

Differential Object Marking – a syntactically triggered mechanism. Insights from Romanian

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1. Aim. This paper discusses Romanian Differential Object Marking (DOM) from a comparative perspective with Romance (Spanish in particular). Stress is being laid on the comparison of DOMed objects and unmarked ones in the two languages. We build on Lopez (2012)'s analysis of Spanish DOM, an interface analysis, correlating the position of marked/unmarked objects with their semantic interpretation and parametrize this analysis, so as to account for the contrasts between Romanian and Spanish DOM with respect to both the syntax and the interpretation of the DO.

2. Background and Problems. i. Lopez (2012) discusses a class of contexts where only DOMed objects are grammatical in Spanish: small clauses, clause union in causative constructions and object control. Interestingly, the obligatoriness of accusative A in these contexts does not follow from specificity requirements. In (1), the affectee is non-specific, as indicated by the subjunctive in the relative clause. Although the object is nonspecific it *must* take DOM.

- (1) *Juan no considera onorado a/*Øun hombre que accepte sobornos.*
Juan not considers honest A/Ø a man that accepts.Subj bribes
'Juan does not consider honest a man that accepts bribes.'
Lopez, 2012: 25

Lopez importantly concludes that DOM is controlled not only by semantic features (animacy and definiteness), but also by purely syntactic factors. Lopez includes Romanian among the languages that enforce DOM on small clause subjects and object control. However, this description is seriously inaccurate as the three contexts have no special properties, allowing both marked and unmarked objects:

- (2) *Obama a numit un alt senator Ministru al sănătății*
Obama has appointed another senator Minister of health.(Small clause subjects)
- (3) *Ion a forțat un copil să-și facă temele.*
John has forced a child subj.-refl. do homework
'John has forced a child to do his homework.'
(Object control)
- (4) *Ion a lăsat copilul să se joace.*
John has allowed child.the subj. refl. play
'John allowed the child to play.'
(Causative –permissive structure)

Romanian is thus an exception to the generalization observed by Lopez: marked and unmarked objects have the same distribution. Interestingly, on the other hand, and similarly to Spanish, Romanian bare plurals *cannot be small clause subjects*.

- (5) **Consider oamenii a fi lipsiți de judecată.*
Consider.I people to be devoid of judgement
'I consider people to lack judgement.'

ii. Lopez (2012) links the behavior of unmarked vs. marked DOs within the aforementioned contexts with their different scope potential these DPs evince when interacting with other scope bearing expressions and with the possibility of acquiring a specific reading. Briefly, while DOMed DOs are able to outscope both extensional and intensional operators, their unmarked

counterparts only allow narrow scope readings and may only read non-specifically. Again, Romanian DOs do not pattern with their Spanish correspondents: unmarked DOs may outscope other scope bearing expressions, just like DOMed DOs; also both marked and unmarked DOs may be interpreted as specific. Bare plurals may only have a narrow scope interpretation and read non-specifically.

We back up these claims with data obtained from two experiments conducted on three types of DO: unmarked DOs, DOMed DOs and Clitic Doubled (CDed) and DOMed DOs. In the first experiment we checked the scope behavior of these DPs within four contexts: that of the universal QP *fiecare* (*everybody*), the conditional, the modal verb *trebuie* (*must*), and negation. The second experiment checks the behavior of these DPs with respect to certain contexts inducing a non-specific reading: *cel mult* (*at most*)/*cel puțin* (*at least*); the distributive *câte*, the free choice indefinite *oarecare* (*any*), a relative clause in the subjunctive. Two important results obtained: a) both unmarked and marked DOs may outscope other scope bearing expressions; b) both marked and unmarked DOs seem to lose their specific interpretation within contexts inducing a non-specific reading.

The findings in (b) contradict the claims in the literature according to which either DOM or the accusative clitic are specificity triggers and tools by means of which one would ensure a wide scope interpretation for the marked DO (Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Cornilescu 2000) and encourage a syntactic approach to DOM and CD marking. The experimental results further disconfirm the clearcut distinction signalled for Spanish and hypothesized for Romanian (Lopez 2012), holding between unmarked DOs and their marked counterparts. Romanian thus patterns with Spanish up to a certain extent in allowing marked indefinite DOs to acquire wide scope and specific readings in the presence of other scope bearing expressions and in occurring in the problematic contexts (small clause subjects, object control, causative structures). Nevertheless, Romanian also allows unmarked indefinites to acquire wide scope and specific interpretations and to occur in small clauses, clause union and object control configurations as opposed to Spanish. The conclusions seem to support the claim in Lopez (2012) that marking actually arises out of syntactic reasons and that the availability of a wide scope interpretation rather comes as a consequence of a certain mode of semantic composition of the object with its predicate, which is in turn dependent on a peculiar syntactic position (either within VP or in *Spec α P*). This analysis needs, however, to be fine grained so as to accommodate for the behavior of Romanian unmarked DOs.

4. Solution. Lopez proposes that in languages that have DOM there are two strategies of checking Accusative. Some objects remain *in situ* and can only satisfy their case requirement by *incorporation* into the lexical verb. Other DOs scramble to a higher position to check case. The two case-marking strategies correlate with the size (functional structure) of the nominal projection. In Spanish, objects which are DPs or smaller are open to incorporation. KPs, the category that represents DOM-ed objects, cannot incorporate and scrambling is obligatory. Scrambling of the DO is the syntactic hallmark of DOM and is associated with argumenthood. We claim that the difference between Spanish and Romanian noticed above lies in how they divide between the nominal expressions that stay *in situ* and those that scramble. In Spanish the division is between KPs and DPs. KPs scramble, DPs incorporate. In Romanian the relevant division is between NP/NumPs which incorporate and DPs/KPs which scramble: DOs which are projected as NPs/NumPs check case *in situ* by (semantic) incorporation. Objects which incorporate are interpreted as predicates/ properties and form complex predicates with V. DOs which are projected as DPs or KPs cannot incorporate, but scramble to a higher position (which accounts for their scope properties, i.e., their ability to bind the IO, though not the subject). DOs that scramble are interpreted as arguments and combine with the verb by functional application. Marked and unmarked DOs roughly have the same distribution in Romanian, in sharp contrast with Spanish. There are however syntactic differences between them: DOM-ed

objects *must* scramble, unmarked objects *may* scramble. This difference follows from the fact that DPs may be re-analyzed as NP/NumPs, while KPs may not. Cornilescu, A. 2000. Notes on the Interpretation of the Prepositional Accusative in Romanian. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*, 2 (1): 91.

Dobrovie-Sorin, C. 1994. The Syntax of Romanian. *Studies in Generative Grammar*, vol 40, Berlin, Mouton.

Lopez, L. 2012. Indefinite Objects. Scrambling, Choice Functions, and Differential Marking. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT