# CLITIC DOUBLING AND DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN NON-SPECIFIC CONTEXTS IN ROMANIAN[1]

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**Abstract.** This paper provides empirical insights into the semantic import of the Differential Object Marker *pe* (DOM) and of accusative pronominal clitics (CD) as specificity triggers with indefinite direct objects (DOs) in Romanian. The experiment we discuss investigates the behaviour of unmarked and marked DOs when occurring in various contexts forcing a non-specific reading. We compared two types of marked DOs: single differentially marked DPs (DOMed DOs) and clitic doubled and differentially marked ones (CDed+DOMed DOs). First inspection shows that, even though marking seems to render the DO a less suitable candidate for non-specific contexts, items containing marked DOs are not actually excluded as unacceptable. Closer inspections reveal, however, that the variation of acceptability judgements can be divided into more homogeneous groups of speakers with a distinctive behaviour. Some groups do not accept marked DOs in the non-specific contexts, while others accept both marked and unmarked DOs. This observation leads us to assume that we see a diachronic development of the function of CD and DOM from a marker of specificity towards a marker of true argumenthood of the DO. The paper also contributes to the syntactic analysis of CD and DOM as part of the general layout of the DP.

**Keywords:** specificity, Differential Object Marking, Clitic Doubling, direct object, indefinites.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Romanian Clitic Doubling of accusative DPs is characterized by the interdependence between a pronominal clitic doubling the DO and DOM as in (1a–c). Unmarked indefinites in direct object position, (1a), can receive a specific, i.e. wide scope, reading or a non-specific, i.e. narrow scope, reading. CDed+DOMed indefinites, (1c), have been claimed to lose the

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non-specific interpretation available for their unmarked counterparts (Niculescu 1965 Farkas 1987, Dobrovie-Sorin 1990, Pană Dindelegan 1997, Cornilescu 2000, Chiriacescu and von Heusinger 2010: 303):

(1) a. Toți bărbații iubesc o femeie.
all men love a woman.
'All men love a woman'. (specific/non-specific)

b. Toți bărbații iubesc **pe** o femeie
all men love DOM a woman
'All men love a woman'. (only specific)

c. Toți bărbații o iubesc **pe** o femeie
all men CL.3.SG.FEM.ACC love DOM a woman
'All men love a woman'. (only specific)

A similar claim has been put forth for single DOMed DOs i.e., DOs which have been *pe* marked but left undoubled, (1b). Thus, both DOMed and DOM+CDed DOs have been argued to bear a specific reading but the literature does not agree on the exact source of specificity. Farkas (1987), Dobrovie-Sorin (1990, 1994), Cornilescu (2000) argue, for instance, that DOM is accountable for the specific reading, while Steriade (1980) and Gierling (1997) argue in favour of a correlation between specificity and clitic doubling. Lastly, von Heusinger and Onea (2008), Chiriacescu & von Heusinger (2010) and Tigău (2011), see specificity as a joint effect of DOM and CD.

Nevertheless, (less frequent, still natural) examples with DOM but without CD allow the hypothesis that single DOMed DOs behave on a par with their unmarked counterparts, allowing both for a specific as well as for a non-specific interpretation (with a propensity for the former reading). The presence of CD, on the other hand, seems to strongly tilt the balance towards a specific interpretation. Consider (2a–b) where (2a) only allows for a narrow scope reading of *un singur profesor* 'a single professor', which can be expressed with or without DOM. When adding CD to the DOMed version, the sentence becomes pragmatically unacceptable given that the CD forces a specific reading, which is not felicitous in this context.

(2) a. N-am văzut (**pe**) un singur profesor în toată
not-have.1.SG seen DOM a single professor in all
viața mea care să se poarte așa urât
life.the mine.FEM.SG. who SUBJ REFL behave so ugly
cu studenții cum o face el.
with students how it does he
'I haven´t seen a single professor in my whole life who should behave so badly with the students as he does.'

b. ?Nu **l**-am văzut **pe** un singur profesor
not CL.3.SG.M.ACC-have.1.SG seen DOM a single professor
în toată viața mea care să se poarte
in all life.DEF.ART. mine.FEM.SG who SUBJ REFL behave
așa urât cu studenții cum o face el.
so ugly with students how it does he
'I haven´t seen a single professor in my whole life who should behave so badly with the students as he does.'

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Another context strengthening the hypothesis that the pronominal clitic induces specificity is that of left dislocated DOs, which come in two constructions: In one construction the DO is simply moved to the left periphery without being resumed by a pronominal clitic, while in the other construction the left dislocated DO is also clitic resumed. In the latter construction the direct object must be interpreted specifically, as it is illustrated by its incompatibility with the distributivity marker *câte* forcing a non-specific interpretation. We illustrate this with inanimate direct objects, which do not take the differential object marker *pe* and therefore show the sole effect of clitic doubling.

In (3a) the left dislocated DO *două cărți* ('two books') may be read either specifically or non-specifically. In (3b), where the DO has also been clitic-resumed, only the specific interpretation seems to be available (i.e., one in which every student read the same two specific books written by Tolstoy). Since this specificity restriction seems to arise as a consequence of clitic resumption (in the absence of DOM), one might presuppose that the clitic alone is at the core of the specific interpretation (while DOM serves a different purpose). The hypothesis is further strengthened when considering the combination of these constructions with the distributive marker *câte* in (4a) and (4b): while the undoubled DO allows co-occurrence with *câte* exhibiting a non-specific reading, the CLLDed variant does not fare very well in this respect, showing that this construction only allows a specific and wide scope reading.

(3) a. Două cărți de Tolstoi a citit fiecare student.
two books by Tolstoy has read every student
'Every student has read two books by Tolstoy.'

b. Două cărți de Tolstoi **le-**a citit fiecare student.
two books by Tolstoy CL.3.PL.ACC-has read every student
'Every student has read two books by Tolstoy.'

(4) a. *Câte* două cărți de Tolstoi a citit fiecare student
CATE two books by Tolstoy has read every student
'Every student has read two books by Tolstoy.'

b. *?Câte* două cărți de Tolstoi **le-**a citit fiecare student.
CATE two books by Tolstoy CL.3.PL.ACC -has read every student
'Every student has read two books by Tolstoy.'

It seems then that CLLDed indefinite DOs have a specific reading even in the absence of DOM. Unmarked left dislocated DOs behave on a par with their unmoved counterparts. This state of affairs lends strong support to the hypothesis that the pronominal clitic (and not DOM) is the actual trigger for specific readings[4], which was accepted as one of the hypotheses put forth for the current experiment.

From the observations above we can formulate the following three hypotheses: Firstly, unmarked DOs may read both specifically as well as non-specifically and the latter

[4] Building on the case of CLLDed and (non-DOMed) indefinites, Tigău (2016) analyses the pronominal clitic as the sole specificity trigger. The clitic is argued to function as a function restricting the output of the embedding functions interpreting the respective marked indefinite in DRT terms.

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reading obtains easily in contexts inducing a non-specific interpretation. Secondly, DOMed DOs pattern with unmarked DOs allowing for a non-specific reading in the appropriate contexts. Thirdly, CDed+DOMed DOs strongly favour a specific interpretation and will be discarded as ungrammatical when inserted in contexts forcing a non-specific reading.

In order to verify these hypotheses, we have tested the behaviour of unmarked and marked DOs (single DOMed DOs and CDed+DOMed+CDed DOs) when occurring in various contexts inducing a non-specific reading. The contexts contained the following expressions: the quantifiers *cel mult* ('at most')/*cel puțin* ('at least'), the distributive *câte*, the free choice indefinite *oarecare* ('any'), and relative clauses modifying the indefinite DO and containing a predicate in the *subjunctive mood*.[5]

The structure of the paper is as follows: section 2 is a very brief overview of the basic facts of Romanian DOM as a mechanism triggering a specific interpretation. Section 3 presents the testing contexts we employed in the experiment together with the predictions regarding the behaviour of the three DO types. Section 4 describes the experiment proper focusing on its design, the method employed and the results we obtained. Section 5 amounts to a more extensive discussion of the results in view of the initial hypotheses. Finally, section 6 contains the conclusions to this paper.

## 2. SPECIFICITY AND DOM

Romanian may mark its direct objects by means of a differential object marker, the functional counterpart of the locative preposition *pe* ('on'), as well as by means of a pronominal clitic in the accusative. The latter phenomenon, known as clitic doubling, may only affect differentially object marked (DOMed) DOs as shown in (5c) vs. (5d). Thus DOs may be left unmarked (5a), or may bear either the marker *pe* (5b) or both *pe* and an accusative clitic (5c):

(5) a. Am văzut câțiva studenți învățând pentru examen.
have.I seen some students learning for exam
'I saw some students learning for the exam.'

b. Am văzut **pe** câțiva studenți învățând pentru examen.
have.I seen DOM some students learning for exam
'I saw some students learning for the exam.'

c. **I**-am văzut **pe** câțiva studenți învățând
CL.3.PL.ACC-have.I seen DOM some students learning
'I saw some students learning.'

d. **(*I)**-am văzut câțiva studenți învățând
CL.3.PL.ACC-have.I seen some students learning
'I saw some students learning.'

As pointed out in the previous section, Romanian DOM has been claimed to function as a specificity trigger. Dobrovie-Sorin (1994) observes that the use of *pe* in (6b) disambiguates between the readings that the indefinite DP may engender towards a specific one.

[5] See Tigău (2016) for an initial discussion on the behaviour of marked and unmarked DOs within these contexts.

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(6) a. Caut o secretară.
look.I a secretary
'I am looking for a secretary.' Dobrovie-Sorin (1994): (48a) p. 224

b. Caut **pe** o secretară.
look.I DOM a secretary
'I am looking for a secretary.' Dobrovie-Sorin (1994): (61a) p. 234

Cornilescu (2000) makes a similar observation, arguing that DOM, i.e. the *pe* marked DO in (7), is interpreted as epistemically specific:

(7) ...unde să vizitez **pe** nişte vechi şi buni prieteni
where SUBJ visit DOM some old and good friends
'... where I should visit some good old friends.'
Cornilescu (2000): (30) p. 102

Hill and Tasmowski (2008) also observe that the use of DOM in (8) induces a reading according to which the referent denoted by the marked DO is to be understood as part of a background set. No such presupposition seems to be available in the absence of DOM:

(8) Am văzut (**pe**) mulţi colegi pierzându-şi capul
have.I seen DOM many colleagues losing-REFL head.the.
în momente de criză.
in moments of crisis
'I've seen many colleagues of mine losing their head in moments of crisis.'

Hill and Tasmowski (2008): (5d) p. 142–143

Examples (6), (7) and (8) show that there are different kinds of specificity, namely, scopal, epistemic and partitive specificity, respectively (see Farkas and Braşoveanu (in print) for a discussion). What types of specificity there are and whether they can be unified under one general notion or function is still controversial (see von Heusinger 2002, 2019 for an extensive overview). We can, however, state that DOM is triggered by specificity in various languages (Aissen 2003). In Spanish, DOM is realized by the marker *a*, which is derived and homophonous to the dative marker and the preposition for *to*. In Spanish, unmarked indirect objects are non-specific, while DOM-marked ones are either specific or non-specific, see (9) (e.g. López 2012: 1–2). Non-specificity is triggered by the subjunctive in the relative clause.

(9) a. María buscó **a**/Ø una gestora que hablara alemán.
Maria looked for *DOM*/ Ø a manager that spoke.SUBJ German
b. María buscó **a**/***Ø** una gestora que hablaba alemán.
Maria looked for *DOM*/ Ø a manager that spoke.IND German

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Turkish expresses DOM with a suffixed case marker *(y)i* (and its vowel-harmonic allophones *(y)i, (y)u, (y)ü))*. It is generally assumed that case-marked DOs are always specific while unmarked DOs are non-specific (10) (von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2005).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (10) | a. (ben) | ***bir*** *kitap* | oku-du-m | *indef. non-specific* |
| | | I **a** book | read-Past-1.sg. | |
| | | 'I read **a** book.' | | |
| | b. (ben) | ***bir*** *kitab-**ı*** | oku-du-m | *indef. specific* |
| | | I **a** book-**ACC.** | read-Past-1.sg. | |
| | | 'I read **a certain** book.' | | |

Turkish seems to be different from Spanish and Romanian in that the case marker clearly expresses (scopal) specificity[6]. Spanish is different from Romanian in that while the case marker allows for a specific and non-specific reading, unmarked DOs seem to always read non-specifically. In Romanian, on the other hand, the non-marked form is unspecified for specificity. DOMed DOs behave on a par with their Spanish counterparts, allowing both for a specific as well as for a non-specific interpretation.

