

Distribution of Egophoricity in Golog: An Investigation of Flexibility and Inflexibility

I. Introduction Egophoricity with binary indexation contrast is pervasive in Tibetic languages. Egophoric markers (EGO) are canonically used in first-person declarative and second-person interrogative sentences, expressing ‘immediate knowledge’ (Garrett 2001), ‘personal intention’ (Tournadre 2008), etc.; non-egophoric markers (N.EGO) are used elsewhere. In reported speech, EGO marks that matrix and embedded subjects are co-referential, while NON-EGO indicates that matrix and embedded subjects do not refer to the same person. Notably, the canonical distribution pattern can exhibit significant variation across languages. While some languages strictly adhere to this pattern, others display greater flexibility, allowing for non-canonical distributions. This study examines the distribution of egophoricity in Golog (Amdo Tibetan; Tibeto-Burman, Qinghai, China). It investigates both the flexibility and inflexibility of egophoric marking in Golog, embracing both syntactic and semantic perspectives. Specifically, the study addresses four key questions: (a) How can we explain the remarkable flexibility of egophoric marking in most root clauses in Golog? (b) How can we account for the overall ‘person-sensitive’ feature of Golog egophoricity, considering its extraordinary flexibility? (c) Why does egophoricity in embedded and factual clauses strictly adhere to the canonical distribution pattern, prohibiting non-canonical marking? (d) Why do non-volitional clauses consistently fail to license EGO markers?

embedded=
quotation

II. Egophoricity distribution in Golog: a descriptive overview

2.1 Egophoricity in Golog: correlation with volition

In Golog, the distribution of egophoricity consistently abides by a rigid rule: non-volitional clauses, where the subject does not initiate the action voluntarily, consistently prohibit the use of EGO markers. This constraint remains invariant across various factors, including grammatical person, sentence type, and verb transitivity, as evidenced in examples (1) to (4).

- (1) *nga thang nga log nga (2) *ngas dbi.cha mtong.rgayu yin
I.ABS floor nga fall.PAST EGO I.ERG book see.FUT COP.EGO
‘I fell down.’ (1st-person intransitive) ‘I’ll see the book.’ (1st-person transitive)
- (3) *bkra.shis gis khir.sge log nga zer (4) *nga log song ni red/*yin
Tashi ERG he fall EGO say I fall PFV FACT COP.N.EGO/*EGO
‘Tashi_i said that he_i fell down.’ ‘I just fell down. (It is a fact).’
(3rd-person embedded clause) (1st-person factual clause)

2.2 Egophoricity in Golog: inflexible distribution

2.2.1 Egophoricity in embedded clauses =quotation

In Golog, in embedded clauses that permit egophoricity, egophoric marking consistently exhibits inflexibility, adhering strictly to canonical distribution, as demonstrated in both examples (5) and (6). In (5), EGO indicates coreference between matrix and embedded subjects, whereas in (6), N.EGO signifies a lack of coreference between these subjects.

- (5) bkra.shis khir.sge slob.ma yin ser (6) bkra.shis khir.sge slob.ma red ser
Tashi he student COP.EGO say Tashi he student COP.N.EGO say
‘Tashi_i said that he_i is a student.’ ‘Tashi_i said that he_j is a student.’

2.2.2 Egophoricity in factual clauses

In Golog, FACTUAL constructions (-ni.yin/-ni.red) serve to highlight the objectivity of the information conveyed; they do not enhance or downgrade the speaker’s authority. The pragmatics of FACTUAL constructions can be illustrated in the contrastive pair (7) and (8). In (7), a typical EGO clause, the speaker might use it as a response to a question like, ‘Do you still have money?’ to affirm their possession of money. In contrast, in the EGO FACTUAL clause (8), the speaker might be someone who keeps flaunting their luxurious possessions. When questioned about their wealth, they respond with (8) in a tone of arrogance, emphasizing the undeniable fact of their wealth. The use of the FACTUAL marker underscores the statement’s objectivity. It is essential to note, however, that employing the FACTUAL marker in similar

contexts is considered impolite and discouraged.

