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Differential Object Marking in Corsican: Regularities and triggering factors

Abstract: The paper deals with Differential Object Marking in Corsican. After a short introduction, it gives an overview of the main local triggering factors for marking direct objects in general (animacy, referentiality). It then presents the few main assumptions about Corsican DOM in the literature as well as findings of a new corpus study, based on written Corsican texts. Strong personal pronouns and proper names for human referents are consistently marked by the DOM marker *à*, but toponyms and metonymically used proper names are marked as well. Universal and negative quantifiers with a human denotation are also DOM-marked, whereas all other pronouns are not; thus animacy plays only a minor role in Corsican. The presence of determiners, quantifiers or numerals within nominals excludes the presence of *à*, irrespective of the nominals' denotation. Non-specific bare nominals are never DOM-marked, also irrespective of the nominals' denotation. The discussion then explains that the Corsican DOM is triggered much more by syntactic definiteness than animacy, a hypothesis strengthened by the most prominent morphosyntactic regularity at work in Corsican: nominals in combination with determiners and quantifiers cannot be marked by the DOM-marker *à*, even if they denote human beings. The complementary distribution of *à* and prenominal functional elements requires a further detailed syntactic analysis.

Keywords: Differential Object Marking, Nominal determination, Corsican, Italo-Romance languages

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1 Introduction

The morphosyntactic phenomenon of *Differential Object Marking*, so called *DOM* (cf. Bossong 1982a: 580, 1985), regards the specific marking of a nominal in the

function of the direct object (DO).[1] It is triggered by certain local features of the respective nominal – these can be semantic like animacy and/or definiteness, or morphosyntactic like the presence of a definite determiner. There exist also more global DOM-related parameters like verb semantics, the degree of transitivity of the whole construction, topicality of the direct object together with the information-structure of the whole clause (see, among others, Laca 2006; von Heusinger and Kaiser 2007, 2011; Iemmolo 2009, 2010). These will not be taken into account in what follows. Which feature(s) finally interact(s) with the realization of DOM in a given language differs from language to language.

In the field of the Romance languages we find the phenomenon of DOM in standard languages such as Spanish, Portuguese and Rumanian, as well as in non-standard varieties, as in Sicilian, Sardinian and Galician, among others. Similarly, in Corsican, an Italo-Romance variety,[2] direct objects are marked differentially under certain semantic and syntactic conditions:

(1) a. *Vegu   chè   tù   preferisci   più   **à**   **Peneloppe**   chè   **à***
     I.see   that   you   prefer   more   DOM   Peneloppe   than   DOM
    mè.
    me-ACC.SG
    'I see, you prefer Peneloppe rather than me.'
    (Mitulugia: 29)

  b. *Cunnisciti   (*à)   U   Scupatu?*
    You.know   (*DOM)[3]   DET   Scupatu
    'Do you know the Scupatu ['cracked'; nickname]?'
    (Marcellesi 1986: 137)

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1 In order to avoid the ongoing discussion about the analysis of nominals as noun-phrases (NP) or determiner-phrases (DP), the more neutral term "nominal" is generally chosen here for the element in function of the direct object, as the respective element is nominal by its nature (pronoun, full lexical noun with or without determiners, quantifiers and/or modifiers, proper name). Whenever the internal structure of the respective nominals is of any interest for our argument, we will refer by *DP* to nominals with definite determiners (also demonstratives), like *the/these men*, and by *NumP* to nominals with indefinite articles or numerals like *two men*.
2 The discussion about the origin of Corsican and its diachronic development (i.e., Corsican deriving from Latin; the influence of the Tuscan dialects present in the region from the 12th century onwards, etc.) will not be included in this article. Corsican belongs to the class of Italo-Romance dialects, a classification based on its lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactical properties.
3 Glossing-key: DOM stands for the marker *à*, (*DOM) means that the marker is ungrammatical in this position (attested and checked examples); ø means that no marker *à* is attested in our corpus, but that its optionality or ungrammaticality in this position has to be checked by further research.

