

Verbal Alternations in Sesotho: A Case of Lexical Semantics

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KEYWORDS Theta Roles. Lexical-Syntactic Structure. Argument Structure. Determiner Phrase

ABSTRACT This study discusses two types of verbal alternation in *Sesotho* that have the same syntactic structure, but differ in their semantic representations and in their lexical syntax structures. The first scenario: '*Ntate o motsutse lenala la ntja*' (Father extracted dog's nail) alternating with '*Ntja e motsutse lenala la yona*' (A dog extracted its nail). The alternating sentence can be interpreted as: 'A dog had someone extract its nail'. The second scenario is: '*Mong o robile molala wa Thabo*' (Someone broke Thabo's neck) alternating with '*Thabo o robile molala wa hae*' (Thabo broke his neck). We can interpret the alternating sentence as: 'Thabo is the possessor of the neck that suffers the break. Based on a more fine-grained approach of thematic roles and based on a semantic representation of the events encoded by these verbs the results show that these two forms have different interpretations due to different lexical semantic properties.