Event Structure and Differential Object Marking: Perspectives from Romance and Chinese:

Differential Object Marking (DOM) refers to the cross-linguistic trend where marked categories both in the nominal and verbal domains are morphologically differentiated from unmarked canonical ones (Silverstein (1976), Aissen (2003), Serzant and Witzlack-Makarevich (2018)), and clines of markedness in terms of animacy (1), referentiality (2) and transitivity (3) have been shown to trigger DOM:

1) Human > Animate > Inanimate (Silverstein (1976:176), Aissen (2003:438), Croft (2003:130))

2) Personal Pronoun > Proper name > Definite NP > Indefinite specific NP > Non-specific NP
(Lazard (1984:283), Aissen (2003:438), Croft (2003:132))

3) Table in Hopper and Thompson (1980:252):

	High Transitivity	Low Transitivity
Participants	Two or more participants, A(gent) and O(bject)	One participant
Kinesis	Action	Non-action
Aspect	Telic	Atelic
Punctuality	Punctual	Non-punctual
Volitionality	Volitional	Non-volitional
Affimration	Affirmative	Negative
Mood	Realis	Irrealis
Agency	A high in potency	A low in potency
Affectedness of O	O totally affected	O not affected
Individuation of O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

While DOM-factors are cognitive universals, the implementation of nominal and verbal markedness is subject to language-specific properties (Bossong (1991:144ff)), and this may give rise to microvariation and parameterisation of DOM which shows the interface of cognitive factors and grammatical factors at work. This paper compares two well-known examples of DOM which categorially represent two major lexical sources for Case-markers (Heine (2008)): Romance *ad*, which is derived from Latin directional/allative preposition (P$_{allative}$) AD 'to(wards)' and is used as a Case-marker (K(ase)) in numerous Western varieties of Romance (Rolhfs (1971), Roegiest (1979), Zamboni (1992)), and Chinese *ba*, which is originally a lexical verb (V) 'take/hold' reanalysed as a light verb (Voice) above the vP-shell (Zou (1995), Li (2006)). Both Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba* have been shown to be used with animate/referential objects (4a-b) as well as highly affective/transitive verbs (4c-d), as shown in the following minimal pairs:

4a)　　el　　　director　busc-a　　　　el　　carro / el　　　director　　busc-a
　　　ART　director search-PRES.3SG　　ART　car　ART　director search-PRES.3SG
　　　a-l　　　　empleado /　el　　director　busc-a　　　　　　(a)　　un　　empleado
　　　AD-ART　employee　ART　director　search-PRES.3SG　　AD　a　　employee
　　　'The director searches for the car'/'the director searches for the employee'/'the director searches for a(ny) employee'. (Spanish) (Zamboni (1992:790))

4b)　　請　　你　　把　　筆　　給　　我
　　　qing　ni　　ba　　bi　　gei　　wo
　　　please　you　BA　　pen　give　me
　　　'Please give me the pen'/'*please give me a pen.' (Li (2006:422))

4c)　　tien-e　　　　　doce　hijos /　　　mantien-e　　a　　doce　hijos
　　　have-PRES.3SG　twelve children　　rear-PRES.3SG AD　twelve children
　　　'(S)he has twelve children'/'(s)he rears twelve children.' (Spanish) (Zamboni (1992:791))

4d)　　他　　把　　球賽　贏-了 /　　*他　把　　球賽　參加-了
　　　ta　　ba　　qiusai ying-le　　　ta　ba　　qiusai canjia-le
　　　he　　BA　　game win-ASP　　he　BA　　game join-ASP
　　　'He won the game'/(intended) *he joined the game.' (Li (2006:424))

However, Romance *ad* can also be used with atelic and stative verbs as long as the object is animate (5a-b) and/or referential (5c), and affectedness only functions as an independent trigger for DOM in technical registers of Spanish where inanimate objects may be marked by *ad* if the verb is affective/transitive in denoting kinesis on the object (5d-e) (García (2007:64ff), cf Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2005), Ramchand (2008)):

5a)　　v-i　　　　　　a　　　un　　perro
　　　see-PRET.1SG AD　a　　　dog
　　　'I saw a dog.' (Pensado (1995:19-20))