(2) *Vigu* (**à*)   *l'omu*
     I.see   (*DOM)   DET_man
     'I see the man.'
     (Marcellesi 1986: 137)

We can see in Example (1a) that the proper name *Peneloppe* is DOM-marked by *à*, just like the strong personal pronoun *mè*. However, in Example (1b), which also contains a proper name in direct object position, *à* is absent as the proper name follows a definite determiner, the masculine singular article *u* (which is part of the proper name in question). All these direct object constituents denote human referents. In Example (2), although the DO-referent of *l'omu* is also human, the object nominal is not marked due to the presence of the definite article.[4]

This complementary distribution of the DOM-marker *à* and determiners (and quantifiers, as we will see below) is especially prominent in our Corsican data, in contrast to many other Romance languages and varieties,[5] and has to be explained in the context of existing hypotheses about the origin and functioning of DOM in different languages. Still, we will mainly focus here on the language-specific pattern of DOM-marking in Corsican, and not so much on (crosslinguistic) generalizations one could draw.

The paper is organized in three main sections: following the introduction, Section 2 will give a short overview of the commonly assumed general motivations for DOM, with an insight into the main local DOM-triggering properties of the DO. This section will also briefly introduce some well-known hypotheses for a general explanation of the phenomenon. Section 3 examines the phenomenon at hand (i.e., Corsican DOM) in some detail, firstly in terms of its previous descriptions (Section 3.1) and then through an exploration of our corpus analysis results (Section 3.2). A discussion of our findings follows in Section 4 and shows the main function of Corsican DOM, i.e., the marking of highly [individuated] direct object referents. Section 4.2 identifies one main trigger of Corsican DOM by presenting and analyzing the complementary distribution of nominal determiners, numerals or quantifiers with the DOM-marker *à*. Section 5 provides a short conclusion.

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4 The differing orthography of *vegu* vs. *vigu* in Example (1a) and (2) is due to inconsistent spelling in different Corsican authors.

5 Rumanian has a strict complementary distribution of the DOM-marker *pe* and the definite article in unmodified noun phrases, which holds for every preposition except *cu* in Rumanian. This is accordingly not the same regularity nor the same pattern as the one observed for Corsican, cf. Chiriacescu and von Heusinger 2011 for further details.

2 General motivations for DOM

In Differential Object Marking systems, different properties of the DO may be held responsible for the presence or absence of the DOM marker. The literature specifies *animacy* and *referentiality* or *definiteness* (semantic and/or morphosyntactic) as the main factors, usually represented in hierarchies or scales (cf. Lazard 1984, 2001; Bossong 1985, 1991, 1998; Nocentini 1985; Aissen 2003; Iemmolo 2010), alongside *specificity* (cf. von Heusinger [2011], Klein and de Swart [2011] for a very helpful and systematic overview). But certain other more global semantic factors such as transitivity or even *focus* (cf. Detges 2005) also seem to be relevant.

In what follows, we concentrate exclusively on the properties of DO nominals, more precisely on animacy and referentiality. Referentiality, in particular, will turn out to play a major role in Corsican DOM.

2.1 DOM triggers

Regarding the DOM-related properties of direct objects, Bossong (1985, 1991), von Heusinger and Kaiser (2003), Klein and de Swart (2011) and many others mention animacy, semantic and syntactic definiteness and specificity for Romance, especially for Spanish and Rumanian. Following Klein and de Swart (2011) animacy usually seems to trigger a split case alternation, in that (some subclasses of) human and animate direct objects have to be DOM-marked, while inanimate direct objects cannot be marked. It seems that definiteness introduces another split in Spanish in that, in the realm of human/animate direct objects, explicitly indefinite ones as opposed to definite ones, may or may not be marked (a case of "fluid case alternation" in the terminology of Klein and de Swart [2011]), which creates a specificity interpretation effect. In a different ranking of the triggering factors and with a focus on syntactic definiteness, DP-type (pronouns obligatorily marked vs. lexical DPs with optional marking) seems to play a major role in Rumanian, inducing the first and most prominent split case alternation in this Romance language. Specificity in turn is not so much a trigger as an effect of Differential Object Marking (cf. Leonetti 2008: 5, among many others) and does not seem to play a major role in Corsican DOM, so we will not consider it any further here.

