DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN ROMANIAN: AN OVERVIEW*

MARCATGE DIFERENCIAL D'OBJECTE EN ROMANÈS: UNA PANORÀMICA

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Abstract: This article offers a descriptive overview of the most important empirical traits that characterize differential object marking (DOM) in modern standard Romanian, ranging from purely interpretive parameters to the more syntactically oriented ones. Various aspects are reviewed, including the argumental status of Romanian differentially marked objects, despite overt prepositional marking, interactions with clitic doubling, or with the animacy and specificity scales. The final part is dedicated to a presentation of the numerous problems Romanian DOM raises for formal accounts. Against this background, it is shown that analyses which take this phenomenon to signal a mechanism at the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface appear to be best suited for the data.

Key words: differential object marking; Romanian; preposition; animacy; specificity; clitic doubling.

Resum: Aquest article ofereix una visió descriptiva dels trets empírics més importants que caracteritzen el marcatge diferencial d'objecte (MDO) en el romanès estàndard modern, des dels paràmetres purament interpretatius fins als orientats més sintàcticament. Es revisen diversos aspectes, entre

els quals hi ha l'estatus argumental dels objectes marcats diferencialment en romanès, a més del marcatge preposicional manifest, les interaccions amb la duplicació de clític i les escales d'animacitat i especificitat. La part final està dedicada a una presentació dels nombrosos problemes que planteja l'MDO romanès per als enfocaments formals. En aquest context, es demostra que les anàlisis que consideren que aquest fenomen assenyala un mecanisme en la interfície sintaxi-semàntica-pragmàtica semblen ser les més adequades per a les dades.

Paraules clau: marcatge diferencial d'objecte; romanès; animacitat; especificitat; duplicació de clític.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Prepositional differential object marking (DOM) is a robust phenomenon in Romanian and many of its varieties (Niculescu 1965; Farkas 1978; Dobrovie Sorin 1990, 1994; Cornilescu 2000; Mardale 2009, 2015; Tigău 2011; Hill 2013; Irimia 2020a; Hill and Mardale 2021, a.o.). In fact, Romanian exhibits one of the most complex patterns of differential marking of objects, not only because of intricate interactions between the prepositional strategy and clitic doubling (Cornilescu 2006; Cornilescu and Dobrovie-Sorin 2008; Tigău 2011; Hill and Mardale 2021, a.o.), but also because the expected animacy and specificity constraints are overridden in various contexts. As opposed to Spanish, another Romance language with a full-fledged DOM system, many aspects of differential object marking in Romanian are still in need of an adequate explanation, as are the less studied types of co-occurrence restrictions it gives rise to (Cornilescu 2020; Tigău 2021; Irimia in press). This short paper offers a descriptive overview of the most important empirical traits of DOM in modern standard Romanian, ranging from purely interpretive parameters to more syntactically oriented ones. After a brief presentation of the morphological make-up and argumental status of prepositional DOM in (§ 2), the parameters of interaction with Animacy and Referentiality scales (§ 3.1) and with clitic doubling (§ 3.2) are introduced. The numerous problems Romanian DOM raises for formal accounts are then reviewed (§ 4), leading to the conclusion that analyses which take this phenomenon to signal a mechanism at the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface appear to be best suited for the data.

2. ROMANIAN DOM: GENERAL REMARKS

Like some other Romance languages (Niculescu 1965; Sornicola 1997; Rohlfs 1971, 1973; Roegiest 1979; Fiorentino ed. 2003, a.o.), Romanian exhibits a so-called *oblique* DOM strategy (Bossong 1991, 1998; Manzini and Franco 2016; Bárány 2018; Irimia to appear1), which is otherwise quite common cross-linguistically. More precisely, a preposition is recruited for this purpose, namely the locative *pe* ('on'), as in (1). Modern Romanian is thus slightly different from many western Romance languages, where the dative preposition is used for DOM, as seen in example (2) from Spanish:[1,2]

(1) Romanian
   a. Locative preposition *pe* ('on') grammaticalized for DOM[3]
      Au   lăudat-o   **pe**   eleva   eminentă.
      have.3PL praised-CL.3SG.F.ACC LOC=DOM   student.DEF.F.SG   stellar.F.SG
      'They have praised the stellar student.'
   b. Locative preposition *pe* ('on')
      Mănâncă   **pe**   masă.
      eat.3   LOC   table
      Lit. 'They eat on the table.'
   c. Dative marker not grammatical as DOM[4]
      ***I**-au   lăudat   student**ei**   eminent**e**.
      CL.3SG.DAT-have.3PL   praised   student.DEF.DAT.F.SG   stellar.F.SG.DAT
      Intended: 'They have congratulated the stellar student.'

(2) Spanish - dative preposition grammaticalized for DOM
     Busco   *(**a**)   la   niña.
     look for.1SG   DAT=DOM   DEF.F.SG   girl
     'I'm looking for the girl.'

1. Romanian and the dative DOM (Romance) languages can be unified under the assumption that DOM builds on a more general locative marker; this strategy is not surprising from a cross-linguistic perspective (see especially Haspelmath 2008; Irimia forthcoming1). See also Mardale (2018) for the connection between Romanian *pe* and the allative preposition *spre*.

2. For Spanish DOM see especially Torrego (1998); Leonetti (2003, 2008); Bleam (2005); Laca (2006); Rodríguez-Mondoñedo (2007); López (2012); Ormazabal and Romero (2007, 2013a), a.o.

3. Abbreviations: ACC=accusative, AUG=augmented, CL=clitic, DAT=dative, DEF=definite, DOM=differential object marking, F=feminine, IMPF=imperfect(ive), LOC=locative, M=masculine, N=neuter, NEG=negative, NOM=nominative, PL=plural, PST =past, REFL=REFL, SE MP=medio-passive SE, SBJV=subjunctive, SG=singular.

4. Hill and Mardale (2019, 2021) present a limited number of examples from Old Romanian where differentially marked objects were introduced by the dative marker *a* or the inflectional dative. This realization is no longer possible in modern Romanian.