5b)　　conozc-o　　　　　a　　este　actor
　　　know-PRES.1SG　　AD　this　actor
　　　'I know this actor.' (Spanish) (Heusinger and Kaiser (2011:604))

5c)　　te　　dewe　　　　　(a)　　kkwiste
　　　you　owe.PRES.1SG AD　this
　　　'I owe you this.' (Colobraro, in Basilicata, Italy) (Manzini and Savoia (2005:509))

5d)　l-os　　　ácido-s　　　atac-an　　　　　　　a　　　l-os　　　　　metal-es
　　　ART-PL acid-PL　　　attack-PRES.3PL　　　AD　　ART-PL　　　metal-PL
　　　'Acids attack metals.' (Spanish) (Molho (1958:214))

5e)　l-as　　　dificultad-es　priv-an　　　　　　　a-l　　proyecto de todo su　　atractivo　　inicial
　　　ART-PL difficulty-PL　deprive-PRES.3PL　AD-ART project　of all　its　attractiveness　initial
　　　'The difficulties deprive the project of all its initial attractiveness.' (adapted from Laca (1995:69))

In contrast, Chinese *ba* selects lexical verb phrases that are highly affective/transitive regardless of the referentiality of the preposed object which may be indefinite/non-specific as long as it is delimited in line with the telicity of the verb (6a-b) (Liu (1997), Ritter and Rosen (2000), cf Tenny (1994)):

6a)　他 把　　一-個　　　　機會　　　錯過-了
　　　ta ba　　yi-ge　　　　jihui　　　cuoguo-le
　　　he BA　　one-CL　　　opportunity miss-ASP
　　　'He missed an opportunity.' (Liu (1997:94))

6b)　小張　　　　把　　個　　　孩子　　　　生　　　　　在　　　火車-上-了
　　　xiaozhang　　ba　　ge　　　haizi　　　sheng　　　　zai　　huoche-shang-le
　　　Xiaozhang　　BA　　CL　　　child　　　give.birth　　at　　train-LOC-ASP
　　　'Xiaozhang gave birth to a child on the train.' (Wang (1985:51))

These subtle differences may be accounted for by the categorical reanalysis which underlies their diachronic formation, since Latin AD as an allative preposition selects thematic roles ('destination/direction' or 'recipient/beneficiary/experiencer') that are animate and/or referential (7a-b) whereas Chinese *ba* is originally used as the first lexical verb 'take/hold' in serial verb constructions where restructuring takes place when the second lexical verb phrase contains a resumptive pronoun and is transitive enough to auxiliarise *ba* (7c) (Feng (2002)):

7a)　veni-am…　　　　　　　　ad　Domino　　　　poposce-bat
　　　mercy-FEM.ACC.SG　　　AD　Lord　　　　　demand-IMPERF.3SG
　　　'He was begging the Lord for mercy' (*Chronicon Salernitanum* 11)

7b)　ego　　sum,　　　　　　respic-e　　　　　　　　　　ad　　me
　　　I　　　be.PRES.1SG　look.back-IMPERATIVE.2SG　AD　　me
　　　'It is I, look back at me.' (Plautus *Truculentus* 256-257)

7c)　武　　把　高皇　　　　　用　　　　　刃　　刺　　之
　　　wu　　ba　gaohuang　　　　yong　　　ren　　ci　　zhi
　　　Wu　　BA　emperor　　　　use　　　blade　stab　him
　　　'Wu stabbed the emperor with a blade.' (前漢書平話, 卷上)

As Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba* are reanalysed as DOM-markers in the nominal (P > K) and verbal (V > Voice) domains respectively, they undergo different analogical generalisation, since Romance *ad* has been generalised to all relevant marked nominal categories (animate/referential (5)) at the expense of verbal transitivity/affectedness (cf Heusinger (2008)) and Chinese *ba* selects highly affective/transitive verb phrases that delimit the preposed object regardless of its referentiality (6). The realisation of nominal and verbal 'markedness' as established in DOM theory (1-3)) seems to be constrained by formal properties such as syntactic categories which, in the case of Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba*, entails subtly different distribution in their respective languages. The formation of DOM markers, therefore, sheds light on the interface between universal cognitive factors and language-specific grammatical properties which, in line with Chomsky's (2005, 2007, 2013) model of language, consists of a dynamic mixture and interaction of universal cognitive principles and language-specific factors.

(Select) References:

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