

## Case marking strategies

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There have recently been proposed different Optimality Theoretic accounts of differential case marking. On the one hand, Aissen proposed that markedness constraints determine the pattern of Differential Subject Marking (DSM) (Aissen 1999), as well as Differential Object Marking (DOM) (Aissen 2003, De Swart 2003). On the other hand, recent research has shown that the markedness approach (through interaction of the markedness hierarchies and economy) cannot account for (all) patterns of Differential Subject Marking (DSM): in many cases it is the prominent (strong) subject rather than the weak one which is marked though case (Woolford 2001, 2004; de Hoop and Narasimhan, to appear). In this talk we shall discuss additional data on differential case marking and we will propose an explanation for the attested asymmetry between DOM and DSM patterns as well as for certain correlations between case and voice alternations (Malchukov, to appear). In particular we assume with much of the typological literature that case-marking has two major functions – indexing of (proto)role properties and differentiating between subjects and objects (markedness can be understood as a context-independent or generalized differentiating function). If one looks at INDEX and DIFF as two different constraint families one can account for consistencies and asymmetries in differential case marking. Indeed, DOM is cross-linguistically more consistent, as here the effects of both types of constraints converge rather than conflict, while in case of DSM the constraints are in conflict. Our account distinguishes between several different types of DOM and DSM which are often confused in the literature. That is, only alternations between overt and zero case can be attributed to DIFF; however, when there is an alternation between two (overt) cases, the marking must be explained on the basis of INDEX. Furthermore, our account provides an explanation for the functional difference between differential case marking of the “split” and “fluid” type. Only the former type (found in split ergative languages of the Dyrbal type) can follow the predictions of the DIFF constraints, while in case of a genuine transitivity alternation (like in split ergative languages of the fluid type) the pattern of case-marking always reflects an INDEX strategy (e.g., only strong subjects get an ergative case). In the talk we shall show how a relation between availability of a paradigmatic opposition and the function of case marking can be captured through a bidirectional OT. More generally, a bidirectional approach seems to be preferable for accounting for the patterns of case marking, given that INDEX constraints are straightforwardly placed on the production side, while DIFF constraints naturally belong to the comprehension side.

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