Just like most prepositions in the language, the differential marker exhibits a process characteristic to Romanian known as the *Definite Article Drop* (Dobrovie Sorin 2007; Giurgea to appear, a.o.). In a nutshell, this is a restriction leading to ungrammaticality of most prepositions that govern the accusative case[5] if their complement is an unmodified nominal which carries the definite suffix overtly. Hence the contrast between (3) and (1a) — in the latter the nominal is modified by an adjective and allows the definite suffix. Note that despite the obligatory deletion of the definite suffix on the surface, the nominal is still interpreted as a definite in (3).[6]

(3) Romanian — Article drop on unmodified nouns with DOM and prepositions
  a. Au   felicitat-o   **pe**   elevă/*eleva.
      have.3PL   congratulated-CL.3SG.F.ACC   LOC=DOM   student/student.DEF.F.SG
      'They have congratulated the student.'
  b. Scrie   **pe**   masă/*masa.
      write.3PL   LOC   table/table.DEF.F.SG
      'S/he writes on the table.'

However, despite this apparently oblique behaviour, differentially marked objects are set aside from prepositional phrases. This is demonstrated by a variety of diagnostics. First, as we see in (1a), marked nominals can be clitic doubled, using the accusative form of the clitic.[7] This is an option locatives or prepositional phrases with inherent *pe* selected by various predicates do not have; the latter cannot be clitic doubled, as seen in (4). Second, DOM normally requires obligatory clitic resumption under clitic left dislocation (CLLD), while clitic resumption is prohibited with dislocated prepositional phrases, as in (5).[8]

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5. Note that the process does not apply to prepositions that govern the dative or the genitive case. In these instances, the definite morpheme is necessary. Furthermore, a very limited set of accusative case assigning prepositions (including *cu* 'with') are exempt from this rule.

6. An indefinite interpretation would require the obligatory presence of the indefinite marker:
Au   felicitat-o   **pe**   o   elevă.
have.3PL   congratulated-CL.3SG.F.ACC   LOC=DOM   a.F.SG   student.F.SG
'They have congratulated a (specific) student.'

7. As we will see in Section 3, certain types of oblique DOM must in fact be clitic doubled.

8. Note that despite identical surface form of the clitic in both clitic doubling and CLLD, the two have to be kept aside as distinct syntactic mechanisms. Due to space limitations, the paper does not go into a detailed presentation here. See especially Cornilescu (2002); Tigău (2011, 2016): Hill and Mardale (2021), a.o. for extensive discussion.

(4)   Romanian — Prepositional phrases do not allow accusative clitic doubling
  a. (*Îl)   dorm **pe** pat.
   CL.3SG.M/N.ACC sleep.3PL ON bed
   'They sleep on the bed.'
  b. Nu **(*le)**   poți conta **pe** aceste   fonduri/persoane.
   NEG CL.3N/F.PL.ACC can.2SG count ON this.PL.N/F fund.PL.N/person.PL.F
   'You/one cannot count on these funds/persons.'[9]

(5)   Romanian — DOM vs prepositional phrases under dislocation
  a. **Pe**   elevă,   au   lăudat*(-o).
   LOC=DOM student.F.SG have.3PL felicitat-CL.3SG.F.ACC
   'The student, they have congratulated.'
  b. **Pe** tablă,   au   scris(*-o).
   ON blackboard have.3PL witten-CL.3SG.F.ACC
   Intended: 'On the blackboard, they wrote.'

Third, differentially marked objects behave syntactically like the regular unmarked accusatives under a variety of diagnostics, including passivization, which both classes permit, as shown in (6a, b). Prepositional phrases, on the other hand, are not grammatical under passivization,[10] irrespective of whether the locative preposition undergoes movement with its complement, as in (6c), is stranded, as in (6d), or is simply removed, as in (6e). This indicates that marked objects, despite their prepositional appearance on the surface, are not syntactically oblique, but rather true structural accusatives. This is further confirmed by the observation that as shown in more detail in Section 4, differentially marked objects give rise to various types of syntactic co-occurrence restrictions with other arguments. These restrictions are easily derived under an accusative syntax for differentially marked objects, while an oblique syntax would render them truly mysterious.

(6)   a. Au   vizitat un   monument frumos/*(**pe**)   cineva.
   have.3PL visited a.N.SG monument beautiful/LOC=DOM somebody
   'They visited a beautiful monument/somebody.'
  b. Un   monument frumos/cineva   a   fost vizitat.
   a.N.SG monument beautiful/somebody(M) have.3SG been visited.M/N
   'A beautiful monument/somebody has been visited.'

9. This example is slightly adapted from Irimia (2021).
 10. Other syntactic diagnostics differentiating DOM from the inherent/lexical locative include case preservation under nominalization, (im)possibility under reduced relative clauses, secondary predicate modification. See Irimia (forthcoming1) for further discussion.

c. *Pe	tablă	a	fost	scris(ă).
ON	blackboard.F.SG	have.3SG	been	written(F.SG)
Intended: 'The blackboard was written on.'

d. *Tablă	a	fost	scris(ă)	pe.
blackboard.F.SG	have.3SG	been	written(F.SG)	ON
Intended: 'The blackboard was written on.'

e. *Tablă/*Tabla	a	fost	scris(ă).
blackboard.F.SG/blackboard.DEF.F.SG	have.3SG	been	written(F.SG)
Intended: 'The blackboard was written on.'

