *it-* has a consistent semantic contribution, namely to provide spatiotemporal boundaries for an eventuality. In the next section, I show that this characterization of *it-* can account for its function in narratives as an episode-boundary marker.

5.2　Boundedness and episode-boundaries

We have seen that narrative episodes are characterized by an internal continuity in participants, time, or location, and are distinguished from one another by discontinuity in one of these categories. It has been observed that the need to mark episode-boundaries can have consequences for morphosyntax (Fabb 1997). In particular, morphosyntactic elements encoding features related to participants, time, or location can be recruited for the purposes of episode-boundary marking.

As a marker of spatiotemporality, *it-* is well-suited for the purpose of episode-boundary marking. Further, as a function of providing spatiotemporal boundaries for an eventuality denoted by a predicate, *it-* can partition eventualities into those that share common boundaries from those that don't. In other words, *it-* can demarcate episodes. Under the view that episodes can be characterized by continuity in time and space, an episode can be understood as a collection of eventuality-denoting predicates that share spatiotemporal boundaries. The function of *it-* is to mark those boundaries.

For example, consider the function of *it-* in Innisskimm, which I argued in §4.2 is to demarcate the main episode in the story from the scene-setting and closing episodes. An example of a sentence from the main episode was given in (16), and is repeated in (35) below.

(35)　*Maanistoi'tssatsapssi　　　miiyai　ohkotokini　　otaitsatsipssak.*
　　　m-aanist-o'-**it**-issa'tsi-hsi　　amiiyai　ohkotok-in-yi　ot-a-**it**-sitsipssat-ok
　　　3-MANR-***it***-look.at.TI-CONJ　　DEM　　stone-NOM-OBV　4-IMPF-***it***-speak.to.TA-INV
　　　"When she looked at the stone, it spoke to her."　　　　　　　　　(Innisskimm, 6)

The preverb *it-* appears on both verbs in this sentence, as it does on every verb within the main episode of the story. I propose that its contribution here is equivalent to that in (30), where it restricts the temporal boundaries of an event to a certain time. In (35), *it-* signals that the event(s) denoted by the predicate(s) happened at a certain time, namely the time of the main episode. This is schematized in (36).

(36)   Representation of *it-* as an episode-boundary marker
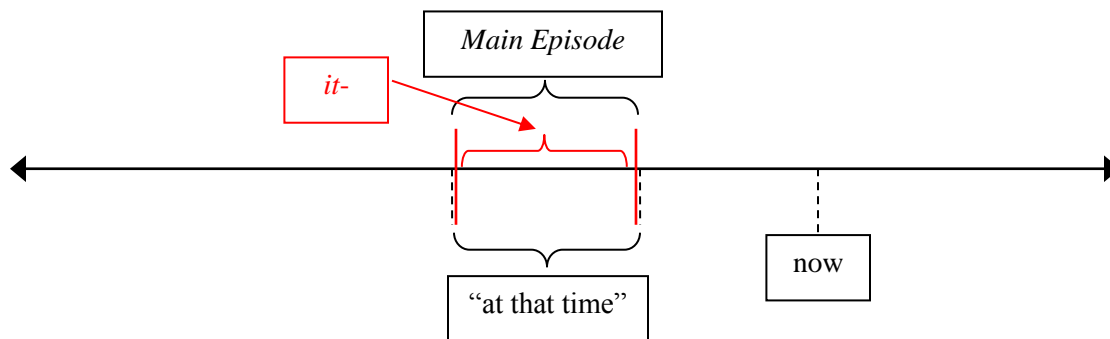
The discourse effect of marking the temporal boundaries for each predicate within a salient episode is to highlight the continuity and cohesion within an episode, as compared with discontinuity with the rest of the story.

Fabb (1997) notes that episode-boundary markers signal not just a discontinuity in the relevant feature(s) that they typically encode, but a break between episodes more generally. For example, if tense shifting is employed to mark episode-boundaries, it may mark boundaries primarily characterized by a shift in participants or location, and not just boundaries characterized by shifts in time. Turning to *it-*, we can observe that, even if the episode-boundary does not expressly coincide with a change in time or location, *it-* marks the saliency of the episode by demarcating its spatiotemporal boundaries. In the narratives considered here, we have seen that episode-boundaries may coincide with a change in time (e.g., *Innisskimm*), a change in participants (e.g., *Katoyissa*), or a change in the action sequence (e.g. *Naapi ki Siikokiinis*). However, by providing spatiotemporal boundaries for the eventualities that comprise the episode, *it-* demarcates that episode, marking it as salient in the narrative.

6   Conclusions and future directions

To summarize, I have shown that the distribution of the Blackfoot preverb *it-* varies across elicitation and narrative contexts. In structured elicitation, *it-* encodes spatiotemporal boundedness either by licensing locative expressions or by restricting or defining the temporal parameters of an eventuality. In narratives, on the other hand, *it-* takes on a broader role, and is recruited as an episode-boundary marker. I have argued that these two patterns both reflect the semantic characterization of *it-* as a marker of spatiotemporal boundedness. As a function of encoding spatiotemporal boundedness, *it-* can demarcate episodes within a narrative.

These findings lead to a number of questions for future research. One direction concerns the syntax of *it-*. Specifically, is *it-* a functional head or an adjunct, and how does *it-* compose with locative and temporal expressions? Does *it-* merge in a different position when it functions as an episode-boundary marker? In addition, there are questions regarding narrative structure in Blackfoot. In particular, it would be interesting to investigate if and how *it-* interacts with other episode-boundary markers that have been identified for other Algonquian narratives. Does *it-* correlate with obviation (which can marks shift in participants), or clause-typing (which can mark shifts in location)?

Looking at narrative structure can inform our knowledge of these various grammatical elements, and conversely, an understanding of their syntactic and semantic properties can help us understand their role in discourse. To conclude, our understanding of the syntax and semantics of morphemes such as *it-* requires looking at their distribution and interpretation in both structured elicitation and narrative contexts.

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