

Differential object marking: Nominal and verbal parameters

Keith Tse *

Abstract. Rich comparative-typological work has established differential object marking (DOM) as a linguistic universal based on various dimensions of nominal and verbal markedness where more marked categories are more likely to be morphologically marked than unmarked ones (Aissen 2003). However, despite the seemingly uniform and homogeneous properties in the world's examples, the great variety and diversity of lexical sources raise the possibility of there being microvariations between different types of DOM. Romance preposition *ad* and Chinese co-verb *ba* are two mainstream examples of DOM and a comparison shows that different lexical sources can give rise to nominally-driven and verbally-driven mechanisms of DOM, since while Romance *ad* is reanalysed as a nominal Case-marker and is extended to all relevant types of object nouns (animate/referential), Chinese *ba* is embedded in the verbal domain where it selects transitive/affective types of verb phrases. This comparison opens up new perspectives on the mechanisms of DOM, namely the clustering of nominal and verbal markedness which can be shown to correlate with the lexical sources of the DOM-markers.

Keywords. Latin; Romance; Chinese; case theory; differential argument marking; different object marking; syntax

1. Introduction. Differential object marking (DOM) is a cross-linguistically pervasive phenomenon where certain marked categories of the same grammatical relation (here object) are morphologically distinguished from unmarked ones, as defined in Serzant & Witzlack-Makarevich (S&W) (2019:17): “Any kind of situation where an argument of a predicate bearing the same semantic argument role may be coded in different ways, depending on factors other than the argument role itself and/or the clausal properties of the predicate such as polarity, TAM, embeddedness etc”. Extensive typological work has revealed a number of nominal and verbal dimensions of markedness which seem to underlie and trigger DOM, and these consist of numerous factors of transitivity which are summarised by Hopper & Thompson (H&T) (1980):

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	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
Affirmation	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

Table 1. Transitivity (H&T 1980:252)

In classic analyses of verbal and event semantics (*aktionsart*) (Vendler 1967, Dowty 1991), transitive verbs such as Achievements and Accomplishments, in contrast to States (BE) and Activities (DO), are distinguished in effecting change (BECOME) in their objects (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2005, Ramchand 2008), which further entails distinctive properties such as affectedness/kinesis, telicity/punctuality, and agentivity/volitionality (Tenny 1994). Moreover, the individuation of object has also been described in various ways, which are also summed up by H&T (1980:252):

Individuated	Non-individuated
Proper	Common
Human, animate	Inanimate
Concrete	Abstract
Singular	Plural
Count	Mass
Referential, definite	Non-referential

Table 2. Individuation of O (H&T (1980:252))

Such nominal dimensions have been further fine-grained in terms of humanness/animacy (Silverstein 1976:176, Aissen 2003:438, Croft 2003:130), referentiality (Lazard 1984:283, Aissen 2003:438, Croft 2003:132), grammatical person (Silverstein 1976:169, Dixon 1979:85), number

animacy and referentiality forms the core of Romance DOM and affectedness secondarily extends to verbal transitivity, and verbal DOM in Chinese *ba* where verbal transitivity in the verbal complement of *ba* is primary and this entails not necessarily definiteness or specificity but delimitedness in the object noun.

2. Latin/Romance *ad* (P(reposition) > K(ase)). The use of Romance preposition *ad* as a marker of DOM is widely attested in Western Romance with dialectal microvariations (Rolhfs 1971, Roegiest 1979, Nocentini 1992, Zamboni 1993, see footnote 1), and *ad* is commonly analysed as a Case-marker (K) of object nouns whose lexical semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties form minimal pairs with their unmarked counterparts (Brugè & Brugger 1994, Guardiano 2010, López 2012). The key notions in question here are the animacy of the object noun, which may be canonically human (2a), inclusive of non-humans (e.g. animals) (2b) or exclusive of a particular type of human (e.g. divinity) (2c), referentiality of the object noun, which can be subdivided into definiteness (3a), specificity (3b), singularity/individuality (3c), proper (3d) and pronominal (3e), and affected objects selected by strongly transitive/affective types of verbs (4):

- (2) a. Spanish (Kliffner 1995:93)
 ve-o a la muchacha
 see-PRES.1SG AD ART girl
 ‘I see the girl’
- b. Spanish (Pensado 1995:19-20)
 v-i a un perro
 see-PRET.1SG AD a dog
 ‘I saw a dog.’
- c. Portuguese (Schwenter 2014:238)
 deve-mos ama-r a Deus
 must-PRES.1PL love-INF AD God
 ‘We must love God.’
- (3) a. Spanish (Kliffner 1995:100)
 conozc-o a-l campeón
 know-PRES.1SG AD-ART champion
 ‘I know the champion.’
- b. Spanish (Kliffner 1995:102)
 encontr-é a un abogado que no cobr-a
 find-PRET.1SG AD a lawyer REL.PRO NEG charge-PRES.3SG
 los ojos de la cara
 the eyes from the face
 ‘I found a lawyer who does not charge an arm and a leg.’
- c. Spanish (Kliffner 1995:104)
 la sociedad educ-a a-l poeta
 the society educate-PRES.3SG AD-ART poet
 ‘Society educates the poet.’
- d. Spanish (Kliffner 1995:98)
 visita-rom a Madrid
 vist-PRET.3PL AD Madrid
 ‘They visited Madrid.’

- e. Spanish (Laca 1995:66)
 vi-ó a mí
 see-PRET.3SG AD me
 ‘He saw me.’
- (4) Spanish (García García 2007:68)
 el entusiasmo venc-e a la dificultad
 The enthusiasm conquer-PRES.3SG AD the difficulty
 ‘Enthusiasm conquers difficulty.’

The comparative distribution of Romance DOM is such that *ad* is predominantly a nominal marker, since while in most varieties *ad* can be found as a marker of personal pronouns and proper nouns as seen in Portuguese (5a-b) and Catalán (5c-d), *ad* is generalised to all human/animate common nouns which may be (optionally) marked even if indefinite or non-specific in Spanish (6a-b), and in Italian dialects (7a-c) referential inanimates may also be marked too

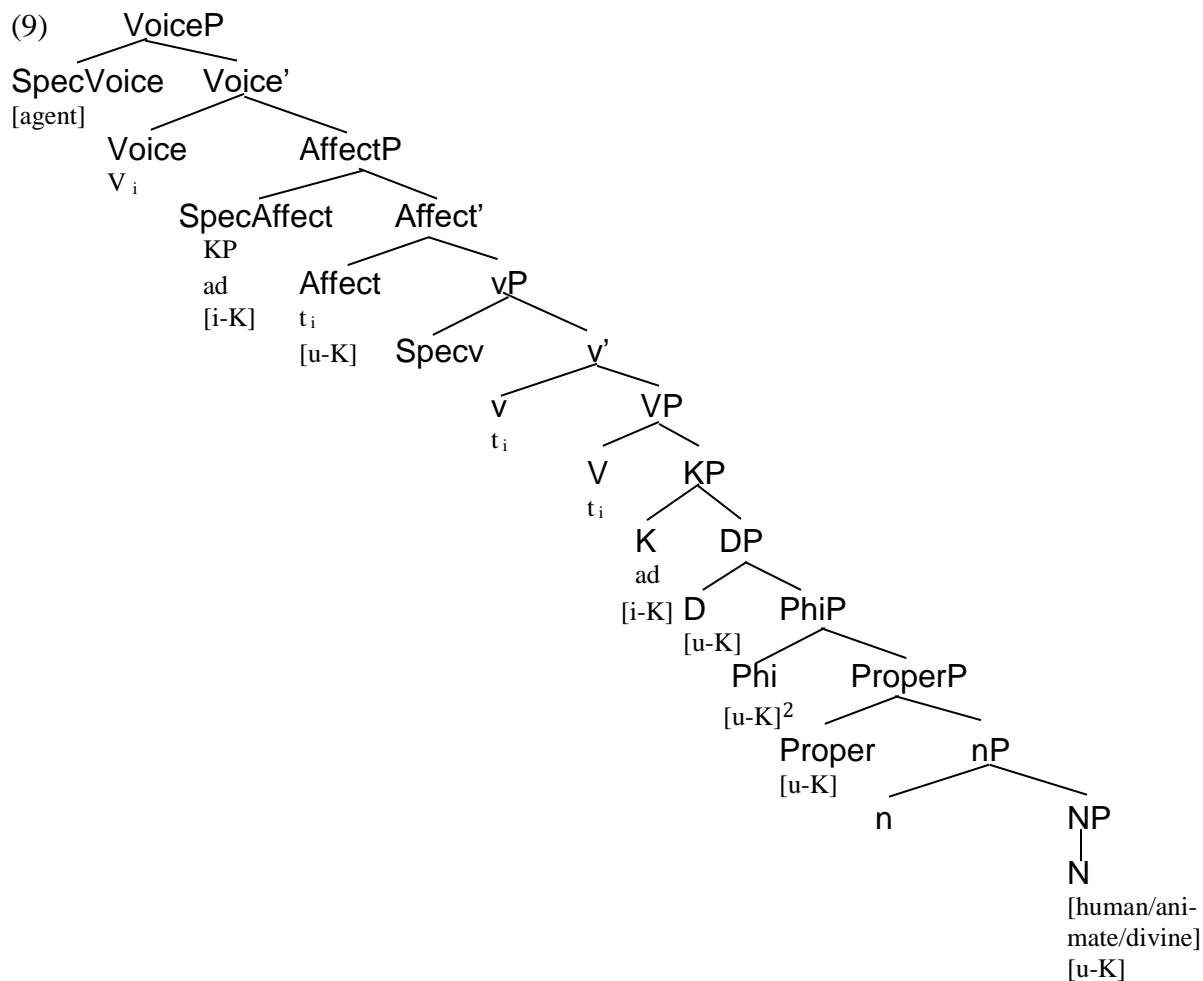
- (5) a. Portuguese (Schwenter 2014:238)
 od-eia a mim
 hate-PRES.3SG AD me
 ‘He hates me.’
- b. European Portuguese (Roegiest 1979:38)
 vej-o (a) João
 see-PRES.1SG AD João
 ‘I see João.’
- c. Catalán (Escandell-Vidal 2007:188)
 jo t’ ajudo a tu
 I you help-PRES.1SG AD you
 i tu m’ ajudar-à-s a mi
 and you me help-FUT-2SG AD me
 ‘I help you and you will help me.’
- d. Catalán (Escandell-Vidal 2009:840)
 veu-r-é a la Maria
 see-FUT-1SG AD ART Maria
 ‘I shall see Maria.’
- (6) a. Spanish (Kliffer 1995:100)
 encontr-é (a) unos hombres
 find-PRET.1SG AD some men
 ‘I found some men.’
- b. Spanish (Leonetti 2004:80)
 necesit-a (a) una enfermera
 need-PRES.3SG AD a nurse
 que pas-e la mañana con ella
 who spend-PRES.SUBJ.3SG ART morning with her
 ‘She needs a(ny) nurse to spend the morning with her.’
- (7) a. Sardinian (Floritic 2003:253)
 app-o vis-tu a custu/cussu
 have-PRES.1SG see-PERF.PTCP AD this/that
 ‘I saw this/that.’