The case of Romanian DOs seems to be more complex in this respect, given that CD has also been claimed to trigger specificity and, as already expanded upon above, there are cases where the specific reading obtains in the absence of DOM (e.g., CLLDed inanimate DOs) along with cases where DOMed DOs lose their specific interpretation while their DOMed+CDed counterparts seem to be able to retain it (e.g., the examples where the marked DO co-occurs with negation in (2)).

The experiment we conducted aimed at investigating this difference of behaviour with respect to specificity between DOMed DOs and CDed+DOM DOs under the expectation that the former DOs would exhibit loss of the specific reading within appropriate contexts, while the latter would still retain their specific interpretation.

## 3. NON-SPECIFIC CONTEXTS

By non-specific contexts we mean those contexts which force a non-specific interpretation on the direct object DP. In this paper we discuss contexts featuring the following expressions: *cel mult* ('at most')*/cel puțin* ('at least'*)*, the distributive *câte*, the free choice indefinite *oarecare* ('any'), relative clauses modifying the indefinite DO and containing a predicate in the *subjunctive mood*.

### 3.1. Quantifiers *mult (at most)/cel puțin (at least)*

One context forcing a non-specific interpretation on the indefinite direct object is that in which the DO is preceded by the quantifiers *cel mult* ('at most')*/cel puțin* ('at least'): In (11a), the unmarked indefinite DO may allow both for a non-specific interpretation and a

[6] Krause and von Heusinger (2019) have analysed acceptability data suggesting that this only holds for scopal specificity and not for epistemic specificity.

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specific one. Under the former reading the set of two colleagues whom Michael helps may vary from one evening to the next. Under the specific reading Michael helps the same two colleagues every evening.
When the indefinite is, however, preceded by *cel mult*, as in (11b), the only available interpretation for the DO is the non-specific one. It seems then that the *cel mult/cel puțin* phrase disambiguates between the two possible interpretations in favour of the non-specific one and thus creates an optimal testing ground of whether or not an expression is specific.

(11) a. Mihai ajută doi colegi la teme în fiecare zi.
Michael helps two colleagues at homework in every day
'Michael helps two colleagues with their homework every day.'
b. Mihai ajută *cel mult* doi colegi la teme în fiecare zi.
Michael helps at most two colleagues at homework in every day
'Michael helps at most two colleagues with their homework every evening.'

Such a non-specific context will allow us to find out which of the two mechanisms triggers specificity. Example (12) contains the three versions of a test item tested in the experiment presented in section 4 below. The three variants differ with respect to marking: (a) contains an unmarked DOs, (b) contains a DOMed DO, while (c) exhibits a CDed+DOMed DO:

(12) Context: În apropierea alegerilor toate canalele de televiziune organizează dezbateri politice oferind astfel telespectatorilor şansa de a decide în cunoştință de cauză cu cine votează.
´On the eve of elections, all TV channels organise political debates enabling the viewers to make an informed choice as to who they will vote for.´

a. Realizatorii acestor emisiuni pot, însă, invita *cel mult*
producers.DEF.ART. these.GEN shows may however invite at most
doi candidați la preşedinție altfel riscă să depăşească
two candidates at presidency otherwise risk SUBJ surpass
limita de timp.
limit of time
'The producers of these shows may, however, only invite at most two candidates otherwise they risk running out of time.'
b. Realizatorii acestor emisiuni pot, însă, invita **pe** *cel mult*
producers.the these.GEN shows may however invite DOM at most
doi candidați la preşedinție altfel riscă să depăşească
two candidates at presidency otherwise risk SUBJ surpass
limita de timp.
limit of time
'The producers of these shows may, however, only invite at most two candidates otherwise they risk running out of time.'
c. Realizatorii acestor emisiuni **îi** pot, însă, invita
producers.DEF.ART. these.GEN shows CL.3.PL.ACC may however invite
**pe** *cel mult* doi candidați la preşedinție altfel riscă să
DOM at most two candidates at presidency otherwise risk SUBJ

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depăşească limita de timp.
surpass limit of time
'The producers of these shows may, however, only invite at most two candidates otherwise they risk running out of time.'

### 3.2. Distributive *câte*

Another context that we verified experimentally is that built around the distributive determiner *câte.* As argued in Farkas (2001), this determiner restricts the possible interpretations of an indefinite to a non-specific and a narrow scope one. Hence, while both a specific and a non-specific interpretation is available for the indefinite DO *un coleg* ('a colleague') in (13a) as shown by the specific continuation (i) and the non-specific on (ii), the presence of *câte* restricts the possible readings to the non-specific one (hence the ungrammaticality of (b.i.)):

(13) Context: Şeful de departament se alege prin vot secret.
'The head of the department is elected by resorting to secret voting.'

a. Ieri, membrii departamentului au ales un coleg
yesterday members.the department.GEN have chosen a colleague
de pe lista de candidați.
on list.the of candidates
'Yesterday, the members of the department have all selected a colleague from the list of candidates.'

i. Acesta a fost domnul Popescu.
'This was Mr. Popescu.'
ii Dar nici unul dintre cei selectați nu a reuşit să obțină majoritatea din primul tur.
'But none of those selected managed to obtain the majority of votes in the first round.'

b. Ieri, membrii departamentului au ales **câte** un
yesterday members.the department.GEN have chosen CATE a
coleg de pe lista de candidați.
colleague on list.the of candidates
'Yesterday, the members of the department have all selected a colleague from the list of candidates.'

i *?Acesta a fost domnul Popescu.
'This was Mr. Popescu.'
ii. Dar nici unul dintre cei selectați nu a reuşit să obțină majoritatea din primul tur.
'But none of those selected managed to obtain the majority of votes in the first round.'

A sample item from the experiment may be found in (14) below, with its three variants:

(14) Context: Pacienților trebuie să le fie respectate demnitatea şi dreptul la intimitate pe toată durata consultației.

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'One must respect the dignity and right to privacy of patients during the examination.'

a. Ca urmare, doctorul poate examina numai *câte* un
as consequence, doctor.the may examine only CATE a
pacient pe rând.
patient in turn
'As a consequence, the doctor may examine only one patient at a time.'

b. Ca urmare, doctorul poate examina numai **pe** *câte*
as consequence, doctor.the may examine only DOM CATE
un pacient pe rând.
a patient in turn
'As a consequence, the doctor may examine only one patient at a time.'

c. Ca urmare, doctorul **îl** poate examina
as consequence, doctor.DEF.ART CL.3.SG.M.ACC may examine
numai **pe** *câte* un pacient pe rând.
only DOM CATE a patient in turn
'As a consequence, the doctor may examine only one patient at a time.'

