

***ABA, DOM AND OTHER ACCUSATIVES**

Monica Alexandrina Irimia, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

BACKGROUND. Mismatches between surface realization and inner syntax, although not rare in the nominal domain, raise numerous theoretical problems. Here we are interested in examining typologically robust patterns of differential object marking (DOM) realized via oblique morphology and where structural accusatives establish complex exponency and syncretisms. The mapping of structural accusatives to oblique morphology is puzzling from at least two interrelated perspectives: i) the locus of oblique DOM in case hierarchies and ii) nominal licensing strategies. Through an examination of 12 oblique DOM languages from 6 unrelated families (Romance, Indo-Aryan, Basque, Slavic, Sinitic and Tupí Guaraní) we will be putting forward two important conclusions: 1. Oblique-DOM syncretisms can be straightforwardly captured under enriched case hierarchies of the type in (12), containing two ACC and two DAT (Starke 2017), as well as more than one LOC (Caha 2009). 2. The special position of DOM derives from its structural complexity which, in certain configurations, requires the recruitment of an additional licensor, beyond the canonical one in the relevant domain (Jaeggli 1982, Kalin 2018, Irimia in press).

1. THE DATA. In a well represented DOM pattern, certain types of *direct objects* are realized with oblique morphology, triggered by features such as animacy, specificity, topicality, etc. (Givón 1984, Comrie 1989, Bossong 1991, 1998, Lazard 2001, Aissen 2003, López 2012, a.o.). A typical example of oblique DOM comes from standard Spanish, where direct objects at the higher end of *Animacy/Specificity* scale(s) (Aissen 2003, a.o.) must carry a marker which is homophonous with the dative:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(1) Encontré *(a) la niña.
 find.PST.1SG DAT=DOM the girl
 ‘I found the girl.’</p> | <p>(2) Encontré *(a) el libro.
 find.PST.1SG DAT=DOM the book
 ‘I found the book.’ <i>Spanish</i> (O & R 2013)</p> |
|---|--|

Despite efforts to group oblique DOM with datives structurally (see especially Bossong 1998, Manzini and Franco 2016, a.o.), such objects show an unambiguous *accusative* behavior in syntax (López 2012, Bárány 2018, a.o.). For example, obligatorily DOM-ed tonic pronouns must be clitic-doubled using accusative morphology, as seen in (5); DOM-ed nominals are subject to syntactic diagnostics (passivization, etc.) that are characteristic to structural accusatives as opposed to obliques/inherent cases. As correctly pointed out by Starke (2017), Spanish poses a challenge to case hierarchies that contain just one accusative, as in (6) and (7). DOM-ed animates in (1) are syncretic with DAT, while the inanimate objects in (2) are homophonous with NOM.

2. DOM = LOC and ACC = DAT. Some DOM case systems are yet more complex than Spanish. We will be addressing here, first, the problematic example of Romanian, which uses an animacy-based oblique DOM system (Cornilescu 2000, Tigău 2011, a.o.). A non-trivial challenge is that the differential marker is not syncretic with the dative (as elsewhere in Romance) but with the locative (‘*on*’). Just like in Spanish, Romanian oblique DOM *does* pass *accusative* diagnostics in the syntax (DOM=ACC, (5)). Thus, ACC can be syncretic with both LOC (for DOM in (3)) and NOM (inanimates in (4)).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(3) Văd (pe) studenți.
 see.PRES.1SG LOC=DOM students
 ‘I see (the) students.’</p> | <p>(4) Văd *(pe) copaci.
 see.PRES.1SG LOC=DOM trees
 ‘I see (the) trees.’ <i>Romanian</i></p> |
| <p>(5) <i>Rom.</i> *(Mă) vede *(pe) mine./<i>Span.</i> *(Lo) encontré *(a) él.
 CL.1SG.ACC see.3SG LOC=DOM 1SG.ACC/ CL.3SG.ACC.M found.1SG DAT=DOM he
 ‘S/he sees me/I found him.’</p> | |

We can try various case hierarchies containing one accusative. Under Harđarson’s (2016) structure in (6), we can derive NOM=ACC but not ACC=LOC. The intervening GEN/DAT has dedicated inflectional morphology in Romanian (8)/(9), and will output *ABA (syncretism insertion rule skipping one cell, Johnston 1996, Caha 2009, Bobaljik 2012, 2015, McFadden 2018, Smith et al. 2018, a.o.). Under Caha’s (2009) hierarchy in (7) it is possible to capture the ACC - LOC syncretism, but we run into other *ABA restrictions in that Romanian also exhibits ACC-DAT syncretism in (some cells of) the *clitic* system.