Fourth, differential object marking is sensitive to scales. Animacy and specificity generally have an effect on object marking in Romanian. Using the hierarchy below, constructed by putting together animacy and referentiality scales (Silverstein 1976; Comrie 1989; Aissen 2003, a.o), the cut-off point (\\) has traditionally been taken to separate categories including specific animates and higher from the rest. As a result, inanimates (with overtly expressed nouns) are predicted not to be possible with the differential marker; see the contrast between (1a) and (8a).[11]

(7)	Romanian differential object marking and scales
pronoun > name > proper name > human specific indefinite > specific animate \\ non-specific animate > inanimate

(8)	a. Au	lăudat-(*o)	(*pe)	lucrarea	excelentă.
have.3PL	praised-CL.3SG.F.ACC	LOC=DOM	work.DEF.F.SG	excellent.F.SG
'They have praised the excellent work.'	(*inanimate*)

b. Irina	are	(*pe)	fete.
Irina	have.3SG	LOC=DOM	girl.F.PL
'Irina has girls.'	(*animate with property reading*)

c. Alexandra	vrea	(*pe)	copii.
Alexandra	want.3SG	LOC=DOM	child.M.PL
'Alexandra wants children.'	(*animate with property reading*)

This also correctly predicts that animacy per se is not sufficient to guarantee differential marking. The example in (8b), in fact shows a bare plural animate in an existential clause which has a property reading and cannot be used with differential marking. (8c) contains an intensional predicate whose bare noun object is similarly interpreted as a property, blocking differential marking, despite animacy. See also

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11. Given that accusative clitic doubling is dependent on the prepositional differential marker, it is ungrammatical on unmarked direct objects.

the (non-specific) animate object in example (13a). As we discuss in more detail in §4.4, differential object marking has been equated with those objects that are true arguments; in turn, special marking is not possible on nominals with a predicative nature, which permit a property reading (Cornilescu 2000; Tigău 2021, a.o.), or are restricted only to non-specific readings. It can therefore be concluded that Romanian encompasses a bidimensional DOM system where dedicated marking is sensitive to more than one feature on the nominal. Importantly, these types of splits are not seen with *pe* as an inherent/lexical preposition, which does not prohibit inanimates, as already seen in (1b) or (4b).

3. ROMANIAN DOM AND ITS RELEVANT CONTEXTS

3.1 INTERACTIONS WITH SCALES

Despite its descriptive contribution, an analysis in terms of scales raises numerous questions. First, there is the problem of optionality. As opposed to (standard) Spanish, animate definite nominals are grammatical in Romanian without differential marking; the sentence in (9) is equally adequate for the context corresponding to (1a).

(9) Au   lăudat   eleva   eminentă.
    have.3PL   praised   student.DEF.F.SG stellar.F.SG
    'They have praised the stellar student.'

At the same time, it is clear that 'optionality' does not extend to all DOM contexts. There are in fact numerous configurations where differential marking is obligatory (see Cornilescu 2000; Tigău 2011; Hill and Mardale 2021, a.o., for various other examples). Starting with the animates, this class groups tonic pronouns (all personal pronouns) as in (10a) or (17), proper names (10b), various types of quantifiers with an animacy restriction (*cineva* 'somebody', *nimeni* 'nobody', etc.) as in (10c) or (10d), object *wh*-elements with an animacy restriction (10e), D-linked *wh*-elements with animates (10f), animate objects of pain predicates as in (10g), or highly referential animates with demonstratives, as in (10h). For many speakers, various types of object experiencer psych predicates, as in (10i) or (10j), are another context where differential marking is obligatory.

(10) Romanian differential object marking: obligatory contexts with animates

a. Au   felicitat-*(o)   *(**pe**)   ea.[12]
   have.3PL   congratulated-CL.M.3SG.ACC   LOC=DOM   she
   'They have congratulated her.'

b. Au   premiat-o   *(**pe**)   Oana.
   have.3PL   awarded-CL.F.3SG.ACC   LOC=DOM   Oana
   'They have awarded Oana with a prize.'

c. (*L-)au   chemat   *(**pe**)   (alt)cineva.
   CL.M.3SG.ACC-have.3PL   invited   LOC=DOM   (other)somebody
   'They have called somebody (else).'

d. Nu   (*l)-au   certat   *(**pe**)   nimeni.
   NEG   CL.M.3SG.ACC-have.3PL   scolded   LOC=DOM   nobody
   'They haven't scolded anybody.'

e. *(**Pe**)   cine   (*l-)au   chemat?
   LOC=DOM   who   CL.M.3SG.ACC-have.3PL   called
   'Who have they called?'

f. *(**Pe**)   care   copil   l-au   ajutat?
   LOC=DOM   which   child   CL.M.3SG.ACC-have.3PL   helped
   'Which child have they helped?'

g. *(Îl)   doare   stomacul   *(**pe**)   copil.
   CL.3SG.M.ACC   hurt.3SG   stomach.DEF.N.SG   LOC=DOM   child
   'The child's stomach hurts.' (Lit. 'The stomach hurts the child.')

h. (L)-au   decorat   *(**pe**)   domnul   acesta.
   CL.3SG.M.ACC-have.3PL   decorated   DOM   gentleman.DEF.M.SG   this.M.SG.AUG
   'They have decorated this gentleman.'

i. Marcajul   diferenţial   (îi)   interesează *(**pe**)
   marking.DEF.N.SG   differential.N.SG   CL.3PL.M.ACC   interest.3SG   LOC=DOM
   sintacticieni.
   syntactician.M.PL
   'Differential marking interests syntacticians.'

j. Inflaţia   (îi)   preocupă   *(**pe**)   economişti.
   inflation.DEF.F.SG   CL.3PL.M.ACC   worry.3SG   LOC=DOM   economist.M.PL
   'Inflation worries economists.'

We turn now to another important aspect of DOM obligatoriness in Romanian. A very puzzling observation is that the differential marker obligatorily extends even to inanimates in certain contexts. The most relevant ones are listed here, and cover

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12. Note that object tonic pronouns can only refer to animate entities in Romanian. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this fact.

nominal ellipsis with demonstratives as in (11a), the elliptical reduced demonstrative form *cel* seen in (11b), ellipsis involving the genitive in its linker form (which uses the marker *a-*), illustrated in (11c). In all these constructions, the understood antecedent can be animate or inanimate. The D-linked pronoun *which* in (11d) similarly requires obligatory marking, irrespective of animacy.

(11) Romanian DOM: animacy overridden on understood antecedents
    a. (L)-au   anunțat   *(pe)   acest-a.
       CL.3SG.M/N.ACC-have.3PL   announced   LOC=DOM   this.M/N.SG-AUG
       'They have announced this one.'   (*animate or inanimate*)
    b. (L)-au   prezentat   *(pe)   cel   nou.
       CL.3SG.M/N.ACC-have.3PL   presented   LOC=DOM   CEL.M/N.SG   new.M/N.SG
       'They have introduced/presented the new one.'   (*animate or inanimate*)
    c. (L)-au   adus   *(pe)   al   meu.
       CL.3SG.M/N.ACC-have.3PL   brought   LOC=DOM   GEN-DEF.M/N.SG   mine. M/N.SG
       'They have brought mine.'   (*animate or inanimate*)
    d. *(Pe)   care   (l)-au   auzit?
       LOC=DOM   which   CL.3SG.M/N.ACC-have.3PL   heard
       'Which one have they heard?'   (*animate or inanimate*)

Additionally, animacy is overridden in a set of contexts which can have an expressed nominal. For example, differential marking is seen on the relative pronoun in (12a),[13] some types of strong partitives (Avram and Zafiu 2017), some types of equality comparatives (otherwise rarely addressed in the literature, see Pană-Dindelegan 2013 or Irimia 2020b for discussion), contexts which involve high individualization on the nominal, as in (12d) from Avram and Zafiu (2017). A recent development seems to be the extension of differential marking to objects representing sports teams. One example is in (12e), from a sports journal on the Romanian news channel Digi24.

(12) Romanian DOM: animacy overridden (II)
    a. Caietul   **pe**   care   l-ai   cumpărat.
       notebook.DEF.N.SG   LOC=DOM   which/that   CL.3M.SG.ACC-have.2SG   bought
       'The notebook (which/that) you have bought.'
    b. Le-ai   citit   doar   **pe**   trei   dintre aceste romane.
       CL.3M.SG.ACC-have.2SG   read   only   LOC=DOM   three   from this.N.PL novel.PL
       'You have read only three of these novels.'

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13. Dropping the differential marker with the relative pronoun is very common in colloquial Romanian, especially among young speakers. However, it is severely frowned upon in normative grammars.

c. Îl   preţuieşte   ca   **pe**   un   dar.
   CL.3M.SG.ACC value.3SG   as   LOC=DOM a.N.SG gift
   'S/he values him as a gift.' (as s/he values a gift)

d. L-ai   uitat   **pe**   i.
   CL.3M.SG.ACC-have.2SG   forgot   LOC=DOM   i
   'You forgot the i.'

e. Au   bătut-o   **pe**   Fiorentina.
   have.3PL beaten-CL.3M.SG.ACC   LOC=DOM   Fiorentina
   'They beat Fiorentina (football team).'

In summary, DOM distribution in Romanian can be described as follows: (*a*) obligatory with various types of animates, as in (10); (*b*) obligatory even with certain inanimate categories, especially under ellipsis, as in (11); (*c*) optional with definite animate DPs, as seen in (1a) and (9); and (*d*) ungrammatical in a yet different set of contexts, which group together inanimate nominals as in (8a) or bare nominals, even if animate, as in (8b) or (8c). It can generally be safely concluded that Romanian differential object marking can only affect nominals with a certain type of structure and in certain configurations.

That animacy per se is not enough is further confirmed by examples such as (13a). Here the object is animate, modified by a quantifier or a demonstrative; however, differential marking is not possible, even if the intended interpretation on the animate object is specific. In a discussion of similar examples from Spanish, Torrego (1998) attributes DOM ungrammaticality in these instances to the fact that the subject is inanimate. An animate subject permits differential marking in this context,[14] as shown in (13b); as expected, interpretive differences ensue — the marked object more easily entails a specific entity, as opposed to the unmarked version.

(13) a. Opera   (*îi)   cunoaşte   (***pe**)   mulţi/aceşti   fani.
        opera.DEF.F.SG   CL.3M.PL.ACC   know.3SG   LOC=DOM   many/this.M.PL fan.M.PL
        'Opera knows many/these fans.'

     b. Diva   (îi)   cunoaşte   (**pe**)   mulţi/aceşti   fani
        diva.DEF.F.SG   CL.3M.PL.ACC   know.3SG   LOC=DOM   many/this.M.PL fan.M.PL
        'The diva knows many/these fans.'

14. DOM impossibility in examples such as (13a) should not be taken to entail that the differential marker is never possible in Romanian if the subject is inanimate. An illustrative example, kindly provided by Virginia Hill, is below:

(i) Muntele   i-a   protejat   **pe**   mulţi   prizonieri.
    mountain.DEF.M.SG   CL.3M.PL.ACC-have.3SG   protected   LOC=DOM many.M.PL   prisoner.M.PL
    'The mountain has protected many prisoners.'

In fact, the difference between specific and non-specific interpretations appears to be salient in other contexts involving animates and quantifiers that are similar to *mult* ('much/many'), in that they permit the weak (non-specific) vs. strong (specific) alternation. Other quantifiers in this class are the indefinite *un* (M/N.SG)/*o* (F.SG)/*niște* (PL), polarity sensitive *vreun* (any.M/N.SG)/*vreuna* (any.F.SG), numerals, the negative indefinite *niciun* (none.M/N.SG)/*niciuna* (none.F.SG), and other amount demoting classes such as *puțini* (few.M.PL)/*puține* (few.F.N.PL), etc. (see Cornilescu 2000 for a complete list). Here, the variant without DOM normally entails a non-specific (also called *weak*) reading, while the variant with DOM can more easily get a specific (*strong*) interpretation.

(14) a. Au   arestat   cinci   bărbați.
          have.3PL   arrested   five   man.PL
          'They have arrested five (random) men.'
      b. (I)-au   arestat   **pe**   cinci bărbați care furau
          CL.3M.PL.ACC-have.3PL arrested   LOC=DOM five   man.PL   who   steal.IMPF.3PL
          din   magazine.
          from   store.PL
          They have arrested five (specific) men who were shop lifters.'

Contrasts of this type have traditionally been used to back the hypothesis that DOM is a specificity inducing mechanism, in the sense that it can only affect those animates that also contain specificity; thus, as already mentioned above, it must be the case that Romanian uses a bi-dimensional system when it comes to the special marking on certain objects (see also the cross-linguistic remarks in López 2012). The challenge with accounts along these lines is at least two-fold: first, the differential marker is obligatory in various types of categories which cannot be analyzed in terms of specificity, such as the quantifiers in (6a), (10c) or (10d); second, there are many contexts with (nominal) differential objects that have a non-specific interpretation (see Cornilescu 2000 or Tigău 2011 for numerous examples). The marked nominal in the sentence below contains the non-specificity modifier *oarecare* ('random', 'no matter who'). Another example with a non-specific, generic differentially marked object is in (16).[15]

15. This example was kindly provided by a reviewer.

(15) L-am   rugat   **pe**   un   om   *oarecare* de   pe   stradă
CL.3M.SG.ACC-have.I   prayed   LOC=DOM   a.M.SG   man   random   of   on   street
să   îmi   spună   adresa   corectă.
SBJV   I.DAT   tell.SBJV.3SG   address.DEF.F.SG   correct.F.SG
'I asked a random person on the street to tell me the correct address.'