### 3.3. Free choice indefinite *oarecare* ('any')

Another context tested in the experiment was the one provided by the free choice indefinite *oarecare* ('any'). Just as with the previous two contexts, we expected indefinites preceded by *oarecare* to lose their, otherwise possible, specific interpretation. Under the hypothesis according to which DOM and CD trigger a specific reading, CDed+DOMed DOs were expected to be rejected within the context of *oarecare,* while DOMed DOs would turn out as good as unmarked DOs. Example (15) shows this at work*:* the unmarked DO allows for a specific or non-specific reading: Maria may be looking for a specific (or non-specific) mechanic who might help her with the car. When the DO carries the modification of *oarecare,* the specific reading is ruled out.

(15) Maria caută un mecanic (*oarecare*) pentru nişte reparaţii la maşină.
Mary seeks a mechanic any for some repairs at car.
´Mary is looking for a mechanic for some repair work at her car.´

The free choice indefinite *oarecare* may be combined with a modifying relative clause containing a predicate in the subjunctive/indicative: (16a) shows that the co-occurrence of the indefinite DO preceded by *oarecare* with a relative clause in the subjunctive restricts the available readings of the DO to a non-specific one; (16b) shows that co-occurrence of *oarecare* and the indicative mood in the modifying relative causes a clash:

(16) a. Caut o secretară oarecare care să vorbească englezeşte.
look.I a secretary any who SUBJ. speak English
'I am looking for a (any) secretary who might speak English.'

b. ?Caut o secretară oarecare care a vorbit englezeşte.
look.I a secretary any who has.IND speak English
'I am looking for a (any) secretary who has spoken English.'

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Consider also (17) containing an actual sample item we tested in the experiment:

(17) Context: Înainte de fiecare teză profesorul le dă elevilor lista cu referințele bibliografice.
Before each test paper the teacher gives the students a list of references.

a. Aceştia selectează apoi trei autori oarecare şi studiază în
these select then three authors any and study in
profunzime întreaga lor operă
depth all their work
'These select three authors from the list and study their work thoroughly'

b. Aceştia selectează apoi **pe** trei autori oarecare şi studiază
these select then DOM three authors any and study
în profunzime întreaga lor operă
in deep all their work
'These select three authors from the list and study their work thoroughly.'

c. Aceştia **îi** selectează apoi **pe** trei autori oarecare
these CL.3.SG.PL.M.ACC select then DOM three authors any
şi studiază în profunzime întreaga lor operă
and study in deep all their work
'These select three authors from the list and study their work thoroughly.'

### 3.4. Relative clauses containing a predicate in the *subjunctive mood*

Mood has also been argued to influence the specific/non-specific interpretation of indefinite DOs. As pointed out by Rivero (1979), Farkas (1987), the grammatical mood of a predicate from within a relative clause modifying a nominal functions as a specificity test. The examples under (18) show this at work: the unmodified DO in (18a) may evince both a specific as well as a non-specific interpretation; in (b) on the other hand, where the indefinite DO has been modified by means of a relative clause whose predicate is in the subjunctive, the only possible reading is the non-specific one. In (c), where the mood in the relative clause is the indicative, the DO may only read specifically:

(18) a. Maria caută un mecanic.
Mary seeks a mechanic
'Mary is looking for a mechanic.'

b. Maria caută un mecanic care să îi repare
Mary seeks a mechanic who SUBJ CL.3.SG.DAT repair
maşina.
car.the
'Mary is looking for a mechanic who should repair her car.'

c. Maria caută un mecanic care i-a reparat
Mary seeks a mechanic who CL.3.SG.DAT-has repaired
maşina.
car.the
'Mary is looking for a mechanic who repaired her car.'

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Just as it happens with DOs preceded by *cel mult/cel puțin* ('at most'/'at least'), we expect CDed+DOMed indefinites to be infelicitous when modified by a relative clause containing a predicate in the subjunctive, while DOMed indefinites should be as good as unmarked ones when modified by such a relative clause. Example (19) shows the three variants of a sample we tested in the experiment. Note that only the case of indefinite DOs modified by relatives with predicates in the subjunctive was considered in the experiment:

(19) a. Context: Secretara departamentului tocmai s-a pensionat, iar directorul ar avea nevoie de cineva mult mai bine pregătit.
'The secretary of the department has just retired and the manager would need someone with a much better expertise.'

a. El va aprecia cu siguranță o secretară care să poată
he will appreciate with certainty a secretary who SUBJ can
vorbi fluent două limbi străine
speak fluently two languages foreign
'He will definitely appreciate a secretary who can fluently speak two foreign languages.'

b. El va aprecia cu siguranță **pe** o secretară care să poată
he will appreciate with certainty DOM a secretary who SUBJ can
vorbi fluent două limbi străine
speak fluently two languages foreign
'He will definitely appreciate a secretary who can fluently speak two foreign languages.'

c. El **o** va aprecia cu siguranță **pe** o secretară
he CL.3.SG.F.ACC will appreciate with certainty DOM a secretary
care să poată vorbi fluent două limbi străine
who SUBJ. can speak fluently two languages foreign
'He will definitely appreciate a secretary who can fluently speak two foreign languages.'

As already pointed out, the expectations for the four contexts were for them to allow the use of unmarked indefinite and DOMed DOs (on a non-specific interpretation) and to disallow CDed+DOMed indefinites, given that CD is hypothesized to trigger specificity.

## 4. THE EXPERIMENT

### 4.1. Hypotheses

As already pointed out, our expectations with respect to the present experiment had been formed from various studies on Romanian DOM and CD, which analyse both these mechanisms as specificity triggers[7] and which distinguish marked DOs from their unmarked correspondents, whose interpretation may vary between a specific and a non-

[7] Steriade (1980), Farkas (1987), Dobrovie-Sorin (1990, 1994), Cornilescu (2000), Gierling (1997), Tigău (2011, 2016), Chiriacescu and von Heusinger (2010) a.o.

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specific one. As a consequence, we expected unmarked indefinite DOs to fare well in the four contexts inducing a non-specific interpretation where they are expected to read non-specifically.

