

## Partitives and Differential Object Marking

Silvia Luraghi, University of Pavia

### PARTE - Partitivity in European Languages

Differential object marking or DOM is traditionally defined as “the phenomenon whereby only a subset of direct objects are case marked depending on the semantic and/or pragmatic properties of the object referent” (Iemmolo & Kluppff 2014). An example is animacy based DOM in Spanish as in (i).

(i) *Estoy esperando un tren / a un camarero.*  
be.prs.1sg waiting a train / DOM a waiter

“I’m waiting for a train/ for a waiter.”

In recent years, partitive case markers have been viewed as instantiating a special type of DOM, often labelled as symmetrical DOM, when offering an alternative to accusative encoding of direct objects as in Finnish (ii).

(ii) *Lapsi sö-i keito-n keito-a*  
child.nom eat-3sg.pst soup-acc soup-par

“The child ate (up) the soup / ate (some) soup.”

A fundamental difference between the items involved in (i) and (ii) is that partitive marking is typically also possible for subjects, i.e. it is involved in differential subject marking or DSM, while the Spanish type DOM marker is not.

DOM and DSM (sometimes subsumed under DAM, differential argument marking) have been the subject of extensive studies in the last decade, and various definitions have been proposed, covering to different extents the types of marking exemplified in (i) and (ii). In my lecture I will survey some recent works and discuss different definitions. Tentatively I will argue that a too broad definition of DOM (or even of DAM) ultimately undergoes the risk of blurring the distinction between phenomena that should better be kept separate.