

## Transitivity in Contrast: English and Edoid of West Africa

Contrastive analysis in recent decades has been recast as a pilot study in typology (van der Auwera 2012), subfield of comparative linguistics (König 2012), and a new field of parallel text corpora (Ebeling 2016). Also garnering attention has been transitivity (Rice 1987, 1988, Kittilä 2002, La Polla 2011, Haspelmath 2015.). Separately, a condition of hyper transitivity was advanced for West African languages (Ameka and Essegbey 2006, Ameka 2013, Muysken and Smith 2015), although pertinent investigations remain few.

For this paper we undertake contrastive assessment of transitivity as it relates to bodily emissions, both fluids/gases and vocalizations. Via translation to English, we compiled an extensive corpus for Emai (Edoid, West Africa) that includes spontaneous texts from oral tradition and directed elicitation databases fostering dictionary and grammar. Like English, Emai word order is SVO and segmental inflection is minimal. Unlike English, Emai relies heavily on lexical and grammatical tone in addition to multi-verb and verb-particle predications.

With respect to coding of bodily emissions, English verbs often permit multiple transitivity types, at times displaying predications where erstwhile body-function verbs occur as nominals. English shows *He pooped*, *He pooped on the deck* as well as *He took a poop on the deck*. Vocalizations in English include *He spoke*, *He spoke his final words*, *He spoke at the event*. Although not all English verbs of bodily emission distribute across such constructions (Levin 1993), the examples convey the overall flexibility of English verb transitivity in this domain.

In Emai, transitive expressions of bodily emissions are more constrained. Verbs often display transitive-only or intransitive-only properties. Regarding fluid and gaseous emissions, Emai transitives include *fena* ‘excrete’ (*òjè féná ìsòn* [Oje excrete feces] ‘Oje has excreted his feces/ has defecated’ and *òjè féná áhìhèn* [Oje excrete urine] ‘Oje has excreted his urine/ has urinated’); *roo* ‘release’ (*àlèkè róó éviè* [Aleke release tears] ‘Aleke has shed tears/ has teared up’); *vbia* ‘discharge’ (*òjè vbíá èsèìn* [Oje discharge spit] ‘Oje has discharged spittle/ has spit’); *nè* ‘pass’ (*òjè né ihòn* [Oje pass fart] ‘Oje passed a fart/ has farted’); and *fí* ‘exhale’ (*òjè ò ó fí étìn* [Oje SM PROG exhale breath] ‘Oje is breathing’).

Regarding sound emission, Emai exhibits transitives *ta* ‘speak’ (*òjè tá étà* [Oje speak words] ‘Oje has spoken’); *so* ‘sing’ (*òjè ò ó sò òdò* [Oje SM PROG sing song] ‘Oje is singing a song/ singing’); *zè* ‘disclose’ (*òjè ò ó zè ùnyò* [Oje SM PROG disclose grumble] ‘Oje is grumbling’ and *yàn á zè òdò* [3PL PROG disclose thought] ‘They are conversing’).

Intransitive-only verbs in Emai include *tího* ‘sneeze’ (*òjè tíhó-ì* [Oje sneeze-PFV] ‘Oje has sneezed’); *vèen* ‘disperse’ (*òjè véén ó vbí égbè* [Oje disperse CL LOC body] ‘Oje has belched’); and *oo* ‘ooze’ (*éìlì èmàì óó-ì* [ART boils ooze-PFV] ‘The boils have oozed’). Each reveals an effect not under control of the grammatical subject. As for Emai transitives, the four-fold semantic prototype adopted for English by some (Rice 1987) appears weakened since distinctiveness of participants, an action of contact, and its material change-of-state effect are not determinative. Rather control of event outcome by grammatical subject, non-contact movement, and change-of-position effect establish the essence of transitivity for bodily emissions, more so in Emai than English.

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