Building on Tigău (2016), who argues that DOMed indefinite DOs behave similarly to their unmarked counterparts in these contexts, we expected these DPs to also fare well in these contexts and to lose their specific interpretation (which seems to be preferred otherwise, as argued in Cornilescu 2000 a.o.). CDed+DOMed indefinites, on the other hand, were expected to be totally discarded from such contexts, given that they seem to retain their specific interpretation irrespective of the contexts they occur in (see ex. (2) and (4) above).

The following hypotheses were thus posited for our experiment:

H1: Unmarked DOs may read both specifically as well as non-specifically and the latter reading obtains easily in contexts inducing a non-specific interpretation.
H2: DOMed DOs pattern with unmarked DOs allowing for a non-specific reading in the appropriate contexts
H3: CDed+DOMed DOs strongly favour a specific interpretation and will be discarded as ungrammatical when inserted in contexts forcing a non-specific reading.

### 4.2 Design and procedure

The experiment checked the behaviour of unmarked, DOMed and CDed+DOMed indefinite DOs within the four contexts described above. Table 1 shows the contexts together with the corresponding predictions.

*Table 1*

Non-specific contexts and predictions for types of indefinite Dos

| **Context** / **Indefinite** | ***cel mult (at most)/cel puțin (at least)*** | ***câte*** | ***oarecare (any)*** | ***subjunctive*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a) unmarked DO** | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| **b) DOMed DO** | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| **c) CDed+DOMed DO** | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |

For each of the four contexts we designed 9 sentences, (36 different lexicalisations in total) which we further varied function of DO type: unmarked/ DOMed/ CDed+DOMed. We thus ended up having 108 items, 9 for each of the cells in Table 1.

We employed 18 filler items, of which 6 were proper control items and the other 12 belonged to a pilot test of the interaction of CD and binding of arguments. They had been previously tested informally with a small group of respondents who did not take part in the main experiment. The control items 1-6 contain verbs which may only select a CDed Dative object, which were presented in three different forms, as illustrated in (20). In (20a)

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the dative object is a proper name and is clitic doubled, in (20b) the dative object is a quantifier phrase (QP) and is also clitic doubled. Both constructions are expected to be rated as very good. (20c) contains a proper name but no clitic, a clearly ungrammatical constructions – therefore we expected a very bad rating in this case.

(20) a. **Mariei** **i** s-a aplecat de la salata
Mary.DAT CL.3.SG.DAT REFL-has got sick from salad
de vinete.
of egg plants
'Mary got sick from the egg plant salad.'

b. **Oricui** **i** s-ar fi aplecat de la salata
anyone.DAT CL.3.SG.DAT REFL-would be got sick from salad
de vinete.
of egg plants
'Anyone would have got sick from that egg plant salad.'

c. **Mariei** s-a aplecat de la salata de vinete.
Mary.DAT REFL-has got sick from salad of egg plants
'Mary got sick from the egg plant salad.'

The filler items 7–18 were good grammatical constructions, but difficult to process – so we expected good ratings, but lower than the very goods from the good control items.
Fillers 7–18 contain verbs which require a dative object. We had three variants as illustrated in (21): (21a) contains a CDed dative object which is bound by the subject QP; (21b) contains an undoubled dative object and the same quantificational binding relation as in (21a); variant (21c) contains a clitic-doubled dative object which is now bound by a proper name:

(21) a. **Orice elev$_i$** silitor *îi* place **profesorului său$_i$**.
any pupil hardworking CL.3.SG.DAT pleases professor.DAT his
'Any hardworking pupil pleases his teacher.'

b. **Orice elev$_i$** silitor place **profesorului său$_i$**.
any pupil hardworking pleases professor.DAT his
'Any hardworking pupil pleases his teacher.'

c. **Petre$_i$** *îi* place **profesorului său$_i$**.
Peter CL.3.SG.DAT pleases professor.DAT his
'His teacher likes Peter.'

All 18 filler items were distributed **into 3 different lists** using the Latin square method for an even distribution and they were merged with the 36 test items, such that each of the three lists had 54 items in total.

The questionnaires were formatted as Google online forms in such a way that the potential respondent could only access one item at a time, without having the possibility of going back or forth. Each questionnaire was assessed by at least 20 native speakers of Romanian, with a total of 67 people taking part in the experiment. Respondents were required to assess each item on an acceptability scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 was listed as *completely unacceptable,* while 7 was labelled as *completely acceptable.* The

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respondents who failed to assess the control items in an appropriate way, were discarded as outliers. We had 20 remaining participants for each of the questionnaire – their judgments entered statistical analysis.

### 4.3. Results

The main results of the questionnaires are summarized in Figure 1, which shows the mean value of the acceptability judgements for each of the four contexts and each of the three forms:

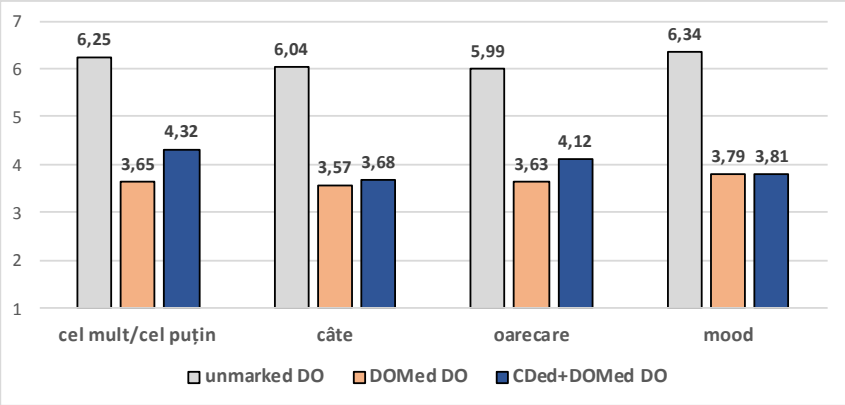



Figure 1: Mean values of accessibility judgemens for contexts and DO types.

The results clearly show that unmarked indefinite direct objects in the non-specific contexts are always rated well. This confirms hypothesis 1. However, the results also show that DOMed direct objects are somewhat worse rated as CDed DOMed direct objects. This goes against hypotheses 2 and 3 where we predicted that DOMed direct objects pattern with unmarked DOs, while DOMed and CD direct objects are clearly specific and expected to be rated badly in this context.

