

## DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN SPANISH: STATE OF THE ART\*

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**ABSTRACT.** This state-of-the-art review tries to cover as much as possible about the properties, conditions and analyses of Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Spanish. Starting with some considerations about the boundaries of the phenomenon, it considers its morphological, semantic and syntactic properties –with respect both to the internal properties of the direct object and to the wider context in which it appears–. It also reviews the other morphosyntactic phenomena that have been claimed to correlate with DOM, and finally goes through a number of analysis in different theoretical traditions to highlight the points of agreement and debate in the current literature.

**Keywords.** differential object marking, transitivity, accusative, dative

**RESUMEN.** El presente estado de la cuestión trata de ser tan exhaustivo como sea posible con respecto a las propiedades, condiciones y análisis asociados al marcado diferencial de objeto en español. Partiendo de algunas consideraciones acerca de la delimitación del fenómeno, considera sus propiedades morfológicas, semánticas y sintácticas tanto en lo que toca a la estructura interna del complemento directo como al contexto más amplio en que aparece. El trabajo presenta, asimismo, una revisión de otros fenómenos morfosintácticos que se han asociado de una u otra forma al marcado diferencial de objeto, y termina con la presentación de algunos análisis que, desde distintas perspectivas teóricas, han estudiado este fenómeno. Esto nos permite destacar los puntos de acuerdo y desacuerdo fundamentales que se hallan en el estudio reciente de este rasgo de la gramática española.

**Palabras clave.** marcado diferencial de objeto, transitividad, acusativo, dativo

### 1. Differential object marking: what it is

Probably the most debated issue related to the grammar of accusatives and datives in Spanish is the phenomenon of Differential Object Marking (henceforth, DOM), which is illustrated in the contrast between (1a) and (1b).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Encontré un problema.  
*I found a problem*  
'I found a problem'  
b. Encontré a un superviviente.  
*I found A a survivor*  
'I found a survivor'

Bossong (1982, 1985, 1991), which first used the term 'DOM' in order to describe contrasts such as (1), gives the following characteristics as necessary for its identification: (i) DOM must establish a contrast between elements that have the same syntactic function –in the classic cases, direct object–; (ii) it must be performed through morphological marking (what he calls grammemic case marking); (iii) the contrast established must be associated with a difference in meaning, *lato sensu*, in

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<sup>1</sup> In order to be terminologically neutral about the nature of *a*, which as we will see is disputed in the literature, we gloss it as A.

such a way that a certain amount of variation is observed and marking has not become automatised and petrified (see, especially, Bossong 1991: 151-154).

Arguably, some of these conditions are too strict, and certainly they have been interpreted as too strict in some works which extend the notion of DOM to other contrasts.

This article is structured as follows. This section will discuss Bossong's definition of DOM in order to see why Spanish direct object marking has been considered part of the phenomenon and, also, in order to discuss what other cases of alternation could potentially fall within the definition. §2 will discuss in detail the different factors that influence DOM in Spanish. §3 will present a set of morphosyntactic phenomena that at one point or another have been claimed to connect somehow to DOM in Spanish. §4 goes through some recent analyses, §5 considers possible extensions of DOM in Spanish grammar and §6 summarises the aspects where there seems to be consensus about how Spanish DOM works, and highlights some areas which are under debate or in need of further empirical research.

### 1.1. *Differential contrast, homogeneous syntactic function*

It is superficially obvious that between the two sentences in (1) there is one minimal difference: *a* precedes the only overt argument in (1b), but not in (1a). One question that arises at this point is whether the syntactic relation between that argument and the verb is also different, depending on the presence of *a*. The answer is, as we will see, not easy, but if we limit ourselves for the time being to the classic syntactic relations between verbs and arguments, there is evidence that both arguments have the same function: direct object.

How can we know this? Again, in very descriptive terms, there are at least two processes in Spanish that show that both arguments in (1) are direct objects irrespectively of the marking they display. The first one, illustrated in (2), is passivisation. Passivisation in Spanish is restricted to the direct object (2), and is rejected by, say, indirect objects (3) –with only apparent exceptions, discussed in Pineda (2013) for Spanish and Catalan–. Both (1a) and (1b) allow the passive (4).

- (2) a. Alguien robó las joyas.  
       *someone stole the jewels*  
       ‘Someone stole the jewels’  
     b. Las joyas fueron robadas.  
       *the jewels were stolen*  
       ‘The jewels were stolen’
- (3) a. Alguien dio una herencia a Luis.  
       *someone gave an inheritance to Luis*  
       ‘Someone left an inheritance to Luis’  
     b. \*Luis fue dado una herencia.  
       *Luis was given an inheritance*  
       Intended: ‘Luis was left an inheritance’
- (4) a. Un problema fue encontrado (en el manual).  
       *A problem was found (in the textbook)*  
       ‘A problem was found in the textbook’  
     b. Un superviviente fue encontrado (entre los escombros).  
       *a survivor was found (among the debris)*  
       ‘A survivor was found in the debris’

Secondly, there is case marking in pronominal clitics. In non-leísta varieties – which are the majority in the Spanish speaking world (Fernández-Ordóñez 1999)– direct objects are biunivocally associated to the pronouns *lo* and *la*, depending on gender (5). Indirect objects are associated to the pronoun *le* (6). Independently of the marking they get, both arguments in (1) are pronominalised in non-leísta varieties with the form corresponding to direct objects, so (7) can be paired with either (1a) or (1b).

- (5) a. Llevo un libro en el bolso.  
*I.carry a book in the bag*  
 b. Lo llevo.  
*it.acc I.carry*  
 ‘I carry it’
- (6) a. Llevo una cesta a mi abuelita.  
*I.carry a basket to my granny*  
 ‘I carry a basket for my granny’  
 b. Le llevo una cesta.  
*her.dat I.carry a basket*  
 ‘I bring her a basket’
- (7) Lo encontré.  
*it/him.acc I.found*  
 ‘I found it / him’

The absence of a contrast between the *a*-marked argument in (1b) and the non-*a*-marked one in (1a) indicates that, if we restrict ourselves to the traditional syntactic functions, both arguments have the same role. However, as we pointed out, this could be an oversimplification: the marking might be associated to a different syntactic relation between verb and argument which, in any case, equally allows the passivisation and accusative pronominalisation processes. Indeed, as we will have a chance to see repeatedly during this article, some researchers have proposed in recent times that there should be a different syntactic structure for each one of the sentences in (1).

### 1.2. The relevance of DOM for linguistic theory

Beyond the descriptive importance of DOM for Spanish grammar, understanding this pattern of data has relevance, *inter alia*, for the following questions:

- (a) What is the nature of case marking? DOM shows that two kinds of constituents, both correlating with what has been traditionally described as an accusative clitic, can receive two types of different marking. If both markings are ‘accusative’, what differentiates these two accusatives, and what are the properties that grammar takes to decide what marking is best for each DP? If each marking corresponds to a different ‘case’, why can both correlate with the same kind of clitic? What does this fact tell us about what case is?
- (b) How many different kinds of direct objects have to be differentiated? As we will see, DOM differentiates between at least two classes with distinct scope possibilities, and perhaps even different positions inside the verbal constituent. What is the nature of these distinct direct objects? Why does grammar differentiate between them?

- (c) What does it mean to be a direct object, in a deep sense? What is the kind of dependency that an object establishes with the verb and the functional sequence above lexical verbs? How similar or how different are these dependencies from indirect objects, prepositional complements or even subjects?
- (d) How is aspect defined? Sometimes, DOM involves differences in the aspectual interpretation of a verb. How is this result achieved, and why does aspect correlate with case marking?
- (e) What are the nominal features that are relevant to determine the position of an argument, its case marking and its interaction with aspect?
- (f) Some DOs, at least on the surface, seem to allow DOM, but do not require it. Is the internal structure of a DP different with and without DOM, even if it does not seem so on the surface? Is the internal DP structure identical, and DOM depends on its syntactic position?
- (g) Why do personal pronouns always require DOM?

Obviously, we will not answer these questions in this review. Our goal will be to provide the reader with a map of what the facts are, and what the interpretation of these facts has been in a series of works from different theoretical traditions. Let us begin.

## 2. Differential object marking: properties

Describing the properties of Spanish DOM is not an easy task, and this due to the fact that judgements about the grammaticality of certain sequences are not homogeneous across speakers. This is not an unusual fact, and it is generally paired with different geographical, social or stylistic varieties, but the reason why it is more problematic in DOM is that in general we still lack descriptive studies that compare the extension of DOM across varieties, from a geographical or any other perspective (see Balasch 2011 for one of the few cases where the extension of DOM across varieties is studied, and Aleza 2013 for a detailed study of *leísmo* in Cuba, which is potentially relevant for *a*-marking). Zdrojevski (2013) reports that in Rioplatense Spanish a sentence like *Chocó al coche* ‘It crashed A the car, it crashed with the car’ is grammatical, but speakers of other varieties –like European Spanish– find it ungrammatical. Impressionistically again, it seems that speakers of European Spanish have a stronger tendency to *a*-mark the DO of verbs like *caracterizar* ‘characterise’ than speakers from, say, Rioplatense Spanish.

Moreover, there seem to be individual preferences that are not very well understood either. Pensado (1995) reports having found in corpora sentences like *la bolsa deportiva que contenía a la bomba* (TVE, 17-10-1993) ‘the sport bag that contained A the bomb’ which to her ear are ungrammatical, and we will see that many of the data reported in Torrego (1998) do not have the same acceptability for other speakers of European Spanish. One cannot discard, either, the possibility that satiation effects (see Goodall 2004) are more powerful when judging pairs of sentences that are minimally differentiated by a single unstressed vowel.

All these limitations complicate a description of the phenomenon. In the following pages, we will cover the facts to the best of our ability, and paying attention as much as possible to documented differences in judgement, in the hope that future research will be able to establish the appropriate divisions between the existing grammars. More often than usual in linguistic descriptions we will be forced to address classificatory problems, issues having to do with the identification of the kind of

phenomenon involved, and distinct interpretations that coexist under seemingly similar grammars.

The intuitions having to do with what DOM is in Spanish have usually been connected to one of the following three ideas (cf. Laca 1995: 69-87), which share the intuition that an *a*-marked direct object is not a prototypical direct object.

- (i) *a*-marked direct objects are somehow similar to subjects, either because they have potential properties of subjects (potential agency, animacy, active intervention in the event...) or because they can be considered themselves subjects of some secondary predication
- (ii) *a*-marked direct objects are somehow similar to indirect objects (datives), either because they are conceptualised as recipients of some eventuality (affectedness) or because they receive case like datives
- (iii) *a*-marked direct objects have properties of discourse topics, either because they share with them to be individuated in the context of discourse, introducing (new) specific participants, or because they are literally dislocated from their base position

We will see that these intuitions, alone or in combination, are all supported by some fact. Existing proposals about the nature of *a*-marking invariably keep at least some version of the claims in (i)-(iii).

### 2.1. Morphological properties

The usual way to describe the two morphological marking possibilities of direct objects in Spanish is the following (as, for instance, Zdrojewski 2013 puts it): DP direct objects are syncretic either with nominative or with dative. In (8), we can see through a comparison between a DP subject and a non-*a*-marked direct object that the superficial form of both arguments is the same. In (9), we make the same comparison, now between a canonical indirect object and an *a*-marked direct object.

- (8) a. Surgió una tormenta.  
*It.came.up a storm*  
'A storm came up'
- b. Miro una tormenta.  
*I.watch a storm*  
'I watch a storm'
- (9) a. Le robamos el coche a Pepe.  
*him.dat we.stole the car A Pepe*  
'We stole the car from Pepe'
- b. Atacamos a Pepe.  
*we.attacked A Pepe*  
'We attacked Pepe'

The idea that *a*-marked objects have the morphological shape of datives is crucial in some theories about how the form appeared historically (§2.6.1). It is central in some formal analysis of the phenomenon, like Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007), and has been related to phenomena like *leísmo* and clitic doubling (§3.3, §3.4).

It is a frequently quoted fact in the studies on this issue that across history among the first verbs that started marking with *a* the direct object were verbs which in Latin selected a dative internal argument (Lapesa 1964). One of the main verbs in the

discussion is *ayudar* ‘help’, which in Latin –and cross-linguistically, very frequently– introduced a dative. In modern linguistics, the idea goes back at least to Borer (1983: 185), and has been contested, among others, by Jaeggli (1986: 38-39).

Some pieces of evidence appear in favour of identifying *a*-marked direct objects with datives, at least at some level of representation. One of the pieces of evidence that support this claim (noted in García 1975) is that one single *a*-marked expression can be at the same time the animate direct object of a verb and the indirect object of another verb, as in (10). The possible relation with *leísmo* and clitic doubling will be discussed in §3.

- (10) a. que tú volverás, como dices, a buscar, ver y hablar a mi señora  
*that you will.again, as you.say, to search, see and talk A my lady*  
 ‘that you, as you say, will search, see and talk to my lady again’  
 [Quijote 731, apud Laca 2006: (8a)]
- b. unos profesores [a los que [quitaron su sueldo] y [golpearon]]  
*some teacher A the which they.stole their salary and they. beaten*  
 ‘some teachers that they stole their salary from and beaten’

However, not all authors agree with this theory, as indirect objects are not the only arguments that are marked with *a* in Spanish. It is well-known that there is also a locative-directional *a* preposition, as in (11).

- (11) a. estar a la orilla del mar (locative)  
*to.be A the coast of-the sea*  
 ‘to be by the seaside’  
 b. ir a la farmacia (directional)  
*to.go A the pharmacy*  
 ‘to go to the pharmacy’

Pottier (1960) and López García (1983) are among the authors that have argued that DOM is the extension of the directional *a*, not the dative *a*, to the direct object. In their view, the crucial property of *a* is that it expressed a direction towards some entity. That entity could be recategorised as an affected object towards which the action of the verb was oriented. Note, in any case, that implicit or explicit in this theory is the idea that datives eventually share properties with *a*-marked direct objects, only that indirectly, and to the extent that they have a common source.

Against a literal interpretation of this theory we find the fact that directionals and DOM direct objects cannot be referred to by the same pronoun, in contexts equivalent to (10). Unlike (10b), (12) is ungrammatical –and note that *atacar* ‘attack’ is one of the verbs (§2.3.3) that almost invariably appear with DOM–.

- (12) \*la Universidad, a la que muchos acudieron y atacaron...  
*the University, A the that many came and attacked...*  
 Intended: ‘the University, which many came to and attacked’

The surprising fact, however, is that datives can be coordinated with directionals.

- (13) la Universidad, a la que muchos acudieron y quitaron su financiación...  
*the University, A the that many came and removed its funding...*  
 ‘the University, which many came to and removed the funding from’

(13), combined with (10) and (12), is surprising for the following reason: what the coordination test is diagnosing is whether the different arguments marked with *a* share at least one grammatical property that is active in their label. (13) shows that directionals and datives must share one such property; (10) shows that datives and DOM direct objects also share one such property, but (12) shows that directionals and DOM direct objects are headed by constituents which do not share one property that allows them to be coordinated. Taken together, what these data suggest is that we must have at least two properties that differentiate directionals, datives and DOM direct objects. We could hypothesise that directionals and datives have a property X that is present in their label (14a, 14b); datives and DOM direct objects have a different property, Y, that is also present in their label (14b, 14c). Whether direct objects have property X or not is open for discussion, but coordination facts suggest that at the very least that property X is not present in their highest projection –and conversely, that if directionals have property Y, it is not in their highest projection–. The exponent *a* would be syncretic with these three feature representations.

- (14) a. directionals [X]  
 b. datives [X, Y]  
 c. DOM direct objects [Y]

At the same time, there are two data points that suggest that the locative-directional interpretation of DOM has some initial plausibility. The first one comes from the comparison between varieties of Spanish. Bossong (1991: 153) notes that in Northern Peru (Cajamarca), DOM is marked with *onde*, which etymologically is related to *donde* ‘where’.

- (15) un cura dizque taba queriendo mucho onde una niña  
*a priest apparently was loving a.lot A a girl*  
 ‘Apparently, a priest was much in love with a girl’  
 [Ciro Alegría, *Los perros hambrientos*, 1939]

It can be shown that in the same variety, *onde* has clearly locative-directional uses.

- (16) la desenterró y la llevó onde él  
*her.acc unburied and her.acc took A him*  
 ‘he unburied her and took her to him’  
 [Ciro Alegría, *Los perros hambrientos*, 1939]

The other data point comes from the comparison with another Romance language, Romanian. In Romanian, DOM uses a preposition that is necessarily locative, and which is never used to mark datives. (17a) shows that DOM is marked with *pe*. (17b) shows that *pe* is used also in locative contexts. (17c) shows that datives carry a different marking, which contrasts with accusatives marked with *pe*.

- (17) a. Televiziunea m'a ales pe mine, nu eu pe ea.  
*Television.the me has chosen A me, not I A it*  
 'Television has chosen me, I [haven't chosen] it'  
 [apud Klein 2007: (1a)]
- b. Cartea este pe masă.  
*book.the is on table.the*  
 'The book is on the table'  
 [apud Zegrean 2007: (4)]
- c. (pe) mine vs. mie  
*A me.acc me.dat*  
 (pe) noi vs. nouă  
*A us.acc us.dat*  
 [cf. Augerot 2000]

The absence of a syncretism between the DOM accusative form and the dative – combined with the syncretism between DOM and the locative reading– might suggest a different structure from the one that we identified previously in Spanish. For theories that expect morphological syncretism to be restricted by some universal ranking of features (like Nanosyntax, Caha 2009), Romanian suggests that locatives and DOM direct objects are more similar to each other than to datives. This is the opposite of what the coordination facts in Spanish suggest. Further research in this area could prove fruitful; the obvious options that should be considered is (a) that Romanian and Spanish DOM are defined by different properties, so that Spanish-DOM is not Romanian-DOM; (b) that the properties that are relevant for coordination are not identical to those that syncretism cares about; (c) that the coordination test, the analysis of syncretism, or both have to be reconsidered. The problem is complicated by the fact that positing two homophonous *a* exponents is not crazy in a language that has only five vowels, and where consonant sequences are quite restricted.

Besides the discussion of whether *a*-marking is more closely related to dative or to locative-directionals, the second important morphological property of DOM is whether *a* can be analysed as a case marker. As Müller (1971) and Rohlf's (1971) review, the emergence of DOM in Spanish has been commonly related to the loss of Latin morphological cases. There seems to be a more or less strong tendency to find DOM in those Romance varieties where morphological cases were lost at an early age (as opposed to those, like French, where case distinctions were morphologically performed in nouns), so one obvious conclusion that could be reached from a descriptive perspective is that DOM is a way of case marking. In fact, in the classic presentation of DOM (Bossong 1985) it is explicitly said that DOM comes into play when morphological case desinences are lost, and as an alternative to fixed word order, which –in this view– plays the same function as case marking in languages like English.

It is not clear for everybody that descriptively DOM is simply due to case marking. Pensado (1995) assumes that one necessary property of case marking is that it has to be compulsory. Given a context and a form, either it will always get case marking or not, but as we have seen this is not how DOM works; Pensado offers the following example to show it.

- (18) a. Vi un perro.  
*I.saw a dog*

- b. Vi a un perro.  
*I.saw A a dog*

Where Pensado (1995: 19-20) accepts that DOM can be taken as a case marker is in combination with personal pronouns. These cases have the property that DOM is absolutely compulsory. There are no context, no verbs and no interpretations where in Spanish having a personal pronoun without *a*-marking (19b) could be grammatical.

- (19) a. Te vi a ti.  
*you.acc I.saw A you*  
 b. \*(Te) vi ti.  
*you.acc I.saw you*

However, not all authors agree that even in that context DOM can be analysed as case marking. Laca (2006: 426) notes that a potential problem for the claim that DOM is necessary to mark case with personal pronouns is the fact that *a*-marking combines with a pronominal form that already displays a case contrast with respect to the nominative version (20), and also that it would be a case marker that, at least in the first historical stages, would be restricted only to a small set of forms.

- (20) a. a mí  
*A me.obl*  
 b. \*a me  
*A me.acc*  
 c. \*a yo  
*A me.nom*

DOM could be yet another phenomenon which does not perfectly fall into any of the traditional categories of morphological analysis –which are almost exclusively defined by distributional factors, like suffix, prefix, root or case marking–. Next to some obvious connections with case phenomena, unlike traditional case marking, it is subject to choice. That we cannot assign it a traditional label is probably not a serious problem, if we manage to understand it better.

A perspective that could make things easier for an account based on traditional morphological categories would be the one proposed in García & Van Putte (1995), where it is assumed that DOM contrasts not with a version that lacks any marking, but more precisely with a version that gets zero marking. In this sense, contrasts like (18) could be viewed as an opposition between  $\emptyset$  and *a*. Once we accept, if only expositively, this proposal, the connection with case is more amenable to a traditional analysis. The contrast between zero marking and *a*-marking in Spanish would not be different from the contrast between partitive and accusative marking in a language like Finnish (21), which sometimes reflects similar distinctions to Spanish DOM and which is undisputably in the domain of case according to a traditional definition.

- (21) a. Ostin leipää.  
*I.bought bread.part*  
 ‘I bought bread’  
 b. Ostin leivän.  
*I.bought bread.acc*  
 ‘I bought the bread’

Given (21), one could think that the Spanish manifestation of ‘Finnish partitive’ (that is, of whatever features or structure is called partitive in Finnish grammars) is (22a); the equivalent of ‘Finnish accusative’ is (22b), and perhaps nominative is (22c).

- (22) a. [∅ [DP]]  
 b. [a [DP]]  
 c. [DP]

A proposal along these lines, where DOM is one out of two materialisations of essentially the same structure, has problems with coordination facts (§2.5), but has been adopted, for instance, in Aissen (2003) (§4.1).