- (6) NOM > ACC > DAT > GEN > LOC... (7) NOM > ACC > LOC₁ > GEN > LOC₂ >...
 (Harðarson 2016) (Caha 2009)

Thus, we obtain the paradigms below which illustrate; 1) an ACC with three exponents: a) ACC = LOC for animates; b) ACC = NOM for inanimates; c) ACC = DAT for clitics; 2) DAT = GEN, indicating that DAT and GEN must be contiguous. DAT = GEN provides support to the hierarchy in (6), which however cannot capture the syncretisms established by ACC.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| (8) <i>Animates</i> (N or Pron) | (9) <i>Inanimate nominals</i> | (10) <i>Clitics</i> |
| NOM <i>copil</i> ‘child’ | NOM <i>copac</i> ‘tree’ | NOM |
| DAT copilu-lui | ACC <i>copac</i> | ACC -le- (3PL.F) |
| GEN copilu-lui | DAT copacu-lui | DAT -le- (3PL.F) |
| ACC-DOM <i>pe copil</i> | GEN copacu-lui | GEN |
| LOC <i>pe copil</i> | LOC <i>pe copac</i> | LOC |

The way out is to add LOC to Starke’s hierarchy in (11) such that we obtain the hierarchy in (12). Crucially, this representation can capture Romanian, Spanish, as well as other oblique DOM systems.

- (11) NOM > SAcc > SDat > GEN > BAcc > BDat (Starke 2017, ex.21; locatives omitted)
 (12) NOM > Acc₁ > Loc₁ > Dat₁ > GEN > LOC₂ > **Acc₂ (= oblique DOM)** > Dat₂...

3. The various syncretisms can be explained as deriving from a structural source; the locus of ACC Case feature checking is the regulating factor. Let’s illustrate with Romanian. Under a variety of structural diagnostics, Romanian clitics occupy a position above *v*P. This indicates the presence of a probe above *v*P for checking *u*C on internal objects that cannot stay in-situ. The {...Acc₂ > Dat₂ >...} sequence in the hierarchy recruited for non-in-situ objects derives ACC = DAT. Non-clitic forms, no matter whether animate or inanimate, (can) stay in-situ, in a position below the external argument (EA). Although both inanimate ACC and animate ACC (oblique DOM) are structural accusatives, animate ACC (oblique DOM) gives rise to some syntactic diagnostics which are not seen with inanimate ACC (nor with LOC). For example, they can trigger PCC-like interactions, which can only be derived in the syntax (see also Ormazabal and Romero 2007 for pioneering discussion). This indicates that oblique DOM is a more complex type of structural accusative. One possible way to formalize this is to follow accounts that link oblique DOM to a discourse-related A-feature beyond the initial accusative specification (Belletti 2018, Mursell 2018, Irimia in press, a.o.). As the initial licenser in the domain checks ACC, an additional licenser is needed for the discourse-related A-feature. The locative preposition signals the last-resort recruitment of the additional licenser (Jaeggli 1982, Kalin 2018, a.o.) and derives the ACC- oblique syncretism.

1.2. Oblique DOM and absolutive agreement. The expanded hierarchy in (12) (based on Starke 2017 and Caha 2009) opens the path to addressing yet another puzzling characteristic of oblique DOM: its co-occurrence with overt agreement which otherwise signals accusatives/absolutives. We present an example below from Gujarati (Indo-Aryan), an ergative (ERG)-absolutive (ABS) language. As can be seen in (13-a), absolutive direct objects trigger past participle agreement (PPA), irrespective of animacy. Animate direct objects are marked with an adposition which is homophonous with the dative and must show PPA (13-b), just like other absolutive arguments (13-a), but unlike datives or lexical cases which do not show PPA (Mistry (1997, Woolford 2006, Wunderlich 2012, a.o.):

- (13) GUJARATI (Wunderlich 2012, ex. 32a, b, adapted)
- | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|----|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| a. | sita-e | kāgal | vāc- yo . | b. | raj-e | sita- *(ne) | pajav- i/yo . |
| | sita.F-ERG | letter.M. | read-PF.M.SG | | raj.M-ERG | Sita.F-DAT=DOM | harass-F/M |
| | ‘Sita read a (specific)/the letter.’ | | | | ‘Raj harassed Sita.’ | | |

Gujarati PPA is also seen with absolutive subjects. This outputs syncretisms similar to what we saw in Spanish/Romanian, but in an ERG-ABS system: ABS = NOM and ABS = DAT. None of the hierarchies containing one ABS can capture these patterns. Under canonical case hierarchies for ERG-ABS systems (Smith et al. 2018, Zompì 2019, a.o.), ERG intervenes between ABS and oblique cases. On the other hand, an enriched hierarchy, along the lines in (14), containing two ABS, derives these data (which are not rare in ABS-ERG languages, see also Basque or Tupí Guaraní, etc.) in a straightforward way

- (14) ABS₁ > ERG > LOC₁ > DAT₁ > GEN... > ABS₂ (= **OBLIQUE DOM**) > DAT₁....

