DIFFERENTIAL CASE MARKING IN BURMESE-LOLO LANGUAGES

ABSTRACT. The Burmese-Lolo languages exhibit several rare Differential Subject/Object Marking patterns with import for typology and syntax. Available data allow us to identify at least four types.

Type I: DSM triggered by animacy, A/O-ambiguity, focus Languages: Azhee

The Azhee case marker la^{55} marks inanimate subjects or subjects that are ambiguous with objects. The other transitive subjects are not marked (Gerner, forthcoming).

\[\text{Split (animacy, ambiguity)}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Inanimate or ambiguous A} & \rightarrow \text{Animate and unambiguous A} \\
\text{A-la}^{55} & \rightarrow \text{A-∅}
\end{align*}
\]

The case marker la^{55} was reanalyzed as contrastive focus marker that can re-occur with the case marker in reduplicated form (A-la^{55}la^{55}).

Type II: DOM triggered by A/O-ambiguity, focus Languages: Lolo, Lalo, Lahu

The Lolo DO marker t^{hie^{21}} introduces two splits, a primary split by marking ambiguous O against unambiguous O; a secondary split by marking unambiguous focal O against unambiguous non-focal O. Ambiguous O are indifferent to contrastive focus (Gerner 2008).

\[\text{Split (ambiguity)}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ambiguous O} & \rightarrow \text{Unambiguous O} \\
\text{O-t^{hie^{21}}} & \rightarrow \text{O-∅}
\end{align*}
\]

Type III: DSM triggered by aspect Languages: Nesu, Burmese

The Nesu particle ka^{55} marks subjects differentially depending on the aspect of the whole clause. The subject must be case-marked, if the simple clause encodes a resultative state; it can be case-marked if the clause is perfective without implying a result; it cannot be case-marked if the clause is imperfective (Gerner 2012). The Burmese marker kā exhibits similar properties (Jenny 2012).

\[\text{Split (aspect)}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Clause resultative} & \rightarrow \text{Clause perfective but not resultative} \rightarrow \text{Clause imperfective} \\
\text{A-ka}^{55} & \rightarrow \text{A-(ka}^{55}) \rightarrow \text{A-∅}
\end{align*}
\]

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1 Azhee is a Central Loloish language spoken by about 90,000 natives in Mile county of Yunnan Province (P.R. of China).

2 Lolo is spoken by about 150,000 natives in Yongren county of Yunnan Province (P.R. of China). Lolo is a Central Loloish language.

3 Nesu is a Southern Loloish spoken by about 100,000 natives in the district of Gejiu City in Yunnan Province (P.R. of China).
Type IV: Word Order triggered by aspect Languages: Nuosu

The Nuosu language exhibits an aspect-conditioned word order split for simple clauses (Gerner, 2004). The word order must be AOV, if the simple clause encodes a resultative state; it can be AOV or OAV if the clause is perfective without implying a result; it must AOV if the clause is imperfective (Gerner 2004, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Split (aspect)</th>
<th>Clause resultative</th>
<th>Clause perfective but not resultative</th>
<th>Clause imperfective</th>
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<td>OAV</td>
<td>AOV/OAV</td>
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References:

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* Nuosu is the principal language of the Yi Nationality. It is spoken by more than 2,000,000 natives in Sichuan Province (P.R. China). It is a Northern Loloish language.