



# Ambiguity-Driven Differential Object Marking in Yongren Lolo

Matthias Gerner

*Department of Chinese, Translation & Linguistics, City University of Hong Kong,  
83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong*

Received 3 October 2006; received in revised form 28 April 2007; accepted 21 June 2007  
Available online 13 August 2007

---

## Abstract

Yongren Lolo (as well as a portion of related Tibeto-Burman languages) exhibits a type of DOM in a wide range of clause types strictly based on ambiguity. Devices such as morphological case-marking and word order fixations are taken out of the toolbox only if the assignment of semantic roles is not implied by the semantics of the predicate and its arguments. ADDOM-languages (*Ambiguity-Driven Differential Object Marking* languages) such as Yongren Lolo resist any rigid alignment pattern of semantic roles. Earlier attempts by linguists to sketch Lolo-style syntax in terms of the grammatical relations of PRIMARY OBJECT and ‘anti-ergative’ marking are shown to fail for various reasons. The characteristic feature of ADDOM-languages seems to be their ability to strike a special deal between two conflicting constraints that operate at a deeper level of syntactic organization: ECONOMY and MARKEDNESS. Based on the interplay of these constraints, I define a wide range of theoretic ADDOM-structures and position Yongren Lolo within this typology.

© 2007 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Ambiguity; Differential Object Marking; Lolo; Yi; China

---

*Abbreviations:* 1P PL, first person plural; 1P SG, first person singular; 2P PL, second person plural; 2P SG, second person singular; 3P PL, third person plural; 3P SG, third person singular; A, semantic role of A; ALT, alternative question particle; ART, article; B, semantic role of B; CL, classifier; COLL, collective; COM, semantic role of COMPANION; CON, continuous Aspect; CONJ, conjunction; CONJ:if, conjunction with gloss; COV, coverb; COV:give, coverb with gloss; DEM, demonstrative; DEM:DIST, demonstrative: distal; DEM:PROX, demonstrative: proximal; DIR, directional; DP, dynamic perfect; DUR, durative aspect; E, embedded; EA/EB/EO/ES, semantic role of A/B/O/S in embedded clauses; FG CL, family group classifier; FUT, future; LOC, location; LOC:outside, location particle with gloss; M, matrix; MA/MB/MO/MS, semantic role of A/B/O/S in matrix clauses; MW, measure word; MW:folk, measure word with gloss; NEG, negation particle; NEG IMP, negative imperative; NP, noun phrase; NUM, numeral; NUM:9, numeral with its value; PRED, predicative; PRED:give, predicative particle with gloss; PRED:each other, predicative particle with gloss; PRED:together, predicative particle with gloss; RECEIVE, RECEIVE versatile; REF, semantic role of REFERENCE; REL, relator; S, semantic role of S; SEND:away, SEND versatile with gloss; SENT TOP, sentence topic particle; SET OUT, SET OUT versatile; TOP, topic

*E-mail address:* [mgerner@cityu.edu.hk](mailto:mgerner@cityu.edu.hk).