We also see that all four contexts show very similar results i.e., the three DO types behave similarly irrespective of the context in which they occur. Statistic analysis (see appendix) shows that there is no effect between contexts. We will therefore merge the contexts in the subsequent discussion. There is a clear effect between unmarked direct objects and DOMed direct objects and DOMed CD direct objects. There is also a significant contrast between DOMed and CDed DOMed direct objects.

As already pointed out, marked DOs, whether DOMed or CDed+DOMed, received significantly worse acceptability scores than initially predicted, a result which one might expect under a hypothesis that DOM and CD are specificity triggers. What is, however, unexpected is that the variants containing DOMed or CDed+DOMed DOs were not completely discarded as unacceptable, but actually assigned scores which ranged towards the mid area of the acceptability scale. Figure 2 shows, for instance, that the results obtained for marked DOs are higher than the acceptability threshold of 3.5 GM on the scale for all the four contexts, and more closely to the rating of the good items (4,68) that of that of the bad items (1,77).

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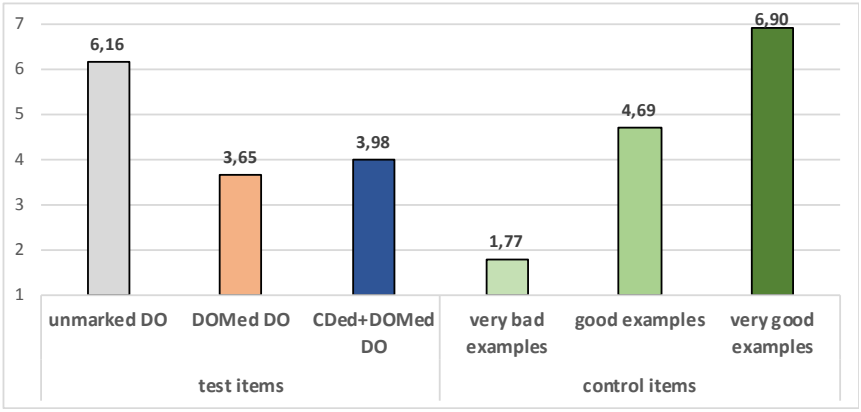



Figure 2: Mean values of acceptability judgements for DO type in all contexts and control items.

Further inspection of the data reveals that we have a very broad variance of the judgements for both the CDed+DOMeD direct objects and the DOMed direct objects from nearly unacceptable to clearly acceptable. See Figure 3 for the distribution of judgements for DOMed DOs and CDed DOMed DOs. It becomes obvious that there are speakers who do not accept these constructions at all, while others do judge them as good as unmarked direct objects. Figure 3 represents the informants according to their judgements on the DOMed DO construction, it also indicates that the judgements for CDed DOMed direct objects are very close to the judgements for DOMed direct object, with minor variation, in particular in the lower ratings.

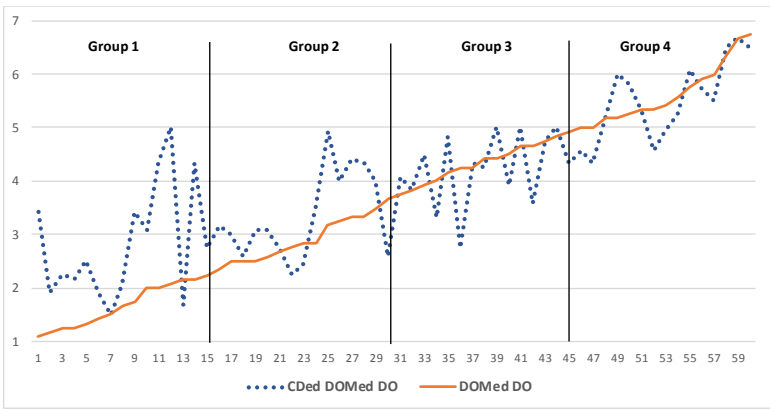



Figure 3: Distribution of informants according to judgements for DOMed DOs.

We see that there is a very homogenous distribution over the whole scale. We therefore divided all informants into four groups according to their judgements of the DOMed DOs: Group 1 discarded DOMed direct objects in non-specific contexts, while group 4 judged them to be almost as good as unmarked direct objects.

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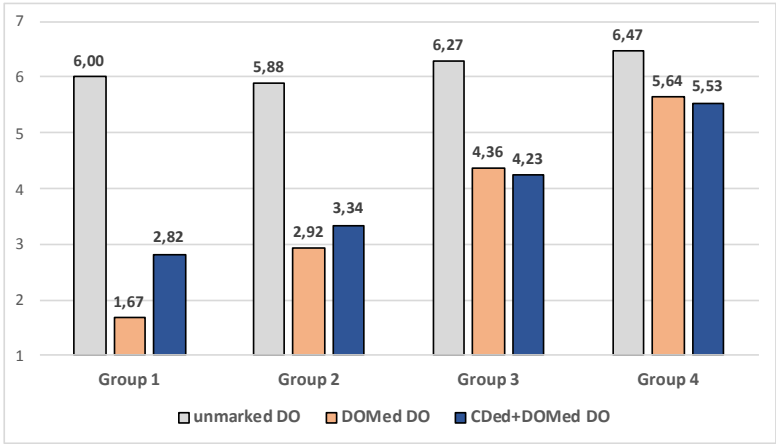



Figure 4: Acceptability judgements for type of direct object and Group 1–4.

Figure 4 shows that all groups rate the unmarked directs objects in the non-specific contexts as very high. They differ in the acceptability of the two marked versions. For Group 3 and 4, they rate both marked version as very high and we do not see any difference in acceptability, while for Group 1 we see that CDed+DOMed variants are somewhat better rated than the DOMed version.

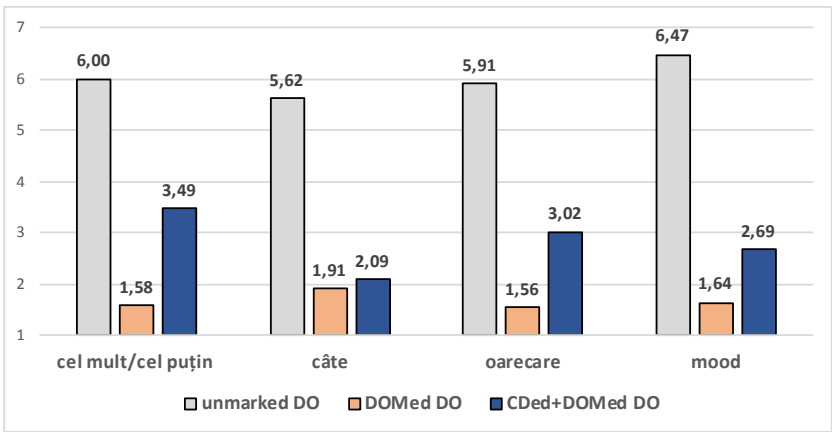



Figure 5: Acceptability judgements for Group 1 for the 4 different contexts and DO types.