- b. Gorgoglione, in Basilicata (Manzini & Savoia 2005:508)
 miette a kkweiste
 put.IMPERATIVE.2SG AD this
 ‘Put this one.’
- c. Colobraro, in Basilicata (Manzini & Savoia 2005:509)
 te dewe (a) kkwiste
 you owe.PRES.1SG ‘I AD this
 owe you this.’

Affectedness, in comparison, is secondary, since only in Spanish can DOM-effect of affectedness be discerned where *ad* is used for marking inanimate and non-personified objects of highly transitive/affective verbs:

- (8) a. Spanish (Molho 1958:214)
 los acidos atac-a-n a los metales
 ART acids attack-PRES-3PL AD ART metals
 ‘Acids attack metals.’
- b. Spanish (Laca 1995:67)
 la primavera preced-e a-l verano
 ART spring preced-PRES.3SG AD-ART summer
 ‘Spring precedes winter.’
- c. Spanish (Laca 1995:69)
 las dificultades priv-a-n a-l proyecto
 ART difficulties deprive-PRES-3PL AD-ART project
 de todo su atractivo inicial
 of all its attractiveness initial
 ‘Difficulties deprive the project of all its initial attractiveness.’
- d. Spanish (Torrego 1999:1801)
 el adjetivo modific-a a-l sustantivo
 ART adjective modify-PRES.3SG AD-ART noun
 ‘The adjective modifies the noun.’
- e. Spanish (Fabregas 2013:15)
 su voluntad obedec-e a la razón
 his will obey-PRES.3SG AD ART reason
 ‘His will obeys his reason.’

The DOM-properties of Romance *ad* (K), therefore, may be represented thus where it is either selected by the various functional layers of the object noun phrase (DP) or by a unique functional head denoting affectedness (Affect) whose specifier holds the object argument marked by *ad* (cf Torrego 1998, Mordoñedo 2007):



In the diachronic formation and evolution of Romance DOM, the wide geographical and historical distribution of *ad* strongly suggests that it is formed in proto-Romance (Sornicola 1998), and it is indeed attested that Latin allative/directional preposition *ad* may be dependent on certain two/three-place lexical verbs where its argument may be reanalysed as direct/indirect objects of the verbs (Sornicola 1997, Adams 2013, Adams & de Melo 2016). However, despite the functional parity between the argument of *ad* and the object relation(s) of the lexical verbs, detailed philological analysis shows that Latin *ad* retains its lexical semantic properties in denoting certain thematic roles (Adams 2013:278ff), namely “direction”/“destination” and “recipient”/“beneficiary”, which is attested from as early as Plautus (2nd century BC) (10a) and throughout the history of Latin (Classical (10b)/Christian (10c)/Medieval (10d)) with verbs of vision (*verba videndi*) which consistently select definite and specific objects in the extended sense of ‘visiting’ (10a-b, d) and ‘rotating’ (10c, e-g):

- (10) a. nunc ad era-m revide-b-o
 now AD mistress-ACC revisit-FUT-1SG
 ‘I shall see her again (at hers) now.’ (Plautus *Truculentus* 320)

² In line with Postal (1969), personal pronouns are here analysed as bare D-elements which lexicalise general phi-features which may be decomposed into grammatical person and number attributes and values.

- b. i-b-o ut vis-a-m huc ad eum
 go-FUT-1SG COMP visit-PRES.SUBJ-1SG hence AD him
 si forte est domi
 if perchance be.PRES.3SG at.home
 ‘I shall go and visit him here, if by chance he is at home.’ (Plautus *Bacchides* 529)
- c. quis illic est qui tam proterve
 who there be.PRES.3SG REL.PRO so impudently
 nostras aedis ariet-at ? ego sum,
 our rooms ram-PRES-3SG I be.PRES.1SG
 respic-e ad me
 look.back-IMPERATIVE.3SG AD me
 ‘Who is over battering our rooms? It is I, look back at me.’ (Plautus *Truculentus* 256)
- d. vere-or ne... nunc ad Caeciliana-m fabula-m
 fear-PRES.1SG COMP now AD Caecilian-ACC.SG play-ACC.SG
 spect-e-t
 watch-PRES.SUBJ-3SG
 ‘I fear that... he may now go and watch the play of Caecilius (in the theatre).’ (Cicero *ad Atticum* 1.16.6)
- e. et respe-xi-t Dominus ad Abel
 and look.back-PERF-3SG Lord AD Abel
 et ad munera eius
 and AD gifts his
 ‘And the Lord looked back at Abel and his gifts.’ (*Biblia Sacra, Genesis* 4.4)
- f. et aspici-e-nt ad me
 and look-FUT-3PL AD me
 ‘And they will look at me.’ (Jerome *Epistulae* LVII.7)
- g. ipse farinarius ad ipso Verno
 ART baker AD ART Vernus
 nonquam aspe-xissi-t
 never look-PERF-3SG
 ‘The baker never looked at Vernus.’ (Merovingian document XXXII)

Furthermore, in the Christian and Medieval eras *ad* is also found with two/three-place verbs which assign ethic dative to their direct/indirect objects (“recipient”/“beneficiary”) and these turn out to be marked by *ad* in Romance (Sornicola 1997, 1998) e.g. verbs of serving *servire* ‘to serve’ (11a-b) which select animate direct objects in the thematic role of ‘beneficiary’ (Blake and Velázquez-Mendoza 2012), and verbs of shouting and begging/praying (*verba clamandi et rogandi*) (11c-e) which also select human/animate objects marked by *ad* and these come into contrast with unmarked inanimate objects in the direct object relation (Huertas 2009):

- (11) a. ad cuius imperiu caelum terra maria servie-ba-nt
 AD whose command heaven earth seas serve-IMPERF-3PL
 ‘whose power heaven, earth and the seas served.’ (Jerome *Epistulae* 82.3)
- b. ibi deb-e-nt servi-re a sancta Maria
 there must-PRES-3PL serve-INF AD holy Mary
 ‘There they must serve Holy Mary.’ (*Sahagún* 423)