- (7) *nga sgor.mo yod*
 I money have
 ‘I have money.’
- (8) *nga sgor.mo yod ni yin*
 I money have FACTUAL COP.EGO
 ‘I have money. (It is a fact.)’

Golog FACTUAL constructions strictly follow the canonical distribution, as in (9) and (10).

- (9) *ngavi zhi.lus las.bya bras yod*
 I.POSS son.ERG homework write.PAST PERF.EGO
 ‘My son has/had written the homework.’ (EGO perfect)
- (10) *ngavi zhi.lus las.bya bras ni red/*yin*
 I.POSS son.ERG homework write.PAST FACT COP.NON-EGO/*COP.EGO
 ‘My son wrote the homework. (It is a fact.)’ (NON-EGO factual/*EGO factual)

2.3 Egophoricity in Golog: flexible distribution

Except for the constructions introduced in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, all other Golog constructions exhibit significant flexibility, allowing for non-canonical distributions that might yield specific pragmatic effects. Notably, EGO is found in non-first person declarative sentences, as in (11), emphasizing the speaker’s extra certainty and implying an intimate or close relationship between the speaker and the sentence subject. EGO also appears in non-second person interrogative sentences, as seen in (12), emphasizing the speaker’s anticipation of the respondent’s extra certainty about the answer. Conversely, N.EGO markers are observed in first-person declarative sentences, as in (13), where they may express self-doubt, convey surprise, or describe scenarios involving dreams or play. In extremely rare instances, N.EGO markers are found in second-person interrogative sentences as exemplified in (14), signifying the speaker’s anticipation that the respondent lacks certainty towards the answer.

- (11) *bkra.shis slob.ma yin*
 Tashi student COP.EGO
 ‘Tashi is a student.’
- (12) *bkra.shis slob.ma i yin*
 Tashi student INTERR COP.EGO
 ‘Is Tashi a student?’.
- (13) *nga.vi lag.par rma.kha yod ku*
 I-POSS hand wound have NON-EGO
 ‘I have a cut on my hand!’
- (14) *kyod slob.ma zig i red*
 you student CL INTERR COP.NON-EGO
 ‘Are you a student?’

III. Explain flexibility and inflexibility of egophoricity in Golog

3.1 Flexibility of egophoricity: a pragmatic account

After scrutinizing constructions that allow for flexible egophoric marking, this study concludes that the occurrence of EGO markers in Golog hinges on two conditions. EGO is employed when both conditions are met, and it is not used if either of these conditions remains unfulfilled.

- (i) (Except for clauses with copulas) The utterance has a volitional subject.
- (ii) The VALIDATOR (‘= person responsible for determining the truth of *p*’; Speas & Tenny 2003: 330) subjectively asserts that *p* is consistent with their own knowledge *schema* (Reisenzein et al. 2009).

In **declarative sentences, with 1st-person subjects**, speakers describe their own state of affairs and are by default the epistemic authority (EA). $p_{utterance}$ normally is consistent with *knowledge schema*_{speaker} and the speaker customarily places subjective assertion towards $p_{utterance}$. EGO is the default. Non-canonical N.EGO highlights the suppression of EA, implying either $p_{utterance}$ -*knowledge schema*_{speaker} *inconsistency*, e.g., *p* is not yet integrated into or conflicts with *knowledge schema*_{speakers}, or the speaker fails to place subjective assertion towards $p_{utterance}$. This explains the extended meanings of self-doubt, surprise, and dream/play descriptions expressed by non-canonical constructions because in these pragmatic contexts, the speaker normally fails to assert that *p* is consistent with their knowledge *schema*. **With 2nd/3rd person subjects**, speakers describe others’ state of affairs and are usually not the privileged EA. $p_{utterance}$ is not required to be in *knowledge schema*_{speakers}, thus N.EGO is the default. Non-

canonical EGO highlights the deliberate assertion of $p_{utterance}\text{-knowledge schema}_{speaker consistency}$, which normally arises when speakers have extra certainty on $p_{utterance}$. A close relationship between the speaker and the sentence subject is often implied.

