DAM:
a very brief introduction

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What is DAM anyway?

- A very broad definition:
  any kind of marking where an argument role/a grammatical relation may be coded in various ways, depending on factors other than the argument role/grammatical relation itself

Depending on a researcher/focus of research, some cases of DAM are considered to be more typical/“real” DAM than the others
Definition - preliminaries

• It is not our aim here to give a definition that would restrict our study to particular subtypes on an *a priori* basis

• We take a continuum approach here

• Especially, because our purpose is to study the dynamics of various DAM systems: a development from something that is less of a DAM into something that is more of a DAM system, or vice versa

• Nevertheless, maybe we need an understanding of how a “more developed” DAM system may be characterized, in order to be able to describe and generalize over processes that lead into such a system and out of it (into something else)
All the d-words

• *differential marking* first by Bossong (1982, 1985),
• researchers working on the diff. agent marking use the term *split*, as in *spit ergativity* (since Silverstein (1976), popularized by Dixon (1994))
• Recent years: numerous related terms
  – de Hoop & de Swart (2008): the first to systematically discuss *differential subject marking* (DSM)
  – Fauconnier (2011): *differential agent marking* (DAM),
  – Kittilä (2008): *differential goal marking*
  – Iemmolo (2011): *differential object indexing* (DOI) for marking on the verb
  – McGregor (2010): *optional case marking*
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Dimensions of variation

• Broadly defined, DAM encompasses a range of phenomena sharing the trait of encoding an argument role in different ways
• Apart from these shared property DAM systems vary from language to language
• To allow for the comparison of DAM systems and their diachronic development paths we need to decompose the phenomenon into a number of characteristics building up on the attested synchronic variation and suggestions made in the literature on the topic
Dimensions of variation

• At least five (maybe more) sets of variables (dimensions) along which DAM systems vary (synchronously and diachronically):
  – trigger of DAM (semantic, lexical, grammatical, etc.),
  – obligatoriness,
  – the make-up of NPs (morphological) marking,
  – variations in syntactic behavior,
  – entrenchment (e.g. in terms of predicate restrictions)
a motley crew of characteristics, they include:

a. “semantic” characteristics of arguments:
   ▪ inherent characteristics: person, number, animacy, humanness
   ▪ discourse characteristics: definiteness/specificity, topicality, contrastiveness/unexpectedness, focus

b. situational characteristics of arguments/fine semantic roles: volitionality, control, powerfulness

Trigger of DAM: “semantics”
Dimensions of variation: "semantics"

- These properties are usually represented as hierarchies or scales (Croft 2003: 130):
  - Animacy: human > animate > inanimate
  - Definiteness: definite > specific indefinite > non-specific indefinite
  - Person: first, second > 3
Dimensions of variation: “semantics”

• As in many languages DAM is conditioned by several properties of the arguments it has been common to operate with various versions of a combined hierarchy,

• E.g. Croft’s (2003) extended animacy hierarchy or Aissen’s (1999) prominence hierarchy
Dimensions of variation: obligatoriness

• Systems of DAM vary in term of obligatoriness of a particular marking:
  Whereas in some DAM systems a particular marking applies in predictable and consistent fashion with certain types of NPs or in certain grammatical contexts, other systems are (seemingly) less strict

• cf. McGregor’s 2009 *Split and Differential* case marking vs. *Optional* case Marking on the other
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Preceding research (inter alia)

- Iemmolo (2010) on asymmetric DOM:
  
  **information structure**: typically marked (e.g. contrastive) topical objects (Iemmolo 2010)
  
  → topical objects
  
  → NP internal properties (related to topichood) such as **definiteness** or **animacy**
Preceding research (inter alia)

• Dalrymple & Nikolaeva (2011) on asymmetric DOM including Diff. Object Flagging:
  
  **information structure:** typically secondary topics (D&N 2011)

    → NP internal properties (related to topichood) such as **definiteness** or **animacy**;
Preceding research (inter alia)

- lemmolo (2013): symmetric vs. asymmetric (terms coined in DeHoop & Malchukov 2008);

  **symmetric systems** are typically related to quantification, aspectuality, polarity,

  **asymmetric systems** are typically related to definiteness, information structure, animacy
Preceding research (inter alia)

• Bickel & Witzlack-Makarevich (2008):
  DAM are results of individual diachronic changes and do not underly a universal diachronic preassure of particular hierarchies
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0. General questions:

• How do we deal with different inflectional classes that have semantic motivation, e.g., with feminine vs. masculine?
  (NB: e.g. animacy clearly pertains to DAM but may be realized via gender/inflectional-classes distinctions)

• Are there more dimensions to be included into our definition (syntactic, functional, morphological, distributional) that might be relevant diachronically?
Questions to be addressed

1. Questions on the Rise of DAM:
   - What is the etymology of the morphological markers that gave rise to DAM?
   - How to model the functional shift of a case marker into a DAM marker with case-atypical function, e.g., determiner-like semantics?
   - How to explain the development from a solid, valence-driven case frame of a predicate into a sort of labile predicate with a DAM-driven case frame?
   - What kinds of morphosyntactic processes enable overriding or loosening the case frame?
Questions to be addressed

2. Questions on further development of DAM:
   • What is the diachronic relation between various functional domains of DAM: animacy, definiteness/specificity, information-structure-driven? (in addition to Iemmlolo 2010, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011)
   • What is the relative chronology of the lexical input restrictions in the rise of DAM? Which NP types acquire DAM first and which last?
Questions to be addressed:

2. **Questions on further development of DAM:**
   - How do DAM systems disappear in favor of a straightforward government?
   - What are the motivations of its disappearance?
   - How can DAM phenomena be transferred or copied via language contact?
We wish you a nice conference!

Ilja, Alena, Kelsey and Juliane