

Syntactic Transitivity in the Analysis of a Malagasy Language

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In traditional analyses of Malagasy languages, sentence structures are commonly analyzed applying the notion "voice", and are classified into three voices, namely, actor voice, passive voice, and circumstantial voice. However, there are some phenomena that indicate that such an analysis does not accurately capture the characteristics of Malagasy sentences. The most commonly recognized problem with the above analysis is the fact that the so-called "passive" sentences do not carry passive meanings and do not function as proto-typical passives do (cf. Rasoloson 2001, Keenan and Polinsky 1998). In this paper, I will demonstrate that an analysis of the basic sentence structures of Betsimisaraka Malagasy in which syntactic transitivity is utilized to classify the constructions provides a clearer description of the language. The proposed analysis moreover has several advantages in the description of Malagasy languages over the old analysis in that it makes cross-linguistic comparison, especially between Malagasy and other Austronesian languages, more revealing, and enables on-going syntactic changes in these languages to become more readily identifiable. The description will primarily be based on data collected through my own fieldwork.

REFERENCES

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