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*Differential Object Marking in Romance: Towards microvariation* offers a comprehensive view about the multifaceted phenomenon known as Differential Object Marking (DOM) across the diverse spectrum of Romance languages. Edited by Monica Alexandrina Irimia and Alexandru Mardale, this volume comprises studies that investigate the intricate dynamics of DOM, shedding light on its syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and diachronic dimensions. Through a combination of empirical data and theoretical insights, the contributors present a meticulous examination of the complexities of DOM, posing a question about traditional assumptions and paving the way for a deeper understanding of this linguistic phenomenon.

At the heart of this volume lies a concerted effort to explore the microvariation of DOM within the Romance language family. While previous studies have predominantly focused on major varieties such as Standard Spanish, *Differential Object Marking in Romance: Towards microvariation* takes a more inclusive
approach, including a wide variety of languages and dialects. From Catalan to Romanian, by way of Italian dialects, and beyond, each piece of research offers unique perspectives on how DOM manifests across different linguistic contexts, highlighting both commonalities and idiosyncrasies. Through the presentation of novel data from lesser-discussed varieties, contributors paint a detailed picture of DOM variation, showcasing the distinctions that exist within and across languages. Each paper offers valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms driving DOM across Romance languages.

The volume’s complete approach is underscored by its exploration of DOM from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Through rigorous analyses of historical texts and contemporary language use, contributors trace the evolution of DOM over time, studying its origins, development and current manifestations. This diachronic lens not only enriches our comprehension of DOM but also provides valuable insights into the broader trajectory of language change in the Romance family.

The book contains eleven articles, which I will shortly review now. The first paper, by Andriani, is entitled «Differential object marking in Barese: Old and new perspectives» and explores the behaviour of DOM in Barese, an upper-southern Italo-Romance variety. The study presents a more systematic research of the phenomenon thanks to new data and suggests that DOM in Barese is compulsory with highly specific and referential determiner-less elements. However, the author indicates that it becomes optional or even ungrammatical with nouns modified by overt functional elements such as definite determiners, numerals or quantifiers. Additionally, this piece of research examines two structural contexts that block DOM in Barese: the co-occurrence of human direct and indirect objects, and constructions where the direct object is embedded under a perception verb. Andriani’s analysis enhances our comprehension of the influence of specificity and the Definiteness Scale over DOM in Barese.

Next, Binder and Stark, in their article «Differential object marking in French: Myth or reality?», critically examine the claim that French shows some instances of DOM, mostly linked to topicality and contrast, as in cases of clitic doubling in clitic right dislocations. Their study, combining acceptability tests and corpus analysis, counters previous assertions that DOM is present in non-standard varieties of French. Binder and Stark’s data show that native speakers overwhelmingly reject DOM, with only a weak regional effect observed in South-Western France. This paper underlines the importance of rigorous methodological approaches in validating linguistic hypotheses and contributes to the debate on the existence and variability of DOM in Romance languages.

The third paper of the volume, authored by Bonfim Duarte and entitled «Clitic doubling in Brazilian Portuguese as a DOM strategy», provides a compelling argument for the relationship between clitic doubling and DOM, objecting to traditional views and opening new lines of research in Brazilian Portuguese syntax. It explores clitic doubling in Brazilian Portuguese, proposing that it is possible when direct and indirect objects correspond to first or second person pronouns. The study argues that clitics are required when the doubled object carries a familiar [topic] feature. Bonfim Duarte’s proposal links clitic doubling to a transfer of the topic feature within the syntactic structure, suggesting that clitic doubling functions as a variant of DOM.
Then, the article «Syntactic and semantic constraints on differential object marking in Old Sardinian», by Cennamo, Cicente and Andriani, studies DOM in Old Sardinian texts, focusing on the Logudoro and the Arborea areas. The authors examine, from the diachronic point of view, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic constraints on differential object marking and emphasize the role of the Individuation Hierarchy in the grammaticalization of the preposition a(d) as a DOM marker. Their findings reveal that DOM in the diachrony of Sardinian spreads progressively from human proper names to common nouns, influenced by definiteness and humanness.

