

## The formation of Differential Object Marking: creative parametric microvariation of semantic features: Latin *ad* and Chinese *ba/jiang*

Despite the wealth of typological data and analysis on the formation of Differential Object Marking (DOM) (see e.g. Serzant and Witlack-Makarevich (2017)), there has not yet been a formal typology of DOM systems that recognizes the similarities and differences within the typological sample of DOM. In this paper, I propose a comparative examination of two very famous DOM-markers (Western Romance (*ad*) as a marker of human and referential objects (Rolhfs (1971), Zamboni (1994)) and Chinese co-verb (*ba/jiang*) as a marker of referential and ‘affected’ objects of dynamic verbs (Zou (1995), Li (2006)), a formal analysis of which reveals not only microparametric variation but also common traits that suggest that syntactic change, at least in the formation of DOM, may be seen as a creative and dynamic (re-)alignment of semantic features which shows that human Case-marking is highly sensitive to semantics.

Formal (Minimalist) analyses of DOM argue that it results from the feature-checking of semantic features that are parasitic on the nominal argument and that different semantic features have to be checked by designated functional projections e.g. Spanish *a* (K(dative)), which is argued to check personal/animate ([i-person]) objects due to theta-deficiency in little *v* (Mordoñedo (2007)). Under this analysis, it is possible to equate DOM with traditional representations of inherent Case where morphological case-marking is strictly conditioned by the semantic features of nominal arguments on the thematic level (cf Chomsky (1981)). DOM in Romance (*ad*) and Chinese (*ba*) may hence be formalized as the differential feature-checking of different semantic types of objects in subcategorization, which, in the case of Romance, consists of [i-person] and/or [i-referential] (Nocentini (1994)), and in Chinese, [i-referential] (Zou (1995)), both of which are checked by their respective DOM markers (Romance *ad* (K(case): [u-person]/[u-referential]), Chinese *ba* (little *v*: [u-referential]) and display significant dialectal microparametric variation (see Roegiest (1979) for Romance *ad* and Li (2006) for Chinese *ba/jiang*). These comparative analyses entail an elaborate classification of formal semantic features in nominal arguments.

Based on this formal account of DOM, a comparative analysis of the historical formation of DOM in Romance (*ad*) and Chinese (*ba/jiang*) displays a dynamic correlation of semantic features with respect to their Case-assigners. The use of Romance *ad* as a DOM marker is widely argued to derive from the Latin allative preposition *ad*, which displaces the morphological dative that marks human/animate objects and becomes obligatorily used with them e.g. verbs of aiding and serving (*verba iuvandi et serviendi*) (Sornicola (1997, 1998)), which are always human since these verbs select direct objects that correspond to <beneficiary>, and verbs of shouting and begging (*verba clamandi et rogandi*) (Tse (2013)), which are reanalyzed from being three-place predicates to two-place (cf Kaufman (2005)) and hence yield a synchronic opposition between previous indirect objects (*ad*), which are necessarily human/animate in Latin (Pinkster (1990)), and inanimate objects ( $\emptyset$ ): Latin verbs of begging (*verba rogandi/petendi*):

- 1) veniam                      ad    Domino    poposcebat  
mercy-FEM.ACC.SG    AD    Lord            demand-IMPERF.3SG  
‘He was begged the Lord for mercy.’ (*Chronicon Salernitanum* 11)

Similarly, Medieval Chinese lexical verb *ba/jiang* ‘to take’ obligatorily selects objects that are ‘real’ which can be ‘taken’, and this gives rise to the use of modern Chinese *ba/jiang* as markers of referential and definite objects (Zou (1995)). Furthermore, a particular prototype of Chinese co-verbs (*ba/jiang*) has the object of the first verb phrase resumed by a coreferential pronoun in the second verb phrase, which entails that the object of the co-verb is strongly ‘affected’ by the second (matrix) verb since it is always selected by dynamic verbs with strong telicity:

- 1) Ru jiang ci ren anxu sha zhi  
 You take this man careful kill PRO  
 'You take this man and kill him carefully' > 'you kill this man carefully'  
 (*Fo Shuo Chang A Han Jing*, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD)

The historical formation of Romance and Chinese DOM, therefore, reveals interesting and significant microparametric similarities and differences which may be tied down to the semantic features on nominal arguments in relation to their Case-assigner, which not only permits a formal typology of DOM systems but also shows the creativity in argument-alignment and sensitivity to semantic features in human language processing and syntactic change.

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