The feature of animacy is relevant for Corsican, as for other Romance varieties: cf. the following example where we can compare the negative quantifiers *nimu* 'nobody' and *nunda* 'nothing':

(3) a. *Ùn   si   lacava   mora   **à**   **nimu**   di   fami.*
     Not   one   let   die   DOM   nobody   of   hunger
     'One did not let anybody die from hunger.'
     (Travisagna: 2)

    b. [...] *da   l'insottu   ùn   si   ne   vidia   (***à**)   **nunda**.*
       from   DET_bottom   not   one   about   *see*   (*DOM)   *nothing*
       'From the bottom one did not see anything.'
       (Ostrisorma: 9)

On the other hand, the semantic property of definiteness is part of a whole bundle of features related to the *referentiality* of the DO nominal; see Table 1, the referentiality scale identified by von Heusinger and Kaiser (2005):

Table 1: Referentiality scale (von Heusinger and Kaiser 2005: 38, following Aissen 2003: 437)

pers. pronoun > proper name > def. nom. > spec. nom. > non-spec. nom.		
+definite		−definite
+specific		−specific

Semantic definiteness can be defined (among other definitions) as "familiarity" or "givenness" in the discourse world (cf. Heim 1988; Kamp and Reyle 1993; Lyons 1999: 2–15; von Heusinger and Kaiser 2003: 42–43) and has to be differentiated from syntactic definiteness in that it does not always coincide with the presence of a definite determiner. At this point we will leave the summary of the main factors for DOM in Romance. We simply want to point out that the role of syntactic definiteness or determination for Corsican DOM is rather intricate; we will come back to this point in Sections 3.2 and 4.

2.2 Competing motivations for DOM-systems

In order to explain the phenomenon of DOM, two competing hypotheses have been put forward in the literature (for a detailed presentation, discussion and potential solution cf. Malchukow 2008).

    The *Disambiguation Hypothesis* (cf. Bossong 1991, 1998; Aissen 2003) is based on the assumption that DOs which show certain morphosyntactic, semantic or functional similarities with the subject (mostly regarding animacy and/or referentiality) need to be distinguished formally from it and thus they should be

marked. From this perspective, which focuses on the relation between verbal arguments, DOM in Romance is a discriminating or distinguishing device.

The argument based exclusively on disambiguation as the original driving force behind DOM-systems has been criticized for several reasons.[6] Firstly, in a large number of Romance varieties,[7] just like in Corsican, disambiguation does not seem to be the primary goal of DOM, since strong personal pronouns (above all 1st and 2nd pers. sg.) that show clearly case-marked forms in subject- and DO-function are the most regular and in many varieties are also the earliest cases of differentially marked DOs (cf. Detges 2005: 159; Iemmolo 2010: 243). Secondly, the differential marking of the DO may lead to a "secondary ambiguity" with other elements, for instance the indirect object in ditransitive constructions (cf. Malchukov 2008: 217). Thus, in Spanish, the prepositional dative marker *a* is homonymous with the DOM-marker *a*, which results in a potentially ambiguous construction inside the domain of objects with ditransitive verbs. Additionally, DOM is also found in contexts where encyclopedic knowledge allows the unambiguous assignment of subject- and DO-function to the respective nominals (cf. Malchukov [2008: 210], who argues that the marking of animacy is generally redundant, as it can be identified by the lexical content of the relevant nominal).

The competing hypothesis for explaining the phenomenon of DOM is the so-called *Transitivity Hypothesis* (Hopper and Thompson 1980; Næss 2004) which assumes an indexing or identifying function of DOM. Under this hypothesis, Differential Object Marking indexes certain (semantic) properties of the direct object, such as animacy or definiteness (often subsumed under the label of individuation) or affectedness (cf. Siewierska and Bakker 2008; also Næss 2004, 2007). *Transitivity*, following Hopper and Thompson's (1980) approach, can be regarded as an essential semantic property of a grammatical construction which verbalizes an action induced from an agent and which strongly affects a patient (cf. Hopper and Thompson 1980: 251). It depends on different parameters (participants, aspect, volitionality, mode, affectedness of the object and individuation of the object, among others) and is considered to be a semantic-conceptual notion on a scalar basis. Of particular interest for the following discussion around DOM in Corsican is the concept of individuation, which is directly related to the object: constructions where the DO-referent is "highly individuated" (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 252) contain "good" objects, which are therefore morphologically marked.

