

Passives constructions in Setswana in Lexical Mapping Theory

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This paper analyses passive constructions in Setswana from morpho-syntactic view point, showing that the suffixation of a passive morpheme to the verb reduces the argument structure of the verb. Previous studies carried out in Setswana verbal suffixes have confined their investigations to these morphemes as elements of morphology but have failed to observe that these affixes overlap into syntax. Chebane (1996) observes that in Setswana, verbal extensions can combine with a single verbal base but fails to observe the overlap into syntax. Further, these studies do not give any theoretical insight in the analysis of the facts about Setswana verbal constructions, as such, certain features that Setswana shares with other Bantu languages are prejudiced. The passive construction in Setswana is a bit complex in the sense that the verbal extension –iw brings into effect the dropping of the subject, and the object becomes the grammatical subject,, thus rendering the transitive verb, such as, apaya ‘cook’ intransitive. Conversely, other derivational suffixes, such as applicative and causative, increase the verb’s arguments by two. For instance, the suffixation of the verbal suffix -el suggests an entity carrying out the action and somebody benefiting. The study appeals to Lexical Mapping Theory, a component of Lexical Functional Grammar developed by Bresnan and Kanerva (1989). The theory concerns itself with the association of semantic roles with syntactic functions and how the alternative mappings brought about by the morphological operations are to be accounted for.