

DAM: a very brief introduction

Ilja A. Seržant
(University of Konstanz)

Alena Witzlack-Makarevich
(University of Kiel)

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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 *split 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*
 - lemmolo (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 (synchronically 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)

Trigger of DAM: “semantics”

- 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

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)

- Iemmolo (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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Questions to be addressed

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 lemmolo 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