

Typological correlations in nominal determination in Romance

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The emergence of article systems in all Romance languages, deriving from a language without obligatory nominal determination (Latin), has led, since the early days of Romance linguistics, to the development of various hypotheses.

Recently, the extreme obligatorification of explicit (indefinite) determination in (spoken) French (even under the scope of direct negation: *Je n'ai pas DE voiture*) has been directly related to the loss of overt inflectional *number marking* in the French NP (cf. "Le trait pertinent qui distingue [...] l'espagnol du français est la présence du nombre dans la prononciation du nom", Schrotten 2001, 196). French is also the most prominent example of Romance languages with two grammaticalized indefinite determiners, namely the indefinite article *un* and the so called 'partitive article' *du*. This property is shared on the one hand by Occitan and - in a continuously increasing way - modern standard Italian (cf. Renzi ³1991) – which has overt number marking in both spoken and written varieties. On the other hand, we find Spanish and Rumanian without 'partitive articles', but with a rule for oblique direct object marking for direct object NPs with certain features ('human', 'animate' etc., cf. Lyons 1999, 205ff.).

The aim of the present talk is to show in a first step that the loss of nominal inflection in late Latin and grammaticalization of indefinite nominal determiners in the Romance languages are in fact interdependent, and this not only according to number marking. Latin nominal inflection gives more information than just 'singular' or 'plural', cf. the opposition between lat. *caseus*, 'one single piece or sort of cheese', and *caseum*, 'substance of cheese' – it is actually also a system of NOMINAL CLASSIFICATION, i.e. classification of the noun's denotation as "an undifferentiated concept or as an individual" (Lehmann 1991, 206). In a second step, it will be shown that the already discovered correlation of the existence of a 'partitive article' and no oblique direct object marking on the one hand (French, standard Italian) and the absence of a 'partitive article' and differential object marking on the other (Spanish, Rumanian, cf. Körner 1987) can be directly related to the degree of conservation of the Latin classification system either in form or in function – which permits a unified explanation of indefinite determiner grammaticalization in Romance.

Selected references

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