CONCLUSIONS. We have presented complex case syncretisms which cannot be derived by hierarchies containing only one accusative bundle of features. Representations that encode two types of accusatives/absolutives as in (12) and (14) (following Starke 2017) are better equipped to explain the patterns. They also open the path to a better understanding of (oblique) DOM and its locus in multiple exponency of accusatives. Moreover, enriched hierarchies avoid various problems in broadly ordered hierarchies (Zompì 2019, a.o.) or hierarchies supplemented by a process of *Impoverishment*. The former assume a dependent case logic, which raises non-trivial challenges for oblique DOM, while the latter cannot derive mixed surface appearance of oblique DOM (accusative and oblique morphology) in a non stipulative way (Keine 2010, Keine and Müller 2008, a.o).

References

- Aissen, Judith. 2003. Differential object marking: iconicity vs. economy. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 21(3):435–483.
- Bárány, András. 2018. DOM and dative case. *Glossa* 3(1). 97:1–40.
- Belletti, Adriana. 2018. On the *a*-marking of object topics in the Italian left periphery. In *From sounds to structures. Beyond the veil of Maya*, ed. Roberto Petrosino, Cerrone Pietro, and Harry van der Hulst, 445–466. de Gruyter. Mouton.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 2012. *Universals in comparative morphology. Suppletion, superlatives, and the structure of words*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 2015. Suppletion: some theoretical implications. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 1:1–18.
- Bossong, Georg. 1991. Differential object marking in Romance and beyond. In *New analyses in Romance linguistics*, ed. Dieter Wanner and Douglas A. Kibbee, 143–170. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Bossong, Georg. 1998. Le marquage différentiel dans les langues de l’Europe. In *Actance et valence dans les langues d’Europe*, ed. Jacques Feuillet, 193–259. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Caha, Pavel. 2009. The nanosyntax of Case. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Tromsø, Tromsø.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language universals and linguistic typology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cornilescu, Alexandra. 2000. On the interpretation of the prepositional accusative in Romanian. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 2:91–106.
- Givón, Talmy. 1984. Direct objects and dative shifting. semantic and pragmatic case. In *Objects. towards a theory of grammatical relations*, ed. Frans Plank, 151–183. London: Academic Press.
- Harðarson, Gísli Rúnar. 2016. A case for a Weak Contiguity hypothesis: a reply to Caha. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 34:1329–1343.
- Irimia, Monica Alexandrina. in press. Types of structural objects. Some remarks on differential object marking in Romanian. In *Case, agreement and their interactions. New perspectives on differential argument marking*, ed. András Bárány and Laura Kalin, 78–126. Brill.
- Jaeggli, Osvaldo. 1982. *Topics in Romance syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Johnston, Jason C. 1996. Systematic homonymy and the structure of morphological categories. some lessons from paradigm geometry. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Sydney dissertation, Sydney.

- Kalin, Laura. 2018. Licensing and differential object marking: the view from Neo-Aramaic. *Syntax* 21(2):112–159.
- Keine, Stefan. 2010. *Case and agreement from fringe to core: a minimalist approach*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
- Keine, Stefan, and Gereon Müller. 2008. Differential argument encoding by impoverishment. In *Scales*, ed. Marc Richards and Andrej J. Malchukov, volume 86, 83–136. Linguistische Arbeits Berichte: Universität Leipzig.
- Lazard, Gilbert. 2001. Le marquage différentiel de l'objet. In *Language typology and linguistic universals. An international handbook*, ed. Martin Haspelmath, Ekkehard König, Wulf Österreicher, and Wolfgang Raible, volume 2, 873–885. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- López, Luis. 2012. *Indefinite objects: scrambling, choice functions and differential marking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Manzini, M. Rita, and Ludovico Franco. 2016. Goal and DOM datives. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 34:197–240.
- McFadden, Thomas. 2018. *ABA in stem allomorphy and the emptiness of the nominative. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 3(1).8:1–36.
- Mistry, P.J. 1997. Objecthood and specificity in Gujarati. In *The life of language*, ed. P.J. Mistry Jane Hill and Lyle Campbell, 425–442. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Mursell, Johannes. 2018. Object agreement in Swahili is topic agreement. *Jezikoslovlje* 19(3):427–455.
- Ormazabal, Javier, and Juan Romero. 2007. The object agreement constraint. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25(2):315–347.
- Smith, Peter W., Beata Moskal, Ting Xu and Jungmin Kang, and Jonathan David Bobaljik. 2018. Case and number suppletion in pronouns. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 37:1029–1101.
- Starke, Michal. 2017. Resolving DAT=ACC (\neq GEN). *Glossa* 2(1).104:1–8.
- Tigău, Alina M. 2011. *Syntax and interpretation of the direct object in Romance and Germanic languages*. București: Editura Universității din București.
- Woolford, Ellen. 2006. Case agreement mismatches. In *Agreement systems*, ed. Cedric Boeckx, 299–316. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wunderlich, Dieter. 2012. *Case and agreement variation in Indo-Aryan*. Ms.
- Zompì, Stanislao. 2019. Ergative is not inherent. Evidence from *ABA in suppletion and syncretism. *Glossa* 117(1).73:1–28.