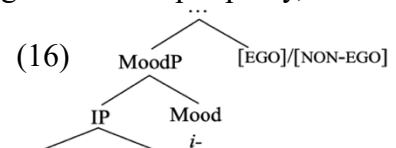
In **questions**, perspective shifts from speakers to addressees (Tournadre & LaPolla 2014). **With 2nd person subjects**, answerers are by default EA over p_{answer} . Speakers normally anticipate asserted $p_{answer}\text{-knowledge schema}_{answerer consistency}$. EGO is the default. Non-canonical N.EGO highlights anticipated unasserted $p_{answer}\text{-knowledge schema}_{answerer inconsistency}$, which occurs when asking about dreams/play, or anticipating the respondent lacks certainty towards their own state of affairs, albeit in very rare instances. **With 1st/3rd person subjects**, answerers normally are not EA of others' state of affairs. Anticipation towards $p_{answer}\text{-knowledge schema}_{answerer consistency}$ is not required, thus N.EGO. Non-canonical EGO, highlighting anticipated asserted $p_{answer}\text{-knowledge schema}_{answerer consistency}$, arises when answerers are anticipated to have extra certainty on p_{answer} . This often implies a close relationship between the answerer and the subject of the sentence.

The overall *person-sensitive* pattern of egophoricity in Golog is thus not conditioned by *person* per se, but by correlations between *person* and *p-knowledge schema* discrepancy.

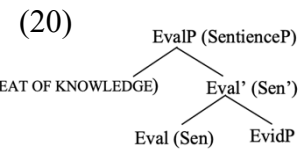
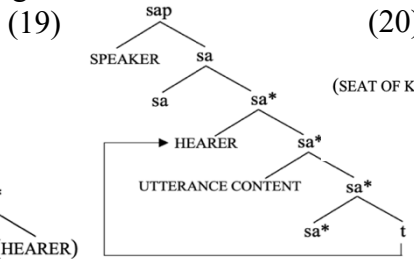
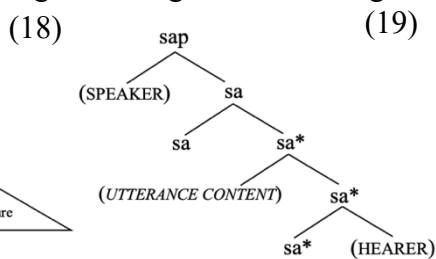
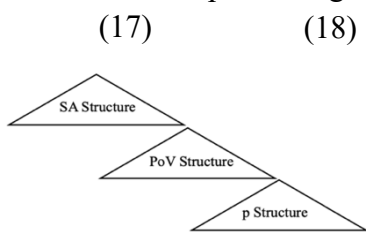
3.2 Inflexibility of egophoricity: a syntactic and pragmatic account

This study posits that EGO/NON-EGO markers in Golog merge very high in the left periphery. This proposal is rationalized from the relevant word order between EGO/N.EGO and interrogative markers in Golog polar questions, where EGO/N.EGO morphemes consistently follow the interrogative marker 'i' (15). Drawing on the framework introduced by Coniglio and Zegrean (2012), this study differentiates Mood Phrase (MoodP) from Sentence Act Phrase (SAP), positing that Mood-head comes with a feature that indicates the clause type (e.g., Speas and Tenny 2003; Haegeman 2014). Therefore, this study proposes that the interrogative marker 'i' is positioned at the MoodP⁰ position. The linear precedence of 'i' at the MoodP-head over EGO/N.EGO markers supports that EGO/NON-EGO merge very high in the left periphery, at least scoping over the MoodP, as demonstrated in structure (16).

(15) *mir.sge slob.ma zig i red*
 she student CL INTERR COP.NON-EGO
 'Is she a student?'