- c. de profund-is clama-v-i ad te, Domin-e
 from depth-ABL.PL shout-PERF-1SG AD you Lord-VOC
 ‘From the depths of my heart I shouted (something) at you, my Lord’ >
 ‘... I called you, my Lord.’ (*Biblia Sacra, Psalmi* 129)
- d. Moyses ora-ba-t ad Dominum
 Moses pray-IMPERF-3SG AD Lord
 ‘Moses was praying to the Lord.’ (*Libri Maccabaorum* 2.10)
- e. veniam... ad Domino poposce-ba-t
 mercy AD Lord demand-IMPERF.3SG
 ‘She was praying the Lord for mercy.’ (*Chronicon Salernitanum* 11)

As Latin dative is thematically conditioned in being assigned to certain thematic roles (“recipient”/“beneficiary”) which are necessarily human/animate and even divine in the case of verbs of begging/praying (*ad Dominum* (11d), *ad Domino* (11e)), *ad* comes to be associated with human/animate/divine objects which may also be affected. In the formation of Romance DOM, therefore, *ad* is reanalysed as a nominal marker of DOM which connects it with various marked nominal categories, and although affectedness is evident in the use of *ad* with verbs that assign ethic dative (11a-e), this is a secondary factor in Romance where nominal markedness seems to be the main criterion. The next section examines the formation and distribution of Chinese DOM in *ba*-constructions which display similar yet different properties

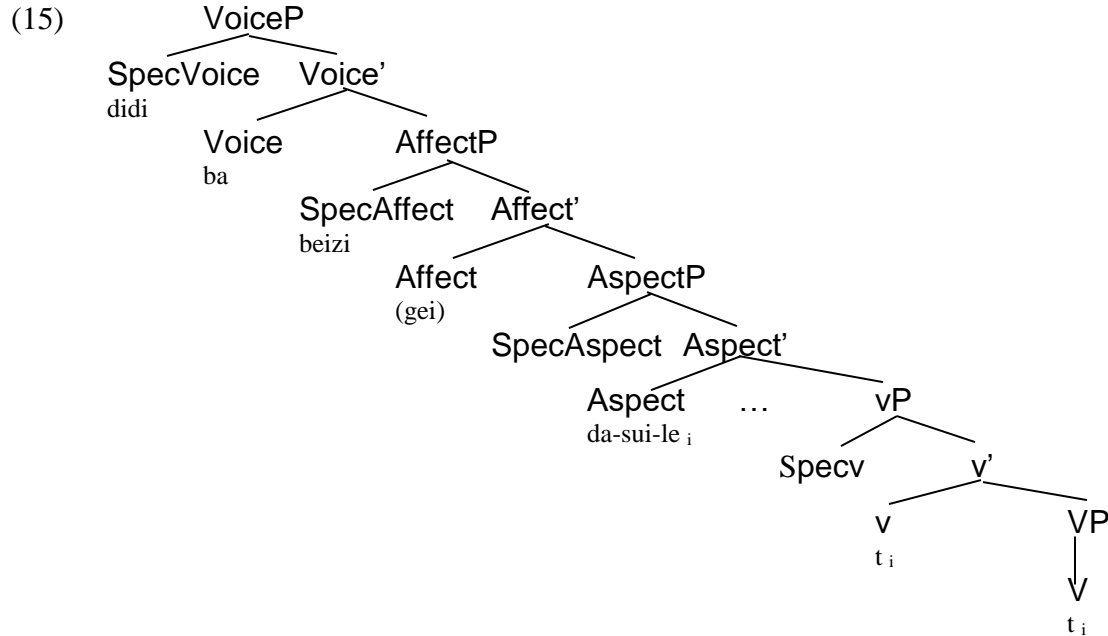
3. Chinese *ba* (V(erb) > Voice). Chinese *ba*-constructions consist of a preposed object which comes right after *ba* but is thematically related to the main lexical verb (Li 2006), and various constituency tests show that *ba* heads a unique functional projection which does not form phrasal constituents with the preposed object, since the object seems to form constituents with the lexical verb phrase:

- (12) 他 把 門 洗-好 (和) 窗戶 洗-乾淨-了
 ta ba men xi-hao he chuanguhu ca-ganjing-le
 He BA door wash-finish and window wipe-clean-ASP
 ‘He washed the door and wiped the window clean.’ (Li 2006:382)

Furthermore, in contrast to Romance *ad* (see previous section), Chinese *ba* obligatorily selects transitive/affective verb phrases which must not be bare and must denote verbal and prosodic properties such as aspect (13a), object complement (13b), affectedness (13c), adverbial modification (13d) and disyllabicity (13e):