## 2.2. *Meaning properties: the role of reference and animacy*

The first factor that conditions the distribution of DOM are the internal properties of the direct object, and more specifically two of them: animacy and referentiality. The studies on the issue have frequently appealed to a revised version of Silverstein’s hierarchy of nominal features (1976: 122). The idea proposed in that work is that nominal phrases should be ordered according to how much animacy and referentiality they carry in their internal information (23). Originally, the hierarchy was proposed to deal with person split systems in accusative / ergative marking.

- (23) Silverstein Hierarchy  
 second person > first person > third person pronoun > proper human name >  
 human noun > animate noun > non-animate noun

Researchers have refined and developed this hierarchy, significantly so in the study of DOM phenomena cross-linguistically. Aissen (2003) divided the hierarchy in (23) into two different scales that can be combined: one for animacy (24a) and one for definiteness (24b).

- (24) a. Human > Animate > non-animate  
 b. Pronoun > Proper name > Definite > Specific indefinite > non-specific indefinite

The two hierarchies can be combined with each other, but the result –as one can expect– is not perfect: sometimes, different combinations of values have the same status in the hierarchy. (25) shows Laca’s (2006) presentation of the hierarchy.

- (25) (I) Human pronoun > (II) Human proper name, animate pronoun > (III) Human definite, animate proper name, inanimate pronoun > (IV) specific human indefinite, definite animate, inanimate proper name > (V) human non-specific, indefinite specific animate, definite inanimate > (VI) animate non-specific, inanimate indefinite specific > (VII) inanimate non-specific

The first thing to note is that the hierarchy is not intended itself as an explanation. It is supposed to reflect a universal set of facts about the grammaticalisation of basic human cognition having to do with what kind of entities are more likely to be individuated in the discourse. Aissen’s (2003) own proposal is to explain the impact

of this hierarchy in grammar through a number of ranked constraints –within the framework of Optimality Theory Syntax, cf. §4.1–.

A second thing to note is that the hierarchy in (25), being the most explicit that exists at the moment, has however some potential limitations. It is intuitively not very appealing that specific human indefinites, for instance, are ranked at the same level as definite non-animates. When considered from the perspective of DOM, they seem to be more different than equal (26), because only one of them takes the marking.

- (26) a. Vi a un amigo mío.  
*I.saw A a friend mine*  
 ‘I saw a certain friend of mine’  
 b. Vi (\*a) la casa.  
*I.saw A the house*  
 ‘I saw the house’

However, remember that the hierarchy itself is not meant to explain DOM: its descriptive power will depend on the constraints that in one form or the other operate on it. In what follows, we will review first the interaction of animacy and DOM; then we will do the same with referentiality.

### 2.2.1. Animacy

It is well-known that the traditional description of DOM in Spanish starts with the claim that *a* is used with animate direct objects –a statement that has consequences when determining the historical reasons for the original of DOM, §2.6–. We will see that this claim is only partially correct.

Speakers and addressees have to be human, or at least considered human in the context. For this reason, items that carry first or second person features are expected to be necessarily human and therefore to be marked by *a*. This prediction is correct. We have already seen that personal pronouns must be introduced by *a* when they are DO. It is reported in historical works that these were the first objects to be marked with *a* in the evolution of Latin to Spanish; in fact, it is known that already at late stages of Latin dative and accusative had become syncretic when manifested as pronouns (see 27, where *a* marks a dative).

- (27) Ego Urraca Gutierrez... et Gonzaluo Sanxer uendimus illa hereditate ad tibi  
*I Urraca Gutierrez... and Gonzalvo Sanchez sell the property A you*  
 Tellus Petriz et ad uxor tua Gontrodo Garciaz  
*Tello Petriz and A wife yours Gontrodo Garciaz*  
 ‘I, Urraca Gutiérrez... and Gonzalvo Sánchez sell this property to you, Tello Petriz, and your wife Gontrodo Garciaz’  
 [1177, *Documents of the Monastery of Santa María de Tría*,  
 apud CORDE, RAE]

Other human pronouns and human proper names are also marked with DOM from an early stage (28).

- (28) et prendiderunt ad Sancio et a Nunu Gomiz  
*and they.caught A Sancho and A Nuño Gómiz*  
 ‘and they caught Sancho and Nuño Gómiz’  
 [early 10<sup>th</sup> Century, apud Bastardas (1953)]

In contemporary Spanish, there is no variation when we have a person pronoun of first, second or third person. In fact, non-clitic third person pronouns tend to be allowed in direct object position only when they are human –see later, (50), for one possible exception–, and of course then DOM is obligatory. (29a) cannot be pronominalised as (29b); it must correspond to (29c). In contrast, (30a) allows both (30b) and (30c).

- (29) a. Vimos la película.  
*we.saw the movie*  
 b. \*La vimos a ella.  
*it.acc we.saw A it*  
 Intended: ‘We saw it’  
 c. La vimos.  
*it.acc we.saw*  
 ‘We saw it’
- (30) a. Vimos a mi tía Paca.  
*we.saw A my aunt Paca*  
 ‘We saw my aunt Paca’  
 b. La vimos a ella.  
*her.acc we.saw A her*  
 ‘We saw her’.  
 c. La vimos.  
*her.acc saw*

In fact, with universal pronouns, the only way of determining out of context whether they refer to human or non-human referents is to check whether they are introduced with *a* or not. (31) shows a couple of minimal pairs; in all the cases, *a*-marking is only compatible with a human interpretation, and its absence requires a non-human reading. Not all pronouns behave like this; see §2.2.3 for some interesting cases where the relevant notion is partitive specificity rather than animacy.

- (31) a. Vimos a todos.  
*we.saw A all*  
 ‘We saw them all (humans)’  
 b. Vimos todos.  
*we.saw all*  
 ‘We saw them all (non humans)’  
 c. Vimos a cada uno de ellos.  
*we.saw A each one of them*  
 ‘We saw each one of them (humans)’  
 d. Vimos cada uno de ellos.  
*we.saw each one of them*  
 ‘We saw each one of them (non humans)’

Many of the apparent counterexamples to this generalisation have to do with the role of individuation (studied in §2.2.3) or with cases of personification (sometimes via metonymy or synecdoche). All the examples in (32) have *a*-marked objects which, out of context, refer to things, but it is clear that in these sentences they are intended to denote humans, either by pondering one of their significant properties (32a), or by

relating them to a location (32b), a function (32c), etc. Some of these personifications are frequent in literature (32d).

- (32) a. Vi a la mente más preclara del país.  
*I.saw A the mind most eminent of-the country*  
 ‘I saw the most eminent mind of the country’  
 b. Conoce a todo Madrid.  
*he.knows A all Madrid*  
 ‘He knows everybody in Madrid’  
 c. Vi al rectorado en pleno en la cafetería.  
*I.saw A the rectorate in whole in the cafeteria*  
 ‘I saw everyone from the rectorate in the cafeteria’  
 d. Vi a la Muerte.  
*I.saw A the death*

It is also frequently noted in descriptive grammars that proper names only carry *a* when they refer to humans, and not when they are taken as titles of books, movies, etc. –but they sometimes require *a* when referring to inanimates, as Torrego (1998) noted, cf. (47)–. (33) shows a contrast between a pair of examples, where the first refers to a human individual and the second refers to the book that shares name with him.

- (33) a. Vio a Werther en el bosque.  
*he.saw A Werther in the forest*  
 ‘He saw Werther in the forest’  
 b. Vio *Werther* en el teatro.  
*he.saw Werther in the theater*  
 ‘He attended a representation of *Werther* in the theater’

Descriptive grammars (especially those intended for foreign language learners, like Fält 2000: §89) note that with names of animals –and other non-human animates– there is the option of marking the object with *a* or not; with *a*-marking the animal is taking as more active. This is not exactly true, judging from the data. With proper names of animals there is a strong tendency to *a*-mark the object, so strong that speakers tend to reject (34b) –assuming Fido is a dog–.

- (34) a. Vi a Fido.  
*I.saw A Fido*  
 b. \*Vi Fido.  
*I.saw Fido*

Where there seems to be variation is whenever the animate non-human is a DP, definite or not. Both sentences in (35) and (36) are possible –although (35b) is marginal for many speakers, suggesting definite animates must be *a*-marked in Spanish no matter what–, and the *a*-marking seems to be associated to contexts where the dog is the intended agent of some implicit event. That is, (36a) is associated to a context where someone has done something in the kitchen (say, has ruined a cake) and the speaker wants to convey that he saw a dog in the kitchen that is likely to be responsible for that.

- (35) a. Vi al perro.  
*I.saw A the dog*  
 b. Vi el perro.  
*I.saw the dog*
- (36) a. Vi a un perro en la cocina.  
*I.saw A a dog in the kitchen*  
 b. Vi un perro en la cocina.  
*I.saw a dog in the kitchen*

Some animals are more difficult to get with DOM than others, and it seems that those are the animals which are normally construed as not being active enough. Several grammars report that sentences like (37) are strange; one can imagine that this has to do with the fact that animals like fish normally do not interact actively with humans –so perhaps they are even categorised as non-animate for the purposes of grammar–. In any case, the version with *a*-marking seems possible provided one imagines a situation where the animal is giving signs of acting as an independent agent –eg., in (37a) the fish could be fighting against the fisher–.

- (37) a. Pesqué a un pez enorme.  
*I.fished A a fish huge*  
 b. Vi a un gusano.  
*I.saw A a worm*  
 c. Vi a una medusa.  
*I.saw A a jellyfish*

Beyond the specific pattern of data, there is one important point that all these alternations between human / animate readings and non-animate readings might be making. The fact that the human interpretation is not forced by some nouns, but can be obtained, suggests that animacy and human readings cannot be due to the presence of a lexical feature some nouns are endowed with. If that was the case, it would be an unusual lexical feature, one that can be removed from some nouns and added to virtually any noun provided a context is established. Two alternatives suggest themselves: either (i) the human interpretation is not represented by the presence of a feature, but associated to the absence of some structure –as a default reading of arguments when information to the contrary is not provided– or a particular configuration or (ii) animacy is due to a feature of some functional head that can combine with virtually any lexical noun. In favour of the first option, we have the fact that frequently the human interpretation is obtained in contexts where information is lacking, such as impersonal sentences with *se*. A frequently noticed fact of impersonal *se*-constructions in Spanish is that a human interpretation of the subject is imposed, even when the lexical meaning of the verb would make a non-human subject more likely.

- (38) a. Se vuela mucho aquí.  
*SE flies a.lot here*  
 ‘People fly a lot here’.  
 b. Se muge mucho aquí.  
*SE moos a.lot here*  
 ‘People moo a lot here’.

Given the role of animacy and human readings in the distribution of DOM, the specific analysis one gives to how human readings are obtained would have obvious consequences for the analysis of DOM.

### 2.2.2. Counterexamples to the animacy generalisation

Beyond the cases where human direct objects do not get DOM because of their referentiality –which are presented in §2.2.3–, there are situations where DOM is assigned to non-human direct objects. In such cases, no personification is interpreted. Descriptively, these cases can be characterised through the verb that introduces the direct object; we will get back to some of these cases in §2.3.

A verb like *llamar* ‘call’, from an early stage of the language, shows a tendency to participate in DOM. *A*-marking with this verb is compulsory (39), already in early stages of the language (Laca 2006: 451) (40).

- (39) a. ¿Cómo llamas \*(a) esta construcción?  
*how you.call A this construction*  
 ‘How do you call this construction?’  
 b. Llamar al pan, *pan* y al vino, *vino*.  
*to call A the bread, bread and A the wine, wine*  
 ‘to call bread ‘bread’ and wine ‘wine’
- (40) a. ¿Y a estas llamas señales de salud? [Celestina VI.178]  
*and A those you.call signs of health*  
 ‘And you call those signs of health?’  
 b. ¡Llamar detestable a la comedia!  
*to.call unpalatable A the comedy* [Comedia Nueva, 92]  
 ‘To call the comedy unpalatable!’

Perhaps in this pattern it is also relevant that the verb introduces a secondary predicate, another factor that seems to trigger DOM irrespectively of animacy (§2.4.3).

But there are also verbs that trigger DOM without having –at least, in any obvious way– a secondary predicate. A relatively homogeneous group is transitive stative verbs, like *preceder* ‘precede’, *anteceder* ‘go before’, *suceder* ‘follow’, *seguir* ‘follow’, *sustituir* ‘substitute’, *reemplazar* ‘replace’, *modificar* ‘modify’, *incluir* ‘include’, *excluir* ‘exclude’, *clasificar* ‘classify’ or *caracterizar* ‘characterise’. As noted earlier, DOM with some of these verbs (like 41a) seems to be more characteristic of European Spanish than other varieties. The series contains a more or less clearly defined group consisting of verbs which express locative relations between entities (42c-f).

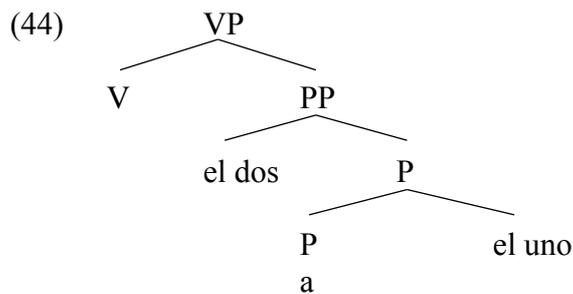
- (42) a. El género caracteriza a los sustantivos.  
*the gender characterises A the nouns*  
 ‘Gender is characteristic of nouns’  
 b. Su voluntad obedece a la razón.  
*his will obeys A his reason*  
 ‘His will obeys his reason’  
 c. El sujeto precede al verbo.  
*the subject precedes A the verb*  
 ‘Subjects precede verbs’

- d. El verbo sigue al sujeto.  
*the verb follows A the subject*  
 ‘The verb follows the subject’  
 e. El dos sucede al uno.  
*the two follows A the one*

In their eventive version –when they have one–, none of these verbs assigns *a* to its direct object. Note, for instance, that in the eventive meaning of *seguir* ‘follow’, there is no DOM before non-animates.

- (43) Juan siguió la vía del tren.  
*Juan followed the road of-the train*  
 ‘John followed the railroad’

A crucial research question is why these verbs, among the stative transitive verbs, have DOM. The answer is not easy, as it is not obvious that the stative verbs that participate in DOM form a natural class. One could assume, perhaps, a structure like (44) for stative verbs denoting ordering relations between entities: the stative verb selects a prepositional phrase, headed by *a*, which relates the subject and the object.



However, this analysis would produce more questions than answers: somehow, one needs to know why a verb like *obedecer* ‘obey’, but not one like *merecer* ‘deserve’ (66) –which is another transitive stative, and moreover one with a similar morphological shape– would require the structure in (44). One would also want to know why the P in (45) does not introduce a prepositional complement, but rather a direct object. One would also have to consider the fact that in previous stages of the language, other stative verbs would *a*-mark non-humans (Laca 2006: 451-452) (46, both examples from *Celestina*, end of 15<sup>th</sup> Century).

- (45) Juan merece (\*a) un castigo.  
*Juan deserves A a punishment*  
 (46) a.... el que siente quien ama a un imposible.  
*the that feels who loves A an impossible*  
 ‘the one that feels who loves an impossible thing’  
 b.... así como la materia apetece a la forma...  
*just like the matter craves A the form...*  
 ‘just like matter craves form’

Let us discuss another counterexample. We have already seen that proper names of animals tend to get the *a*-marking independently of whether in the context they are assumed to be active or not. Torrego (1998: 55) further notes that proper names given

to objects –boats, magazines, cans of beer– also require the *a*-marking, suggesting for her that animacy does not play any real role here. (47) is Torrego’s own example; (48) is given as an illustration that verbs which impose the requisite that the direct object has to be non-animate also behave in the same way.

- (47) Esconde \*(a) *Bárbara*.  
*hide.imp A Bárbara*  
 ‘Hide *Bárbara*’
- (48) Iza \*(a) *Bárbara*.  
*hoist.imp A Bárbara*  
 ‘Hoist *Bárbara*’

The obvious way in which these sentences have to be contrasted is with the examples where the proper name refers to a book, movie or other work of art that is used to represent entities or events (cf. example 33 above). As we have seen, in such cases *a*-marking is impossible. They also contrast with toponyms, which also reject *a*-marking in contemporary Spanish. Thus, it is not true that animacy in itself determines *a*-marking, but it is not true either that all proper names force it.

- (49) Guarda \*(a) *Werther* en el cajón.  
*put.imp A Werther in the drawer*  
 ‘Put *Werther* in the drawer’

In addition to this, Fernández Ramírez (1986 [1951]: 152) notes that third person pronouns sometimes also get *a*-marking even when they clearly do not denote humans. The following example is from Unamuno, a writer born in the Basque country.

- (50) es como el lente [que] nos hace ver mejor la naturaleza sin que a él mismo  
*it.is as the glass [that] us.acc makes see better the nature without that A it*  
*le veamos*  
*it.dat we.see*  
 ‘It is like the lense, that makes us see nature better without we seeing it’

Notice that here, however, other factors could be at play: the direct object is topicalised (§2.4.2), and there is *leísmo* (§3.3) characteristic of the Spanish spoken in the Basque Country. These factors could potentially be playing a role.

### 2.2.3. Individuation

The second DP-internal property that correlates with *a*-marking has to do with referentiality: descriptively, and in general, the more individuated a direct object is, the more likely it is to carry *a*-marking. For most authors, this property is generally more powerful than animacy: many animate nouns lack *a*-marking because they are non-specific. Fernández Ramírez (1986 [1951]: 173), in work that was only published after his death, was an early proponent of the theory that what ultimately counts for *a*-marking is whether the direct object is individualised in a specific situation (‘actualised’, in his terminology) –although he almost immediately after that provided some counterexamples with the verbs *encontrar* ‘find’, *mandar* ‘send’ and *ver* ‘see’–. This is essentially the explanation that is adopted by authors like Kliffer (1984), Company (2002), Aissen (2003), among many others.

It is well-known that one traditional condition necessary to allow *a*-marking is that the direct object should be specific. Specificity itself is a complex notion that receives slightly different interpretations across the literature (see von Stechow 2002 for a summary). It is generally associated with one of these four conditions, which are only partially overlapping:

- (i) a specific noun refers to an entity that is identifiable in the mind of the speaker, independently of whether it exists in the ‘real’ world (‘epistemic specificity’)
- (ii) a specific noun refers to an entity that belongs to a group that has been activated in the discourse (‘partitive specificity’)
- (iii) a specific noun is not under the scope of certain quantifiers (‘scopal specificity’)
- (iv) a specific noun is functionally-linked to the speaker of the utterance or to some referential expression contained in the same sentence (‘relative specificity’)

The first two notions are those that more closely match Spanish DOM, we will see them in detail now here (but we will make reference to the other two later).

Leonetti (2004: 78) notes that, in addition to the immediate consequences that this complex situation has for understanding what kind of phenomenon specificity is, in Spanish *a*-marking does not seem to systematically reflect any of these distinctions, with the possible exception of being partitive, which Leonetti considers only one of the possible interpretations that can be pragmatically triggered when the object is *a*-marked.

With respect to the first definition, a direct object is non-specific if it merely describes a set of properties that some entities in the universe of discourse might have, but do not need to. It is specific if it identifies, through its properties, an entity which at the very least the speaker has previous knowledge of. It is well-known (cf., for instance, Leonetti 1999: 862) that by default an indefinite noun receives a specific interpretation in combination with predicates, and that in order to obtain a non-specific reading it is necessary to have an element with a modal component (an opacity operator) at a hierarchically higher position. Among the inductors of non-referentiality we have predicates belonging to the domains of desires, intentions, possibilities and other modal notions: *buscar* ‘search’, *necesitar* ‘need’, *pedir* ‘ask for’, *querer* ‘want’, *intentar* ‘try’, *esperar* ‘hope’, *planear* ‘plan’, *permitir* ‘allow’, *ser conveniente* ‘to be preferable’, *ser necesario* ‘to be necessary’, *ser suficiente* ‘to suffice’, *ser obligatorio* ‘to be compulsory’, etc. (51). The prepositions *para* ‘in order to’ (51c) and *sin* ‘without’ seems to license also these readings (51d). In all these cases, one can imagine that the relevant predicates or prepositions carry with them some extra modal information; in the case of *sin* ‘without’ it is pretty obvious that the extra notion is related to negation. Combination with *cualquiera* ‘whatsoever’ is one of the signs of non-specificity.

- (51) a. *buscar un billete cualquiera*  
*to search for a ticket whichever*  
‘to search for any ticket whatsoever’
- b. *ser suficiente con un libro cualquiera*  
*to be enough with a book whichever*  
‘to be enough with any book whatsoever’

- c. para vivir en una casa cualquiera  
*to live in a house whichever*  
 ‘to live in any house whatsoever’
- d. sin un amigo cualquiera  
*without a friend whichever*  
 ‘without any friend whatsoever’

The relevance of these predicates for *a*-marking is that it is generally reported (Perez Saldanya 1999) that only specific direct objects are *a*-marked. Knowing that presence of subjunctive in a relative clause is a diagnostic of non-specificity, (52) shows pairs where the first member is specific and is *a*-marked, while the second has the opposite properties.

- (52) a. buscar \*(a) una secretaria que habla inglés  
*to.search for A a secretary that speaks.ind English*
- b. buscar (\*a) una secretaria que hable inglés  
*to.search for A a secretary that speaks.subj English*
- c. necesitar \*(a) un amigo que tiene coche  
*to.need A a friend that has.ind car*
- d. necesitar (\*a) un amigo que tenga coche  
*to.need A a friend that has.subj car*

To the extent that definite nouns can be non-specific, the same pattern is reproduced. (53a) can be said when the winner of the competition has not been chosen yet; (53b) can only be said when the winner has already been determined.

- (53) a. encontrar la persona que tenga más puntos  
*to.find the person that has.subj more points*
- b. encontrar a la persona que tiene más puntos  
*to.find A the person that has.ind more points*

However, the data are not so clean, and sometimes *a*-marking is compatible with subjunctive. In (54), we have one such case: this can be said once the question round of a competition has finished, but the judges have not identified yet who is the person that has the highest number of points. With it, one is assuming that someone has more points than the rest, but he or she cannot identify that person yet.

- (54) Busca a la persona que tenga más puntos.  
*search.imp A the person that has.subj more points*

What this suggests is that the kind of specificity *a*-marking is sensitive to (if *a*-marking is sensitive to specificity at all, a position that has been disputed in López 2012) is not identical to the conditions under which subjunctive is used. Under the light of (54), subjunctive in the relative clause seems to be associated to contexts where the speaker cannot identify the referent, while *a*-marking has to do, rather, with the presupposition of existence of such entity. In a real or imagined world, that entity must exist, even if it is not found. In other words: whoever says (55a) can be accused of believing that unicorns exist (in the relevant world), but (55b) is not assuming they exist.

- (55) a. buscar a un unicornio  
           *to.search A a unicorn*  
 b. buscar un unicornio  
           *to.search a unicorn*

In the second definition of specificity –partitive specificity–, the relevant contrast is the one in (56).

- (56) a. De los parientes que quería visitar, solo vi ??(a) tres.  
           *out.of the relatives that I.wanted to visit, only I.saw A three*  
           ‘Out of the relatives I wanted to visit, I only saw three’  
 b. Solo vi (a) tres.  
           *only I.saw A three*  
           ‘I only saw three’

When the animate direct object refers to part of a larger group that has already been discussed in the context, *a*-marking is compulsory for most speakers. That is why (56a), where the larger group is mentioned, sounds odd. (56b) allows *a*-marking to the extent that the direct object can be specific in this sense, even if the group has not been mentioned in the same sentence. The difference, of course, is related to Milsark’s (1974) well-known distinction between strong and weak quantifiers.

Thus, (57a) presupposes that the direct object is human, and in addition to it, is individuated in the discourse because it belongs to a larger group that had been mentioned; (57b) might be human, but in that case, it could not be individuated. The same applies to the contrast between (57c) and (57d).

- (57) a. Vimos a tres.  
           *we.saw A three*  
           ‘We saw three (humans)’  
 b. Vimos tres.  
           *we.saw three*  
           ‘We saw three ((non) humans)’  
 c. Vimos a algunos.  
           *we.saw A some*  
           ‘We saw some (humans)’  
 d. Vimos algunos.  
           *we.saw some*  
           ‘We saw some ((non) humans)’

Another factor that interacts with *a*-marking is whether the direct object is interpreted as a kind or a class of entities, or as individuals belonging to that class. In the first case, *a*-marking is not possible. To the extent that bare nouns in Spanish denote classes of entities, and not entities themselves, this explains that the direct objects in (58), although human, do not carry *a*-marking. They are used to describe the class of entities that takes part in the event, not to single out any individuals within that class. As expected, generic statements favour such reading.

- (58) a. Un médico cura pacientes.  
           *a doctor cures patients*

- b. Este veneno mata marcianos.  
*this poison kills martians*

However, there is a grey area here, that sometimes interacts with the main verb (59) –because not all verbs allow bare direct objects– and sometimes depends on the presence of modifiers or other properties of the structure the bare noun belongs to (60).

- (59) a. Un payaso no divierte \*(a) jóvenes.  
*a clown not amuses A youngsters*  
 b. Un catedrático instruye \*(a) jóvenes.  
*a professor instructs A youngsters*
- (60) a. La universidad debe formar a investigadores cualificados.  
*the university must train A researchers qualified*  
 [RAE & ASALE 2009: §34.9a]  
 b. El trópico desgasta a hombres y mujeres.  
*the tropic wears.out A men and women*  
 [RAE & ASALE 2009: §34.9b]

About cases like (60), RAE & ASALE (2009) say that *a*-marking is preferred whenever the bare noun carries modifiers that are enough to identify a specific subclass or whenever the bare noun is coordinated with another one. It is suggested (2009: §34.9c) that these bare nouns are determined in the absence of a definite article because ‘they contain enough information to identify individuals or groups’. However, from the perspective of *a*-marking it is very difficult to identify in which sense a subclass of entities should count as more individualised than a class of entities, especially given that bare nouns without modifiers can be quite restrictive (through their lexical properties, 61) and still reject *a*-marking.

- (61) Este profesor forma (\*a) topógrafos.  
*this professor trains A topographers*

One way of interpreting RAE & ASALE’s claim (and maybe not the one it was intended as) is the following: the syntactic role of restrictive modifiers and coordination is comparable to the one that a determiner performs, say, because it licenses some abstract characteristics that overt determiners can also license. Obviously, this story would be supported by the fact that restrictive modifiers and coordination are among the factors that license a bare noun as preverbal subject in Spanish –a language where subjects generally must have a determiner (Leonetti 1999)–.

- (62) a. Hombres \*(con sombreros de paja) aparecieron en la fiesta.  
*men with hats of straw appeared at the party*  
 b. Hombres \*(y mujeres) aparecieron en la fiesta.  
*men and women appeared at the party*

However, the story has to be more complex, because having a determiner is not a sufficient or necessary condition to have *a*-marking. If specificity –at least in one of its senses– is a sharp enough tool to cut the cake, one possibility would be that certain modifiers, and at least one of the operations that we refer to as coordination, impose a

specific reading on the bare noun. At this point, it is difficult to see how the idea could be implemented, especially taking into account that it is generally non-restrictive modifiers that trigger specific readings (Bosque 1996).

- (63) buscar \*(a) un encantador caballero  
*to.search for A a charming gentleman*

Leaving these complications aside, one almost clean generalisation that many works accept implicitly or explicitly seems to be that *a*-marked objects are associated to the introduction of individual variables in the discourse –i.e., they refer to individuals–, while the non-*a*-marked objects would introduce kind variables, and denote classes, sets of properties, etc.

The interaction with animacy, though, would not be completely clean. The existence of non-animates that require *a*-marking prevents us from saying that animacy is a necessary condition for *a*-marking (over which individuation would be evaluated).

#### 2.2.4. Counterexamples to individuation

The best known counterexample to the generalisation that specific animate nouns require *a*-marking is the behaviour of the personal pronouns *nadie* ‘nobody’, *alguien* ‘someone’, *quién* ‘who’, and *ninguno* ‘none’, when referred to people. Systematically, the first three require *a*-marking as direct objects. This is independent of whether one assumes a definite group of people *nadie* or *alguien* is evaluated with respect to or not; the marking is necessary even if the pronoun is non-specific in all possible interpretations.

- (64) No vi \*(a) nadie en el parque.  
*not I.saw A nobody in the park*  
 (65) Vi \*(a) alguien en el parque.  
*I.saw A someone in the park*  
 (66) ¿\*(a) quién viste en el parque?  
*A who you.saw in the park*

Rodríguez Modoñedo (2007) takes this as evidence that *a*-marking does not correspond to specificity, but (in his account) to a more abstract formal property of case licensing in structures. In contrast, Torrego (1998: 174, footnote 56) suggests, following Heim (1987), that these pronouns must introduce individual variables, but she leaves the issue open. She admits that with one verb, presentational *hay* ‘there is’, the pronouns do not express individual variables and consequently do not take *a*-marking, but she does not provide a full account of why a kind denotation is available precisely with this verb.

Fernández Ramírez (1986 [1951]: 156) documents, however, some cases with other verbs where these forms do not carry *a*-marking. Next to some examples that sound unnatural in today’s language, he finds (67). Some contemporary speakers, however, do not accept such sentences.

- (67) a. Es mejor tener en casa alguien que te alegre la vista.  
*it.is better have at home someone that you cheers the sight*  
 ‘It is better to have at home someone that gives you a nice view’

- b. No tiene en el mundo nadie que la defienda más que yo.  
*not has in the world nobody that her protects more than me*  
 ‘She doesn’t have anyone in the world to protect her, if not me’

Presumably there are other factors playing a role here. In the case of (67a), it seems that the presence of the expression *es mejor* ‘it is better’, which has a modal flavour, has something to do with the acceptance of *alguien* without *a*-marking. If we remove it (68), the sequence becomes degraded. As for the second case, notice that it is almost replaceable by *hay*, as it even has a locative complement ‘in the world’.

- (68) \*Lamento tener alguien que me alegre la vista.  
*I regret to have someone that me cheers the sight*  
 ‘I regret having someone that gives me a nice view’

Along similar lines to Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007), López (2012: 12-20) notes that, in fact, *a*-marking does not force specificity in any of its definitions. While it is true that absence of *a*-marking forces a non-specific reading, López notes that *a*-marking is compatible with, for example, both wide and narrow scope readings.

- (69) a. Si Lud invita un filósofo, Bert se enfadará.  
*if Lud invites a philosopher, Bert SE will.anger*  
 ‘If Lud invites any philosopher, Bert will get angry’  
 b. Si Lud invita a un filósofo, Bert se enfadará.  
*if Lud invites A a philosopher, Bert SE will.anger*  
 ‘If Lud invites any philosopher, Bert will get angry’ or  
 ‘If Lud invites a particular philosopher, Bert will get angry’

(69a) only has one reading –that in case any philosopher is invited, Bert will get angry–, but as the glosses show (69b) does not necessarily mean that there is one particular philosopher such as that if he gets invited, Bert will get angry: in addition to this reading, it also shares the non-specific interpretation of (69a). What this seems to suggest is that *a*-marking is a necessary condition for specificity, but that it does not come associated to it compulsorily.

Given these problems, there are two obvious reactions. The first one, as Leonetti (2004) does, is to reject the idea that specificity is the driving force behind DOM. The second one is to treat each class of specificity –epistemic, partitive and scopal– as a different notion, and compare how closely DOM correlates with each one of them: the counterexamples refer to epistemic and scopal specificity, but to the best of our knowledge there are no clear counterexamples to the partitive interpretation of DOM.

Perhaps the mirror image of the counterexamples where *a* is compatible with absence of epistemic specificity has not been studied in the same detail (with the significant exception of López 2012). They have to do with sentences like (70). The indefinite direct object is epistemically specific: the speaker certainly presupposes that the entity exists, and presumably also can identify her. However, it lacks *a*-marking.

- (70) Tengo (#a) una hija.  
*I have A a daughter*

Accounts of this data point generally note that (70) is used as a presentational statement. *Tener*, as we have already mentioned, is a verb where *a*-marking generally carries semantic differences having to do with the interaction between subject and object. Thus, (71) is possible, but with a different interpretation: that the speaker can count on her daughter when s/he needs it.

- (71) Tengo a una hija.  
*I.have a a daughter*  
 ‘I have a daughter’

Interestingly, when *nadie* ‘nobody’, *alguien* ‘someone’ and *quién* ‘who’ combine with this verb, *a*-marking is obligatory and the meaning obtained is the same one as in (72).

- (72) a. ¿A quién tienes?  
*A who you.have*  
 ‘Who can you count on?’  
 b. No tengo a nadie.  
*not I.have A nobody*  
 ‘I cannot count on anyone’

The relevance of (72) is double. On one side, it suggests that the verb *tener* ‘have’ is not presentational in the same sense as the verb *hay* ‘there is’, because with the second one, *a*-marking must be dropped (as noted in Torrego 1998 and Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2007).

- (73) a. Hay (\*a) alguien.  
*there.is A someone*  
 b. No hay (\*a) nadie.  
*not there.is A nobody*  
 c. ¿(\*a) quién hay?  
*A who there.is*

Secondly, it suggests that whatever value *a*-marking has with respect to the verb, it must be kept even in those cases where there is no alternative: it is not that the meaning of *tener* is different with *a* and without it because there is a choice between two possibilities –as we could have thought if we had based our explanation in some pragmatic principle–, but that presence of *a* is itself connected to some specific interpretation.

### 2.3. *Meaning properties: the role of the verb*

The second factor that influences presence of DOM is the kind of verbal predicate the direct object combines with. From this perspective, previous literature has identified semantic effects on the verb that correlate with *a*-marking, and also classes of verbs that reject or force presence of *a*-marking. Perhaps the most detailed study of the interaction between *a*-marking and verbal properties is Torrego (1998), which we discuss in this section.

## 2.3.1. Telicity

Torrego (1998: 21) notes that *a*-marking correlates –at least whenever the verb does not force its presence– with telicity, understood (as Declerck 1989 does) as the property of having a natural or intended endpoint. She takes as an illustration the sentences in (74).

- (74) a. Laura escondió a un prisionero durante dos años.  
       *Laura hid A a prisoner during two years*  
 b. Laura escondió un prisionero durante dos años.  
       *Laura hid a prisoner during two years*

The first sentence, with *a*-marking, can have two meanings: either there was only one act of hiding, that kept the prisoner in hiding for two years, or during the course of two years there were a repeated series of actions of hiding a prisoner. The second sentence only has the second reading, according to Torrego. The data are consistent with the interpretation that presence of *a* can make the event telic: if the event is interpreted as telic, it can have an endpoint and therefore make room for a result state which can be measured by *durante dos años*.

We must right away say that not all speakers share Torrego's judgement here. In fact, when confronted with other contrasts, the judgements seem to be even contrary to what Torrego reports in (75).

- (75) a. Laura buscó a una secretaria durante dos años.  
       *Laura searched for A a secretary for two years*  
 b. Laura buscó una secretaria durante dos años.  
       *Laura searched a secretary for two years*

The speakers consulted (and including the author of this article) can assign a 'result state' reading to both sentences, if the result state means that for two years the entity is under search in a single act of searching. What is different here, for some speakers, is the repetitive reading, where the search takes place several times during a two-year period: some speakers find it easier to get it with (75a).

It is not true either –at least descriptively– that presence of *a*-marking is always correlated with a result state interpretation. A verb like *interrumpir* 'interrupt' has two readings: one in which some event finishes before its natural conclusion (76a) and one in which one interrupts some event for a while, in order to let it restart again (76b). Only the second allows a *for*-phrase measure the duration of the interruption.

- (76) a. El gobierno interrumpió la celebración por el accidente (\*durante dos días).  
       *the government interrupted the celebration for the accident for two days*  
       'The government stopped the celebrations, due to the accident'  
 b. El accidente interrumpió el tráfico durante doce horas.  
       *the accident interrupted the traffic for twelve hours*

Now, we would expect *a*-marking to trigger the second meaning if telicity has to be interpreted as triggering a result state, but for some speakers this does not seem to be the case (77). In (77), we make someone stop talking before she intended to, but *for*-phrases seemingly cannot measure the time during which the speaker suffered the interruption, at least for some speakers. Those speakers can interpret it as measuring the period during which there were constant interruptions by Juan, but not as the

duration of a single interruption. Other speakers, in contrast, do get the interpretation that Torrego predicts, which show that most likely here we have competing grammars, and suggest that Torrego's analysis is on the right track and perhaps what is different across speakers might be the lexical entry of the verb *interrumpir*.

- (77) Juan interrumpió a Rajoy (#durante veinte minutos).  
*Juan interrupted A Rajoy (during twenty minutes)*

It does seem that *a*-marking correlates more generally with the repetitive reading, where the event happens several times during a time period. This is a judgement that is shared by (77), (75a) and, for some speakers, (74a), and it is compatible with at least one interpretation of telicity: that the event has a definite end point, even if it is not necessarily followed by a result state.

### 2.3.2. Agentivity and interaction

A second contrast that Torrego notices is that when there is DOM, the subject is interpreted as agent, not as causer or any other theta-role that could in principle be assigned to the subject. Again, the contrast seems to happen only with some verbs and the judgements are not shared by all speakers. (78) is the main example that Torrego (1998: 29) offers: if the subject is an agent, *a*-marking is possible. If it is a causer (78b), it is out.

- (78) a. El herido exigía (a) un médico.  
*the injured required A a doctor*  
 b. La situación exigía (\*a) un médico.  
*the situation required A a doctor*

Torrego herself notes (1998: 30) that not all verbs behave like this: some require DOM even when the subject is a causer.

- (79) a. El soldado emborrachó \*(a) varios colegas.  
*the soldier made.drunk A several friends*  
 b. El vino emborrachó \*(a) varios invitados.  
*the wine made.drunk A several guests*

The kind of contrast that we see between some pairs of sentences, where the *a*-marked version is associated to some interaction between the subject and the object, is perhaps more clear. In some cases, the contrast is such that the version with *a* is eventive, while the version without it is stative. Maybe the clearest verb of the group is *conocer* 'to know' (Torrego 1998: 31 and ff.).

- (80) a. Inés conoce muchos admiradores.  
*Inés knows many admirers*  
 b. Inés conoce a muchos admiradores.  
*Inés knows A many admirers*

In (80a), we say that Inés knows of the existence of many admirers; in (80b), we suggest that she has personal interaction with them. This contrast is associated to two effects; the first is that (80b) can behave as eventive –according to tests such as the

progressive periphrasis–, because it is compatible with the reading that Inés is getting to know the admirers.

- (81) Inés está conociendo \*(a) muchos admiradores.  
*Inés is knowing A many admirers*

The second is that if the subject is not an animate entity, that can interact with the admirers, *a*-marking is out.

- (82) La ópera conoce \*(a) muchos admiradores.  
*the opera knows A many admirers*

The following contrast, which is accepted by some but not all speakers, reproduces the pattern for those that allow it. In the first sentence, a static distribution is described: the guards are around the president. In the second, the situation is conceptualised as dynamic: the guards are moving, keeping an eye on the president, or just are forming a circle around him as we speak, etc.

- (83) a. Los guardas rodean el presidente.  
*the guards surround the president*  
 b. Los guardas rodean al presidente  
*the guards surround A the president*

We have also noted that the interaction reading is salient with *tener* ‘have’, when the object is *a*-marked. However, in this case the predicate does not give signs of being eventive, as at the very least it is not compatible with the progressive periphrasis.

- (84) \*Estoy teniendo a una hija.  
*I am having A one daughter*  
 Intended: ‘I am counting on a daughter’

Thus, there is some stative-eventive contrast related to *a*-marking, but it is only visible with some verbs. Remember also that some transitive stative verbs, like *obedecer* ‘obey’ or *preceder* ‘precede’, have *a*-marking and still they are stative. Remember, especially, the case of *seguir* ‘follow’, that had *a*-marking with non-animates precisely when used as stative.

Be it as it may, the interaction between subject and object has been taken in part of the literature as a reflection of affectedness: the object must, in some way, be influenced in some significant way by the agent and the event. However, affectedness is an extremely difficult notion to delimit, and it is not clear, for instance, under which definition of affectedness the *a*-marked direct object with *tener* is more affected than the non-*a*-marked direct object of *curar* ‘heal’ in *El médico cura pacientes* ‘the doctor heals patients’.

### 2.3.3. Special classes of verbs

Next to the class of stative transitives, it has been noted (eg., Torrego 1998, Leonetti 2004) that there are some verbs which also force the presence of *a*-marking and seem not to allow direct objects, even non-specific, without it. These verbs include *acusar* ‘accuse’, *castigar* ‘punish’, *ofender* ‘offend’, *golpear* ‘beat’, *insultar*

‘insult’, *ayudar* ‘help’, *acosar* ‘harass’, *saludar* ‘greet’, *odiar* ‘hate’, *sobornar* ‘bribe’, *admirar* ‘admire’, *entrevistar* ‘interview’ and *afectar* ‘affect’ (again, with signs of variation across different dialects and individual preferences). With non-specifics, *a*-marking remains if the direct object is animate.

- (85) a. ofender \*(a) una persona cualquiera  
*offend A a person whatsoever*  
 b. golpear \*(a) un estudiante cualquiera  
*beat A a student whoever*  
 c. afectar \*(a) una persona cualquiera  
*affect A a person whatsoever*  
 d. ayudar \*(a) una persona cualquiera  
*help A a person whatsoever*

Several properties merit discussion here. The first is that this class is not identical to the one singled out in Lapesa (1968), namely verbs whose direct object is prototypically human, which apparently were the first verbs where DOM got extended to DP objects. A verb like *matar* ‘kill’, which presupposes that the direct object is animate, can drop the *a*-marking for many speakers (86), while a verb like *golpear* ‘beat’ cannot be claimed to prototypically select animates, but is more resilient to dropping.

- (86) Para entrar en el club, tienes que matar una persona cualquiera.  
*to come in the club, you.must that kill a person whatsoever*  
 ‘In order to get into the club, you must kill someone’

Thus, prototypicality of animacy does not seem to define this class.

Secondly, many of the verbs which resist dropping *a*-marking with animates are verbs which have a related nominal which can keep the *a*-marking. This is a surprising property if *a*-marking was (always) a manifestation of accusative case, because it is known that nominals do not assign accusative.

- (87) a. el acoso a la prensa  
*the harassment A the press*  
 b. un insulto a su jefe  
*an insult A his boss*  
 c. un golpe al narcotráfico  
*a beat A the drug-trafficking*  
 d. la ayuda a los parados  
*the help A the unemployed*

Contrast this with verbs which allow non-*a*-marked animate objects. They cannot keep the *a*-marking.

- (88) a. \*la matanza a los cerdos  
*the killing A the pigs*  
 b. \*la ocultación al prisionero  
*the hiding A the prisoner*

Third, not all verbs from this class behave alike. Specifically, some of them seem to show a stronger tendency to keep the *a*-marking even with non-animates. Contrast the following sentences. Note also that *golpear* ‘beat’ does have *a*-marking with non-animates in its nominal version (87c), which suggests that *a*-marking in nominals is related to but distinct from *a*-marking in verbal environments.

- (89) a. La policía golpeó (\*a)l narcotráfico.  
*the police beat A the drug-trafficking*  
 b. La policía acosa (a)l narcotráfico.  
*the police harasses A the drug-trafficking*  
 c. La policía ayuda \*(a)l narcotráfico.  
*the police helps A the drug-trafficking*

Here we see that three situations should be differentiated. The first (89a) are cases where non-animates reject the marking; the second (89b) are cases where non-animates accept the marking, and the third (89c) are cases where non-animates demand the marking. As before, here we expect variation among speakers with respect to which verbs fall into which class, and unfortunately detailed studies about this are not available yet.

Finally, many of the verbs from this class are related to nouns, and sometimes compete with light verb constructions where the noun is the direct object, and the entity that in (85) is expressed as an *a*-marked direct object is a dative.

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| (90) | a. golpear a uno ~<br><i>beat A someone</i>    | dar un golpe a uno<br><i>give a blow A someone</i>               |
|      | b. ayudar a uno ~<br><i>help A someone</i>     | dar ayuda a uno<br><i>give help A someone</i>                    |
|      | c. acusar a uno ~<br><i>accuse A someone</i>   | hacer una acusación a uno<br><i>make an accusation A someone</i> |
|      | d. castigar a uno ~<br><i>punish A someone</i> | poner un castigo a uno<br><i>put a punishment A someone</i>      |

Although one has to keep in mind the different subgroups, the existence of such correlations has suggested to some that the verbs, even when they do not seem so superficially, still keep the light verb structure where the direct object is marked as a dative (see Pineda 2013); what would follow from it is that *a*-marking is dative.

#### 2.3.4. Generalisations from the verb class?

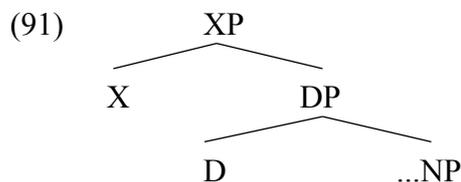
The difficulty of determining what internal properties of the DP force *a*-marking open the possibility that the generalisation about the distribution of *a*-marked objects should be made using the verb, and not the DP. This is in fact one way of interpreting what Fernández Ramírez (1986 [1951]: 175) was suggesting when he noted that the individuation associated to *a*-marking could be overrun by the verb’s requirements, or imposed on a non-individuated object if the verb required it, and noted that changes in verbal meaning were very frequently matched by *a*-marking. Let us say a few words about how this could be done.

Suppose that Torrego’s suggestion that *a*-marked objects are associated to individual variables, while non-*a*-marked objects are associated to kinds, is at least partially correct. Assuming this distinction, or some other similar distinction, one could imagine that some verbs select an individual direct object, while others select a

non-individual one, and finally, a third class allows both. We would, then, have a division between three classes of verbs:

- (i) those that always select a non-individual object would always reject *a*-marking. There seems to be at least one such verb, the presentational *hay* ‘there is’ (cf. Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2007: chapter 1, for a detailed analysis).
- (ii) those that always select an individual object would always require *a*-marking. A verb like *ayudar* ‘help’ seems a good example of this class.
- (iii) the vast majority of verbs could select either, and would display an alternation between *a*-marking and non-*a*-marking in their direct objects, sometimes associated to differences in aspect, agentivity and interaction.

In a nutshell, this would imply associating the presence of *a*-marking with an extra head that dominates the direct object –possibly, although not necessarily, *a* would spell out that head– (91).



Now, there would be a lot of questions to answer. The most obvious of them is why *alguien* ‘someone’ and similar animate pronouns have to be selected with *a* even by verbs which otherwise allow non-*a*-marked objects (class iii). Notice that it cannot be that animate pronouns are themselves individuals by necessity, because they appear without *a*-marking with the class (i). Secondly, one would like to see why *a*-marking is not necessary when something other than direct objects is associated to individual readings. Third, one would like to identify the head X in (91) and explain what are its conditions of licensing, what kinds of DP phrases it selects, how it turns kinds into individuals, etc. Fourth, one would need to make more explicit the relation between X and animacy, because it does seem that –if we believe this proposal– X tends to appear more frequently with animates, although not always. There are many questions here, but perhaps this line of research is worth pursuing.

#### 2.4. Syntactic properties: topicalisation and double *a* patterns

In this section we will review some of the syntactic conditions that trigger or block DOM in Spanish.

##### 2.4.1. Double *a* patterns

The observation that when there is an overt indirect object sometimes DOM is blocked is usually attributed to Bello (1847: §900).

- (92) Presentaron la cautiva Zenobia al vencedor.  
*they.presented the prisoner Zenobia A-the winner*  
 ‘They introduced the prisoner Zenobia to the winner’

It is generally assumed that presence of another *a*-marker, in this case the one that introduces the dative, in the immediate context of the direct object is the cause of the

ungrammaticality. Evidence for it is that if the indirect object is pronominalised, preposed or removed, DOM is obligatory. Double *a*-marking is also better if the indirect object or both arguments are phonologically heavy (93d, cf. Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2007: 223 and ff.).

- (93) a. Le presentaron \*(a) la cautiva Zenobia.  
*him.dat they presented A the prisoner Zenobia*  
 b. Presentaron en sociedad \*(a) la cautiva Zenobia.  
*they.presented in society A the prisoner Zenobia*  
 ‘The socially presented the prisoner Zenobia’  
 c. Al vencedor presentaron ??(a) la cautiva Zenobia.  
*to-the winner they.presented A the prisoner Zenobia*  
 d. Presentaron (a) la cautiva Zenobia a su nuevo esposo, Chindasvinto.  
*they.presented (A) the prisoner Z A her new husband, Chindasvinto*

In some works, going back to Bello, it is argued that there are differences between verbs, and some accept the double marking better than others (94). Rodríguez Mondoñedo (*ibidem*) disputes this claim, noting that the acceptable patterns include always one of the conditions illustrated in (93); in the case of (94), for instance, the indirect object is phonologically heavy.

- (94) El traidor Judas vendió a Jesús a los sacerdotes y fariseos.  
*the traitor Judas sold A Jesus to the priests and Pharisees*

Another area where there seems to be variation has to do with dative clitic doubling (§3.4). As we will see, some speakers consider (95a) more acceptable than (95b), and this is the case with sequences where the direct object is a pronoun, a proper name or is headed by a universal quantifier.

- (95) a. Enviaron a todos los heridos a la doctora.  
*they.sent A all the injured A the doctor*  
 b. \*Le enviaron a todos los heridos a la doctora.  
*her.dat they.sent A all the injured A the doctor*

When DOM is blocked by the presence of an *a*-marked dative, other properties are associated to it (cf. Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2007: 214 and ff.). The direct object must precede the indirect object compulsorily.

- (96) \*Presentaron al vencedor la cautiva Zenobia.  
*they.presented A the winner the prisoner Zenobia*

Secondly, DOM is more easily blocked when the indirect object is clitic doubled. For some speakers, there is a contrast between (97a) and (97b).

- (97) a. ??Entregaron la cautiva Zenobia al vencedor.  
*they.gave the prisoner Zenobia to the winner*  
 b. Le entregaron la cautiva Zenobia al vencedor.  
*him.dat they.gave the prisoner Zenobia to the winner*

Another important aspect of DOM blocking in the context of indirect objects is that not every direct object can undergo it. The conditions for dropping seem to be sensitive to the definiteness of the direct object, following notions presented in §2.3.3. For instance, if the direct object is a proper name –not preceded by a common noun, as in the previous examples–, dropping is worse for speakers (98). And for all speakers consulted, personal pronouns cannot undergo dropping (99).

- (98) Le presentaron \*(a) Zenobia al vencedor.  
*him.dat they.introduced A Zenobia to-the winner*
- (99) Se la presentaron \*(a) ella al vencedor.  
*him.dat her.acc they.introduced A her to-the winner*

This suggests two things: DOM must be related to dative case assignment in Spanish, at least in some sense. There are many technical implementations that can be proposed, but something that specific analyses of the pattern have in common (see Torrego 1998, Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2007) is the intuition that the double marking is impossible because the two arguments compete for the same case-checking position. This implies that dative and DOM must be, essentially, the same. In cases where the marking can be double –such as heavy NPs, or displacement– it is generally assumed that one of the arguments has moved to a domain where case can be satisfied without interfering with the second argument. Similarly, Richards (2010: 25-32) has argued –within a theory of Distinctness, where the same domain cannot host two identically labelled constituents, or else linearisation cannot take place– that dropping one of the markings is due to the syntactic identity of DOM and datives.

Notice, incidentally, and in relation to the question of whether DOM is closer to dative or to locative (§2.1) that there is no dropping if the DOM direct object cooccurs with a directional.

- (100) Enviaron a la cautiva Zenobia al castillo.  
*they.sent A the prisoner Zenobia to the castle*

#### 2.4.2. Topicalisation and topicality

Many authors have noted that *a*-marking is accepted in surprising contexts when the direct object is somehow anteposed with respect to its unmarked position. Niculescu (1959) and Rohlf's (1971) noted that left-dislocation and clitic doubling –two of the main signs of topicalisation– were frequent in the early examples of DOM. In *El Cid* (c. 12<sup>th</sup> Century) the majority of cases where the direct object carries DOM are preposed (101), suggesting that topicalisation was one of the factors that contributed to the early extension of the phenomenon.

- (101) A mis fijas sirvades que vuestras mugieres son  
*A my daughters serve.imp as your wives are*  
 ‘Serve my daughters, for they are your wives’  
 [apud Laca 2006: 455]

We have just seen (§2.4.1) that topicalisation of the indirect object contributes to keeping two *a*-marked arguments in the verb. (102) shows that if the direct object is topicalised, the mark is also preferred. Most speakers prefer the version that carries clitic doubling.

- (102) A la cautiva Zenobia (la) presentaron al vencedor.  
*A the prisoner Zenobia (her.acc) they.presented A the winner*

Roegiest (1979), Dietrich (1987) and Laca (1995) are among the researchers that notice that some cases of DOM are possible only if the direct object is topicalised; contrast the sentences in (103): the same direct object that rejects the mark in situ, accepts it when displaced and clitic doubled.

- (103) a. ...cuando a un árbol consiguen matar-lo...  
*when A a tree they.manage to.kill-it.acc*  
 b. ?? ... cuando consiguen matar a un árbol  
*when they.manage to.kill A a tree*  
 c. ... a la sacristía la traspasaba un buen sablazo de sol  
*A the sacristy it.acc pierced a good stroke of sun*  
 d. \*un buen sablazo de sol traspasaba a la sacristía  
*a good stroke of sun pieced A the sacristy*  
 [apud Laca 1995: 84]

In §3.4 we will see that some researchers have directly tied DOM with clitic doubling, either accusative doubling or dative doubling.

Some authors have argued that topicality, independently of whether it is syntactically manifested or not, is crucial for DOM. Naturally, what is relevant here is what notion of ‘topicality’ should be connected to *a*-marking. In its traditional interpretation, topicality is ‘familiarity’, and in such sense it is related to discourse-bound readings, if not to co-reference. Some authors that have highlighted the connection between *a*-marking and topicality have implicitly assumed this definition of topicality. In this sense, note the contrast in (125), observed in Isenberg (1968): with *a*-marking, the underlined direct object tends to be interpreted as the second mention of the group of horses that was introduced in the discourse previously. Without it, it prefers a generic reading: his friend is familiar with horses in general, but perhaps he does not know the particular horses that Pedro owns.

- (104) a. Un día Pedro sostuvo una larga discusión con su amigo sobre los  
*one day Pedro held a long discussion with his friend about the*  
 caballos. Su amigo, que conocía a los caballos...  
*horses. His friend, who knew A the horses...*  
 b. Un día Pedro sostuvo una larga discusión con su amigo sobre los  
*one day Pedro held a long discussion with his friend about the*  
 caballos. Su amigo, que conocía los caballos...  
*horses. His friend, who knew the horses...*

The correlation between co-reference and DOM has received a great deal of attention in some works, but its importance has in fact been questioned. Balasch (2011: 118) compared the use of DOM in two corpora, one from Madrid and one from Mérida (Venezuela) and registered that co-reference was statistically significant in both corpus –surprisingly– in that it correlated with absence of DOM. When there was no anaphoric or cataphoric coreference, a higher occurrence of *a*-marking than expected was found (24 instead of the expected 16.32). On the standard assumption that coreference is related to topicality, these results question the role of this factor in DOM.

Notice also that in (104a) the interpretation could be due to ‘relative specificity’, to the extent that in this sentence the set of horses is functionally related to the subject, to the extent that those are the specific horses that he has some kind of contact with.

In another sense of topicality, ‘aboutness topicality’ a topic is an anchor for new assertions in the discourse; something that introduces an entity that becomes prominent in the discourse and can be discussed. Leonetti (2004: 86) associates *a*-marking precisely with this notion, which does not imply co-reference and is in line with Fernández Ramírez’ interpretation. This is used by Leonetti (2004: 90) to explain the compulsory presence of *a*-marking in (105).

- (105) *María siempre contrata \*(a) un chico cuando pro es guapo.*  
*María always hires A a young-man when he is handsome*

In quantifier constructions, like the one that *siempre* ‘always’ triggers in (105) –as it is an adverb that quantifies over situations– being an aboutness topic means that one has to be in the restriction of the quantifier, and not under its scope. That is, for the direct object to be an aboutness topic, (105) has to be a claim about situations where María hires a boy, not about situations where María hires someone. How can we be sure that the direct object is in the restriction of the quantifier in (105)? Because the interpretation that the direct object gets in (105) is generic, as it is the subject of the Individual-Level predicate *ser guapo* ‘be handsome’ and individual level predicates generally demand the generic reading of indefinites (Milsark 1974). Leonetti assumes, following Cohen & Erteschik-Shir (2002), that indefinites need some special configuration to be interpreted as generics. Specifically, they have to be mapped in the restriction of the clause. This is what explains the compulsory *a*-marking: without *a*, they would not be aboutness topics, so they would be mapped under the scope of the quantifier.

In Leonetti’s analysis, *a* codifies procedural information that triggers an aboutness topic reading of the direct object. Specificity is only one of its possible manifestation, but *a* is not directly related to specificity.

#### 2.4.3. Secondary predicates

Coste & Redondo (1976), Roegiest (1979), Laca (1995), Torrego (1998), Rodríguez Espiñeira (2002), Ormazabal & Romero (2007, to appear) and López (2012) have all emphasised that when the predicate selects a secondary predicate or any other predicative structure where the direct object plays a role as a subject, DOM is preferred even in cases where it would be unexpected, given the other properties. One such scenario was discussed previously: the verb *llamar* ‘call’, but it is by no means the only one. (106a) is impossible, unless we assume some personification, but (106b) is fine without any personification.

- (106) a. \**Quise imaginarme a un grano de trigo.*  
*I.wanted to.imagine A a grain of wheat*  
 b. *Quise imaginarme a un grano de trigo aislado de los demás*  
*I.wanted to.imagine A a grain of wheat isolated from the rest*  
 [Roegiest 1980: 145]

Similarly, (107a) is not possible unless we assume the interaction reading discussed previously for the verb *tener* ‘have’. With a secondary predicate, (107b) is fine even without assuming that reading (Laca 1995: 72).

- (107) a. Tengo a mi hija.  
*I.have A my daughter.*  
 ‘I can count on my daughter’  
 b. Tengo a mi hija {en Murcia / casada con un militar}  
*I have A my daughter {in Murcia / married with a soldier}*

Ormazabal & Romero (2002) noted that the appropriate characterisation of these contexts is ‘subject rising to object’, that is, contexts where the direct object of the main predicate starts as the subject of some construction. This includes the direct object of verbs of perception (108), allowance (109) and causation (110), when they appear with an infinitival clause. Again, the first member of the pair is not possible unless there is personification.

- (108) a. \*Veo al avión.  
*I.see A the plane*  
 b. Veo al avión aterrizar.  
*I.see A the plane land*  
 (109) a. \*Dejó a la economía española.  
*he.left A the economy Spanish*  
 b. Dejó a la economía española caer.  
*he.left A the economy Spanish fall*  
 (110) a. \*Hizo al árbol.  
*he.made A the tree*  
 b. Hizo al árbol perder las hojas.  
*he.made A the tree lose the leaves*

For this reason, verbs of transformation typically can add the *a*-marking even if the direct object is non-animate.

- (111) La oscuridad ... convierte al mar en un rumor invisible.  
*the darkness turns A the sea in a whisper invisible*  
 [apud Laca 1995: 71]

Note, finally, that it is not entirely true that with secondary predicates indefinites must be interpreted as epistemically specific (contra Williams 1983, Irimia 2011). In a sentence like (112), we can be talking about a non-specific student –as subjunctive marking suggests–. However, *a*-marking is necessary.

- (112) Tenemos que hacer delegado a un estudiante que sepa chino.  
*we.must that make delegate A a student that knows.subj Chinese*  
 ‘We must make delegate a student that speaks Chinese’

### 2.5. Syntactic properties: extraordinary marking under coordination

Another fact that has relevance for the analysis of DOM is its interaction with coordination. Specifically, it is impossible to coordinate two direct objects, one marked with *a* and another one without any marking.

- (113) \*Vi su coche y a Juan.  
*I.saw his car and A Juan*

(113) is rejected by speakers unless a strong pause is made before the coordination, as in ..., *y a Juan*, which probably indicates that in that case we are not coordinating two direct objects, but one sentence with one independent fragment where the main verb can be elliptic.

To the extent that it is accepted by native speakers –not all of them seem to allow it, even in Central European Spanish– (114) is not a counterexample to the generalisation, because it can be interpreted as a coordination of two DPs which globally receive one single *a*-marking.

- (114) ?Vi a Juan y su coche.  
*I.saw A Juan and his car*

These constructions are not studied in a detailed way, to the best of our knowledge. They are mentioned in passing in RAE & ASALE (2009: §34.8f), only to note that the impossibility of coordinating a DOM object with one without *a* sometimes leads to cases where non-animates receive *a*-marking with verbs that otherwise do not allow it.

- (115) ... nos filmaba a mí y al antedespacho por el que pasé la vista  
*us.acc filmed A me and A the pre-office by the which I.passed the sight*  
 ‘he was filming myself and the chamber before the office where I was taking a look’  
 [Díaz Martínez, *La piel y la máscara*]

In fact, other examples can be built where non-animates receive *a*-marking because they are coordinated with arguments that require it. The most acceptable ones involve definite inanimates and personal pronouns –which require clitic doubling–, but other examples are accepted (116c).

- (116) a. Os vimos a tu coche y a ti.  
*you.acc we.saw A your car and A you*  
 b. Nos encontró a mí y a mi abrigo.  
*us.acc found A me and A my coat*  
 c. Descubrimos al terrorista y a la bomba.  
*we.found A the terrorist and A the bomb*

With indefinite animates, the coordination is worse, both with and without repetition of *a*-marking.

- (117) a. \*Os vimos una bomba y a ti.  
*you.acc we.saw a bomb and A you*  
 b. ??Os vimos a una bomba y a ti.  
*you.acc we.saw A a bomb and A you*

When the marking is repeated, there seems to be a tendency to interpret the non-animate noun as, somehow, inherently related with the *a*-marked animate. Perhaps as a pragmatic effect of the coordination, or perhaps as an effect of the conditions under

which DOM is assigned, objects from the personal sphere of the animate are better in this pattern. Contrast, in this sense, the two sentences in (118).

- (118) a. Encontramos en el parque a Juan y a su maleta.  
*we.found in the park A Juan and A his suitcase*  
 b. ??Encontramos en el parque a Juan y a mi maleta.  
*we.found in the park A Juan and A my suitcase*

The impossibility of coordinating one *a*-marked object with one that carries no marking is a problem for theories where *a*-marking is interpreted as one way to morphologically codify accusative (§4.1.). In these analyses, the underlying structure and properties of *a*-marked objects would be identical to those without any marking, and the difference would be simply superficial: Spanish has two ways to mark accusative, one with *a* and one without. Rules making reference to animacy or definiteness would determine which marking morphology uses –in a sense of morphology where it only takes care of the choice of exponents, and has nothing to say about the internal syntactic structure of words–. If this was the case, an *a*-marked object should be able to undergo coordination with a non-*a*-marked one, because their structure, semantic interpretation and internal properties should be essentially identical. The fact that this is not the case suggests that the proposal that *a*-marking is one out of two ways of marking accusative is too simplistic.

In relation with this, in languages where DOM has been claimed to be morphological –one out of two possible exponencies of one case–, coordinating one DOM object with a non-DOM one gives grammatical results. Amharic is one such language (Baker 2012).

- (119) liǰ-u-n                      inna wiǰǰa aǰǰə-h<sup>w</sup>  
*child-def-DOM                and dog see-1s*  
 ‘I saw the child and a dog’

Another important aspect of the grammar of *a*-marking and coordination is the interpretative difference between the sentences in (120). In the first one, *a*-marking is shared by both proper names; in the second one, each one carries its own marking. The question is whether there is a meaning difference between the two sentences, and if so which one.

- (120) a. Visité a [Juan y María].  
*I.visited A Juan and María*  
 b. Visité a Juan y a María  
*I.visited A Juan and A María*

Speakers seem to note a difference between (120a) and (120b). Specifically, it seems that whoever says (120a) strongly implies that there was only one visiting event which, at the same time, involved Juan and María. One can imagine (120a) in a situation where Juan and María live in the same house, and by visiting the house one visits both. In contrast (120b) strongly implies that Juan and María were each visited on a different occasion. If this is true, the difference seems to be one between collective vs. distributive interpretations of an event.

The intuition is confirmed by the compatibility of each one of these constructions with collective modifiers, like *juntos*. The double *a*-marking rejects it.

- (121) a. Entrevisté juntos a Juan y María.  
*I.interviewed together A Juan and María*  
 b. ??Entrevisté juntos a Juan y a María.  
*I.interviewed together A Juan and A María*

Conversely, the version with two *a*-markings is more compatible with a modifier that forces a distributive reading. (122a) must be interpreted as involving three separate occasions, in each one of them one of the humans is interviewed. (122b) is ungrammatical in this reading, even though it can still refer to a series of interviews, each one of them involved interviewing the three of them.

- (122) a. Entrevisté, en cada ocasión, a Juan, a Pedro y a María.  
*I.interviewed, in each occasion, A Juan, A Pedro and A María*  
 b. \*Entrevisté, en cada ocasión, a Juan, Pedro y María.  
*I.interviewed, in each occasion, A Juan, Pedro and María*

Now, what this suggests is that whatever property, operation or structure is behind DOM in Spanish necessarily involves some kind of event quantification; otherwise, the fact that the number of DOM objects tells us something about whether the event is unique or not would be unexplained.

This event distribution seems to take place, as well, in the cases in (116), where the second marking is forced by coordination. (116c), for instance, strongly suggests that the terrorist and the bomb were found in different places, and that one single finding event did not discover them together.

This might be one point of contact between DOM and other arguments marked by preposition: with verbs that select a prepositional complement (‘complemento de régimen’ in the traditional terminology) repeating the preposition –as opposed to using only one P for both conjoined arguments– also implies a distributive reading of the predicate. Similarly to the cases that we have just discussed, (123a) implies that there was only one action of talking, involving both Juan and María, and (123b) suggests that there were two events.

- (123) a. Hablé con Juan y María.  
*I.talked with Juan and María*  
 b. Hablé con Juan y con María.  
*I.talked with Juan and with María*

## 2.6. Historical properties

The nature of *a* and the function of DOM are two areas where many studies have made reference to the historical evolution of the construction in Spanish. In this section we will shortly review some of the main topics in the diachronic evolution of DOM.

### 2.6.1. Theories about its origin

Laca (2006) notes how the different theories about the origin of *a*-marking can be correlated with the three main intuitions that she noted in Laca (1995) were behind the different analyses of *a*-marking from a synchronic perspective: (a) to differentiate it from the subject; (b) because of an analogy with dative; (c) in order to mark its topical nature.

Diez (1844), Brauns (1909) and Hills (1920) are among the authors that have argued that *a*-marking is a procedure used to disambiguate the object from the subject in contexts where the object's properties could lead to confusion: when it is animate and / or definite, which are both prototypical subject properties (eg., Keenan 1976). In this sense, *a*-marking would only partially play some of the roles that case marking normally plays, and it would be associated to the fact that Spanish has a relatively free word order, which makes the position of an argument before or after the verb unreliable to determine whether it is object or subject. The language that is immediately contrasted to Spanish in these studies (when they restrict themselves to Romance languages) is generally French, where subjects cannot be postverbal with the same freedom as in Spanish, and at the same time does not have DOM. It is however easy to find counterexamples to the generalisation that free word order, or specifically the general availability of postverbal subjects, correlates with DOM. In more recent times, Joly (1971) stated a version of this proposal following a Guillaumian view of grammar.

Meyer-Lübke (1906) argued that *a*-marking is due to an analogy with dative. In the evolution of the case system from Latin to Spanish, dative became syncretic with accusative in a number of cases: for instance, in the unstressed pronominal system of first and second person. The forms in (124) were ambiguous between dative and accusative at an early stage (cf. Meier 1948, Lapesa 1964).

- (124) a. me  
           *me.acc/dat*  
       b. te  
           *you.acc/dat*  
       c. nos  
           *us.acc/dat*  
       d. os  
           *you.acc/dat*

Either triggered by this syncretism, or triggered by the same cause that produced it, the identification between dative and accusative extends to stressed pronouns, via forms like (125), which is general already in Latin documents of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century.

- (125) ad mihi  
       *A me.dat*

Lapesa (1964) argues that the confusion might have been strengthened by the existence of some verbs –like *auxiliari* ‘help’ and *servire* ‘serve’– which moved from introducing a complement in dative to introducing one in accusative.

Meyer-Lübke argued that the reason why *a*-marking only extended to some direct objects is that the analogy was established specifically with the dative of interest, which for obvious reasons is prototypically associated to animates. Given this, *a*-marking should be an innovation that would first affect animates (and especially, personal pronouns and human proper names, as they are high in an animacy scale), because those could be conceptualised as having some ‘interest’ (a notion not very far from ‘affectedness’) in the event. Isenberg (1968), Schrotten (1972) and Vega (1980) are among those that have developed this idea, in one form or another.

Nicolescu (1959) and Rohlfs (1971) are singled out in Laca (2006) as proponents of the idea that *a*-marking comes in tandem with topicalisation as procedures that are



translation]. They give the examples in (128) as an illustration and claim that (129) is a Gallicism.

- (128) a. He visto a Cádiz.  
*I.have seen A Cádiz*  
 b. Deseo ver a Roma.  
*I.want to.see A Rome*  
 c. He visto La Coruña.  
*I.have seen La Coruña*
- (129) Deje Valencia.  
*I.left Valencia*

Pensado (1995) believes that the origin of this somewhat bizarre prescriptive judgement is the belief that *a*-marking was essentially a procedure to individuate direct objects. Proper names that already carried a definite article would be considered individuated already, making *a*-marking redundant.

Be it as it may, in contemporary Spanish –as far as we know, in all varieties– sentences like (128a) would be interpreted as personification: we saw someone called Cádiz or the people in a company that is located in Cádiz, etc.

Perhaps as a result of this prescriptive judgement, toponyms with *a*-marking are attested in literary language (as RAE & ASALE note) until quite recently. (130) is found in a text by Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921), and it clearly refers to the city, not any person.

- (130) aunque haya visitado a París  
*although I.have visited A Paris*

### 3. Grammatical consequences of DOM

After having reviewed the different properties that trigger DOM in Spanish, in this section we will explore a number of independent phenomena that have been claimed to correlate with DOM to some degree.

#### 3.1. Availability of the so-called *se*-passives

In relation to the description of the use of passive sentences involving *se* –which, without presupposing any analysis and for purely descriptive reasons, we will call *se*-passives–, there is a well-known note by Cuervo (1883: note 106) to Bello’s (1847) grammar, where it is noted that *se*-passives were historically used mainly with constructions whose internal argument was non-animate. Cuervo notes that in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, sentences like (131) could be occasionally documented, but little by little they were rejected.

- (131) se mataban los cristianos  
*SE killed the Christians*  
 ‘Christians were killed’ or ‘Christians killed each other’

As the translation shows, during that period this sentence was ambiguous between a passive meaning (first translation) or a reciprocal meaning (second translation). Across history, however, the first meaning has been lost and nowadays the only meaning that native speakers can assign to (131) is a reciprocal one.

Se-passives reject in general animate internal arguments; even if (132b) can be a passive version of (132a), (133b) cannot be the passive version of (133a), and has to be interpreted along the lines of a reciprocal construction.

- (132) a. Alguien guardó las bombas.  
*someone locked.up the bombs*  
 ‘Someone locked the bombs up’  
 b. Se guardaron las bombas.  
*SE they.locked.up the bombs*  
 ‘The bombs were locked up’
- (133) a. Alguien encerró a los soldados.  
*someone locked.up A the soldiers*  
 ‘Someone locked the soldiers up’  
 b. Se encerraron los soldados.  
*SE they.locked.up the soldiers*  
 ‘The soldiers locked each other up’

We can, therefore, ask what is wrong with the passive interpretation of (133b). The standard story, which is also suggested in Bello’s (1847: §769), is that what is wrong with the construction is that the direct object in the active version is animate. The suggestion is sometimes functional: being animate, an ambiguity arises. One can expect that once it agrees with the verb –in the passive construction– it is also interpreted as the agent of the event, and at that point the sentence can be interpreted as a reflexive / reciprocal or as a passive. The construction was lost, given this interpretation, because the ambiguity was avoided.

Even if the explanation is not functional, we can wonder if it is really animacy that blocks the passive reading of (133b), because the obvious alternative is that DOM is responsible for the contrast. Data like (134) suggest that this cannot be the whole story, as an animate argument can be successfully interpreted as the subject of a se-passive.

- (134) Se venden niños.  
*SE they.sell children*  
 ‘Children are sold’

The existence of data like this suggests a second explanation: se-passives are not rejected by constructions with an animate direct object, but by those that have an *a*-marked direct object. The two sets overlap in most cases, but they are not identical.

The object in (134), however, appears as a bare noun, and one has to be aware of the possibility that once interpreted as non-referential, nouns lose their animacy and for all relevant properties, *niños* does not count as animate in (134). How can we, then, decide between the theory that blames animacy and the theory that blames DOM?

Remember from §2.3 that there is a class of verbs which imposes the condition that the direct object, even when non-animate, must be *a*-marked. We can test the predictions of these theories through these verbs: if animacy is what blocks se-passive, then these verbs should accept a se-passive; if it is DOM, these verbs should reject it, surprisingly from the perspective of the Bello-Cuervo story. Consider (135b), from (135a).

- (135) a. En inglés, los verbos siguen a los sujetos.  
*In English, the verbs follow A the subjects*  
 ‘In English, the verb follows the subject’  
 b. \*En inglés, se siguen los sujetos (por los verbos).  
*in English, SE they follow the subjects (by the verbs)*  
 Intended: ‘In English, subjects are followed by verbs’

(135b) is strongly ungrammatical. One could think that what is wrong with the *se*-passive is that these verbs, as we said, are stative. However, *se*-passive has no problem in applying to stative verbs.

- (136) a. Juan tiene agallas.  
*Juan has guts*  
 ‘Juan is brave’  
 b. Cuando se tienen agallas...  
*when SE they have guts*  
 Lit: ‘When guts are had...’

The conclusion seems to be, then, that what makes a *se*-passive wrong is *a*-marking in the direct object, not its animacy.

What explains this? In some analysis DOM is the manifestation of heads that are above the DP, and as such having DOM involves building more structure over the DP (Torrego 1998): the impossibility of having a passive might then be related to the impossibility of extracting the DP from within that structure, or the structure makes it inaccessible to agreement. Another option is to say that DOM involves a special kind of case assignment that, unlike abstract accusative, remains in the passive form and makes the argument unavailable as a subject. In other proposals, however, the difference between DOM and not DOM is merely positional (eg., Zdrojewski 2013), and for those approaches explaining this pattern is a challenge.

### 3.2. DOM and word order in causative constructions

In §2.4.3 we saw that causative constructions are one of the contexts where *a*-marking can be triggered even in the absence of other conditions. What has been noted less frequently is that the position of the DOM argument within the construction shows some tendencies. Again, the pattern of data is not crystal-clear for every speaker, and there seem to be variation, geographical or otherwise (see for instance Torrego 2010 for an analysis where the position of the causee is not identical to what is described here).

First, many speakers notice a contrast in acceptability between the two sentences in (137).

- (137) a. \*Hicieron el árbol perder las hojas.  
*they.made the tree lose the leaves*  
 b. Hicieron al árbol perder las hojas.  
*they.made A the tree lose the leaves*

That is: the position between the infinitive and the causative verb is restricted, for these speakers, to *a*-marked direct objects. Note that the same speakers do not report any personification effects in (137b). The relation between the position and *a*-marking

can be potentially related to two phenomena that we have already discussed: topicalisation and / or the presence of subject-to-object movement.

However, again, the situation cannot be so simple, because the preinfinitival position is not restricted to *a*-marked objects with other (apparently similar) constructions. With verbs of allowance and perception (138), the same speakers that rejected (137a) allow a non-*a*-marked direct object between the two verbs.

- (138) a. Dejó la olla hervir un rato.  
           *he.allowed the pot boil a while*  
 b. Vio las hojas caer.  
           *she.saw the leaves fall*

Ormazabal & Romero (to appear) note a perhaps related pattern. It has to do with a position that certain *a*-marked direct objects cannot occupy, and it affects precisely the opposite set of verbs. With verbs of allowance and perception, an *a*-marked direct object is not possible after the infinitive.

- (139) a. ??Dejó caer a la economía española.  
           *he.allowed to.fall A the economy Spanish*  
 b. ??Vio aterrizar al avión.  
           *he.saw land A the plane*

This restriction does not apply to animate *a*-marked direct objects.

- (140) a. Dejó dormir a su hijo.  
           *he.allowed to.sleep A his son*  
 b. Vio caer a su hijo.  
           *he.saw fall A his son*

### 3.3. *Leísmo*

*Leísmo*, although it is usually defined in the same way, refers to a set of systems which are distinct from each other. In a simple version, *leísmo* is known as the extension of the clitic *le* to situations where etymologically one would expect the clitics *lo* or *la*.

There has always been the intuition among researchers that *leísmo* can be related to *a*-marking, especially among those that have argued that *a*-marking is essentially extension of a dative marking. The reason is that, in etymological systems that followed more or less closely the case distribution inherited from Latin, *le* is the dative form, while *lo* and *la* would represent the accusative forms of, respectively, masculine and feminine. From this perspective, *leísmo* would go hand in hand with DOM, because both phenomena would correspond to the same process: extension of dative to accusative contexts. Lapesa (1964) was one of the first to state this idea, in his discussion of the historical evolution of the phenomenon.

Ormazabal & Romero (to appear) talk extensively about this issue, and note that Central European Spanish –which is the variety that Lapesa was implicitly talking about– the extension of *a*-marking and *leísmo* are not identical. The reason is that a masculine animate direct object is both *a*-marked and is pronominalised with *le* (141), but a feminine animate direct object is *a*-marked but not pronominalised with *le* (142).

- (141) a. Vi al chico.  
*I.saw A the boy*  
 b. Le vi.  
*him.dat I.saw*
- (142) a. Vi a la chica.  
*I.saw A the girl*  
 b. La vi.  
*her.acc I.saw*

In contrast, the correlation is much more strict in the variety of Spanish spoken in the Basque Country. In this variety, both feminine and masculine animates are pronominalised with *le*, so there is a strict correlation between leísmo and *a*-marking.

- (143) a. Vi el libro.  
*I.saw the book*  
 b. Lo vi.  
*it.acc I.saw*
- (144) a. Vi a {l chico / la chica}  
*I.saw A the boy / the girl*  
 b. Le vi.  
*him/her.dat I.saw*

More specifically, Ormazabal and Romero take this connection as a sign that *a*-marked objects are in actuality datives. Just in the same way that datives allow for clitic doubling otherwise (145), an *a*-marked object can be doubled by a clitic even when the direct object is non-referential (146). In contrast, non-*a*-marked objects reject the doubling with *le* (147).

- (145) No le han dado un sobresaliente a ningún estudiante.  
*not him.dat have given an A to no student*
- (146) a. A ningún estudiante le han visto en la universidad.  
*A any student him.dat have seen in the university*  
 b. No le han visto a ningún estudiante en la universidad.  
*not him.dat have seen A no student in the university*  
 [apud Ormazabal & Romero to appear: (23)]
- (147) a. \*Ningún libro lo han visto.  
*no book it.acc have seen*  
 b. \*No lo han visto ningún libro.  
*not it.acc have seen no book*

As Ormazabal and Romero note, this pattern is evidence that leísmo in this variety cannot be solved morphologically (as suggested for instance in Fernández-Ordóñez 1999), as a syncretism between etymologically dative and accusative clitics. It is not just the exponent that is identical, but also the syntactic behaviour of the forms.

Leísta varieties of Central European Spanish reject that doubling when *le* corresponds to a direct object (148). This shows that in this variety, at least for these examples, leísmo is not due to the object being dative, but is more plausibly analysable as a case of morphological syncretism.

- (148) a. \*A ningún estudiante le han visto en la universidad.  
*A any student him.dat have seen in the university*  
 b. \*No le han visto a ningún estudiante en la universidad.  
*not him.dat have seen A no student in the university*

Ormazabal & Romero propose an analysis that is tightly linked to their proposal about the existence of two classes of clitic pronouns. In their view, in Basque Spanish *le* is always an exponent of object agreement with the verb. When it appears, it means that the object verb agreement has been satisfied by the *a*-marked argument. As opposed to Central European Spanish –where at least there is an instance of *le* which is not a case of agreement– in Basque Spanish any clitics that does not show a difference in gender marking is an exponent of object agreement. This makes the series in (149) all compete for the same position in Basque Spanish: object agreement.

- (149) me    te    se    le            nos    os  
*me    you    SE    him/her        us    you*

In contrast, *lo* and *la* –in all varieties considered– are not exponents of object agreement, but real pronouns that therefore do not compete with the elements in (149).

Object agreement, in their view, does not differentiate between direct and indirect objects. Apparently, in Basque Spanish, only *a*-marked objects can enter into object agreement.

This proposal tightly relates leísmo with *a*-marking in Basque Spanish: unless the object is *a*-marked, agreement is impossible. There are several predictions that are confirmed by the data.

One is that leísmo will be impossible if there is another clitic from the series of (149), because they are all exponents of the same agreement and two arguments will not be able to agree at the same time if their features are distinct. (150) is impossible in Basque Spanish; similarly, (151) is ungrammatical, because the *a*-marked object would like to agree and there is already some other argument agreeing with the verb, as witnessed by the clitic.

- (150) \*Te le llevé a casa.  
*you him I.carried to house*  
 (151) \*Le llevé al niño a la doctora.  
*her I.carried A the child to the doctor*

The strategy used in this variety to solve the problem is ultimately the same for both cases: *a*-marking and leísmo disappear.

- (152) a. Te lo llevé a casa.  
*you him I.carried to house*  
 b. Le llevé el niño a la doctora.  
*her I.carried the child to the doctor*

What this strategy does is to avoid that the direct object agrees with the verb, leaving room for a second person pro (152a) or an *a*-marked dative (152b) to agree.

Note that in Central European Spanish the proposal is that *le* is ambiguous between two analyses. Ormazabal & Romero treat leísmo in this variety as a morphological

property: some pronominal clitics that in other varieties correspond to *lo* are spelled out by the exponent *le*, but the properties of those clitics –and the corresponding *a*-marked object– are not those expected from a real dative. In other words: in this variety there would be two *le*: one which is real object agreement, that would appear with datives and other constructions where clitic doubling is possible, and another one which is a pronoun and would be generated in the same position as some *a*-marked direct objects, when they are masculine.

Still talking about Central European Spanish, it is interesting to look a bit deeper into the question of whether *leísmo* correlates with *a*-marking or not. The general description of Central European *leísmo* in grammars is that *leísmo* is more extended when the direct object is human (*‘leísmo de persona’*). This is reflected by the fact that the number of speakers that accept (153a) is higher than those that accept (153b), where the direct object is a non-animate entity.

- (153) a. Le       maté.  
          *him.acc I.killed*  
      b. Le     leí.  
          *it.acc I.read*

This would suggest that *leísmo* is related for most speakers to animacy rather than to *a*-marking, to the extent that at the same time those speakers would not use *le* with an *a*-marked animate feminine. For those that accept both sentences in (153), *leísmo* would be related to masculine gender assignment. Now, the complication comes from the existence of the following patterns, with *a*-marked non-animates, which some speakers that reject (153b) also accept.

- (154) a. El sujeto precede al predicado.  
          *the subject precedes A the predicate*  
      b. El sujeto le precede.  
          *the subject it.dat precedes*  
(155) a. El sustantivo sigue a la preposición.  
          *the noun       follows A the preposition*  
      b. El sustantivo le sigue.  
          *the noun it.dat follows*

What we see here is that for these speakers there is a divide between animate and non-animate *a*-marked direct objects. In animate objects, *leísmo* seems to be associated with gender, but in *a*-marked non-animates *leísmo* works slightly closer to the Basque pattern to the extent that gender differences are not reflected. What makes these examples different from (153b) is that this second group, accepted even by speakers that otherwise reject *leísmo* with non-animates, is *a*-marked. Thus the correlation between *a*-marking and *leísmo* could still be quite powerful in this variety, once animates are left aside.

### 3.4. Accusative clitic doubling

We have just seen a few aspects of clitic doubling with datives and its correlation with *a*-marking. Dative clitic doubling is, however, not the only one that is documented across varieties of Spanish, as there are (geographically and contextually restricted) instances of accusative clitic doubling. It is in principle tempting to correlate these instances with *a*-marking, and that because of two reasons.

The first is that one of the two contexts where accusative clitic doubling is compulsory in all varieties is one where *a*-marking is also compulsory: with personal pronouns (156).

- (156) \*(Lo) vi \*(a) él.  
*him.acc I.saw A him*

The second is that the other context where accusative clitic doubling is accepted is when the direct object is left-dislocated, and associated with topicalisation. We have already seen in several sections that topicalisation is more or less strongly correlated by *a*-marking since early stages of Spanish.

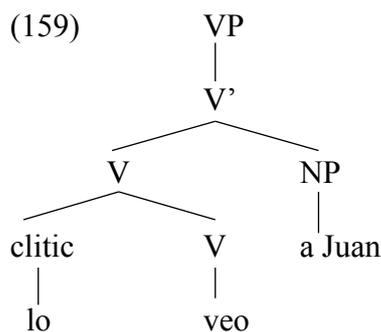
- (157) A Juana ??(la) vi.  
*A Juana her.acc I.saw*

Given this situation, it is tempting to associate accusative clitic doubling to *a*-marking in those varieties of Spanish where this is possible beyond the contexts in (156) and (157). This is what Jaeggli (1982, 1986) does, using data from River Plate Spanish, where (158) is possible.

- (158) Lo vimos a Juan.  
*him.acc we.saw A Juan*

After showing that the *a*-marked object is in an argument position, he asks himself why this sequence is possible, and more specifically how it is possible that accusative case is, apparently, assigned twice. Why does the clitic, which is in an accusative form, not block case to the DP object? His proposal closely links the presence of *a* with clitic doubling.

He proposes that the structure of (158) is (159): the clitic is base generated as a sister to the V head, and the direct object is placed in the complement position (Jaeggli 1986: 18).



From that position, the clitic absorbs the accusative case of the verb. Here is where *a*-marking becomes relevant: *a* acts as a ‘case transmitter’, which assigns accusative case to the NP object. More technically, what is crucial for Jaeggli is both that the verb discharges its case feature and that all nominal arguments get some case. There must be a matching relation between those cases, and *a* makes it possible. In (159) there are three such matching relations: the clitic and the verb, the verb and the *a*-marker and the *a*-marker and the NP object.

The prediction that Jaeggli would make is that clitic doubling is only possible when the object is *a*-marked. If there is no *a*-marking, then the verb's accusative case is not transmitted to the NP, and the structure would be ungrammatical. That is ultimately what would make (160) ungrammatical in his theory.

- (160) \*Lo vi Juan.  
*him.acc I.saw Juan*

Taken literally, it seems that Jaeggli would expect non-*a*-marked direct objects to be incompatible with clitic doubling in any variety. To be fair, he never says this in its 1986 article, but it would seem that it follows from the shape of his analysis, unless additional provisos are made, and he does explicitly state this in his 1982 article, where he calls the principle 'Kayne's generalization'. Some subsequent work on accusative clitic doubling has shown, however, that the correlation is not perfect.

For instance, Sánchez (2005) studies clitic-doubling in Peruvian Spanish and argues that more important than *a*-marking is the fact that the doubled object has to be interpreted with wide scope, which suggests to her that a VP-internal topic interpretation has to be assigned to the DP. Provided this principle is met, there are cases where doubling happens with non-*a*-marked direct objects (161). In (161), with doubling, the only reading available is one where there is only one picture of the two children –that is, we cannot have two pictures, one for each child–.

- (161) La vi la foto de los dos niños.  
*it.acc I.saw the picture of the two children*  
 'I saw the picture of the two children'

Suñer (1988) shows some data from River Plate Spanish that do not support Kayne's generalization either.

- (162) ¿Así que el tarambana de Octavio la liquidó su fortuna?  
*so that the empty-headed of Octavio it.acc squandered his fortune?*  
 'So the empty-headed Octavio squandered his fortune?'

Now, Suñer's analysis of these constructions has been contested, suggesting that Jaeggli's analysis of the data might be correct, at least for River Plate Spanish. Specifically, Zdrojewski (2008) has argued that sentences like (162) are cases of clitic right dislocation, and therefore a different structure from the one underlying (158) should be assigned to them –as far as we know, Sánchez' data have not been directly contested, although they might be amenable to a similar analysis–.

The complications to Kayne's generalisation come, for other authors, from opposite cases where even though the direct object is *a*-marked clitic doubling is impossible. These are the cases that Saab & Zdrojewski (2012) study (163).

- (163) \*Juan lo vio a un tigre.  
*Juan it.acc saw A a tiger*

The generalisation should be, then, that in River Plate Spanish accusative clitic doubling requires *a*-marking, but that *a*-marking in itself is not enough to license clitic doubling. In addition to it, other discourse factors should be considered, much in the line of what Sánchez has identified for Peruvian Spanish. As far as we understand

it, it is still an open issue whether Peruvian Spanish complies with the generalisation as well.

### 3.5. Subextraction

*A*-marked objects are also special because they make subextraction more difficult than their non-*a*-marked versions. The observation is presented in Torrego as follows (1998: 38).

- (164) a. el chico del que conozco varias hermanas  
           *the boy of-whom that I.know several sisters*  
       b. ?el chico del que conozco a varias hermanas  
           *the boy of-whom that I.know A several sisters*

Obviously, the data are difficult to assess in many cases, both because of the variation that permeates everything having to do with DOM and because of the general difficulty, for many speakers, to evaluate subextractions from DPs. However, many speakers seem to accept the contrast as it is presented in Torrego.

Furthermore, Torrego notes that subextraction is even worse with those verbs where DOM is compulsory with animate objects, independently of specificity. In this sense, (165a) –with a verb where DOM is sensitive to specificity– is better than (165b), one of the verbs that require DOM.

- (165) a. ?el chico del que encontramos a varias hermanas  
           *the boy of-whom that we.found A several sisters*  
       b. \*el chico del que insultamos a varias hermanas  
           *the boy of-whom that we.insulted A several sisters*

The influence of these data for analyses of DOM has been quite significant. One potential intuition that we perhaps have to discard –given the data that follow, in (166)– is that the subextraction is more difficult with *a*-marked objects because they tend to be topics, and their topical nature is somehow against the focal nature of the interrogative –and the intended answer–. If this were the case, in addition to not having an explanation of the contrast between *encontrar*-type verbs and *insultar*-type verbs, we would expect extraction from *alguien* ‘someone’ to be better, counterfactually.

- (166) a. Vimos a alguien del rectorado.  
           *we.saw A someone of-the rectorate*  
       b. ??¿de dónde vimos a alguien?  
           *of where we.saw A someone*

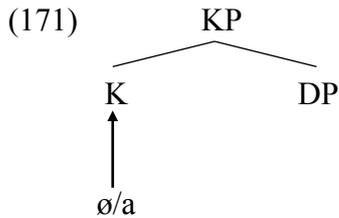
The intuitions that have been advanced in published work have to do with one of the following three options, or the combination of some of them: (a) *a*-marking builds another layer over the direct object, forcing the interrogative to stop there or blocking the extraction; (b) *a*-marking is, especially with the *insultar*-type verbs, a manifestation of inherent case, and inherent case blocks extraction (Chomsky 1986) or (c) the position occupied by the *a*-marked direct object is a specifier-one, and specifiers tend to be islands for extraction (see Uriagereka 1999 for a review).

However, not all authors agree with this basic pattern of judgement. At least with some verbs, *a*-marking can be associated to a higher degree of subextractability.



with coordination, clitic doubling and *léismo* (in some varieties), and the reading of quantifiers imply that a treatment where Spanish DOM is just a way to mark accusative and no further syntactic differences are expected between DOM and non-DOM objects is too simplistic.

However, combined with syntactic differences, the idea that ultimately DOM is one of two ways of mark a case that can also be spelled out as zero is present in a number of approaches. Perhaps the most explicit of them is López (2012), who proposes that *a*-marking is one possible spell out of a head K (case) which dominates DP.



As we will see later, KP is necessary when the direct object gets a specific reading. More specifically, López (2012) treats indefinite DPs as predicates, and therefore as having type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  in semantics. The role of K is to lift the DP to an  $\langle e \rangle$  type, which makes it an eligible variable for choice functions (Reinhart 1997), which placed at the right level of the structure will trigger specific readings (we will see the details later). Thus, K is necessary for specific readings.

As we have seen, specific nouns can be *a*-marked or not in a variety of cases, and perhaps most clearly in animate / non-animate pairs.

- (172) a. Busco a cierto chico.  
*I.search A certain boy*  
 b. Busco cierto libro.  
*I.search certain book*

Given this, the inescapable conclusion has to be that K allows two exponents, which superficially trigger *a*-marking and absence thereof. López (2012: 59-64) makes a particular proposal about how the insertion rule would work. As in the rest of the literature,  $\emptyset$ -materialisation is considered default, and rules that introduce *a*-marking have to make explicit reference to properties of the selected DP (eg., when it is a pronoun) and the noun it contains (eg., given animacy), but also reference can be made to verbal context –telicity, whether the verb is stative, perhaps even to specific exponents for the verb, etc.–, in order to capture some of the contrasts that we have seen in §2.2 and §2.3. As López puts it, the question is how local the context relevant for *a*-marking has to be: it seems necessary to refer to the DP selected by K and to the immediate verbal environment where KP is placed, but in Spanish no reference has to be made to higher-order sentential heads, like grammatical aspect, tense, mood or clause type.

The fact that no reference is made to these notions –and note that some of them could be easily related to individuation or reference– constitutes evidence against accounts of DOM based on the global cognitive construal of the sentence (§4.4).

To the best of our knowledge, one modern account where DOM is literally taken to be just a difference in case marking, without expecting other distinctions in syntax, is Aissen (2003). Part of the goals of her work are outside the boundaries of this article,

as she sets as her main goal a cross-linguistic comparison of different systems of DOM; we will therefore not be able to make justice to some of the merits of this work.

Aissen proposes that DOM emerges as a result of the conflict between iconicity and economy. For her, *a*-marking is used in cases that for whatever reason are not typical direct objects. DOM would, then, be a way to overtly mark through increased morphophonological complexity a situation that is semantically exceptional. The opposite force is economy, which in general penalises an overt value –to the extent that overtness is associated to building more structure in at least one level of the grammar–. Her proposal is framed in the Optimality Theory tradition, so she codifies these two forces as violable constraints:

- (173) a. \* $\emptyset_C$  Penalises the absence of a value for the feature CASE.  
 b. \*STRUC<sub>C</sub> Penalises a value for the morphological category CASE

These two constraints ultimately determine which direct objects will be marked by *a*. In order to do so, Aissen conjoins the first constraint with a family of constraints whose job is to codify how prototypical it is for some semantic properties and grammatical categories to be in the direct object position. We provide here only some examples.

- (174) a. \*Subject / Inanimate  
 b. \*Object / Human  
 c. \*Object / Pronoun  
 d. \*Subject / non-specific

The result are conjoined constraints like the following:

- (175) a. \* $\emptyset_C$  & \*Subject / Inanimate  
 b. \* $\emptyset_C$  & \*Object / Pronoun

What these constraints express is that there is a violation of the constraint if both conjoints are violated. In other words, if there is an inanimate subject, to prevent a violation of the constraint one has to mark its case in some way. Following common practice in Optimality Theory, the specific surface patterns that are obtained depend on how high each one of the constraints is ranked within a hierarchy. A language that never marks its direct object is a language where the economy constraint \*STRUC<sub>C</sub> is undominated by the conjoined constraints (176a); a language that only marks case in a direct object pronoun is a language where \* $\emptyset_C$  & \*Object / Pronoun dominates the economy constraint, which in turn dominates all the other relevant conjoined constraints (176b), etc.

- (176) a. \*STRUC<sub>C</sub> >> \* $\emptyset_C$  & \*Object / Pronoun  
 b. \* $\emptyset_C$  & \*Object / Pronoun >> \*STRUC<sub>C</sub>

As the reader will have noticed by now, this places Aissen in the tradition that considers that the main role of DOM is to differentiate the object in situations where, for one reason or the other, one of the two functions is not performed by a prototypical entity.

In addition to the problems associated to treating DOM as a morphological marking phenomenon, it is not clear how the use of these constraints could explain some specific patterns in Spanish –note, however, that Aissen’s goal was not to study Spanish, but to compare different DOM systems which had different sensitivity to animacy and definiteness–. One problem are stative verbs like *preceder* ‘precede’, which are DOM verbs. They could in principle be covered by a constraint like (177) being ranked quite high in the hierarchy, stating that subjects that are not animate are non-prototypical and thus trigger DOM.

(177) \* $\emptyset$ C & \*Subject / Inanimate

However, the same constraint would predict that (178) should be better than (179), which is not true (§2.3.1).

(178) \*La situación demanda a un médico.  
*the situation asks.for A a doctor*

(179) ?El paciente demanda a un médico.  
*the patient asks.for A a doctor*

Similarly, the fact that *nadie* –human and non-specific– is compulsorily *a*-marked with almost every verb could be captured by (180) being above the economy principle.

(180) \* $\emptyset$ C & \*Object / Human

But the ranking of that constraint, which makes no reference to specificity, would predict that (181) should be good.

(181) \*Vimos a estudiantes.  
*we.saw A students*

It seems that any ranking that forces *a*-marking with *nadie* would force *a*-marking with a bare noun, and similarly that any ranking that forces *a*-marking with *preceder* would force *a*-marking with a stative construal of a verb like *demandar* in (179), unless specific reference is done in the constraint to the specific lexical items involved. That is, we would need constraints like (182), ranked higher than the economy constraint, at the same time as the other conjoined constraints, which would be ranked lower than economy.

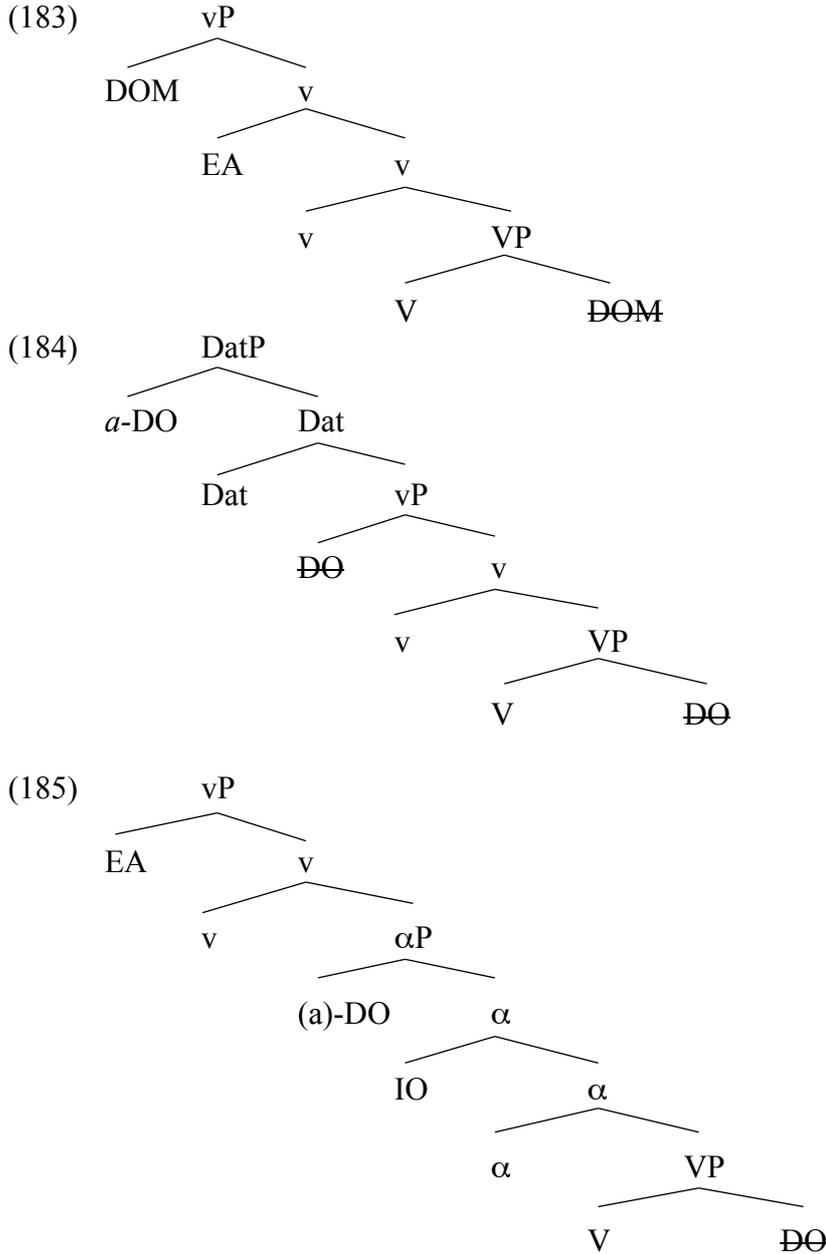
(182) a. \* $\emptyset$ C & \**nadie* >> \*STRUC<sub>C</sub> >> \* $\emptyset$ C & \*Object / non-specific  
b. \* $\emptyset$ C & \*Object of *preceder* >> \*STRUC<sub>C</sub> >> \* $\emptyset$ C & \*Subject / non-animate

Increasingly specific constraints would be necessary to express the fact that *nadie* does not take *a*-marking with *hay*, and many other of the patterns that we reviewed in §2.2 and §2.3. Obviously, as the constraints increase in number and include more lexical information, the proposal becomes less attractive.

4.2. *Possitional distinctions*

A substantial amount of the work done in DOM in the last 20 years assigns a different syntactic position to (at least some) *a*-marked direct objects, with respect to (most) non-*a*-marked ones. Specifically, this is clear in three recent accounts: Torrego (1998), Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007) and López (2012).

What they have in common is that *a*-marking is associated to a special configuration, but –as usual– the devil is in the details. Torrego (1998: 46) argues for the structure in (183); Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007: 169), for the one in (184); López (2012: 40), for the one in (185).



Two differences here are obvious: (i) the position where the DOM object moves first; (ii) the nature of the projection. In addition to this, there is a third point of difference that is not obvious in the previous trees: (iii) whether *a*-marking is associated to a syntactic layer or not. In Torrego, *a*-marking is itself a head which carries nominal properties; in Rodríguez Mondoñedo, *a*-marking is not present

syntactically and simply reflects case assignment at the morphophonological level; López associates *a*-marking with a specific head, K, which selects the direct object, but ultimately uses spell out rules to determine if K is spelled out as *a* or not.

With respect to the first parameter, Torrego places a DOM object as the second specifier of a vP projection, which for her also introduces the external argument (following Chomsky 2000). López explicitly argues that DOM objects are lower than external arguments, specifically of a lower head that is intermediate between vP and VP (Koizumi 1995). Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007) is not explicit in his representation with respect to the position of the external argument.

López (2012: 43) offers the following piece of evidence in favour of his representation, where the DOM object does not c-command the EA (contra Torrego). In (186), the possessive cannot get a bound reading triggered by the negative item within the direct object. (186) is grammatical only if we say that the father of someone in particular did not attack any child. López assumes that post-verbal subjects remain in situ in Spanish (ie., they do not move to TP).

- (186) \*Ayer no atacó su<sub>i</sub> propio padre a ningún<sub>i</sub> niño.  
*yesterday not attacked his own father A no child*  
 Intended: ‘Yesterday, his own father did not attach any child’

(187) shows that the EA c-commands the DOM object, as a bound reading is possible there.

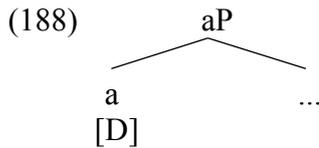
- (187) Ayer no atacó ningún<sub>i</sub> padre a su<sub>i</sub> propio niño.  
*yesterday not attacked no father A his own child*  
 ‘Yesterday, no father attacked his own child’

The nature of the projection is also different in each one of these accounts. Torrego assumes that vP is the locus of (a) the introduction of the external argument; (b) case assignment; (c) the definition of the aspectual properties of the verb. Consequently, movement of an argument to that position would have implications for the three aspects. With respect to the first, this explains for her that with DOM the external argument has to be interpreted as an agent. Being under the same head, she argues that interpreting the EA as agent might be forced in order to respect the prominence of theta roles: in a nutshell, as the internal argument becomes more prominent, the external argument has to be upgraded to agent.

#### 4.2.1. Torrego (1998)

Moreover, in Torrego’s approach –also in Rodríguez Mondoñedo’s– the DOM object escapes from the complement of vP. Following Diesing (1992), who argued that specific readings are always associated to positions above v, Torrego can explain why definite and specific objects tend to carry DOM: the position where they move is a position where they can potentially be interpreted as specific referents, independent individuals in the discourse, etc.

With respect to case, the assumption is that *a*-marking introduces a syntactic layer that carries a D-feature (188), which is in turn attracted by vP; if vP is strong –that is, if it carries the appropriate formal features– attraction triggers case assignment.



Torrego leaves the door open for the possibility that *a*-marking introduces more structure with some verbs than with others, accounting for the subextraction contrasts that we reviewed in §3.5. In any case, it is crucial to note that in her account, *a*-marking is not the result of a spell out rule that applies to case, but is itself a syntactic layer that introduces structure which makes possible a particular kind of case assignment with the verb.

With respect to aspect, the proposal that *vP* defines aspect in the verb makes it possible for Torrego to relate *a*-marking with telicity and eventiveness. It also can establish the basis to analyse why double *a*-marking is related to a distributive reading of the event, as we saw in §2.5.

#### 4.2.2. Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007)

As for Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007), he proposes that *a*-marking is the spell out of dative case assignment. In his system, *vP* is the projection of a head that carries only number features, and he crucially assumes that case is not assigned unless there is checking of all the features of the DP. In contrast, the dative projection also carries person features.

Simplifying things a bit, the contrast between an *a*-marked and a non-*a*-marked direct object is as follows: a non-*a*-marked direct object receives accusative case in the specifier of *vP*. For this, it is crucial that it only carries number features, and therefore this will be the case of non-animates and some non-specifics, which he assumes also lack person features. They will stop in spec, *vP* because there all its features will be checked.

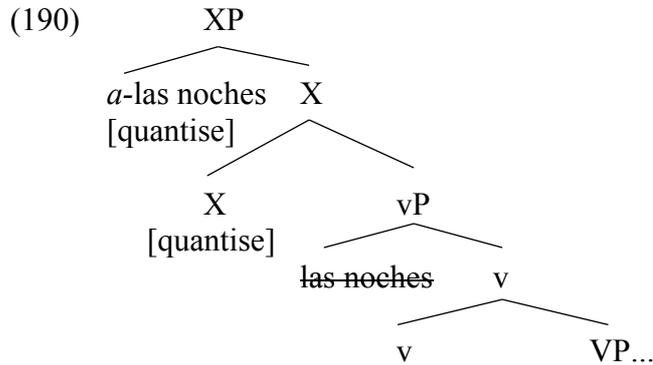
As for personal pronouns, definite animates and, crucially, necessarily human indefinites like *nadie* ‘nobody’, *alguien* ‘somebody’ o *quién* ‘who’, they carry a person feature. When they move to spec, *vP*, they cannot check their case because *v* does not carry a person feature, so they have to continue. In their second movement they arrive to DatP, which has both person and number features. The result is that dative case is assigned to them, and that is spelled out as *a*.

The potential problem for Rodríguez Mondoñedo’s account has to do with verbs like *preceder*, where *a*-marking is mandatory even with non-animates: why do these verbs require *a*-marking if the direct object does not carry a person feature? What Rodríguez Mondoñedo (2007: 174-176) proposes is that these verbs are necessarily quantized: if the object is plural there must be multiple events (that is, we cannot assume one single event involving multiple entities) (189).

- (189) Los días siguen a las noches.  
*the days follow A the nights*  
 ‘Day after day, the day follows the night’

This is represented syntactically as follows: these verbs must have an X head with a [quantise] feature. The nominals they take as direct objects must contain a [quantise] feature. This means that when the quantise object stops in *vP*, case cannot be assigned to it –because *v* does not carry a [quantise] feature–, so it has to continue

to XP, which has all relevant features. The assumption is that this XP assigns dative case.



What this analysis does is to claim that quantisation (not stativity) is the crucial distinction for quasi-minimal pairs like (191).

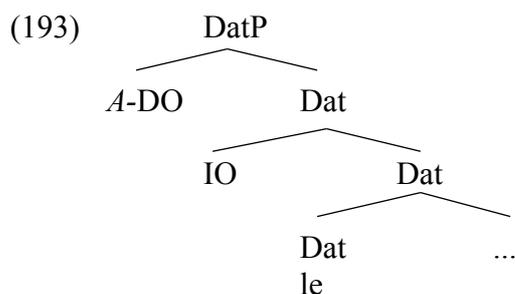
- (191) a. El perro sigue los coches.  
*the dog follows the cars*  
 b. El perro sigue a los coches.  
*the dog follows A the cars*

While in (191a) it is possible to interpret that there is a group of cars, and the dog follows the group in one single event, in (191b) this reading does not seem possible, and we interpret that the dog has a habit, which is manifested in a series of events, each one of them involving following a car.

However, other verbs do not clearly follow Rodríguez Mondoñedo's predictions, which to some extent seem to be restricted to verbs that have information about the spatial organisation of objects (like *rodear* 'surround', *seguir* 'follow', etc.). (192), which contains a stative transitive verb that forces *a*-marking on its inanimate object, is not interpreted as a series of events involving each one of them a different tax, but rather as one single event that substitutes all taxes in one go.

- (192) Esta tasa sustituye a los impuestos anteriores.  
*this fee substitutes A the taxes previous*  
 'This fee substitutes the previous taxes'

The proposal that *a*-marked objects move to DatP gives a straightforward explanation of the difficulty of obtaining double-*a* patterns when indirect objects are present in the structure (§2.4.1). For Rodríguez Mondoñedo, the problem is not case assignment. Given the assumptions made about case, in principle, DatP can check case for the two arguments in a configuration like (193), although the head only reflects one of them.



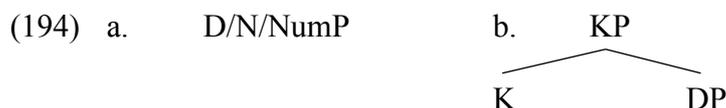
The problem has to do with linearisation. Rodríguez Mondoñedo assumes Richards' Distinctness Condition, which states that two objects headed by the same label cannot appear together in the same domain. If they appeared in the same domain, the linearisation algorithm would find a sequence of two identical elements  $\langle X, X \rangle$ , which would create a paradox, as one label would have to follow and precede itself. Removing *a*-marking from the direct object would, then, be a non-strategy to prevent a problem of linearisation, but it is a strategy that is not available with a number of elements, such as pronouns and proper names. The alternative would be to further move either the DO or the IO outside of the domain occupied by DatP. This would allow both arguments to carry identical labels, and no infraction would take place because they would never have to be linearised with respect to each other.

Some of the details are not very clear, as Distinctness is understood by Richards (see especially 2010, chapter 1) as an interface filter that would take care of the contrasts that had been previously analysed by the Case Filter, and as such it presupposes a definition of case which is at odds with Rodríguez Mondoñedo's general system, where movement of DOM objects is necessary to satisfy case.

#### 4.2.3. López (2012)

As for López (2012), his  $\alpha$ P projection is presented as an integration of Mondoñedo's Dative Phrase and Torrego's aspectual-defining head. He suggests that the phrase could be seen as an applicative structure of sorts which is used to partially define the aspectual structure of the verb; with this, he can explain at the same time (a) the correlation between *a*-marking, aspect and distributive event readings; (b) the correlation with dative marking and potentially the interaction with overtly *a*-marked datives; (c) potentially as well, on the plausible assumption that  $\alpha$ P is only present or only fully active when *v* is strong, the correlations with argument structure.

For López, there are underlyingly two classes of direct objects (194): objects no more complex than DPs and DPs selected by a head K.



Only the second class can become an *a*-marked object.

The semantic interpretation of each one of these objects is different. non-*a*-marked objects are predicates, with type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , and they do not combine with the verb through function application or saturation, but through coordination whose effect is to restrict the verbal predicate (Chung & Ladusaw 2004), followed by existential closure. Thus, when a non-*a*-marked object combines with a verb, as in (195), we obtain a formula

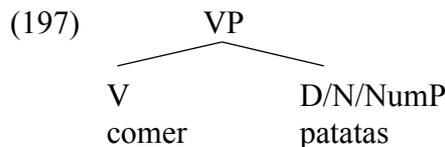
like (195b) –we only considered the relevant part, which is the VP–. Given that these objects are not  $\langle e \rangle$ , they must necessarily be interpreted as non-specifics.

- (195) a. come patatas  
*eat potatoes*  
 b.  $\lambda e \exists x[\text{eat}'(x)(e) \ \& \ \text{potatoes}'(x)]$

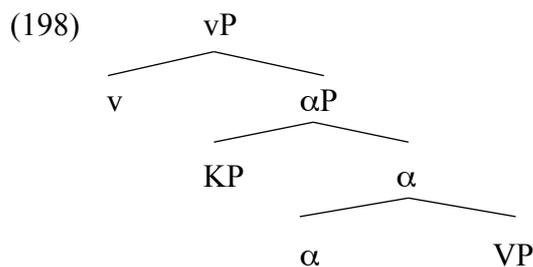
K is viewed as a semantic function that takes an object of type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  and yields  $\langle e \rangle$ , thus, an individual and not a predicate. It composes with the predicate through normal function application (196).

- (196) a. comer a un misionero  
*eat A a missionary*  
 b.  $\lambda e[\text{eat}'(e)(\text{a missionary}')] ]$

Restriction is only possible in one syntactic position: complement of VP (following ideas by Carlson 2003, who argued that as VP denotes an eventuality any object that combines with it must denote a predicate). This bans KP, whose type is not  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , from being interpretable in that position. Once an  $\langle e, t \rangle$  (necessarily non-*a*-marked) direct object is in the configuration (197), it can incorporate in order to satisfy its case –by having a copy in V, when V raises to v, it will receive case from v–.



KP has to find another way to check its case with vP, as it cannot remain in the domain of VP because it does not have the right semantic type; possibly, also because K blocks incorporation. The way to get case from vP is to merge in spec,  $\alpha P$ , a position which is locally selected by vP.



Note that both animate and non-animate objects would be in this position, and not all of them would be *a*-marked. *A*-marking, then, presupposes being in spec,  $\alpha P$ , but that position does not immediately manifest as *a*-marking. *A*-marking is due to spell out rules that make reference to the immediate context of KP in (198):

- (i) properties of the DP it combines with
- (ii) properties of the NP contained within the DP
- (iii) aspectual properties of the verb, as defined by  $\alpha$

- (iv) thematic properties of the verb, as defined by  $v$  or by  $\alpha$  and  $v$  together

DOM would be introduced, for instance, in  $K$  in the contexts defined in (199).

- (199) a. [ $\alpha$ P [KP    ]  $\alpha$  <sub>[telic]</sub>]  
 b. [KP     [NP <sub>[animate]</sub>]]

On the standard assumption that  $v$ P defines a domain, the account correctly predicts that the insertion rule could not make reference to objects outside the verbal domain, such as tense or aspect.

In the same way that this position does not imply *a*-marking, but makes it possible, it makes possible specific readings, but it doesn't force them. Note that in what follows López parts ways with a strictly positional account of specificity, as Diesing's (1992).

KP licenses the direct object as a possible variable under the scope of a choice function CH. Choice functions (Reinhart 1997) are existentially bound functions that modify the scope of the variable they take without movement. One of its uses in linguistic theory has been to explain why existential quantifiers can get specific readings even when they are within an island, like a conditional clause. In (200) the specific reading of the direct object –'there is a specific student that, if we see him here, we will make a report'– cannot be obtained through quantifier movement, on the assumption that conditional clauses constitute a barrier to movement.

- (200) If we find a student here, we will make a report.

Instead, Reinhart proposed that the specific reading is obtained if *a student* is combined with a choice function, that is then existentially closed above the conditional operator (201).

- (201)  $\exists f$  [CH( $f$ ) & [we find  $f$ (student)  $\rightarrow$  we will make a report]]

If KP makes the nominal object something that can be under the scope of a choice function, then *a*-marking is necessary for specific readings because *a*-marking is a materialisation of  $K$  and without  $K$  the object has type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ .

But simultaneously, *a*-marking is expected to be compatible both with specific and non-specific readings, as the scope of the object will vary depending on the position where the choice function is existentially closed. See how this will allow deriving the two readings of the KP in (202).

- (202) Toda mujer vio a un hombre.  
*every woman saw A a man*  
 'Every woman saw a man'

The specific reading –'there is a man that they all saw'– will be obtained if the choice function existential closure applies above the position of the universal quantifier (203a), while the non-specific reading –'each woman saw a possibly different man'– is associated to existential closure before the universal quantifier (203b). Removing labels and technical details that are orthogonal to this intuition, (203) represents both cases.

- (203) a.  $\exists f$  [toda mujer vio  $f$ (un hombre)]

b. [toda mujer vio  $\exists f$  [f(un hombre)]]

Note that in some way López has to ensure that *quién*, *alguien* and *nadie* must be introduced as  $\langle e, t \rangle$  objects but must become objects of type  $\langle e \rangle$ , as they must have necessarily *a*-marking (which presupposes that become KPs, with K yielding type  $\langle e \rangle$ ). The question is, then, what makes it impossible that they stay type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  with most verbs. López discusses in some detail the case of *quién*. His proposal is that what makes this item unavailable as a  $\langle e, t \rangle$  that combines with the VP through restriction is vacuous quantification, the principle that associates to any operator a variable.

Remember that restrict requires that the argument that is not saturated in the VP is existentially closed.

(204)  $\lambda e \exists x [\text{eat}'(x)(e) \ \& \ \text{potatoes}'(x)]$

This closure takes place at the VP level, and closes the variable associated to the direct object. Now, the problem is that *quién* is an interrogative, and as such it will have to be available as a variable to an interrogative operator Q that is introduced at a CP level. However, this operator will not find any open variable, because the one associated to *quién*, as it was involved in a restrict operation, has been closed by an existential.

(205)  $[_{CP} Qx [_{TP} \dots \lambda e \exists x [_{VP} \text{eat}'(x)(e) \ \& \ \text{who}'(x)]]]$

Presumably, similar proposals could be developed for *nadie* ‘nobody’ and *alguien* ‘somebody’: in the first the obvious account would involve a negative operator, and perhaps the second must be associated to another kind of existential operator. If some story along these lines can force them to be out of a restrict operation, then it follows they will have to be KPs, and if the spell out rule is detailed enough, they will carry *a*-marking. The only potential problem will have to be that with these words one will have to ensure that existential closure of the choice function takes place at a very early stage, because otherwise we would predict that they could get specific readings. We were not able to find any account of this in López (2012).

#### 4.3. *A*-marking, case and the Person Case Constraint

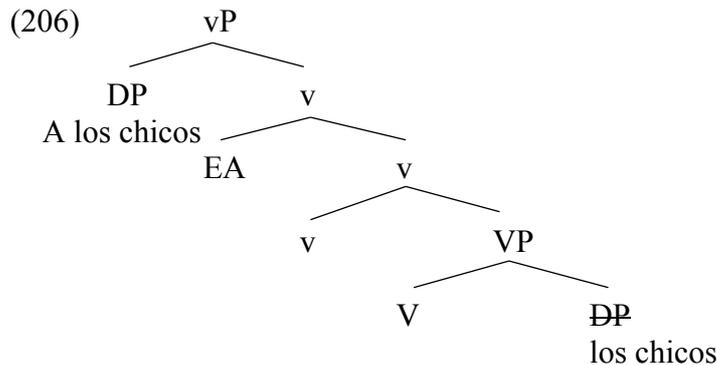
In §3.4 and §3.5 we already saw some aspects of Ormazabal & Romero’s (to appear) analysis of the relation between DOM and object agreement. Here we will see some of the details from a slightly different perspective that will allow us to contrast it with Zdrojewski (2013), who argues for precisely the opposite view.

Ormazabal & Romero propose the following ideas about DOM, which collectively allow unifying DOM with the Person-Case Constraint (Bonet 1991, 1994) under the same analysis.

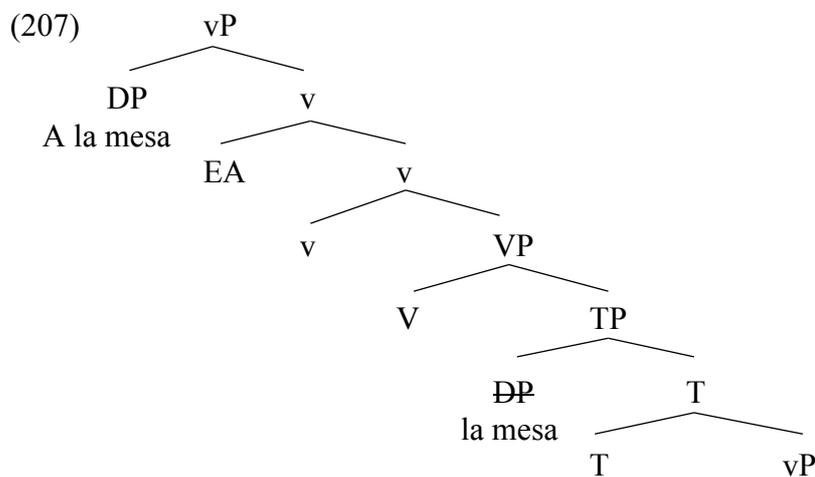
- (i) DOM is the effect of object case assignment by *v*
- (ii) Object case assignment can (but does not have to) come accompanied by object agreement
- (iii) There is only one object agreement position
- (iv) Personal pronouns and animate definites must agree with the verb

- (v) Datives agree with the verb
- (vi) Consequently, under certain circumstances, the direct and the indirect object compete for the same position, causing ungrammaticality

(206) shows the derivation of a sentence with a DOM object. The idea is that, being an animate noun, it has to be licensed via agreement, so it moves to the spec, vP position –note that in this the analysis shares properties with Torrego’s (1998)–. The result of the checking relation that is established is *a*-marking.



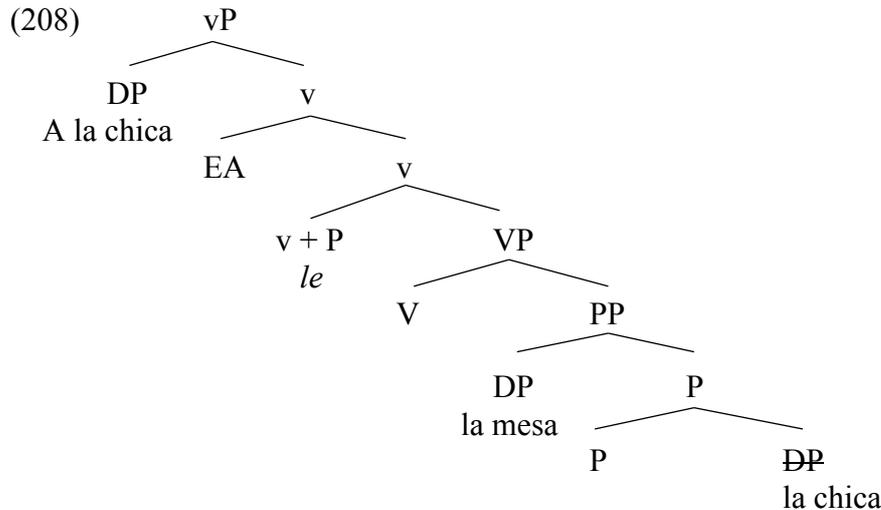
In principle, non-animates and indefinites are not *a*-marked because they can incorporate and, then, they do not need to move to the object agreement position of *v* (cf. Ormazabal & Romero’s 2013 analysis of Mohawk). However, when they are in a small clause they occupy a specifier position with respect to their predicate. From there, incorporation is impossible, so the only option is movement to the object agreement position and *a*-marking.



It is worth highlighting a difference between this account and López: in López’ account, any specific direct object –*a*-marked or not– occupies the same position. In Ormazabal & Romero’s, the position is associated directly to *a*-marking, but not so clearly with specificity. If a direct object is not DOM, it does not occupy the object agreement position.

(208) shows a situation where the indirect object (introduced for them as the complement of a P which later incorporates to the verb) gets case. Note that it moves to exactly the same position as *a*-marked direct objects, and that it takes case in the

same way. (208) has a non-animate direct object, which does not have to move to that position, so the structure is licit.



Note that *le* marks object agreement in *v*. Taking this marking as evidence that there has been agreement between the dative and the verb, consider again the contrast in (209), previously noted in §2.4.1.

- (209) a. *Le enviaron todos los heridos a la doctora.*  
*her.dat they.sent all the injured A the doctor*  
 b. \**Le enviaron a todos los heridos a la doctora.*  
*her.dat they.sent A all the injured A the doctor*

What goes wrong here is that the dative has entered into an object agreement relation with the verb, as the clitic shows, but in (209b) the direct object also has *a*-marking, which indicates that it competes with the dative for the same position. Absence of *a*-marking in (209a) indicates that in the grammatical sequence the direct object does not move to the position occupied by the dative.

Treating this pattern as the effect of the competition of two constituents for the same object agreement position allows Ormazabal & Romero to unify DOM with their account of the Person Case Constraint, the situation where presence of a third person dative clitic blocks a first or second person accusative clitic.

- (210) a. *Os enviaron a la doctora.*  
*you.acc send A the doctor*  
 b. \**Le os enviaron.*  
*her.dat you.acc they.sent*  
 Intended: ‘They sent you to her’

What happens in (210a) is that only the direct object (a *pro*) agrees with the verb. However, in (210b) both the direct and the indirect object agree with the verb, and as their features are distinct, the derivation cannot be successful. Ultimately, what happens with DOM can be treated as the same situation: two constituents with different features competing for the same position.

Let us make at this point explicit one of the assumptions that Ormazabal & Romero seem to be making. It must be the case that *a*-marking in a dative can be due

to something other than object agreement with the verb (presumably, an effect of the P that introduces datives when it does not incorporate to v). If so, (210a) is grammatical because *a*-marking in the dative is due to the P structure, and the dative does not need to agree with the verb in that configuration. Similarly, the grammaticality –in their judgement– of (211) suggests that *a*-marking in datives can happen independently of object agreement, at least when there is no dative clitic doubling.

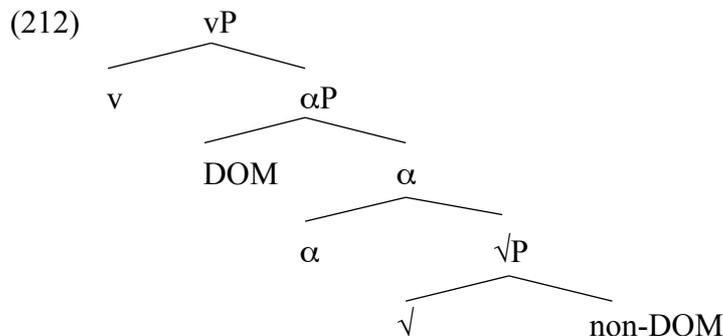
- (211) *Enviaron a todos los heridos a la doctora.*  
*they.sent A all the injured A the doctor*

In (211), the direct object agrees with the verb –and gets *a*-marking as a consequence of it– and the indirect object remains in situ, and gets *a*-marking of P. It contrasts minimally with (209b) in that absence of clitic doubling indicates that here there has been no agreement with the dative.

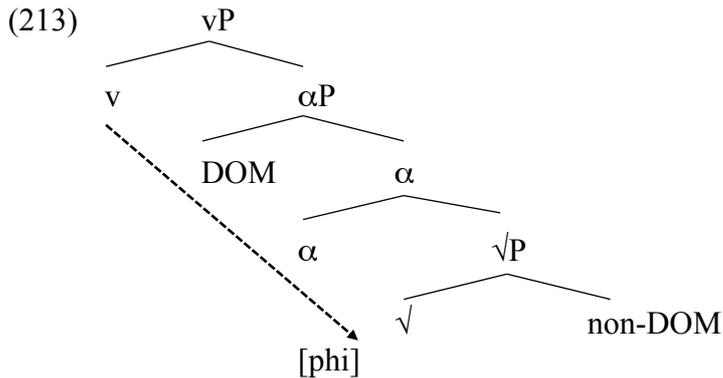
Once the assumption is made, the pattern of data reflects that DOM is tied to object agreement, and is just one of the manifestations of a deeper phenomenon that also connects with PCC effects.

Up to now, we have seen that almost all the theories of DOM consider that in one way or the other it involves a movement operation that is in some way related to case: the direct object moves to a position where case is somehow satisfied. One exception to this account is Zdrojewski (2013), who capitalises in the non-existence of a designated accusative marking for direct objects in Spanish.

His structure is reminiscent of López (2012) in that the DOM object occupies a specifier position below vP. However, the difference is that in his account, all *a*-marked objects occupy the same position, while all non-DOM objects are located as the complement of the root.



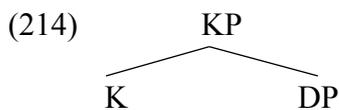
Zdrojewski, crucially, does not claim that movement to  $\alpha$ P is due to case assignment. In fact, he proposes that the position DOM occupies is one where case cannot be assigned, because the head  $\alpha$  lacks phi features. Leaving some technical details aside, he assumes Chomsky’s (2008) inheritance approach, where the head little v transfers phi features to a lower head –in this case, the root node–.



He further assumes a principle, stated in Pujalte (2013), which states that the intermediate heads between a phi-donating head and a phi-receiving head must be necessarily phi-defective. What this means is that if *v* gives phi features to the root node, any intermediate head –here  $\alpha$ – must necessarily lack phi features.

The consequence is that a direct object that has been merged as a specifier of  $\alpha$ P will necessarily be outside of the inheritance chain. Consequently, if it stays in situ it will get its case checked by the root, but if it moves it will not get its case assigned.

At this point, DOM kicks in. Zdrojewski (2013) proposes a post-syntactic rule that satisfies the DP's case by introducing a dissociated K morpheme into the representation. Thus, the DP in the specifier position becomes, in the morphological component, (214). At this point we have a very similar representation to López (2012).



Then, a spell out rule will ensure that in that particular context –the specifier of a phi-defective head– the value for case that is introduced is the one corresponding to dative.

#### 4.4. Cognitive accounts

In the modern Cognitive Linguistics tradition, there has been a tendency to treat DOM as a marker of a strongly prototypical transitivity relation. As it is customary in the studies within this tradition, semantic notions are at the core of any analysis and concepts are defined by a set of non-necessary and non-sufficient conditions whose accumulation produces prototypical instances of the notion. In the particular case of DOM, the following set of conditions –proposed in Hopper & Thompson (1980) in order to define transitivity– has played a central role in these accounts.

- (215) High transitivity is associated to:
- a. Participants: existence of two or more participants
  - b. Kinesis: a dynamic action
  - c. Aspect: telic aspect
  - d. Punctuality: punctual
  - e. Volitionality: volitional subject
  - f. Affirmation: affirmative
  - g. Mode: realis
  - h. Agency: agent high in potency

- i. Affectedness of the object: object totally affected
- j. Individuation of the object: object highly individuated

Givon (1985) shows that by virtue of these properties, a prototypical case of a transitive sentence would involve a volitional, salient and agentive subject with a non-controlling affected individuated patient which undergoes some change by virtue of the event, and with a telic, realis and specific action denoting verb. Transitivity is defined in this work and others sharing theoretical tenets with it as transfer of energy from an agent to a patient, causing a change in the patient (Lakoff 1977, Langacker 1991). In other words, (216) would be an instance of a prototypical transitive sentence in Spanish. On the assumption that animates will be more affected by change than non-animates (Naess 2004), *a*-marking is characteristic of a high level of transitivity.

- (216) María golpeó \*(a) Juan.  
*María hit A Juan*

What this produces –interestingly– is a proposal which has some similarities to Spitzer’s idea that *a*-marking is used whenever the direct object is threatened in some way by the verbal action. These proposals tend to concentrate on the verb –quite logically, given that the verb would be considered the semantic center where the eventuality is conceptualised, and imposes conditions to the subject and the object–, and explain the presence of *a*-marking by verbal properties. The role of animacy and definiteness is important to the extent that it can be used to modulate the degree of affectedness.

Von Heusinger & Kaiser (2011), specifically, associate the diachronic development of *a*-marking in Spanish to the degree of affectedness that is associated to the verb and the type of denotation the verb has. With this goal in mind, they elaborate on Beavers’ (2011) scale of affectedness, reproduced here as (217), and especially on Tsunoda’s (1985) hierarchy of verbal meanings (218). Their conclusion is that there is a high correlation between *a*-marking and verbs which are high in these two hierarchies, but they also note that this factor alone cannot predict the data obtained at lower points in the hierarchy, where the potential agentivity of the object – whether the object is animate or not, definite or not– play a stronger role.

- (217) quantized change (*kill*) > non-quantified change (*widen*) > potential for change (*hit*) > unspecified for change (*wait*)  
 (218) effective action > perception > pursuit > knowledge > feeling > relation > ability

Other studies in cognitive linguistics (and arguably similar theories) where the degree of transitivity, affectedness, the potential for agentivity in the object or definiteness play a central role include Company (2002), Croft (1993), Delbecque (1998, 1999, 2002), Enghels (2013) and perhaps also Pottier (1968).

There are, however, a couple of potential problems for an approach like the one adopted in these works. One of them is that, if we consider an affectedness hierarchy, the surprising fact is that Spanish seems to use DOM at both extremes of the scale: when the transitivity is quite high (as in 216) and when it is unusually low (as with transitive statives like 219).

- (219) El adjetivo modifica al sustantivo.  
*the adjective modifies A the noun*

The second potential problem is that –to the best of our knowledge– no specific effects of (ir)realis mood or (a)telic aspect has been identified with respect to DOM in Spanish (as López 2012 noted). To the extent that these notions contribute to the definition of transitivity but do not have an impact in DOM the proposal is weakened. It is true that a sentence like (220) could be argued to reject DOM because of its atelic nature, but it does seem that atelicity in itself does not block *a*-marking (221); plausibly, the apparent role of aspect in (220) has more to do with the fact that atelicity is necessary in generic statements, which can be associated to non-individuated direct objects.

- (220) Estas situaciones requieren un héroe.  
*these situations demand a doctor*  
 (221) Jack estaba matando a su última víctima cuando...  
*Jack was killing A his last victim when...*

## 5. Going back to the original definition of DOM

Given the contrasts we have seen here, at this point we are ready to see whether there are other contrasts in Spanish or in other languages that might show some connection with DOM.

### 5.1. DOM beyond direct objects?

There are two ways in which Bossong's definition can be unnecessarily restrictive. The first one of them is that it singles out direct objects. However, arguably, the main properties of DOM can be seen in processes that do not affect the direct object in Spanish. One obvious possibility has to do with cases where the verb selects a prepositional object and several prepositions can be used in that context.

Consider, for instance, so-called locative arguments (discussed, for instance, in RAE & ASALE 2009: §36.2g-i). Here, the marking that the argument receives can be different (222), and is associated to different semantic interpretations, but the arguments arguably play the same syntactic role, judging from the pronominal substitutes they allow (223) and disallow (224). Three conditions noted in Bossong are respected: (i) marking –as opposed to, say, word order–; (ii) variation with semantic distinctions and (iii) identity in syntactic function.

- (222) a. Juan puso el libro en la mesa.  
*Juan left the book on the table*  
 'Juan left the book on the table'  
 b. Juan puso el libro sobre la mesa.  
*Juan left the book over the table*  
 'Juan left the book over the table'  
 c. Juan puso el libro bajo la mesa.  
*Juan left the book under the table*  
 'Juan left the book under the table'  
 (223) \*Juan lo puso el libro.  
*Juan it.acc left the book*  
 Intended: 'Juan left the book on it'

- (224) Juan puso el libro allí.  
*Juan left the book there.*  
 ‘Juan left there the book’

Similarly, we see alternations between two possible prepositions beyond locative arguments. One of the many cases of this, discussed in RAE & ASALE (2009: §36.4ñ), is particularly relevant because of the potential ties to animacy, which is central in classic cases of DOM. It is the alternation between *de* ‘of’ and *por* ‘by’ with the verb *quejarse* ‘complain’. As noted in the mentioned work, *por* ‘by’ rejects person objects (225), while *de* accepts both (226).

- (225) a. \*Juan se queja por su jefe.  
*Juan SE complains by his boss*  
 Intended: ‘Juan complains about his boss’  
 b. Juan se queja por la cantidad de trabajo.  
*Juan SE complains by the quantity of work*  
 ‘Juan complains about the work load’
- (226) a. Juan se queja de su jefe.  
*Juan SE complains of his boss*  
 ‘Juan complains about his boss’  
 b. Juan se queja de la cantidad de trabajo.  
*Juan SE complains of the quantity of work*  
 ‘Juan complains about the work load’

The contrast is reminiscent of classic examples of DOM, where animate objects – given some conditions– must come accompanied by a marker (in those cases, *a*). Another sense in which the alternation between *de* and *por* when marking prepositional complements is reminiscent of classic DOM is that it can be associated to small contrasts in the meaning of the verbal predicate. Consider (227).

- (227) a. Juan se preocupa de su hijo.  
*Juan SE worries of his son*  
 ‘Juan worries about his son’  
 b. Juan se preocupa por su hijo.  
*Juan SE worries by his son*  
 ‘Juan worries about his son’

Given (227a), there are two possible –related– interpretations. One of them is that Juan gets worried because of his son, but the second is that Juan is interested in taking care of his son. The second reading is not available in (227b). This is reminiscent of contrasts where presence of *a* with the direct object triggers a more ‘interactive’ meaning of the predicate –that is, a meaning which somehow requires necessarily an active interaction between subject and internal argument–.

Finally, there is an understudied interaction between marking and syntactic function in Spanish which potentially holds some resemblance to DOM. Consider the sentences in (228).

- (228) a. ¡Ven con papá!  
*Come with daddy!*  
 ‘Come to daddy!’

- b. ¡Ve con papá!  
*go with daddy!*  
 ‘Go to daddy!’

Next to a normal comitative meaning –‘follow daddy’– which we are not interested in, (228) allows a second reading that in imperative contexts is more salient: a directional meaning, roughly ‘come to me’. The fact that a directional interpretation can be obtained with a preposition like *con* ‘with’ is already puzzling, but what makes this construction interesting for the purposes of DOM is that the directional reading can only be obtained when the noun introduced by the preposition is animate, as the contrasts in (229) show.

- (229) a. ¡Ve con tu abuela!  
*Go with your granny*  
 ‘Go to your granny!’  
 b. \*¡Ve con la mesa!  
*Go with the table*  
 Intended: ‘Go to the table!’  
 c. ¡Ven conmigo!  
*Come with me*  
 ‘Come to me!’  
 d. \*¡Ven con la tarima!  
*Come with the platform*  
 Intended: ‘Come to the platform!’

The detailed discussion of the connections between classic DOM and these other phenomena is left outside this article, as it is within a volume on the grammar of accusatives and datives. However, these contrasts suggest that the story that has to be told about DOM is at least partially independent of the grammar of *a*, as the main contrasts offered by *a* are reproduced –at least in restricted contexts– by other prepositions, like *de* or *con*. In a more obvious sense –obvious to the extent that the same conclusion would have been arrived at by other means– these contrasts suggest that the explanation about DOM cannot treat animacy or the other factors involved in the phenomenon as something special, but rather as the intersection of conditions and processes that are otherwise traceable in the language, such as correlations between prepositions and reference, or prepositions and active readings of predicates.

### 5.2. DOM without marking?

A second sense in which Bossong’s definition could be argued to be too restrictive is in his choice of associating necessarily the phenomenon to some overt marking. This restriction makes sense within Bossong’s own research program. He assumes a clear distinction between grammemic processes, that act through morphological marking (1991: 146), and word order phenomena. But perhaps more relevantly, he is concerned about how to capture grammaticalisation, so his focus is on the way in which items are reinterpreted as semantically significant morphology.

However, beyond those particular concerns, the claim that DOM should be restricted to situations where the differentiation is performed through marking seems too restrictive (especially given the evidence that grammars do not impose as one of their conditions that every formal distinction is spelled out by an overt marker, see Kayne 2005, 2013 for a review).

Hypothetically, we could imagine a language where a differentiation between classes of direct objects was performed in the following way: direct objects with properties (X, Y, Z) appear to the left of the verb (230a), while those that lack those properties appear to its right (230b).

- (230) a. Subject – Object – Verb  
 b. Subject – Verb – Object

Note that this would not be strange at all, and attested word order differences in languages are almost always more specific than this. Person-split phenomena – situations where pronouns belonging to different persons behave in distinct ways– are sometimes manifested in word order differences; for instance, in a recent paper, Manzini & Savoia (2012) report that in the Càsola dialect of Italian, a second person subject clitic follows the negative marker *nə*, while a third person subject clitic precedes it (231).

- (231) a. *n' tə dorm*  
*not you sleep*  
 ‘You don’t sleep’  
 b. *{i / la} nə dorm*  
*{he / she} not sleep*  
 ‘He / She does not sleep’

In fact, there is at least one context where DOM interacts with the position that the DO can have with respect to the verbal predicate: causative constructions (cf. §3.2). All in all, it seems to us that there are no grounded reasons to restrict DOM to cases where the distinction is performed by overt morphological marking.

### 5.3. What DOM is not

It is also important to briefly consider what would not count as DOM in Spanish and why. Even where there is a meaning difference between two constructions, and the constructions simply differ on the marking of the argument, we might lack initial evidence to relate those cases to DOM –in a wide sense–. Specifically, this is due to the fact that when a language allows for two different markings of the same argument, what we expect is precisely that there is a meaning difference between the two markings.

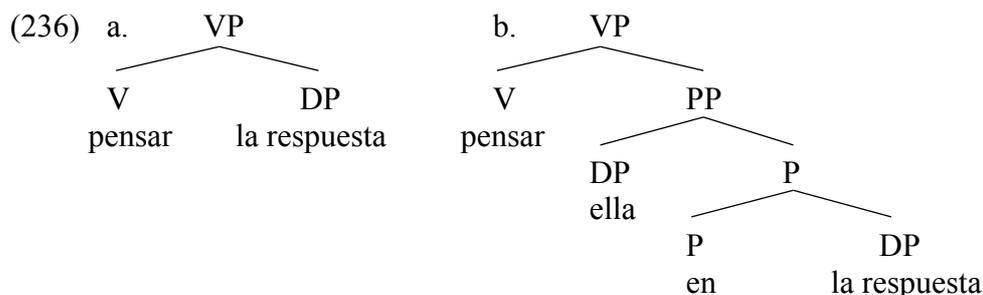
Not every situation where there is the choice of marking an argument with a preposition would be a case of DOM. A contrast like the one in (232) –cf. RAE & ASALE (2009: §36.3ñ)– cannot fall into DOM, because the syntactic function of the argument changes in each case. In the first case, at least in the traditional sense, the argument acts as a subject because it controls agreement.

- (232) a. *Me bastan cuatro cajas.*  
*me.dat are.enough four boxes*  
 ‘Four boxes are enough for me’  
 b. *Me basta con cuatro cajas.*  
*me.dat is.enough with four boxes*  
 ‘Four boxes are enough for me’

Despite superficial appearances, cases like those in (233) and (234) are not cases of DOM, at least following the traditional definition, because in the first member of the pair the argument is a direct object, while it is analysed as a prepositional complement in the second –hence the difference in pronominalisation, (235)–. Note, however, that there are interesting connections: there is a semantic difference between the two members of the pair related to verbal aspect (and we will see in §2.3 that verbal aspect is one of the factors affected by DOM). In (233a) the predicate is an accomplishment where the predicate behaves as a verb of creation, while in (233b) the verb falls into the class of activities and denotes a psychological eventuality. A similar contrast between telicity and atelicity is seen in (234).

- (233) a. pensó la respuesta  
*she.thought the answer*  
 ‘She made up the answer’  
 b. pensó en la respuesta  
*she.thought on the answer*  
 ‘She pondered the answer’
- (234) a. creyó sus palabras  
*she.believed his words*  
 ‘She trusted what he said’  
 b. creyó en sus palabras  
*she.believed on his words*  
 ‘She believed in what he said’
- (235) a. pensar la respuesta --> pensar-la  
*think the answer think-it.acc*  
 b. pensar en la respuesta --> pensar en ella  
*think on the answer think on it*

Analyses like Simoni (2005) argue that the underlying structure of the two versions are very different; in contrast, analyses of DOM generally assume that, at least, the base syntactic relation of the two arguments with the verb is identical. Whether these cases are closer or further away from DOM would depend on the kind of analysis that each author proposes for the distinction, and whether the base position of an *a*-marked object can be different from that of a non-*a*-marked one. Be it as it may, Simoni (2005) adopts a lexico-syntactic approach (Hale & Keyser 2002) and argues that in the first member of each pair, the verb directly selects the DP argument (236a). In the prepositional version, the verb selects a PP which relates subject and object (236b). The different structure contributes to accounting for the aspectual differences within the pairs.



Let us discuss a final case. Inherently reciprocal verbs that express causative events where two entities are related to each other –like *unir* ‘join’, *asociar* ‘associate’, *ligar* ‘link’, *sumar* ‘add’– typically are able to introduce their prepositional complement with either *a* or *con* ‘with’.

- (237) a. *asociar un producto con una empresa*  
*associate a product with a company*  
 ‘to associate a product with a company’  
 b. *asociar un producto a una empresa*  
*associate a product to a company*  
 ‘to associate a product to a company’

Again, this difference is related to a meaning contrast. Speakers tend to interpret the structure where the second internal argument is marked by *con* as more symmetric than the one that uses *a*. In (237a) the suggestion is that the speaker wants to give the same weight to the product and the company –more like logical coordination–, while in (237b) it is felt that the company is an entity of larger extension and importance within which a product is placed. However, from here, again, it does not follow that this has to be covered by the same theory that explains the distribution of DOM. Specifically, the version with *a* displays properties of indirect objects: it can co-occur or be substituted by the clitic *le*, but that is impossible in the version with *con*.

- (238) a. *asociar-le un producto (a una empresa)*  
*associate-it.dat a product (to a company)*  
 b. \**asociar-le un producto con una empresa*  
*associate-it.dat a product with a company*

## 6. Conclusions

As should have become obvious from the previous pages, there is plenty to consider when studying DOM in Spanish, and there are still some empirical domains where it seems that we do not have a complete description of the data. However, there are also some fairly well-studied areas, and it seems that some consensus has already emerged. Among the aspects that all or the vast majority of researchers working on the issue seem to agree on we can highlight the following:

- (a) Spanish DOM is not a purely morphological phenomenon. Whatever underlies the contrast between *a*-marking and its absence must imply syntactic and / or semantic differences
- (b) An *a*-marked direct object shares substantial properties with dative arguments, either because of its position, because of its agreement or because of a semantic similarity to recipients
- (c) There are semantic conditions that correlate with DOM; they have to do with animacy, definiteness and the argument and aspect structure of the verb
- (d) None of these semantic conditions is enough by itself to account for DOM
- (e) Some particular items have special properties that force or block DOM

Next to these points of agreement, there are some intensely debated issues and problems:

- (a) What is the relation between DOM and locatives? There must be a relation between these elements, because the preposition used in Spanish also has locative uses and moreover languages like Romanian use a preposition which is only locative
- (b) How many different correlations are predicted to be possible between leísmo and DOM? What happens with speakers that allow leísmo only with some DOM objects? Why does animacy seem to play a role in how systematically DOM correlates with leísmo?
- (c) What makes DOM objects less acceptable as subjects of passives?
- (d) What makes DOM objects worse with subextraction? Does this phenomenon really correlate with the previous one?
- (e) Do syntactic factors take precedence over semantic interpretations or vice versa? Can we always claim that DOM is caused by formal conditions –case assignment, movement– and the semantic effects are epiphenomenic, deriving from general conditions on how those syntactic structures have to be interpreted? How do, for instance, aspectual effects emerge from identical (or very similar) structures in such a way that telic events and states can both require DOM?
- (f) From the opposite side, where semantics seems to be the driving force, how is it possible to motivate that apparently very different kinds of direct objects –animate and inanimate, non-specific and definite– receive the same marking? What is the general semantic interpretation associated to DOM, which can be applied to all the examples?
- (g) Independently of whether the weight falls mainly on formal or semantic factors, how do they correlate with each other?
- (h) What is the right treatment of particular lexical items that ask for DOM in an exceptional way? Should they be treated as lexical exceptions, or can they be grouped into more or less systematic classes sharing some non-trivial properties?
- (i) What are the (hopefully minimal) differences between the structure of infinitive constructions with causative, allowance and perception predicates that trigger the distinct positional restrictions exhibited by DOM objects with them?

The following areas seem to stand out as areas where more research seems necessary in order to refine the analysis:

- (a) The potential variation across geographical areas and other sociolinguistically defined groups, and what other syntactic properties correlate with variation in *a*-marking
- (b) The correlation between *a*-marking and co-reference, as different results have been identified by different authors
- (c) The acceptance of double *a*-marking (direct object and indirect object) across verb classes and varieties, including its interaction with clitic doubling phenomena
- (d) The set of transitive stative verbs that carry *a*-marking: what happens with those that are quantized, and what happens with those that do not seem to be quantized? What differentiates this class from other transitive stative verbs that do not allow or do not force *a*-marking? What are the sources of variation here?

- (e) The correlation between DOM and accusative clitic doubling, across varieties
- (f) The properties of *alguien* ‘someone’, *nadie* ‘nobody’ and *quién* ‘who’: what makes them special with respect to other indefinites, and minimally with respect to DPs introduced by *qué* ‘which’, *algún* ‘a’ and *ningún* ‘non’, which would in principle be expected to have similar properties but behave differently with respect to DOM? What happens in contexts where *a*-marking is not compulsory even with these indefinites?
- (g) The potential correlation between *a*-marking and other phenomena where animacy is relevant (like the directional interpretation of *con* ‘with’) or where the presence of a preposition causes some aspectual change, as well as those cases where repeating the preposition under coordination gives a distributive reading

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