

## Differential Object Marking In Classical Greek

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Differential Object Marking (DOM) is a phenomenon best studied in languages with asymmetric case alternation (i.e. languages where alternation of flagging varies between an overt case mark and a  $\emptyset$  mark).<sup>1</sup> In fact, some authors consider DOM only when they deal with such languages, but we think the same principles can be fruitfully employed when we consider symmetric case alternation (i.e. when the alternation is between different overt cases), as have been done by other authors, even when we acknowledge that the kind of case alternation implies important differences in the extension and characteristics of DOM. In this paper we propose that some of the principles that govern case marking of verbal arguments in Greek must be used to explain DOM.

Case alternations come typologically in two flavours: "split" alternations refer to the use of different verbal lexemes, with different associated case frames, to code for alternations in some of the parameters of the transitivity scale. On the other hand, and following Hoop and Malchukov 2006, we will call "fluid" the case flagging alternation of the objects of one verb that impinges on variations on any transitivity parameter. In both symmetric (like Greek) and asymmetric (like Spanish) case alternating languages, it is necessary to consider lexical, referential, pragmatical and informational properties of the predicate to explain the case alternations.

In Ancient Greek, we observe a series of verbs that assign an alternating case mark to their DOs. All the examples of () are instances of roughly synchronic alternances in the use of one and the same verb θαυμάζω.

τὰ ἀρχαῖα <Ac.> (...) θαυμάζοντων (their) admiration of  
earlier events Th.1.21.2 ὑμῶν <Gen.> (...)  
θαυμάζω I am surprised at you X.HG 2.3.53  
θαυμάζω τῇ τε ἀποκλήσει <Dat.> μου τῶν πυλῶν I am  
astonished at finding your gates shut against me  
Th.4.85.3

While it may be fair to call this alternation DOM, it is quite a different animal from the usual examples of DOM in languages like Spanish, without a morphological differentiation between subject and object. Alternations can

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<sup>1</sup> For most of the differential case marking related terminology I will follow Malchukov 2007.

imply two or more case marks (bare cases or prepositional cases), can be synchronic or diachronic and can be of several kinds; they may involve the semantics of the verb, or that of the object.

What we are proposing in this paper is that the importance of each group of properties is roughly the opposite for languages with symmetrical or asymmetrical case alternation: while lexical semantics of the verb are the main criterion to decide case marking of objects (and consequently differential object marking too) in Greek, it is the semantics of the object the first criterion for DOM in Spanish. In the first case we deal with an iconic mark, and in the second there is a principle of economy and differentiation what determines case marking. The second proposal that we present here is that, for languages like Greek, the main parameters involved in the assignation of case marking determine the extension of DOM. A third claim of this presentation, viz. that the case marking (and DOM) of arguments is based on the spatial imaginary of basic semantic conceptualizations of the argument structure, will be briefly dealt with.<sup>2</sup>

#### REFERENCES

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<sup>2</sup> cf. Riaño 2006 for an extended explanation of the iconicity of case marking in ancient Greek.