If we analyse the results of Group 1 in more detail, as illustrated in Figure 5, we see that acceptability varies with the context: For DOMed DOs all contexts are similarly bad, while for CD+DOMed DOs we see that the contexts with *câte* is very bad, while the one containing the quantifiers *cel mult/cel puțin* are much better rated. The *oarecare* and

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*subjunctive mood* contexts are in between. These judgements within Group 1 confirms the observations of an anonymous reviewer[8].

A reviewer suggested that the differences between the different groups may also depend on age, as they reflect the diachronic development from fewer contexts that allow DOMed DOs without CD to more contexts where the missing of CD is allowed. In order to test this hypothesis, we divided all participants in two groups according to age, the young (under 30, 40 participants) and old (over 29: 20 participtans) and looked at the distribution of the young and the old over Group 1 to Group 4. We could find more older participants in Groups 1 and 2 and less in Groups 3 and 4, as summarized in Table 2.

*Table 2*

Distribution of older vs. younger informants across groups

| | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| old | 25% (5) | 55% (11) | 15% (3) | 5% (1) | 100% (20) |
| young | 25% (10) | 10% (4) | 30% (12) | 35% (14) | 100% (40) |

This result is further substantiated by findings from diachronic investigations on the evolution of DOM and CD in Romanian (see von Heusinger & Onea 2008 for an overview). More specifically, Lindemann (2017) shows in a corpus search that about 97% of animate DOs are DOMed and CDed in nowadays Romanian, while DOMed constructions without CD are licenced only in particular syntactic/semantic contexts (comparative constructions, verbs that require certain prepositions, etc.). During 1900-1950 and earlier, however, less than 50% of speakers used CD and DOM together and non CDed DOMed DOs seem to have been the norm. This corpus search correlates to the variation observed in the grammaticaly judgment task reported above.

## 5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Given the experimental results presented, we need to discuss the following aspects against the background of our initial hypotheses: 1. Unmarked indefinite DOs obtain high acceptability scores, which confirms our hypothesis. 2. DOMed DOs receive the lowest acceptability scores, contrary to our expectations. These results need to be confronted with our initial hypothesis according to which DOMed DOs should pattern with unmarked DOs in allowing occurrence within the four contexts under a non-specific reading. 3. CD+DOMed variants get high scores contrary to our initial hypothesis these DOs would be completely discarded from the four contexts. 4. An explanation as to why the CDed+DOMed variants fared better than their DOMed counterparts is also necessary, in particular in contexts, where both types are not accepted (Group 1 and Group 2).

[8] The reviewer reports: "For me, there is a difference in the acceptability of the test items given to the participants also based on the sentence. The c) condition [i.e. CDed DOMed DOs] seems to be more readily compatible with the *subjunctive & oarecare* and less so with *cel mult/puțin.* The only context I would definitely rule out c is with *câte*".

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The high acceptability scores assigned to items containing unmarked DOs are expected given that these DPs generally allow both a specific and a non-specific reading and may acquire both a wide scope and a narrow scope interpretation when co-occurring with other scope taking expressions. When used in the four contexts inducing a non-specific interpretation, the unmarked DOs will thus lose their (otherwise available) specific interpretation and read non-specifically.

When it comes to accounting for the **unexpectedly low acceptability of DOMed DOs** several aspects need to be considered. First we have to note that we find a very high variation in responses and that it seems that acceptability depends on different speaker groups. We focus on those groups that do not accept this type of direct object. Here we find a clear contrast between DOMed DOs and CDed DOMed DOs – see Fig. 4, Groups 1 and 2.

Consider first our initial research hypothesis according to which DOMed DOs should fare similarly to their unmarked counterparts in the four tested contexts: Tigău (2016) discusses specificity with DOMed indefinite DOs and reaches the conclusion that DOM is not a specificity trigger. She points out that there are situations where a differentially marked DO does not read specifically. In (22), for instance, DOM is obligatorily required with the bare quantifier *nimeni* (‘nobody’*),* which is never specific:

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (22) | Nu | am | văzut | pe/*Ø | nimeni | pentru că | era | întuneric. |
| | not | have.1.SG | seen | DOM/*Ø | nobody | because | was | dark |

‘I haven´t seen anyone because it was dark.’

Recall also the examples under (2) where the DOMed indefinite may only be interpreted in the scope of the negative operator. In this respect, the DOMed DO (a) patterns with its unmarked counterpart; the CDed+DOMed variant (b) is however discarded from such a context, which was expected, given that such DPs are thought to always read specifically and, as such, to outscope the negative operator, a reading which, however, the context does not allow, hence the impossibility of CD+DOM.

The examples above thus show that the non-specific interpretation remains an option with DOMed indefinite DOs and that it may actually be actualized in an appropriate context. Hence the expectation that DOMed DOs behave similarly to their unmarked counterparts within the four tested contexts forcing a non-specific reading.

When confronted with examples such as the ones above, where DOMed DOs seem to be able to lose their specific reading within appropriate contexts, we expected to witness a similar behaviour within the four tested contexts. Consequently, the unexpected lower acceptability scores with these DOs for Groups 1 and 2 needs an explanation. An initial step towards finding an answer in this respect would be to consider some similar results reported in Avram (2014). The experiment presented by Avram involves two acceptability questionnaires filled in by 23 native speakers of Romanian, which seem to fall into two groups: speakers who always clitic-double the DOMed DO and speakers who allow both for a ‘single’ DOMed variant and a CD+DOM one. As it seems, for some respondents the single DOM variant is simply unacceptable: They seem to always pair CD with DOM and to consider this combination as the only one available for DO marking. To these respondents, CD+DOM seems to have functional unity (see also Tigău 2015 for a similar proposal).

A similar propensity to mark DOMed DOs as less acceptable than their CDed+DOMed counterparts was noticed in another experiment carried out by Tigău and

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von Heusinger (2019) on testing binding within ditransitives. A general observation made with respect to those instances where DOMed DOs are employed is that these DPs tend to fare worse than the items where CDed+DOMed counterparts are used. Thus, while items containing DOMed DOs never get scores higher than 4.43 on a seven-rung Likert scale, sentences containing CDed+DOMed DOs may reach acceptability values of 5.52.

