

# Voice and grammatical relations in Lamaholot of eastern Indonesia

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In this paper, I present an analysis of voice and grammatical relations in the Lewotobi dialect of the Lamaholot language. Lamaholot is a Central Malayo-Polynesian language of the Austronesian language family (Blust 1993, cf. Donohue and Grimes 2008). It is spoken in the eastern part of Flores Island and neighboring islands of eastern Indonesia, and is best understood as a dialect chain with substantial enough differences between some of the dialects as to make them mutually incomprehensible (Bowden 2008; cf. Keraf 1978, Nishiyama and Kelen 2007). In this description, I focus exclusively on Lewotobi, the most westerly dialect in the chain, which is spoken by approximately 6,000 speakers in Kecamatan Ile Bura. Similarly to other Flores languages, Lamaholot is a nearly isolating language. But it is a typical instance of “preposed possessor languages”, although “transitional languages” are predominant in this island (Himmelmann 2005; cf. Donohue 2007, Musgrave 2008).

I make four arguments in this paper. First, Lamaholot does not have any morphological means for voice and valence-changing operations, but it employs agreement enclitics, verb serialization, and other periphrastic means for these purposes (causative alternations, middle/reflexive, applicatives, etc) (Nagaya 2009b).

Second, two kinds of grammatical relations are to be distinguished in Lamaholot: the semantico-syntactic grammatical relations (Subject, Primary Object, Secondary Object, Extension, and Oblique) and the pragmatico-syntactic grammatical relation (Topic) (Shibatani 2008a, b, 2009; Dryer 1986; Dixon 2010). It is demonstrated that different grammatical relations are defined by different grammatical phenomena (see Table 1).

Third, Lamaholot has two competing transitive constructions, the Actor-Topic and the Undergoer-Topic constructions (Nagaya 2009a, b; cf. Donohue 2005). The Actor-Topic construction is a transitive clause with AVU word order, a subject argument being in the clause-initial position. In the Undergoer-Topic construction, in contrast, a non-subject core argument (PO, SO, or E) occupies the clause-initial position, yielding UAV word order. The former is analyzed as an unmarked construction, while the latter is best characterized as a pragmatically marked construction.

Lastly, the primary function of the alternation between the Actor-Topic and the Undergoer-Topic constructions is to change the topic relation from one argument to another for the purpose of reference-tracking. Importantly, this alternation does not affect the alignment of the semantico-syntactic grammatical relations. Therefore, this eastern Indonesian language displays a non-demotional voice alternation, which is characteristic of “symmetrical voice languages” in Philippines and western Indonesia.

**Table 1:** Grammatical relations in Lamaholot

| SUBJ                       | PO                          | TOP                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Agreement                  | Enclitic pronoun <i>roʔ</i> | Clause-initial position     |
| Reflexivization            | “Antidative”                | Relativization              |
| <i>Kadiʔ</i> -coordination | “Benefactive”               | <i>Kia gə</i> -coordination |

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