

Asymmetric case in coordination: An argument against movement-based approaches to DOM

1. Introduction: Differential Object Marking (DOM) is a common crosslinguistic phenomenon whereby languages that have morphologically overt case-marking on objects only display this marking on a subset of objects, namely those that are high in definiteness or animacy (Comrie 1979, Croft 1988, Bossong 1991, Enç 1991, Aissen 2003, de Swart 2007, *i.a.*). Take, for example, case marking of definite objects in Caucasian Urum, a Turkic language spoken by ethnic Greeks in Georgia, (1).

- (1) a. Lara [pismo] yoll-ier. b. Lara [pismo-**yi**] yoll-ier. (Böhm 2015)
 Lara letter send-3SG Lara letter-**DOM** send-3SG
 ‘Lara is sending a letter.’ ‘Lara is sending the letter.’

In this talk, we set out to accomplish two things: (i) to introduce new findings related to DOM in coordinations, revealing that many DOM languages allow asymmetric marking in coordinations when conjuncts are mismatched in terms of specificity/definiteness, and (ii) to show that these findings deal a fatal blow to many popular (broadly) Minimalist accounts of DOM, namely, those that derive DOM via movement (de Hoop 1996, Torrego 1998, Woolford 1999, Bhatt 2007, Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007, Baker and Vinokurova 2010, Richards 2010, López 2012, Ormazabal and Romero 2013, *i.a.*).

2. Movement accounts of DOM: Movement-based accounts of DOM are those that take raising of the object out of VP to be a necessary (though perhaps not sufficient) ingredient of DOM, (2).

- (2) [TP T ... [object ... [VP V *t*_{object}]]]

One preliminary problem with taking movement to be a general property of DOM is that not all DOM languages have (at least obvious) syntactic movement of the marked object; see, e.g. Hebrew (Shlonsky 1997), Kannada (Lidz 2006), and Neo-Aramaic languages (Kalin 2014). However, it might be that there is movement in these languages but this movement is covert or is not detectable with the normal tests, so this is not a fatal blow to movement-based accounts of DOM. In this talk, we present data from coordination that we take to definitively show that movement is not a necessary ingredient of DOM crosslinguistically.

3. DOM in coordination as a movement diagnostic: While the accounts cited in §1 apply various tests to establish the higher position of marked objects (e.g., adverb placement, binding), the most reliable tests of movement are typically not applied, namely syntactic islands. If an alleged movement-derived effect yields ungrammaticality in island configurations, then we can conclude that we really are dealing with movement. If the effect is not blocked, then we must conclude that movement is not a crucial ingredient of the effect.

In this talk, we appeal to one of the most crosslinguistically robust islands, namely coordination. In accordance with the Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC), it is not possible to move one conjunct out of a coordination. To apply this test to the DOM cases at hand, we need to conjoin one element that is supposed to undergo movement (a marked object) and one element that is supposed to stay in situ (an unmarked object). If a marked and unmarked object cannot be conjoined, then this indicates that there is something wrong with the configuration, plausibly because it is ruled out by the corresponding CSC violation, (3).

- (3) [TP T ... [DP₁ ... [VP V [&P *t*_{DP1} & DP₂]]]]

However, if asymmetric DOM in coordination *is* grammatical, and one conjunct can be marked while the other is unmarked (or marked differently), we can conclude that DOM is not tied necessarily to movement.

4. Data: We tested for asymmetric DOM in eleven languages from five different language families. Nine of the eleven languages in our sample allowed asymmetric DOM. Take e.g. Caucasian Urum again (cf. (1)):

- (4) Mesut [&P araba-**i** da biröz pul] ist-ier-di. (V. Moisiđi, p.c.)
 Mesut car-**DOM** and some money ask-IPFV-PAST.3SG
 ‘Mesut asked for the car and (some) money.’

Eight other languages in our sample pattern with Urum: Spanish, Neapolitan Italian, Romanian, Nepali, Finnish, Hebrew, Amharic, and Tamil. Just two disallowed asymmetric DOM—Turkish, (5), and Hindi.

