〈特集「受動表現」〉

Passive constructions in Northern Sotho (S32)
北ソト語（S32）の受動表現

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要旨：本稿は，語研論集 14 号(2009)所収の調査票にもとづいて収集した北ソト語(S32) (バントゥ系；南アフリカ共和国)の受動表現に関する記述的資料を提供するものである.

Abstract: This article presents descriptive data on various passive constructions in Northern Sotho (S32), a southern Bantu language spoken in South Africa. The data was collected through the questionnaire "Passive expressions" designed in Journal of the Institute of Language Research 14, 2009.

1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is to describe passive constructions in Northern Sotho, a Southern Bantu language mainly spoken in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Northern Sotho is mostly spoken in the north and north-east of this province. The imaginary line is drawn from Pretoria to Springs, Middleburg to Lydenburg and from the north of Sabie River to Bushbuckridge towards Olifants River. Northern Sotho is also spoken in some areas of Giyani, north of Louis Trichardt (Makhado) Town to Messina (Musina) Town. It stretches from the western side of Botswana border to the areas of Potgietersrus (Mokopane) and Warmbaths (Belabela). Statistics from Census 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022) show that about 6 million people (10% of the population) in South Africa speak Northern Sotho as their home language. The passive morpheme is -w-, which attaches to the verb stem. In this section, an overview of the language is presented.

2. Basic data

This section shows the passive data in Northern Sotho based on the questionnaire "Passive expressions" appeared in Journal of the Institute of Language Research 14 (2009). Each entry has a passive form. The orthographic representation of sentences is in italics. Morpheme-by-morpheme lines with gloss[1] appear below the sentence. In all examples, the passive morpheme is –(i)w-. The first example shows the simple passive form in Northern Sotho.

(1) Simple passive [Item 1-1]

Thato o bethilwe ke Malose.

Thato   o   bethil-w-e   ke Malose.

Thato   SM1   hit-PASS-FV   by Malose

'Thato was hit by Malose'

The subject of the passives in Northern Sotho may be inalienable parts (2a) or alienable parts (2b). The passive can also have a type of causative meaning as in (3).

(2) Types of objects

    a. *Leoto la Thato le gatilwe ke Malose.*

        Le-oto   la   Thato   le   gatil-w-e   ke Malose

        5-foot   ASSC5   Thato   SM5   step-PASS-FV   by Malose

        'Thato's foot was stepped on by Malose.' [Item 1-2]

    b. *Sekhwama sa Thato se utswitšwe ke Malose.*

        Se-khwama   sa   Thato   se   utswitš-w-e   ke Malose

        7-wallet   ASSC7   Thato   SM7   steal-PASS-FV   by Malose

        'Thato's wallet was stolen by Malose.' [Item 1-3]

The following examples in (3-5) show that types of passives that are atypical. In (3), the verb 'to cry' cannot be passivized, when the construction with passivize 'to cry' was checked with the first and the second author. The agent phrase in Northern Sotho passives may be optional as shown in (4). A sentence with unidentifiable subject may be expressed with a passive as in (5).

(3) Intransitive verbs [Item 1-4]

Lesea le letše bošegong bja maabane. Ka fao ga se ke kgone go robala le gatee.

Le-sea   le   letše   bošegong   bja   maabane.   Ka fao   ga   se   ke   kgone   go   robala

5-baby   SM5   cry   night   ASSC14   previous   so   there   NEG   be   1SG   can   to   sleep

le gatee.

never

'The baby cried last night. So, I couldn't sleep at all.'

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[1] Subject markers in Northern Sotho are written separate from the host verb in the orthography. In Bantu linguistics, these subject markers are morphologically identified as a prefix attached to the stem. Following the orthographic rendition, however, this paper does not connect the subject marker and the verbal stem with a hyphen.

(4) Omitting the agent [Item 1-5]

Moago wo moswa o agilwe (ke Thato).

Moago	wo	moswa	o	agil-w-e	(ke	Thato).
3-building	ASSC3	new	SM3	build-PASS-FV	by	Thato

'A new building was built (by Thato).'

(5) Generic agent [Item 1-6]

Sefora se bolelwa Canada.

Se-fora	se	bolel-w-a	Canada.
7-French	SM7	speak-PASS-FV	Canada

'French is being spoken in Canada.'

The results of an action are expressed in examples (6-7). In (6), the 'wallet' is stolen and is not any more accessible, and in (7), the subject of the passive 'picture' remains hanging on the wall.

(6) Results of an action [Item 1-7]

Sekhwama se utswitšwe ke Thato.

Se-khwama	se	utswitš-w-e	ke	Thato
7-wallet	SM7	steal-PASS-FV	by	Thato

'The wallet was stolen by Thato.'

(7) Outcome of an action [Item 1-8]

Seswantšho se kgomareditšwe lebotong.

Se-swantšho	se	kgomareditš-w-e	lebotong.
7-picture	SM7	attach-PASS-FV	on.the.wall

'A picture is hung on the wall.'

Example (8) shows that an emotion verb such as *rata* 'to love' can be passivized.

(8) [Item 1-9]

Thato o ratwa ke Malose.

Thato	o	rat-w-a	ke	Malose
Thato	SM1	love-PASS-FV	by	Malose

'Thato is loved by Malose.'

The messenger verb 'to tell' is passivized in (9), showing that passivization of this type of verbs is possible in Northern Sotho.

(9) [Item 1-10]

Malose o boditšwe ke Thato go ithuta kudu'

Malose	o	boditšwe	ke	Thato	go	ithuta	kudu
Malose	SM1	tell-PASS-FV	by	Thato	15	study	hard

'Malose was told by Thato to study hard'

When two sentences are connected, the subject of a passive sentence can also serve as the subject of the following clause as in (10a). This type of coordination is not possible with the object of an active sentence, which cannot be omitted in the following clause as in (10b).

(10) Complex clauses

a. *Thato o biditšwe ke Malose, gomme o ka phapošing ya Malose gabjale.*

Thato	o	biditš-w-e	ke Malose,	gomme	o	ka	phapoši-ng	ya	Malose
Thato	SM1	call-PASS-FV	by Malose	and	SM1	ASSC	9.room-LOC	ASSC9	Malose

gabjale

now

'Thato was called by Malose, and is in Malose's room now.' [Item 1-10a]

b. *Malose o biditše Thato, gomme Thato o ka phapošing ya Malose gabjale.*

Malose	o	biditš-e	Thato,	gomme	Thato	o	ka	phapoši-ng	ya	Malose
Malose	SM1	call-FV	Thato	and	Thato	SM1	ASSC	9.room-LOC	ASSC9	Malose

gabjale

now

'Malose called Thato, and Thato is in Malose's room now.' [Item 1-10b]

3. Conclusion

This paper has shown passive sentences in Northern Sotho. The passive constructions are formed with the morpheme –(i)w-. Various types of sentences show that passives in Northern Sotho pattern similar to other Southern Bantu languages.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3, ...: Noun class numbers

1SG, 2PL, ...: Person and Number

AUG: Augment (initial vowel prefixed to a noun class prefix)

CJ: Conjoint (a verbal form obligatorily followed by a post-verbal constituent)

COMP: Complementiser

DJ: Disjoint (a verbal form usually not followed by a post-verbal constituent)

FV: Final Vowel (default inflectional suffix of the finite verb)

INF: Infinitive

LOC: Locative

NEG: Negative marker

OM: Object Marker

PASS: Passive

PERF: Perfect

POSS: Possessive pronoun

SM: Subject Marker

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