Information structure in Totoli –
Reference management and its interrelation with voice selection

Sonja Riesberg
Universität zu Köln

Totoli is a Western Malayo-Polynesian language spoken in the northern part of Central Sulawesi, and – as many western Austronesian languages – it displays a symmetrical voice system. While there has been much discussion on the morpho-syntactic properties of these symmetrical systems, only little work has been done on the information structural side. It is, of course, well-known that certain syntactic structures, as well as the referential status of the participants in a given discourse influence the selection of a given voice, but there is still very little serious work available, which is concerned with the actual use of the different voice constructions. Exceptions are a number of publications in the Givón-type topic continuity and persistence framework (e.g. Cooreman 1987, Wouk 1996), and the dissertation by Pastika (1999), who studied voice selection in Balinese based on a corpus consisting of 11 narrative texts (five spoken, six written).

This paper is a first preliminary study on how topic continuity, topic shift and comment continuity are interrelated with the use of different voice constructions in Totoli. It will present data from five Totoli narratives (altogether 43:00 minutes of spoken speech).

References

Cooreman, A. M. 1987. *Transitivity and discourse continuity in Chamorro narratives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Pastika, I Wayan. 1999. *Voice selection in Balinese narrative discourse.* Canberra: Australian National University Ph.D. thesis.

Wouk, Fay. 1996. Voice in Indonesian discourse and its implications for theories of the development of ergativity. *Studies in Languages* 20(2). 361-410.