- (5) *Hasan [_{&P} dondurma-yı ve pasta] ye-di. (Ü. Atlamaz, p.c.)
Hasan cake-DOM and ice.cream eat-PAST
Intended: ‘Hasan ate the cake and some ice cream.’

Notably, both Turkish and Hindi are close relatives of DOM languages that do allow asymmetric DOM (Caucasian Urum and Nepali); we did not find any language family that disallowed asymmetric DOM.

While DOM in each language in our sample has many complexities that we do not have the space to discuss here, it is clear that many (if not most) DOM languages allow for asymmetries in case marking with conjoined objects. Since movement is prohibited out of coordinations, this tells us there must be some non-movement-related mechanism that is behind DOM. This strongly suggests that movement analyses of DOM are on the wrong track to the extent that they are intended to be general and crosslinguistically applicable.

5. *Three attempts to save movement-based accounts:* There are a few ways one could challenge our conclusion that movement is not a central component of DOM. First, it could be argued that the coordination island is not as robust as we make it out to be. It has, in fact, been observed that exceptions to the CSC are occasionally attested. For example, Bošković (2009) has shown some speakers of Serbo-Croatian allow extraction of the left conjunct. However, violations of the CSC are very infrequent crosslinguistically. To our knowledge, no such exception has been reported for any of the languages in our sample. Further, even in languages like Serbo-Croatian, only the leftmost conjunct can be extracted from a coordination; this would predict that only the leftmost conjunct could ever bear DOM. This is the wrong prediction: for the most part, we find no linear restrictions on asymmetric DOM. (The examples above feature DOM on the first conjunct because DOM is a suffix in Turkic languages, and so first-conjunct marking is unambiguously asymmetric.)

Second, it might be that while *movement* is symmetric, *case assignment* is not. In other words, in a configuration where only one of the conjuncts is high in definiteness/animacy, it might be that the whole coordination moves, but in its higher position, only one of the conjuncts gets case-marked. There are two reasons why this is implausible. First, Weisser (2016) shows that (non-DOM) case marking in coordinations is always symmetric. Second, even if case assignment *could* target a specific conjunct inside of a coordination, we would again expect to find ordering/hierarchy effects, but our data do not bear this out.

Third, it might be argued that asymmetric DOM arises due to some sort of ellipsis, i.e., that what looks like simple coordination of DPs is in fact coordination of some larger piece of structure. However, the intonation characteristic of gapping is absent in these asymmetric coordinations, and other tests (e.g., adjectives like “together” and topic-movement of the coordination) make an ellipsis analysis implausible.

6. *Where does this leave us?* In light of these findings, one might wonder which accounts *can* deal with the data we present. We discuss what we call the NP vs. DP account, according to which the difference in case marking of the respective conjuncts is due to a difference in their size or the featural makeup of the heads (see e.g. Danon 2006, Lidz 2006, Richards 2008, Dayal 2011, López 2012). We show that these accounts *could* derive these facts, but would have to make undesirable stipulations about the possibility of conjoining different categories, syntactically *and* semantically. We also discuss two less frequently adhered alternatives, namely a last-resort rescue account of DOM (e.g., Kalin 2014) as well as purely morphological accounts that derive the case alternations by means of impoverishment/feature freezing (e.g., Keine & Müller 2008, Glushan 2012). We show that even though these accounts need minor adjustments, they can account for the conjunction patterns much more straightforwardly than the alternatives can.

Selected references: Baker and Vinokurova 2010. Two modalities of case assignment: Case in Sakha. NLLT 28. • Danon 2006. Caseless nominals and the projection of DP. NLLT 24. • Diesing 1992. *Indefinites*. MIT Press • Kalin 2014. Aspect and argument licensing in Neo-Aramaic. PhD Thesis, UCLA. • López 2012. Indefinite objects: Scrambling, choice functions and differential marking. MIT Press • Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007. The syntax of objects: Agree and Differential Object Marking. PhD, UConn.