Patterns of syncretism in differential object marking

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In some languages with differential object marking (DOM), the exponents of DOM and dative case are homophonous (e.g. Spanish, Hindi, or Gujarati). I argue that this pattern is not due to DOM objects and indirect objects representing the same type of syntactic argument but due to syncretism between accusative and dative case. This is indicated by a number of syntactic tests which group DOM objects with zero-coded direct objects rather than with indirect objects.

To model these patterns of syncretism, I assume that morphological cases are ordered represented along a hierarchy that can vary across languages to some degree (following e.g. Caha 2009, Zompì 2019). I propose that to capture variation and complex patterns of syncretism, language-specific hierarchies can be partially rather than totally ordered.

References:

Caha, Pavel. 2009. The nanosyntax of case. Tromsø: University of Tromsø. PhD dissertation.

Zompì, Stanislao. 2019. Ergative is not inherent: Evidence from *ABA in suppletion and syncretism. Glossa: a journal of general linguistics 4(1):73. 1–28. `https://www.glossa-journal.org/article/id/5180/`.