Next, Cyrino and Irimia’s study on «Differential object marking in Brazilian Portuguese» not only provides a unifying framework for understanding DOM in Brazilian Portuguese, but it also aligns it with broader patterns in Romance languages. The authors approach the contexts in which DOM appears in Brazilian Portuguese, questioning the traditional assumption of its absence. They identify specific contexts, such as equatives, animates under coordination and animate relative pronouns, where DOM is still observed. Their analysis suggests that these instances involve configurations resulting from sentential ellipsis, with DOM signalling a raising operation to the high left periphery.

The next article corresponds to Giancarli’s detailed examination of DOM in Corsican, which contributes to understanding microvariation in Romance languages. Building on previous research, the paper «Corsican DOM: Towards a unified local explanation» focuses on local factors influencing DOM in this language. The study identifies two key factors: DOM-ed objects as markers of scanning operations and as designators. These factors further split into subcategories and are unified under the concept of contrastive marking.

The next paper is Guardiano’s exploration of the distribution of a-marked objects in a Sicilian dialect. The article «Differential object marking in a dialect of Sicily» analyses the syntactic properties of nominal structures in object position. The study finds that a-marking in the mentioned dialect is constrained by two major restrictions: the necessity of a phonetically realized D head and the [+human] feature of the referents. This piece of research provides valuable insights into the syntactic conditions governing DOM.

In their paper «The dative/accusative alternations in Old Romanian», Hill and Mardale compare the alternations between dative and accusative in Romance languages with Romanian. They argue that while Romance languages use these alternations to develop DOM particles, Romanian undergoes a syntactic substitution of dative with accusative structures. This morphological and syntactic analysis highlights the unique path of DOM development in Romanian, emphasizing the divergence in morpho-syntactic patterns in the Romance family.

We find then Kanazawa’s study, «Differential object marking in kinship terms and animacy hierarchies in Old Sardinian». This paper provides a detailed examination of animacy hierarchies and their impact on DOM. Specifically, it focuses on the characteristics of DOM in kinship terms in Logudorese Sardinian. The analysis reveals that the animacy hierarchy governing DOM in this variety differs according to the grammatical number of the direct object: singular kinship terms are distinguished from human common nouns, whereas plural forms are not.

Next, Ledgeway authors the paper entitled «Parametric variation in differential object marking in Italo-Romance», an exhaustive review of DOM variation across Italian dialects, identifying relevant dimensions such as information structure,
animacy, specificity, person, number and the head vs. phrasal distinction. The study develops a parametric hierarchy to map the differing licensing conditions of DOM in Italo-Romance, highlighting the precise pragmatic, semantic and syntactic parameters involved.

The last article presents Odria and Pineda’s research. This paper, entitled «A micro-comparative approach to DOM in language-contact environments: The case of Catalan, Basque and Spanish», studies the interaction between DOM in Spanish, on the one hand, and DOM in Basque and Catalan, on the other. Odria and Pineda’s study, based on diachronic and synchronic data, examines the influence of Spanish on the latter two languages. While prescriptive grammars attribute DOM in Basque and Catalan to Spanish pressure, the authors argue for a more nuanced understanding, considering other contributing factors. This research highlights the complexities of language contact and the dynamic nature of DOM in multilingual settings.

In summary, the volume’s focus on microvariation highlights the diversity of DOM patterns across Romance languages, challenging traditional notions and leading the way for new avenues of research. By examining the subtle nuances of DOM within and between languages, the contributors illuminate the intricate interplay of semantic and pragmatic factors, specificity, animacy, morphological shape, syntactic effects, contact-induced changes and diachronic shifts that shape DOM variation. This nuanced approach attempts to answer questions regarding which morpho-syntactic strategies form DOM. Furthermore, not only does it improve our comprehension of DOM, but it also contributes to the broader field of linguistic typology, enriching our knowledge of language diversity and variation.

*Differential Object Marking in Romance: Towards microvariation* represents a reference publication in the field of Romance linguistics, because it presents a broad exploration of a complex linguistic phenomenon. By bringing together research from leading scholars in the field, this volume advances our understanding of DOM and sets the stage for further exploration into the rich and diverse tapestry of Romance languages. It is an essential resource for anyone interested in syntax, semantics, pragmatics and diachrony within the Romance language family.