(16) Ce   o   deranjează **pe**   o   femeie   la   un   bărbat?
what   CL.3M.SG   annoy.3SG   LOC=DOM   a.F.SG   woman   at   a.M.SG   man
Lit. 'What annoys a woman in a man?'

The non-homogeneity of uses and the difficulty in unifying the relevant contexts either semantically or structurally has raised numerous questions about the precise nature of Romanian DOM. Against this background, interactions with clitic doubling might provide a helpful clue. The next subsection contains some remarks about relevant possibilities of DOM-clitic doubling.

3.2 INTERACTIONS WITH CLITIC DOUBLING

As Cornilescu (2000) has correctly pointed out, although DOM and clitic doubling might have similar semantic and pragmatic outputs, they must be identified as two separate phenomena with distinct natures. The interaction they establish in Romanian is truly complex, in various instances being quite difficult to decide on a clear-cut pattern. For example, there are contexts where clitic doubling appears to be optional, as seen with most direct objects with a lexical (animate) nominal, such as (1a)a wich we started with. Avram (2014) contains a relevant discussion about the optionality of clitic doubling with marked objects in Romanian.

On the other hand, there are configurations which require obligatory clitic doubling, such as the pronouns in (10a). Furthermore, most of the speakers consulted for this study mention that clitic doubling is much better with proper names as in (10b). Note that regarding pronouns, the singular tonic form for the 1st and 2nd persons must show accusative morphology, in addition to oblique DOM and clitic doubling.

(17) Romanian DOM: tonic pronouns for 1st and 2nd persons singular
a. *(**M**)-au   chemat   *(**pe**)   *mine*/*eu/*mie.
CL.1SG.ACC-have.3PL   called   LOC=DOM   me.ACC/I.NOM/me.DAT
'They called me.'

b. *(**Te**)-au   chemat *(**pe**)   *tine*/*tu/*ţie.
   CL.2SG.ACC-have.3PL   called   LOC=DOM   you.SG.ACC/you.SG.NOM/you.SG.DAT
   'They called you (singular).'

And third, there are also contexts in which clitic doubling is strictly banned. These include quantifiers without the expressed nominal, such as (10c) or (10d). Similarly, the animate *wh*-element *cine* ('who') is not grammatical with clitic doubling. Consider, therefore, the contrast between (10e) and (10f) — the D-linked *wh* pronoun in (10f) allows clitic doubling (for many speakers clitic doubling is in fact obligatory). A similar distinction between the animate *wh* and the D-linked pronouns regarding clitic doubling is also salient across Spanish varieties (Suñer 1988).

4. THEORETICAL CHALLENGES RAISED BY ROMANIAN DOM

The difficulties in subsuming all the instantiations of differential marking to purely semantic features, such as animacy, have led to the examination of various hypotheses that could unify Romanian DOM, leading from purely syntactic formal ones to explanations which also consider the syntax-pragmatics interface. This section reviews the most important analyses, underlining their predictions and the problems the data raise.

4.1 ROMANIAN DOM AS CASE. KAYNE/JAEGGLI'S GENERALIZATION

In generative approaches, and especially the line of research known as Government and Binding, a common analysis for Romanian DOM revolved precisely around the interaction between the prepositional marker and clitic doubling (Dobrovie Sorin 1994). Taking exemples such as (10a) as representative contexts, where oblique DOM also needs obligatory accusative clitic doubling, a generalization was proposed that linked the special marker to a last resort Case[16] checking mechanism to avoid a violation of the Case Filter.[17] The latter was assumed to regulate the distribution of nominals in the sentence, prohibiting nominals in an argumental position if they have not been assigned Case. The problem with (10a) was seen to derive precisely

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16. As is customary, the capital is used on Case to indicate an abstract licensing condition on the nominal; this mechanism, however, might not have a spell-out in the morphology.
17. The Case Filter (Chomsky 1981, 49): *NP if NP has phonetic content and has no Case.

from the doubling clitic; the latter, being a nominal category and thus subject to the Case Filter, absorbs the C/case from V. As V can check Case only once, its nominal correlate remains caseless and thus subject to a violation of the Case Filter. The preposition spelling out the differential marker is inserted in the derivation as a Case assigner such that the nominal can be Case licensed properly. This is known as Kayne/Jaeggli's Generalization, indicated in (18):

(18)   Kayne/Jaeggli's Generalization (Jaeggli 1982: 20)
         'An object NP may be doubled by a clitic only if the NP is preceded by a preposition.'

Given its abstract syntactic level of application, an analysis in terms of Kayne/Jaeggli's Generalization avoids the problems encountered by unification in terms of scales. As differential marking is a matter of nominal licensing, it is predicted to apply to various types of categories, and not just animates and specific nominals. However, this type of Case based analysis runs into various issues. First, we have seen that clitic doubling is not obligatory across the board with the differential marker. In fact, there are contexts in which clitic doubling is ungrammatical, such as (10c-e). It follows therefore that the doubling clitic cannot be assumed to trigger competition in terms of Case in all instances (see also Mardale 2009, 2015). Second, the interaction between clitic doubling and marked objects needs further attention. Why is it that certain types of nominals need clitic doubling to begin with, while for others doubling is optional, and a third class completely blocks it? Additionally, given the patterns exhibited by the data, is the interaction between clitic doubling and marked objects a matter of nominal licensing in terms of Case, or does it indicate some other mechanism in the grammar? All these observations suggest that an alternative analysis for the differential marker is needed.

