Transitivity, Voice, and Ergativity in Mandar

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Himmelmann (2005) describes two broad typological categories that are useful in categorizing non-Oceanic Austronesian languages. These two categories are symmetrical voice and preposed possessor marking. Of the 800 or so non-Oceanic Austronesian languages, about 60% are symmetrical voice languages, and these are found in the western part of the Austronesian world. About 25% are preposed possessor languages, and these are mostly found in the eastern-Indonesian area. About 15% do not align clearly with either typological category, and Himmelmann calls these "transitional" languages. Mandar is a transitional language, similar to its close relation Makassar (Jukes 1998; Jukes 2005). Although Mandar's voice system is not symmetrical, there are some clause types that appear to be neither transitive nor intransitive, but "semi-transitive". In this paper I will describe transitivity, voice, and ergativity in Mandar, placing the language in its typological context.

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