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6 See also the empirical argumentation in de Hoop and Malchukov 2008: 569: "Crosslinguistically, a merely distinguishing function of case is rare." Cf. in a similar vein Malchukov 2008: 208.
7 For example see the different setting in Sicilian (cf. Putzu 2008).

The individuation of the object emerges from the distinction between the thematic roles of patient and agent (cf. Hopper and Thompson 1980: 253), as well as from the distinction of the patient from its background. [Individuation] as a feature of the DO is, accordingly, "the extent to which the O[bject] is particularized and viewed as a concrete entity distinct from its background" (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 287). A DO counts as "highly individuated" if it exhibits properties and features of the left column in Table 2:

Table 2: Individuation (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 253, from Timberlake 1977: 162)

Individuated	Non-individuated
proper	common
human, animate	inanimate
concrete	abstract
singular	plural
count	mass
referential, definite	non-referential

Among the above-listed properties, the features [proper], [human]/[animate] and [referential]/[definite] of the object's referent each contribute to its individuation. We will see that these features are highly important in the description and explanation of Corsican DOM.

As we focus exclusively on direct object properties in what follows, we will only take into account the identifying function of DOM here; we are perfectly aware of the fact that both hypotheses are needed (and do in fact frequently interact, thus not excluding each other) in order to explain different DOM-systems cross-linguistically (cf. de Hoop and Malchukov 2008; Malchukov 2008: 209).

3 Description of Corsican DOM

Corsican DOM is morphologically realized by the prenominal marker *à*, which is homophonous with the definite feminine article singular *a*, and with the preposition *à* used to mark datives and locatives. In general, Corsican *à* can be considered a poly-functional marker, just like the DOM-marker in Spanish, Sicilian or Rumanian.[8] DOM in Corsican operates as a privative opposition, i.e., *à-* versus

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8 A specific mono-functional DOM-marker is found e.g., in Hebrew and Mandarin (cf. Bossong 1982b: 51).

zero-marking. The category of nominals in DO-function is thus split up into two subclasses, whose members are either marked by *à* or not (cf. Bossong 1982b: 24).

3.1 Previous studies

Most of the previous studies are only concerned with Corsican grammar in a general fashion, with only some remarks concerning the DOM-system. Normative grammars outnumber descriptive studies. The only somewhat detailed analysis about Corsican DOM we find is Marcellesi (1986), who evaluated spoken data from one region in and around Ajaccio (southwestern part of the island).[9] He presents a rather reliable description and the first systematization of the phenomenon; however, a detailed explanatory approach is missing. Marcellesi uses the written questionnaire of Rohlfs (1949), which comprises 65 French sentences to be translated into Corsican by 22 Corsicans from *diverses regions de l'île* 'several regions of the island' (Marcellesi 1986: 134; not further specified). This is supplemented by an audio-corpus (not available/traceable) based on spontaneous speech from speakers from Ajaccio and surroundings (about 270 minutes of recordings). In his analysis of the structure of nominals in DO-function in Corsican, Marcellesi identifies two important properties of Corsican DOM. First, he describes the role of animacy, relevant only in the domain of pronouns (with unclear results for interrogative pronouns; see the table in Marcellesi [1986: 136]). Second, he discovers the complementary distribution of the definite article and the DOM-marker *à*, irrespective of the animacy of the respective referent (class) or the category of common noun vs. proper name (against Rohlfs [1949: vol. II] and some traditional Corsican grammars). According to Marcellesi, this last property confers to Corsican a special status within Italo-Romance: "[. . .] pour ce phénomène, la généralité et les similitudes qu'on rencontre dans l'aire italique méridionale ne doivent pas cacher que des différences apparemment minimes sont en réalité systématiques [. . .]." [As for this phenomenon, the generality and the similarities

