Differential A Marking
Diachronic developments and restrictions from a typological perspective

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Definitions

**Differential Agent Marking (DAM)**
Variation in case marking of the more agent-like argument of a bivalent or trivalent predicate

**Valency**
Purely semantic definition of arguments, advantages:
- Cross-linguistic comparison possible
- No preference of specific morphosyntactic processes, since
  - this is arbitrary
  - these processes don’t exist or don’t behave in the same way in all languages
Definitions

Macro-level semantic roles
(Bickel 2010, Witzlack-Makarevich 2011)

- **S:** the only argument of a 1-arg predicate
- **A_{tr}:** the more agent-like argument of a 2-arg predicate
- **P:** the more patient-like argument of a 2-arg predicate
- **A_{ditr}:** the more agent-like argument of a 3-arg predicate
- **G:** the more patient-like argument of a 3-arg predicate (mnemonic for ‘Goal’)
- **T:** neither more agent-like, nor more patient-like argument of a three-argument predicate (mnemonic for ‘Theme’)

Types of DAM

**Conditions**

- Referential properties of the A argument: e.g.
  - lexical classes (e.g. pronouns vs. nouns), person, number, animacy, definiteness (rare), agentivity, focus
- Valency classes
- Clause properties:
  - TAM categories, polarity, clause types (main vs. other), scenario (nature of co-arguments)
Definiteness

**Adyghe** (NW Caucasian; Russia; Kumakhov et al. 1996: 97)

**DEF:** A(ERG)  
**INDEF:** A(unmarked)

a. *ps’as’e-*m  mə-r  Ø-ə-ʃe-ne-p  
girl-ERG  it/that.one-ABS  3P-3SG.A-do-FUT-NEG  
‘The girl will not do it.’

b. *ps’as’e*  mə-r  Ø-ə-ʃe-ne-p  
girl  it/that.one-ABS  3.P-3SG.A-do-FUT-NEG  
‘A girl will not do it.’
Valency classes (case frames)

**Khwarshi** (Nakh-Dagestanian; Russia; Khalilova 2009): selection:

a. **A(ERG), P(ABS):** default class

   hedge n-uq-i ise žu bada.

   ‘Then he closed that sack.’

b. **A(LAT), P(ABS):** esp. experiencer verbs

   tuq-un c’odoraw-il ğadalaw-is ze-qo iss-u xabar.

   ‘Clever heard Fool talking to the bear.’

c. **A(ABS), P(SUPERESSIVE):**

   kad h’amây-e’-l’o buž-i.

   ‘The girl believed (her) friend.’
TAM

**Georgian** (Gurevich 2006)

- Present: A(NOM)
- Aorist: A(ERG)
- Perfect: A(DAT)

a. *k’ac-i* dzayl-s xat’avs  
   man-NOM dog-DAT paint.PRS.3SG.A.3P  
   ‘The man paints / is painting the dog.’ (Present)

b. *k’ac-ma* dzayl-i daxat’a  
   man-ERG dog-NOM paint.AOR.3SG.A.3P  
   ‘The man painted the dog.’ (Aorist)

c. *k’ac-s* dzayl-i turme dauxat’avs  
   man-DAT dog-NOM apparently paint.PERF.3SG.A.3P  
   ‘The man has apparently painted the dog.’ (Perfect)
Interaction patterns: 4 variables

**Sherpa:** variables

→ Determining the domains in which the variables condition the splits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pred. class</th>
<th>default</th>
<th>non-default</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>IPFV</td>
<td>PFV A(ERG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>non-1st</td>
<td>1st A(ABS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information structure</td>
<td>non-focus A(ABS)</td>
<td>focus A(ERG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ still a simplified picture (cf. “non-default valency classes”)
Origins of DAM

- Subordinate (e.g. nominalized) clauses
- Biclausal constructions
- Detransitivized/intransitive constructions
- Extension of the use of case markers of other clausal dependents (arguments or adjuncts)
- Divergent morphological nature (e.g. suppletive pronouns)
- Indexicals, information structure markers > case markers
Subordinate constructions