4.2 romanian dom and raising. lópez (2012)

Cross-linguistically, marked objects appear to be characterized by a special property: they tend to be found in a different (higher) position than unmarked nominals (Baker 2015). This has raised the question of whether all Romanian dom configurations can in fact be unified in terms of raising. A recent analysis along these lines has been proposed by López (2012), who takes Romanian dom[18] to signal a subclass of nominals

18. Alongside other dom languages.

with [Case], which must undergo overt raising to an intermediate position above VP, but below the position where the E(xternal) A(rgument) is introduced. Romanian confirms that oblique DOM which is not clitic doubled is generated below the EA: no binding from the marked object into the EA is possible. In the contrast below from Cornilescu (2020), only the clitic doubled DOM in (19b) can bind into the subject, allowing a coreferential interpretation, and indicating that it is presumably generated (or at least interpreted) higher than non-clitic-doubled DOM.

(19) Romanian DOM and External Arguments (Cornilescu 2020, ex. 24 and 25)
    a. Muzica   lor$_i$ plictiseşte **pe**   mulţi$_{*i}$.
       music.DEF.F.SG their annoy.3SG LOC=DOM many
      'Their music annoys many people.'
    b. Muzica   lor   **îi**$_i$ plictiseşte **pe**   mulţi$_i$.
       music.DEF.F.SG their CL.3M.PL.ACC annoy.3SG LOC=DOM many
      'Their own music annoys many people.'

However, if we examine binding and c-command relations into I(ndirect) O(bjects), the picture is not a simple one and it does not match the Spanish facts (or at least the data López 2012 uses for Spanish). In any case, as Hill and Mardale (2021) also conclude, the interactions between direct and indirect objects in Romanian do not imply that DOM-ed objects are higher than IOs. In the example in (20a), adapted for Romanian after López (2012), binding from DOM into IO does not go through.[19] Binding from IO into DOM is fine, as demonstrated in (20b). This indicates that Romanian differential objects can be lower than *both* the IO and the EA. Of course, this does not prove that Romanian oblique DOM does not need raising. It could be that it raises but to a position below the IO, which is still above VP. The problem is that unmarked nominals show the exact same behaviour, and it is moreover not easy to map this position.

(20) a. Duşmanii   nu (i)-au   înmânat fiului   săi/lui$_i$
       enemy.M.PL.DEF.M.PL NEG CL.3SG.DAT-have.3PL handed son.DAT.M.SG his
      (**pe**)   niciun$_{*i}$ prizonier.
      LOC=DOM no.M.SG   prisoner
      'The enemies did not deliver any prisoner to his son.'

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19. As Irimia (2020b) or Hill and Mardale (2021) note, some speakers might allow binding from the marked object into IO, in some configurations, if the former is also clitic-doubled (with the accusative clitic). See also Tigău (2020) for interactions between clitic doubled datives and clitic doubled DOM.

b. (I)   (l)-au   prezentat   **pe**   studentul
   CL.3SG.DAT CL.3SG.M.ACC-have.3PL   introduced   LOC=DOM   student.the.M.SG
   său/luii   fiecărui₍ᵢ₎   profesor.
   his   every.DAT.SG   professor
   Lit. 'They have introduced his student to each professor.'

Various recent accounts touch on the difficulty of setting marked and unmarked objects aside, just based on diverging positions. For example, both Cornilescu (2020: 127-129) and Tigău (2021) take DOM-ed and unmarked objects to exhibit the same distribution in Romanian. Both types of objects can raise to the *v*P periphery (although it is not clear whether both classes target the exact same position); the only difference unmarked objects might show is that they can also remain in situ. Hill and Mardale (2021), on the other hand, assume that at least some types of marked objects remain in situ in Romanian, just like the unmarked ones. These diverging views suggest that some other parameters are relevant for the special marking some types of direct objects surface in Romanian, besides syntactic position.

López (2012) discusses another test with potential relevance for assessing the position of marked objects, namely coordination between marked and unmarked objects. According to López (2012), the test gives negative results for Spanish, as in the example below, where an intended conjoined phrase containing an unmarked and a marked object results in ungrammaticality. As explained in more detail below, this motivates the conclusion that marked and unmarked objects do not share the same position in Spanish.

(21) Coordination involving unmarked and marked objects in Spanish — ungrammatical
      *Juan   encontró   un   hombre   y   **a**   una   mujer.
      Juan   meet.PST.3SG a.M.SG   man   and DAT=DOM   a.F.SG   woman
      'Juan met a man and a woman.'
      (López 2012: ex. 36b, page 50; glosses and translation added)

The problem for Romanian is that coordination does not seem to be a reliable diagnostic for object position, due to the numerous problems in the data. As recently discussed by Hill and Mardale (2021) or Irimia (to appear2), some speakers might allow an unmarked object to be coordinated with a marked one, as in (22). These structures could be taken as evidence that in Romanian the two classes indeed share the same position. It is well known that in many languages coordination prohibits extraction of one of the conjuncts (see Ross' 1967 Coordinate Structure Constraint). The ungrammatical example in (23a) demonstrates that this constraint holds in

Romanian. This means that (covert) raising of DOM out of the coordinated phrase, above the unmarked nominal, should lead to ungrammaticality in examples such as (22); this is schematically represented in (23b), and see also López (2012) or Saab and Zdrojewski (2021) for discussion from Spanish. Now, given that contexts such as (22) might be accepted by some speakers, it must be the case that marked and unmarked nominals share the same position.

(22) Au   chemat un   copil/copilul   şi   **pe**   Ion.
      have.3PL called a.M.SG   child/child.DEF.M.SG   and   LOC=DOM   Ion
      'They have called a child/the child and Ion.'

