

The morphosyntactic and semantic properties of grammatical relations in Chiyao

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This study seeks to analyse the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of grammatical relations in Chiyao within the framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) by focusing on two types of relations, subject and object, using data collected through grammaticality judgments, audio-recording of traditional narratives, and analysis of written texts. The findings indicate that syntactically, the Chiyao subject can be identified through a number of properties, which include ellipsis, coreferential deletion in coordinated clauses, raising, equivalent noun phrase deletion, agent argument in the active clause, the addressee of imperatives, indispensability, occupation of external structural position, control of intra-clausal reflexives, and aptness to be relativised upon. Morphologically, the Chiyao subject is coreferenced on the verb with a subject marker whose occurrence is dependent upon syntactic, morphological, and semantic factors of the constituent nouns and the type of constructions in which they occur. Semantically, the Chiyao subject functions as agent, force, theme, and experiencer. As for object properties, it is shown that syntactically the Chiyao object is flexible as it can occur in both postverbal and preverbal (dislocated) positions. Morphologically, the findings have indicated that in addition to semantic properties of the object noun such as animacy, definiteness, and specificity, object marking in Chiyao is also determined by properties of a verb and syntactic structure. Semantically, the Chiyao object can serve as patient, beneficiary, and result. These findings generally point to a conclusion that for a complete account of grammatical relations subject and object in Chiyao, a combination of criteria encompassing morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects of the language must be taken aboard.