

To *-re* or not to *-re*: Differential Object Marking in Tukanoan languages

Differential Object Marking (DOM), in which two or more sets of direct objects (Iemmolo and Klumpp, 2014) show differences in marking depending on their semantic, pragmatic or referential properties, is a widespread phenomenon — such as the occurrence of the Spanish “prepositional accusative” *a* with typically human nouns, as in *He visto a Juan* “I have seen Juan”. DOM is found in many languages (Sinnemäki, 2014), including the Tukanoan language family of Northwestern Amazonia. While there are several accounts of DOM in individual Tukanoan languages (e.g. Cook and Levinsohn 1985, Case and Jeretič 2018), a unified typological and diachronic approach has yet to be developed. I analyze the behaviour of the object marker *-re* based on linguistic descriptions of 15 Tukanoan languages, applying a set of typological parameters, gathered mainly from the typology of DOM posited in Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant (2018). Furthermore, I attempt to determine the nature of the DOM systems in these languages, taking into account the object markedness scales, first described by Aissen (2003). All evidence from the study point toward: (a) the grammaticalization of *-re* from a prominent spatio-temporal marker to a subject marker in one Tukanoan language via a differentially marked object — akin to what was described by Heine et al. (1991) as the “spatial > human > inanimate” path; (b) a clear pattern indicating a geographical centre from which the various *-re* functions may have spread. I conclude that future work on the phenomenon should be oriented towards unifying DOM marking analyses in different branches of the Tukanoan language family.

References

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