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9 We find some other descriptions and discussions of Corsican DOM, e.g., in Rohlfs (1949: vol. II, 439); he argues for the need to disambiguate subjects from objects, based on the observation that the loss of the Latin morphological case-system led to ambiguity. Chiorboli (1987: 87) argues in a similar vein, evoking the allegedly free position of the subject in Corsican (without further explanation), as does Giacomo-Marcellesi (1997: 35). Humanness and animacy are also briefly discussed as possible triggers for DOM in Corsican (cf. Bottiglioni 1957 [1932]: 120; Rohlfs 1949: vol. II, Section 632, 434–437; Albertini 1972: 92). All these studies lack a reliable data base, in that the examples are sparse and their provenance is not indicated, except for Bottiglioni (1957 [1932]), whose description is based on his linguistic atlas (cf. Bottiglioni [1933–1942]).

that one can find in the Southern Italian area must not hide that the differences, apparently minimal, are in reality systematic] (Marcellesi 1986: 129).

The most intriguing point mentioned above in Marcellesi's (1986) findings, i.e., the complementary distribution of the differential marker *à* and the definite article (no other determiners are mentioned in the literature), is also described by Damiani (1993: 28) and Chiorboli (1994: 77). According to these authors, DOM is blocked by the article, but not vice versa: "L'article exclut la préposition [...]" [The article excludes the preposition] (Damiani 1993: 28); "[...] l'article bloque d'ordinaire l'apparition de la préposition" [The article normally blocks the emergence of the preposition] (Chiorboli 1994: 77).

To sum up, all previous studies suffer from a rather superficial or incomplete discussion of a few examples, which does not permit an overall description and understanding of Corsican DOM. More precisely, the authors did not undertake a systematic analysis in two important areas: First, their description of pronouns in DO-position is rather imprecise; we will thus look at possible differences between definite and indefinite pronouns, and inside these categories between universal quantifiers and demonstratives on the one hand, and different types of indefinite pronouns on the other. Second, we will try to analyze how other prenominal functional elements that differ from the definite article, i.e., the indefinite article, possessives, quantifiers and numerals, interact with the DOM-marker *à* in order to better understand this crucial and very specific property of the Corsican morphosyntax.

3.2 Corpus data

Two main motivations have guided our corpus study: Firstly, we wanted to establish a reliable corpus of Corsican texts in order to give retraceable results and insights. Secondly, the findings of Marcellesi 1986 leave open at least two questions: (i) If humanness is one main triggering factor of DOM in Corsican, why and to what extent does it hold in the realm of pronouns alone? (ii) What about prenominal functional elements and their complementary distribution with the DOM-marker *à*? Are only definite articles affected by this regularity, or is it also the case for quantifiers, numerals etc.? Thus, a small corpus (about 33.000 words) of written data taken from original Corsican prose texts was compiled and analyzed manually as a first step (see the References Section). The corpus texts comprise mainly narrative prose, but also newspaper articles and a scientific text about Corsican toponyms. All texts were written between 1992 and 2005. The choice of text-types and the date of origin of the individual text were restricted by

the availability of the material.[10] Of course, the corpus is far too small to give representative results and there are difficulties that arise from the use of exclusively written data. This first empirical and systematic study of Modern Corsican DOM therefore should be considered as a pilot study in order to identify questions for future research.[11] The following findings will merely reveal tendencies.

The analysis was conducted by hand in order to identify not only the marked DOs, but also negative evidence of the phenomenon. For a detailed analysis of the phenomenon, all DOs in the corpus (1139 DOs) were classified according to important local parameters for DOM in general and for Corsican DOM in particular. The parameters to be presented and discussed are the grammatical categories of strong personal pronouns; proper names; definite pronouns (universal quantifiers and demonstratives); definite nominals (article plus noun or name, article plus possessive plus noun or name, demonstrative plus noun or name, universal quantifier plus noun or name); indefinite pronouns (negative pronouns, free-choice pronouns etc.); indefinite nominals (indefinite article plus noun or name); quantified nominals (mid-scalar quantifiers and numerals plus noun or name), and bare common nouns.

