

Negativization: A Focus Strategy in Basà Language

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Abstract : Basà language is classified as belonging to Kainji family, under the sub-phylum Western-Kainji known as Rubasa (Basa Benue) (Croizier & Blench, 1992:32). Basà is an under-described language spoken in the North-Central Nigeria. The language is characterized by subject-verb-object (henceforth SVO) as its canonical word order. Data for this work is sourced from the researcher's native intuition of the language corroborated with a careful observation of native speakers. This paper investigates the syntactic derivational strategy of information-structure encoding in Basà language. It emphasizes on a negative operator, as a strategy for focusing a constituent or clause that follows it and negativizes a whole proposition. For items that are not nouns, they have to undergo an obligatory nominalization process, either by affixation, modification or conversion before they are moved to the pre verbal position for these operations. The study discovers and provides evidence of the fact showing that deferent constituents in the sentence such as the subject, direct, indirect object, genitive, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, clause and idiophone, etc. can be focused with the same negativizing operator. The process is characterized by focusing the pre verbal NP constituent alone, whereas the whole proposition is negated. The study can stimulate similar study or be replicated in other languages.

Keywords : negation, focus, Basà, nominalization

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