Given the experimental results, obtained independently of our own undertaking, which show a general dispreference for DOMed DOs in the absence of CD, we might consider that a possible explanation of the low acceptability results in Group 1 and 2 would actually have to do less with their potential for a specific reading or for the loss of that reading in the four tested contexts, and more with the general frown on the phenomenon of DOM marking (without CD) as such.

**The unexpected high acceptability of CDed+DOMed DOs**, which is more expressed in Groups 3 and 4, but which are also obvious in Groups 1 and 2 in Figure 4. Our initial hypothesis with respect to CDed+DOMed indefinite DOs was that these DPs would be disallowed from contexts inducing a non-specific interpretation. Data regarding the behaviour of inanimate CLLDed DOs, which do not need DOM and which seemed to disallow non-specific readings and to be rejected from contexts forcing such a reading on them supported this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, this expectation was disconfirmed since the respective items generally received scores ranging around the mid area of the acceptability scale, which showed that they were considered not altogether unacceptable, but rather acceptable. The explanation we would like to propose follows the line of argument advanced for DOMed DOs and takes CD+DOM as a complex mechanism where the combination of DOM and CD exhibits a functional unity. The pronominal clitic seems to be less of a specificity trigger and to actually have a syntactic role, most probably triggering movement of the marked DO out of the VP into a position where the DO has access to a mode of semantic composition (i.e., choice functions) which may give rise to a specific interpretation along the lines of López (2012)[9]. Having a specific interpretation is, however, not mandatory (as is also the case with DOMed indefinite DOs.).

Thus, in line with López (2012)'s proposal for Spanish marked DOs, the specific interpretation is not linked with a piece of morphology, i.e., the pronominal clitic, but comes about as a result of a peculiar mode of semantic composition enabled in syntax by way of movement to an appropriate position. This is in turn related to the argument status of the marked DO – as pointed out by López (2012), marked DOs lose the <e,t> reading available for their unmarked counterparts and acquire argument status (see also Bleam 2005). As such, marked DOs may no longer check case by way of incorporation into V (as seems to be possible for unmarked variants), but have to move out of VP in order to do so. The position they reach renders available a special mode of semantic composition (through choice functions), which enables a specific reading for the respective DP (Onea & Hole 2017, Tigău in press).

Given the considerations above, CDed+DOMed DOs may actually lose their specific interpretation in the appropriate contexts as is the case with the four tested contexts discussed in this paper. Furthermore, given the functional CD+DOM unit formed,

[9] This is position P3 in López (2012), a position within the TP area, wherefrom the scrambled DO may bind into the subject DP, for instance.

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CDed+DOMed DOs should actually be expected to fare better than their DOMed counterparts, just as the experimental results show. ‘’

## 6. CONCLUSION

The experiment presented in this paper has unveiled a few interesting facts with respect to the behaviour of Romanian marked and unmarked indefinite DOs within contexts forcing a non-specific interpretation. The following conclusions were reached: All respondents assign high acceptability scores to unmarked indefinite DOs occurring within contexts forcing a non-specific interpretation. This is to be expected, given that unmarked indefinites freely allow both a specific and a non-specific interpretation.

DOMed indefinite DOs and their CDed+DOMed counterparts fare significantly worse in the tested contexts, but they are not totally discarded, when compared to the *bad* fillers, which get very low acceptability scores. Moreover, they show a stable variation that allows us to assume that we have different speaker groups with different uses of these constructions. Some speakers (Group 3 and 4) accept both constructions in the non-specific contexts, thus neutralizing a possible function of CD and DOM in expressing specificity. For these speakers we have to assume a different function of CD and DOM. Other speaker groups, (Group 1 and 2) do not accept these constructions in non-specific contexts. Here we can conclude that CD and DOM do express specificity which then would lead to the unacceptability in non-specific contexts. Our data also suggests that it is DOM that expresses specificity, while the function of CD cannot be identified through this type of questionnaire. Another possible explanation for the low acceptability of single DOMed variants in Group 1 and 2 may have to do with the general constraint against using DOM in the absence of CD, given the functional unity that DOM and CD seem to have reached.

The fact that marked DOs seem to fare well in non-specific contexts for many of the respondents and that this tendency seems to be on the increasing trend suggests that we are witnessing a diachronic development of the function of CD and DOM from a marker of specificity towards a marker of true argumenthood of the direct object DP. This, in turn, provides support to the hypothesis that DOM and CD have a syntactic role contributing to the the general layout of the direct object DP and thereby triggering some special mechanisms of case assignment (i.e., blocking inherent case assignment and movement out of VP to a functional position).

## Appendix: DOs in contexts inducing non-specificity

Statistical analyses were conducted in R version 1.0.136 using the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) to perform linear mixed-effect models (LMEM) with the score as outcome variable. As fixed effects we entered context and DO type into the model. As random effects, we had intercepts for subjects and items. The context *cel mult/cel puțin* and DO type *unmarked DO* were mapped onto the intercept. To identify the best model fit we performed likelihood ratio tests. This revealed that the reduced model with two main effects affected the acceptance rate ($\chi^2$ (4) = 6.34, $p > .05$).[10]

[10] Formulars for model comparison:
(1) full model: lmer(score ~ context + DO type + (1|subj) + (1|item))
(2) reduced model: lmer(score ~ context * DO type + (1|subj) + (1|item))

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| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 6.2884 | 0.1804 | 34.86* |
| contextcate (cel) | –0.2892 | 0.1541 | –1.88 |
| contextmood (cel) | –0.1252 | 0.1541 | –0.81 |
| contextoarecare (cel) | –0.1517 | 0.1541 | –0.98 |
| **contextmood (cate)** | **0.1640** | **0.1541** | **1.06** |
| **contextoarecare (cate)** | **0.1376** | **0.1541** | **0.89** |
| **contextmood (oarecare)** | **0.0265** | **0.1541** | **0.17** |
| DOtypeC (U) | –2.1720 | 0.1335 | –16.27* |
| DOtypeD (U) | –2.5556 | 0.1335 | –19.14* |
| **DOtypeD (C)** | **–0.3836** | **0.1335** | **–2.87*** |

* t-values greater than 2 and less than –2 are considered significant. Factors in brackets indicate the intercept.

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