As the data shows (cf. Table 3), strong personal pronouns with referents that are always human are always marked, whereas clitic pronouns are never marked (consistent with previous studies, see 3.1). Like in other Romance languages with a DOM-system, this regularity is very stable in Corsican (see also Example [1a]).

(4) *S'è   tù   inganni   a   terra,   da dopu   a   terra   inganna   **à***
    If_is you   betray   DET   earth   afterwards   DET   earth   betray   DOM
    ***te**.*
    you
    'If you betray the earth, the earth will betray you.'
    (Travisagna: 4)

Anthroponyms are also always marked, see Example (1a), given again as (5):

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10 There is no digital corpus of Corsican available today which would allow the analysis of syntactic constructions. The only existing corpus of Corsican, the *Banque de données Langue Corse* (http://bdlc.univ-corse.fr [03/30/2010]), is built up of single lexical items and not of sentences or whole texts.

11 In an upcoming field-study on Corsican, a collection of spoken data and additional written data will allow an analysis of the phenomenon on the basis of a statistically more significant corpus.

Table 3: Overview of the parameters investigated in the corpus study[a]

	Strong pers. pronouns[b]	Proper names anthropon., topon., kinship term[c]	Definite pronouns ∀	Definite pronouns dem.	Definite nominals art.+N, art.+poss.+N, dem.+N, ∀+N	Indefinite pronouns neg. pronoun[d]	Indefinite pronouns others	Indefinite nominals indef. art.+N	Quantified nominals numeral/ some/many +N	Bare nouns
[+human]	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
	3(3)	39(39)	5(5)	0(7)	0(103)	4(4)	0(5)	0(17)	0(4)	1(16)[e]
[+anim.]	+	+	ø	ø	-	ø	-	-	ø	-
		2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(13)	0(0)	0(1)	0(3)	0(0)	0(5)
[+inanim.]	±	±	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	0(1)	11(13)	0(9)		0(488)	0(4)		0(13)	0(4)	0(53)

a Apparently, number does not play a direct role in Corsican DOM-marking but see our comments on number with universal quantifiers in Section 4. Key for the table: + = all examples of this category attested in the corpus are marked; ± = marked and unmarked examples of this category are found in the corpus; – = no example of this category is marked in the corpus; ø = no examples of this category are attested in the corpus.

b Strong personal pronouns are only used to refer to human beings and therefore there are no attested examples in the classes of animate or inanimate referents.

c Kinship terms with a definite article are attributed to the class of definite nominals.

d I.e., *nisunu, nimu* 'nobody', *nunda* 'nothing'.

e The only attested occurrence of *moglie* without an article and with the *à*-marker outside of an incorporation structure has a definite reading, see (i):

(i) *Spaventatu, Laios rivene   in Tebba   è   cappia   a   so   sumente   di   manera   à   ùn   mette   **à**   **moglie**   incinta.*
    Frightened   Laios   come_again   to   Thebes   and   release   to   his   semen   of   manner   to   not   make   DOM   wife   pregnant.
    'Frightened, Laios comes again to Thebes and releases his semen in a way not to make pregnant his wife.'
    (Mitologia: 39)

Due to the homophony of the marker *à* and the definite feminine article singular *a*, and the fact that *moglie* in all comparable environments (with a definite reading) always appears with the definite article or a possessive, we assume a typing error here.