- (13) a. 他 把 那個 房子 蓋-*(了)
 ta ba nei-ge fangzi gai-le
 he BA that-CL house build-ASP
 ‘He built that house.’ (Liu 1997:63)
- b. 我們 把 李四 罵-*(了)/*(一頓)/*(得 很 厲害)
 women ba Lisi ma-le yidun de hen lihai
 we BA Lisi scold-ASP once COMP very serious
 ‘We scolded Lisi once very serious.’ (Li 2006:395)

ba is hence commonly represented as a functional head (Voice) above Asp(ect) while the lexical verb undergoes head movement in order to obtain aspectual suffixes and various theta-assigning A-heads (Zou 1995:78ff, Li 2006:408-412), and in between there should be posited a functional projection denoting affectedness (Affect) which may be optionally lexicalised by *gei* whose specifier holds the preposed object, as shown below:



Chinese co-verbs are derived from serial constructions (Peyraube 1996, Rhys 2000), and in the case of *ba* which is originally a lexical verb meaning ‘to take/hold’ (Bennett 1981) it is widely argued that *ba* is reanalysed in restructuring contexts where the serial verb construction is reanalysable as monoclausal due to the fact that there is coreference between the object of *ba* (and the etymologically related *jiang* (將)) and the object of the second verb phrase, the latter of which may be resumed by a resumptive pronoun (Peyraube and Chappell 2011) which still exists in Chinese dialects (20c):

- (16) a. 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)
- b. 汝 將 此 人 安徐 殺 之
 ru jiang ci ren anxu sha zhi
 you JIANG this man carefully kill him
 無 損 皮 肉
 wu sun pi rou
 NEG damage skin flesh
 ‘You kill this man carefully without damaging his skin or flesh.’ (佛說長阿含經)

- c. 千祈 唔好 將 啲 頭髮 染-黑 佢
 chinkei nghou jeung di taufaat yim-hak keui
 please NEG JIANG CL hair dye-black it
 ‘Please do not dye the hair black.’ (Cantonese, in Chappell 2007:188)

In the reanalysis of the object of *ba* as the object of the second verb, the second verb must be strongly transitive in order to select the object of *ba* as its own preposed object merged in a higher A-position (*gaohuang.. ci zhi* ‘stab the emperor’ (16a), *ci ren... sha zhe* ‘kill this man’ (16b), *di taufaat... yimhak keui* ‘dye the hair black’ (16c)), which not only eliminates the original argument structure of *ba* as a lexical verb and leads to its reanalysis as a functional head but also entails verb movement in the second verb phrase which hence shows verbal properties such as aspect and object complementation (13a-e). Furthermore, as transitive/affective verbs are telic and hence select delimited objects, the preposed object in *ba*-constructions is delimited which does not necessarily imply definiteness or specificity (14a-c). Chinese *ba*, therefore, is essentially a verbally-driven DOM construction which entails nominal properties. These mechanisms of DOM in Chinese and Romance are summarized in the next concluding section.

4. Differential object marking: Clustering of nominal and verbal parameters. A comparison between Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba* as used in their respective DOM-constructions shows subtle differences in the clustering of nominal and verbal parameters of markedness in DOM, since while Romance *ad* is reanalysed as a nominal Case-marker and is hence generalised to all marked object nouns in conformity with the original selectional properties of Latin directional preposition *ad*, namely animacy, referentiality and affectedness, Chinese *ba* is merged as a functional head in the verbal domain which selects highly transitive/affective verb phrases in which the lexical verb undergoes head movement and selects delimited objects. The ensuing verbal properties of affectedness in the former and nominal delimitedness in the latter seem to be epiphenomenal, which reveals some subtle microvariations in the clustering of nominal and verbal parameters in DOM, as summarised in the following table:

	Nominal DOM (e.g. Romance <i>ad</i>)	Verbal DOM (e.g. Chinese <i>ba</i>)
Primary triggers	Human/animate of O Definiteness/referentiality of O	Affectedness/transitivity of V
Secondary effects	Affectedness of V	Delimitedness of O

Table 3. Empirical properties of Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba* (cf. Table 1)

DOM, therefore, in spite of its cross-linguistic ubiquity and typological range, is not necessarily a universally homogeneous phenomenon, and a close comparison between Romance *ad* and Chinese *ba* seems to uncover some subtle mechanisms at work.

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