Arguments often marked in the same way as in **possessive constructions**

- different sorts of subordinate clauses (often involving nominalized verb forms)
- argument marking (simplified; Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Malchukov 2004):
  a. A(ARG), P(ARG):  
     *My horse* winning the race came as no surprise.
  b. A(POSS), P(ARG):  
     *My horse’s* winning the race came as no surprise.
  c. A(POSS), P(POSS):  
     *My horse’s* winning of the race came as no surprise.
  d. A(OBL), P(POSS):  
     *The winning of the race by my horse* came as no surprise.
Subordinate constructions

Different degrees of clausal integration:
more diversity in subordinate clauses than in main clauses:
Turkish (Kornfilt 2008: 84)

a. specific: A(GEN)
   Köy-ü *bir* haydut-un bas-tiğ-in-ı duy-du-m.
   village-ACC INDEF robber-GEN raid-NMLZ-3-ACC hear-PST-1SG
   ‘I heard that a (certain) robber raided the village.’

b. non-specific, generic: A(NOM)
   Köy-ü *haydut* bas-tiğ-in-ı duy-du-m.
   village-ACC robber[NOM] raid-NMLZ-3-ACC hear-PST-1SG
   ‘I heard that robbers raided the village.’
Subordinate constructions

Case frames of subordinate constructions in main clauses:
2 diachronic scenarios:

- **Insubordination**: main clause use of formally subordinate clauses (Evans 2007); i.e. no traces of a former main clause left

- **Clause fusion**: (former) main clause only contributes the verb, which develops to an AUX and forms a complex predicate with the lexical subordinate verb (e.g. Heine 1993, Bybee et al. 1994, Harris & Campbell 1995, Gildea 1998)
Subordinate clauses

Nominalized constructions used for certain TAM categories; e.g. Suyá (Jêan; Brazil; de Castro Alves 2010):

Stage I:  \[A-te \ P \ V.NMLZ]_{\text{subord}} \ V \quad \text{(main clauses: \ A-Ø)}

Stage II:  A-te \ P \ V.NMLZ \ (AUX) \quad \text{(other main clauses: \ A-Ø)}

Stage I:  DAM conditioned by clause type:
- main clause: A-Ø
- subord. clause: A-te

Stage II:  DAM additionally conditioned by tense and polarity (and lexical class)
- most (main) clauses: A-Ø
- FUT, NEG (pronouns only): A-te

\[i-re \ hw\text{"i}si \ ren \ ma\]
1-ERG fruit pick.\text{NMLZ} \ FUT
‘I will pick fruit.’ (Gildea & de Castro Alves 2010)
Biclausal constructions

2 clauses contribute arguments

Stage I: [1-arg clause] + [1-arg clause]
Stage II [2-arg clause (often with periphrastic verb form)]

Examples: (various) Nakh-Dagestanian languages (cf. Forker 2012): biabsolutive constructions: A(ABS), P(ABS)

Biabsolutive construction: each original clause contributes 1 argument

Stage I  [S(ABS)       [P(ABS)       V.LEX-CVB]       AUX]
Stage II  [A(ABS)       P(ABS)       V.LEX-CVB       AUX]

- used in imperfective contexts
- periphrastic verb form: convert (lexical part) + auxiliary
- rest of the paradigm: A in the ERG (or other cases)
Biclausal constructions

Example

Archi (Nakh-Dagestanian, Russia; Kibrik 1979: 67-69, cf. also Forker 2012)

a. *buwa*-mu x:”alli b-ar-ši b-i
   mother(II)-ERG bread(III)[ABS] III-make-CVB III-be
   ➔ ergative construction

b. *buwa* x:”alli b-ar-ši d-i
   mother(II)[ABS] bread(III)[ABS] III-make-CVB II-be
   ➔ biabsolutive construction

both: ‘Mother is baking the bread.’
P-oriented constructions

Passive/Resultative > default

Stage I
Default (active): A(S-marking) P(P-marking)
P-oriented: A(OBL-marking) P(S-marking)

Stage II:
Default: A(e.g. ERG) P(S-marking)
P-oriented constructions

Indo-Aryan: 1) Resultative > Perfective paradigm
2) Decay of the case system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Resultative:</th>
<th>Imperfective:</th>
<th>Case decay (incl. INS &gt; OBL)</th>
<th>New ERG (lg-specific)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OIA</td>
<td>INS</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>INS</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Resultative &gt; Perfective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early NIA</td>
<td>OBL</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Case decay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later NIA</td>
<td>(OBL+)ERG</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sanskrit (Old IA; Verbeke 2013: 76)

*devadatt-ena* kaṭa-h kr-ta-h

Devadatta-INS mat-NOM.SG make-PTCP.RES-M.NOM.SG

‘The mat is made by Devadatta.’

