Transitivity in Fur

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FUR is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken in the Darfur province in Western Sudan, bordering on Chad. It has a case marking system for the nominal constituents as well as morphological subject and object reference marking with the verb.

Valency or Transitivity has traditionally been concerned with the number of syntactical arguments of a verb. Valency or Transitivity was understood as a (lexical) property of the verb. In Fur, the number of syntactical arguments in a clause is not always obvious, since ellipsis is frequently employed. Hopper and Thompson (1980) offered a less contrastive view of Transitivity that allows transitivity to be seen as a continuum instead of two opposing properties of transitive and intransitive. Based on Hopper and Thompson, Næss (2003) developed a transitivity model that explains the relationship between the semantic transitivity notion and grammatical valence. Valency changing markers, such as the causative, passive or antipassive, etc, allow for more morphemes related to transitivity.

Using Næss' model, the grammatical marking of transitivity in the Fur language is described. The features for differential object marking, subject and object reference marking as well as valency changing morphemes (applicative, middle marker) will be presented.