(23) Coordinate structure constraint
      a. *Ce$_i$ altceva   au   cumpărat   carne   şi   __$_i$?
         what   other.something   have.3PL   bought   meat   and
         'What else did they buy meat and ___?
      b. *[… DOM$_i$ [$_{VP}$ V [$_{\&P}$ DP$_{unmarked}$ & __$_i$]]]

However, in order for the hypothesis that unmarked and marked objects share the same position to hold up, it is necessary to prove that sentences such as (22) involve coordination at the DP level, and not some other types of coordination — for example, sentential coordination with ellipsis in the second clause. Irimia (forthcoming2) has pointed out numerous, significant difficulties with these types of data in Romanian, which coordination at the DP level cannot explain. For reasons of space, only one point is illustrated here.[20] We have seen in (10a) or (17) that in standard Romanian, direct object pronouns need not only differential marking, but also clitic doubling. The challenge is that speakers who accept examples with unmarked and marked objects as in (22) also accept sentences like (24); here the second member of the coordination is a differentially marked pronoun, but it lacks the required clitic double. Why is this example grammatical (to those speakers who accept it), despite the absence of the clitic double? The sentential ellipsis analysis[21] can straightforwardly explain examples of this type — examples such as (24) involve a coordination of sentences, and not of DPs; the doubling clitic undergoes deletion as the second sentential constituent

20. See Irimia (forthcoming2) for other problems from standard Romanian and two other varieties. See also Saab and Zdrojewski (2021) for extensive discussion regarding Spanish contexts in which coordination between unmarked and marked objects is possible, but where an ellipsis analysis is equally justified.

21. Or some other mechanism which does not involve coordination at the DP level and can derive the non-pronounceability of the clitic double (for example, types of coordination seen with so-called 'exempt categories'). See Irimia (forthcoming2) for further discussion.

is deleted. The differentially marked nominal escapes deletion due to its raising to a higher position than the sentential fragment under deletion. A sentential deletion process receives further support from the observation that examples with unmarked and marked objects need special intonation at least for some speakers.

(24) Au   chemat un   copil/copilul   şi   **pe**   el.
      have.3PL called a.M.SG   child/child.DEF.M.SG and LOC=DOM   Ion
      'They have called a child/the child and him.'

In conclusion, coordination is not a foolproof test in Romanian. The evidence coming from examples such as (24) has be supplemented with more unambiguous, independent diagnostics such as to motivate the conclusion that unmarked and marked objects share the same position. The problem is that such tests, as we have seen, are not easy to come across.

4.3 ROMANIAN DOM UNDER MORPHOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS

Another common line of investigation into DOM cross-linguistically revolves around purely morphological explanations. A good summary can be found in Keine (2010) and the other references cited there. In these accounts both oblique DOM and unmarked objects are generally seen as having the same syntax of structural objects. The only difference lies in the (obligatory) application of a morphological operation (e.g., *Impoverishment*) which removes the accusative case features and inserts an oblique marker, in the environment of certain features, such as animacy.

Connecting oblique DOM to morphological *Impoverishment* explains the *syntactic* properties it shares with unmarked nominals (for example, a possible raising operation affecting both as mentioned above, or the fact that both classes act as structural accusatives and are subject to processes such as passivization, etc.). However, in overall terms it is problematic for Romanian, because it cannot capture another equally important fact: DOM exhibits non-trivial *syntactic* properties it does not share with unmarked objects. For example, it gives rise to co-occurrence restrictions with certain types of dative clitics, as in the ungrammatical (25a) which contains DOM and a dative clitic with a possessor reading. The unmarked object, by contrast, is well-formed with the dative possessor, as in (17b).[22] See also Onea and Hole (2018), or Irimia (in press) for other examples of this type and a more detailed presentation.

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22. The alternation in the dative form of the (reflexive) clitic (*îşi/şi*) is purely phonological.

(25) a. *Şi-l   ajută **pe**   coleg.
         CL.3DAT.REFL-CL.3SG.M.ACC   helps   LOC=DOM   mate
         Intended: 'S/he helps his/her own mate.'
       b. Îşi   ajută   colegul.
         CL.3DAT.REFL   helps   mate.DEF.M.SG
         'S/he helps his/her own mate.'   (adapted from Irimia to appear2)

Crucially, we have clear evidence that the co-occurrence restriction is not a purely morphological one. Dative clitics have many other interpretations in Romanian, despite identity in surface form. The dative clitic in (26) is not interpreted as a possessor, but rather as a goal, and the sentence is grammatical, although the direct object must be differentially marked and despite the goal and the possessor interpretations of the dative clitic being homophonous.[23]

(26) **Şi**-a   trimis   ***(pe)***   cineva   în   ajutor.
       CL.3REFL.DAT-have.3SG   sent   LOC=DOM   somebody   in   aid
       'He has sent somebody as an aid to himself.'   (from Irimia in press)

Recently, Cornilescu (2020) has analyzed configurations in which differentially marked objects are blocked with certain types of clitic-doubled indirect objects, as in (27a). A repair strategy is instead to clitic double the differentially marked object, using the accusative clitic, as shown in (27b).

(27) a. *Comisia i-a   repartizat **pe**   fiecare
         board.DEF.F.SG CL.3DAT.SG-have.3SG   assigned   LOC=DOM   each
         rezident unei   foste   profesoare   a   lui.
         resident a.DAT.F.SG   former.DAT.F.SG   professor.DAT.SG   GEN.F.SG   his
         Intended: 'The board assigned each resident to a former professor of his.'
       b. Comisia i *l*-a repartizat **pe** fiecare rezident unei foste profesoare a lui.
               CL.3M.ACC-
         (Cornilescu 2020, ex. 6, adapted)

Another context where DOM is ungrammatical comes from sentences with the medio-passive SE (see Dobrovie Sorin 1998 for discussion). The contrast below is telling:

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23. The sentence cannot mean that the sender sent as his aid somebody who is in a possessive relation with the sender. A possessor interpretation of the dative reflexive clitic is still possible, but not in DOM. For example, the sentence can mean that he has sent somebody to/as his own aid.

(28) a. *Se   (îi)   înscrie/înscriu **pe**   studenţi.
         SE_MP   CL.3M.ACC.PL   enroll.3SG/3PL   LOC=DOM   students
         Intended: 'The students are getting enrolled.'
      b. Se   înscriu   studenţii.
         SE_MP   enroll.3PL   students.DEF.M.PL
         'The students are getting enrolled.'

Medio-passive SE contexts are similar to the dative possessor ones in (25a), in that clitic doubling of DOM is *not* a possible repair strategy. The examples in (25a) and (28a) are ungrammatical, irrespective of whether the marked object is clitic doubled or not. However, another realization of the SE morpheme, namely the reflexive (REFL) one, *requires* differential marking if the tonic reflexive form of the pronoun is present. As we see in (29), the spell-out of the SE morpheme does not vary between the medio-passive and the reflexive interpretations.

