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OBJECTS AND INFORMATION STRUCTURE

In many languages, the objects of transitive verbs are either marked by grammatical case or agreement on the verb, or they remain unmarked: this is differential object marking. This book is a cross-linguistic study of how differential object marking is affected by information structure, the structuring of the utterance in accordance with the informational value of its elements and contextual factors. Marked objects tend to be associated with old information or information that the sentence is about, while unmarked objects tend to express new information. The book also sheds light on grammatical patterning in languages with differential object marking: in some languages marked and unmarked objects have identical grammatical properties, whereas in other languages marked objects are more active in syntax. Finally, it provides a theory of the historical changes that led to the emergence of various patterns of differential object marking.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Our work on this topic began in connection with our participation in the AHRC project "Noun Phrase Agreement and Coordination", a joint project which involved, besides us, Louisa Sadler, Ryo Otoguro, and Aline Villavicencio at the University of Essex (AHRC grant MRG-AN10939/APN17606, 2004–2006). We are grateful to Louisa, Ryo, and Aline for helpful comments and discussion as our ideas developed over the course of the project.

Earlier versions of the work were presented at the 2005 International Lexical Functional Grammar Conference (LFG05) in Bergen, the 2005 Linguistic Association of Great Britain conference in Cambridge, the 2005 Colloque de Syntaxe et Sémantique à Paris (CSSP 2005), the University of Leipzig in December 2007, the University of Manchester in April 2008, the workshop "Arctic Languages: Syntax, Morphology, Lexicon" at the University of Tromsø in September 2009, the workshop "Variation and Change in Argument Realisation" at the University of Naples in May 2010, the Surrey Linguistics Circle in December 2010, and the State of the Art Seminar on Differential Object Marking and Information Structure at the University of Konstanz in December 2010. An early version of our work appeared as Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2005), though it will be clear to readers of that paper that our ideas have evolved considerably since its publication. We have profited from discussion of these earlier versions with Farrell Ackerman, Ash Asudeh, David Beck, Balthasar Bickel, Miriam Butt, Elizabeth Coppock, Greville Corbett, David Cram, Annahita Farudi, Ron Kaplan, Tracy Holloway King, Aditi Lahiri, Olivia Lam, Louise Mycock, Tara Mohanan, Louisa Sadler, Devyani Sharma, Nigel Vincent, Yogendra Yadava, and Annie Zaenen.

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List of Abbreviations

We have regularised some of the glosses and the transcription of the original sources. We use the following abbreviations:

Abs	absolutive	Ez	ezafe	Obl	oblique agreement
Acc	accusative	Fem	feminine	P	potential
Adv	adverb	Foc	focus	Part	participle
All	allative	Fut	future	Pas	passive
AN	action nominal	Gen	genitive	Perf	perfective
Art	article	Hab	habitual	Pl	plural
Asp	aspect	Hon	honorific	Poss	possessive
Attr	attributive	Imp	imperative	Postess	postessive
Aug	augmentative	Impf	imperfective	Prep	preposition
Aux	auxiliary	Imprs	impersonal	Pres	present
C	completive	Indef	indefinite	Prog	progressive
Caus	causative	Indic	indicative	Proh	prohibitive
Cl	classifier	Inf	infinitive	Pron	pronominal
Com	comitative	Instr	instrumental	Purp	purposive
Conv	converb	Interj	interjection	Q	question
Cop	copula	Intr	intransitive	Rel	relative form or relative pronoun
Dat	dative	Irr	irrealis	Rep	reportative
Decl	declarative	Loc	locative	Sg	singular
Det	determiner	Masc	masculine	Spec	specific
Dim	diminutive	Mod	modal	Subj	subject agreement
Dir	directive	Neg	negation	Sub	subordinate
Dur	durative	NMLZ	nominalisation	Supess	superessive
Du	dual	Nom	nominative	Top	topic
Erg	ergative	Obj	object marker or object agreement	Tr	transitive
Expl	expletive				

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