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**Austronesian relativization: A view from the field in eastern Indonesia**

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Abstract

On the basis of a detailed study of the relativization phenomena in the dialects of Sasak and Sumbawa in eastern Indonesia, this presentation shows that several crucial assumptions made by Keenan and Comrie (1977), one of the most celebrated works in modern syntactic typology, and in their related works are untenable. That is, the Topic nominal in Western Malayo-Polynesian languages cannot be reinterpreted as Subject and that non-Actor focus constructions in these languages cannot be considered passive. Sasak and Sumbawa, as demonstrated (somewhat infelicitously to my mind) for Tagalog by Schachter (1976), have two privileged but distinct grammatical relations Topic and Subject, and the fact that the Topic nominal is most accessible to relativization in these languages falsifies the claim that "in absolute terms Subjects are the most relativizable of NP's" (Comrie and Keenan 1979: 653). The pronoun-retention strategy in these languages also falsifies their other universal: "All RC strategies must operate on a continuous segment of the AH" (Comrie and Keenan 1979: 661). In addition to these central topics in the typological study of relativization, methodological issues in language description will be raised. In particular, the importance of taking a wider historical view is pointed out with the suggestion that the Austronesian distinction between the Actor-focus and the Patient-focus construction runs much deeper and wider than hitherto suspected.