(29) Romanian DOM under reflexive SE
      Ion   se   premiază   doar   **pe**   sine   (însuşi),
      Ion   SE_REFL award with a prize.3SG   only   LOC=DOM   self.3SG   (himself.M.SG)
      nu   şi   pe   alţii.
      not   and   LOC=DOM   other.DEF.M.PL
      'Ion awards only himself with prizes, and not the others.'

In summary, the non-uniformity of DOM-related co-occurrence restrictions and their repairs strengthen the hypothesis that this mechanism is deeply rooted in syntax.

4.4 ROMANIAN DOM AND THE SYNTAX-SEMANTICS-PRAGMATICS INTERFACE

Given the problems raised by the various accounts presented above, another line of research into Romanian DOM has explored the connection with information structure. Generally, oblique DOM is correlated with topics (so-called *secondary topics,* see especially Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011; Leonetti 2003, 2008 for Spanish; Iemmolo 2010 and Belletti 2018 for western Romance; and recently Hill and Mardale 2019 for Old Romanian, or Onea and Mardale's 2020 E-topics). Topichood finds support in the observation that in some languages, differentially marked objects can only be found in overt dislocation configurations, which exclude focus. However, an account of these terms will still need adjustment for Romanian. First, dislocated topics are insensitive to the oblique marker in Romanian. Note the CLLD demonstrative in

(30), which is grammatical without DOM. On the other hand, the same augmented form of the demonstrative is ungrammatical without DOM in an in-situ position, as we saw in (11a).

(30) **Aceasta**,   n-am   citit-o.
      this.F.SG.AUG   NEG-have.I   read-CL.3F.SG.ACC
      'This, I haven't read.'

Furthermore, for many speakers Romanian DOM does not appear to have the same prosodic correlates of topics; and, for all speakers, it is well formed under focus. In (31b) the differential marker is necessary on the argument which is not given, while in (32) we see DOM-ed animates under contrastive focus. Data of this type also compelled López (2012) to reject an analysis of DOM in terms of information structure, or topical objects. They also pose various challenges to accounts in terms of aboutness topic/E-topic.

(31) a. Pe   cine   nu   au   convins?
         LOC=DOM   who   NEG   have.3PL   convinced
         'Who haven't they convinced?'
     b. Nu   au   convins-o   *(pe)   Ioana.
        NEG   have.3PL   convinced-CL.3F.SG.ACC   CL.3F.SG.ACC   Ioana
        'They haven't convinced Ioana.'

(32) Au   chemat-o   **PE   FATĂ, nu   PE   BĂIAT**.
     have.3PL   called-CL.3F.SG.ACC   LOC=DOM   girl   NEG   LOC=DOM   boy
     'They have called THE GIRL, not THE BOY.'

More recently, Irimia (2020a, 2020b, 2021) has explored a different hypothesis: Romanian differential marking signals the presence of a licensing condition on the nominal, beyond the 'regular' abstract licensing in terms of Case. An important starting point in these works is that the extended structure of these nominals needs to be investigated in more detail, going beyond traditional notions such as specificity, definiteness or animacy (see Hill and Mardale 2021 for a similar observation).

Various works have highlighted the importance of abstract categories that are relevant in the composition and interpretation of differentially marked objects. These includes classes such as: (*a*) Sentience (Belletti 2018), which signals grammaticalized animates and how the speaker relates to them; (*b*) a category similar to individuation and represented more formally as [PERSON] (see especially Cornilescu 2000, and subse-

quently Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007; Adger and Harbour 2007; Richards 2008, a.o.); and (*c*) discourse-linking specifications, as introduced by certain types of partitivity. The observation Irimia (2020a, 2020b, 2021) starts from is that in various languages these types of specifications can be merged into the extended nominal spine above and beyond the projection hosting the Case feature. As they require licensing beyond Case, an additional licenser, beyond the regular Case licenser, will be needed for this purpose. At PF the result of this additional licensing mechanism is signaled overtly by the preposition. Irimia (2021) has shown that similar structural constraints imposing additional licensing beyond Case hold in many other DOM languages, even beyond Romance and Indo-European. It is relevant to note that the typology of projections and specifications merged beyond the locus of structural Case can be rich, and certainly goes beyond grammaticalized animacy. The prediction is that in various languages, such as Romanian, differential marking will not be sensitive only to animacy. Thus, isolating Sentience and [PERSON] as separate categories, and the presence of generalized discourse-features beyond [Case] can explain DOM overriding semantic (animacy and referentiality) scales and its insensitivity to topicality.

What is relevant for DOM, instead, is a certain type of complex structure, which poses problems for licensing - the relevant nominals contain more than one feature that requires adequate licensing in the syntax, and the differential marker signals the result of more than one licensing operation. Nominal ellipsis, D-linking, Sentience, [PERSON], etc. can construct enriched nominal structures that contain discourse-linking functional projections, which must be licensed beyond structural Case (the latter feature being, in turn, related to argumenthood). More simply put, differential marking in Romanian is a means to signal those categories that not only have an independent status as arguments (as opposed to nominal categories with predicative nature, see the remarks by Cornilescu 2000 pointed to above), but which contain additional specifications which are relevant at the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface, beyond argumenthood. This opens the path to a much needed in-depth investigation of the extended higher periphery in nominals, the interactions between discourse-linking specifications and Case, as well as their consequences on narrow syntax mechanisms such as licensing and its typology.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This short presentation of standard Romanian DOM has reviewed its most relevant contexts of use, and has provided an overview of the most important lines of

research into its nature. Generally, Romanian DOM stands out from similar phenomena in many other (Romance) languages in that it can easily override the expected animacy and specificity restrictions. Similarly, the semantic non-homogeneity of the differential marker as well as its complex interactions with accusative clitic doubling have raised numerous, non-trivial problems under various types of accounts, ranging from purely formal ones to those related to the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface. This makes Romanian a prolific domain for investigation into the nature and typology of differential marking, nominal structure, and the more general problem of licensing in grammar.

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