Hindi (New IA): ERG < ABL < LOC < ‘Ohr’ (Butt & Ahmed 2010: 563)

*Ram-ne* ravi-ko pīṭ-ā.

Ram-ERG Ravi-ACC beat.PTCP.PFV-M.SG

‘Ram beat Ravi.’ (Mohanan 1994: 70)
Suppletive pronouns

Torwali (Indo-Aryan; Pakistan; Lunsford 2001)

Nouns: Decay of the case system in the SG

Pronouns: Case system preserved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOM</th>
<th>ERG</th>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>OBL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>mæ</td>
<td>mæ</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>tu</td>
<td>tæ</td>
<td>thæ</td>
<td>čhi</td>
<td>the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>mo</td>
<td>moe</td>
<td>mo</td>
<td>mun</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>tho</td>
<td>tho</td>
<td>tho</td>
<td>thun</td>
<td>tho</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction of the variables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical class, number</th>
<th>Aspect, tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRO, N.PL</td>
<td>ERG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.SG</td>
<td>NOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PFV, FUT, IPFV, NFUT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extensions of other case markers

Extension of the marking of instruments/sources/locations for unusual As:
- semantically unusual: inanimate As
- pragmatically unusual: focal, unexpected degree of agentivity etc.

Example: Goonyandi (Bunuban; Australia; McGregor 1990, 2010):
- ergative = instrumental
- animacy: ergative almost always employed on inanimate As, more rarely on pronominal As
- agentivity: no ergative marking signals low agentivity
Indexicals, information structure

- **Precondition**: Indexicals or focus markers occur particularly frequently on A arguments and are subsequently reanalyzed as A markers.

- **Example**: Kuuk Thaayorre (Paman; Australia; Gaby 2006: 159)
  
  **Stage I**: FOC marker
  
  \[=thurr \text{ ‘FOC’}\]

  **Stage II**: FOC marker restricted to As (but not on all As)
  
  \[=thurr \text{ ‘FOC’}, \text{ ‘ERG’} \text{ (optional, i.e. for focal As)}\]

  **Stage III**: All As are marked with this marker (ERG)
  
  \[=thurr \text{ ‘FOC’} \text{ vs. } -thurr \text{ ‘ERG’} \text{ (obligatory for all As)}\]

- more diversity through reanalysis of morphemes other than case markers
Origins and developments

- Referential properties of the A argument
  - extensions of other case markers
  - P-oriented constructions
  - different developments of suppletive pronoun forms and non-suppletive noun forms
  - indexicals, pragmatic markers
- Valency classes (cf. also “strict” vs. “loose” ergative coding, Harris 1985)
  - extensions of other case markers
  - detransitivized/intransitive constructions
  - subordinate/nominalized constructions
Origins and developments

- TAM splits:
  - P-oriented constructions
  - subordinate/nominalized constructions
  - biclausal constructions
- Polarity:
  - subordinate/nominalized clauses
- main vs. subordinate clauses:
  - subordinate/nominalized constructions
- Scenario: frozen pragmatically conditioned DAM
The emergence of DAM cannot be accounted for in terms of universal alignment preferences (cf. also Bickel & Witzlack-Makarevich 2008, Bickel et al. in press). Rather, there are genealogical and areal tendencies (and also idiosyncratic outcomes)

- New DAM patterns evolve through the reanalysis and extension of constructions that previously had different properties
- DAM is thus often just an epiphenomenon, a by-product of language change in other areas of grammar
- While direct functional explanations for typological regularities are useful and needed, indirect or historical explanations can often account for certain patterns more adequately
- DAM patterns don’t emerge in random ways, there are recurrent developments
- High diversity in synchronic patterns