This study further posits that egophoricity in Golog is likely encoded within the Sentence Projection, primarily due to its pragmatics and the approximate position it holds. Building on the work of Speas and Tenny (2003), which offer a syntactic analysis of the mapping between Speech Act (SA), clause types, and constraints on the Point of View (PoV), it is argued that the Sentence Domain consists of both the *Speech Act Projection* and *Sentence Projection* (or *Evaluation Phrase/PoV structure*), as depicted in (17). Specifically, the higher-level Speech Act Phrase (SAP) is viewed as a Larsonian shell structure. The pragmatic roles of *speaker*, *hearer*, and *utterance content* are defined in terms of their structural position. In declarative sentences, 'speaker is the agent of the speech act, the *utterance content* as its theme, and the *hearer* as its goal' (Speas & Tenny 2003: 320), as in (18). In interrogatives, the speaker remains the highest argument of the speech act. The *hearer* is promoted to a position where it can check the formal feature on the lower head and becomes the closest c-commander of the *utterance content*, possessing knowledge for evaluating the utterance content.



The lower *Sentience Phrase* (or *Evaluation Phrase/Pov structure*) captures ‘the point of view of a sentient entity’ (Speas & Tenny 2003: 332). It has argument structure that closely resembles that of the SA projection. As demonstrated in (20), the Sentience Phrase has one necessarily sentient argument, referred to as the ‘seat of knowledge’ or sentient ‘mind’, who ‘evaluates, processes, or comments on the truth of a proposition’ (Speas & Tenny 2003: 332). This argument, which is essentially a syntactic representation of the VALIDATOR argument of Stirling (1993), is mapped to the specifier. A second argument is the proposition itself, which is mapped to an internal argument position.

Drawing upon the given models, we propose the following syntactic analysis for egophoricity. This study posits that egophoricity occupies the highest head position within the Sentience Projection. In **root clauses that permit flexible egophoric marking** (RCF), egophoricity is represented at the SAP⁰ position. This proposal is grounded in Speas and Tenny’s (2003) framework for SAP, which effectively accounts for the pragmatics and the perspective-shifting pattern associated with egophoricity in RCF. That is, as discussed in Section 3.1, egophoricity in RCF expresses the speech act of assertive/expressive, and it is speaker-oriented in declarative sentences and hearer-oriented in interrogatives.

In **embedded clauses** that license egophoric marking, egophoricity no longer expresses speech acts; instead, it functions as an indicator of whether the matrix subject (e.g., *Tashi* in (5) & (6))—serving as the VALIDATOR/‘seat of knowledge’ since embedded clauses are evaluated from their viewpoint—is coreferential with the subject of the embedded clause. Based on this observation, this study posits that embedded clauses do not embed a full SAP, but only embed a SentienceP. Egophoricity is encoded at the SentienceP⁰ position. This pattern aligns with Zu’s (2013) insight that the full SAP is a root phenomenon.

In **factual constructions**, unlike in RCF, egophoricity no longer conveys any speech acts, but only marks whether the VALIDATOR/‘seat of knowledge’ is coreferential with the sentence subject. Following Speas and Tenny’s (2003) model, this study posits that egophoricity in factual constructions is endowed in the SentienceP⁰, as opposed to the SAP⁰ position. This particular pattern can potentially be attributed to pragmatic instead of syntactic considerations. As discussed in Section 2.2.2, speakers use FACTUAL constructions to highlight objectivity. SAP⁰ position, however, inherently encodes subjectivity, which typically implies the potential for error (Mulder; *IEP*). Introducing subjective marking after emphasizing objectivity could give rise to a logical contradiction.

This study further proposes a minimalist analysis of the consistent correlation between **EGO** and **volition**. We posit that the subject of a volitional clause bears an interpretable [volition] feature, while the subject of a non-volitional clause bears an interpretable [non-volition] feature. In the case of EGO in volitional clauses, it indirectly signals the [volition] feature for the entire sentence, and we assume it bears an uninterpretable [volition] feature. Conversely, N.EGO in clauses with main verbs does not convey any volition-related feature for the entire sentence and is therefore assumed to lack any [volition]-related feature. Following the principles of the Minimalist Program (MP), all uninterpretable values should be checked and deleted prior to Transfer. Consequently, the uninterpretable [volition] feature on EGO in volitional clauses must be valued and deleted before the Transfer stage. Only subjects in volitional clauses possess the interpretable [volition] feature, necessitating EGO Agree with subjects that bear this interpretable feature.

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