(5) *Vegu chè tù preferisci più **à** **Peneloppe** chè **à**
I.see that you prefer more DOM Peneloppe than DOM
mè.
me-ACC.SG
'I see, you prefer Peneloppe rather than me.'
(Mitulugia: 29)

We can also find a metonymic use of names in the corpus, e.g., using the name of an author to denote a book written by him, e.g., *ellu avia lettu à Fenimore Cooper* 'he had read Fenimore Cooper'. Similarly, the number of a year can be used in a metonymic way as the "name" for a historically important date:

(6) [. . .] *tutte spressioni aduprate in certi libri scritti da*
all expressions used in certain books written to
*scunsiderà **à** **68** [. . .]*
belittle DOM 68
'[. . .] all these expressions written/used in certain books to belittle [the year] '68 [. . .].'
(Nazione, "Attualità," no. 14, 05/08)

Furthermore, toponyms confirm their description in the literature: the vast majority of toponyms are marked by *à*:

(7) *Vinz, cù i so 600 omi, più un centu di* a
Vinz with DET his 600 men plus one hundred from DET
furtezza di Calvi, più un centu di Corsi di
fortress of Calvi plus one hundred of Corsicans from
*l'Algaiola, decide d'occupà **à** **Calinzana.***
DET_Algaiola decide to_occupy DOM Calinzana
'Vinz, with his 600 men, plus one hundred from the fortress of Calvi, plus one hundred of Corsicans from Algaiola, decides to occupy Calinzana.'
(Cronache: 5)

Only 2 out of 13 toponyms are not DOM-marked:

(8) a. *Para Sa Roccu chì brusgia ø Chjatra.*
For Saint Roccu who burns Chjatra.
'For Saint Roccu who burns Chjatra.'
(Nazione, "Lingua," no. 8, 10/07)

b. *Enrico Macia: hè statu u   primu à   cantà ø Soleranza* [. . .]
   Enrico Macia is been DET first to sing   Soleranza
   'Enrico Macia has been the first to sing Soleranza [. . .].'
   (Nazione, "Attualità," no. 14, 05/08)

Whereas (8a) represents an actual exception to the overall tendency for consistently marking proper names irrespective of the animacy of their referents, (8b) shows a regularity we also find in other examples outside of our corpus: Proper names used as song-titles are never DOM-marked, maybe because of the metonymic use of the proper names in question (e.g., when the name of the main protagonist of a story told by the song figures as its title) even if metonymic use of nouns does not automatically lead to the exclusion of DOM-marking (see Example [6] and below).

    The following interesting example is taken from a scientific text about toponymy, where all toponyms representing the linguistic material being discussed are marked (this is a "metalinguistic use" similar to that found with DOM-marking in Rumanian, cf. Stark [2011]):

(9) *S'accetta   (*à)   tuttu: nomi italiani, nomi   corsi*
    One_accept (*DOM) everything names Italian   names Corsican
    sfigurati   [. . .] s'accetta   à   Portovecchio, à
    deformed   one_accept DOM Portovecchio   DOM
    Popolasca [. . .].
    Popolasca
    'One accepts everything: Italian names, deformed Corsican names [. . .] one accepts Portovecchio, Popolasca [. . .].'
    (Toponimia: 1)

Kinship terms also present an interesting case in this context: as already mentioned by Marcellesi (1986), they behave differently from other *nomina communia*; they are more like proper names. Accordingly, we find *à*-marked kinship terms whenever they come up without determiners:

(10) *Ha   lasciatu in paesi a   moglie cù   due figlioi   masci,*
    He.has left   in village DET wife   with two children male
    una fèmina è   à   mamma ancu à   nascia.
    one female and DOM mum   still to born
    'He has left his wife in the village with two male children and one female and mum who still had to be born.'
    (Travisagna: 3)

However, for example, kinship terms used in a metaphoric way as seen in the following instance, do not have the DOM-marker *à* because of the presence of the definite determiner:

(11)   *Tutti*   *quant'è*   *no'*   *simu,*   *salutemu*   *l'omu*   *d'azzione*   *è*
     All   together_and   we   are   greet   DET_man   of_action   and
     (*à)   ***u***   ***babbu***   *di*   *a*   *negritudine.*
     (*DOM)   DET   father   of   DET   Négritude
     'We all together greet the man of the action and the father of the
     Négritude.'
     (Nazione, "Cultura," no. 15, 07/08)

Within the class of definite pronouns, the feature [animacy] is partially important for DOM: all universal quantifiers are realized with DOM if they denote human entities (*ognunu* 'everybody'; *tutti* 'all'). Pronouns denoting inanimate entities (e.g., *tuttu* 'everything') are not marked (see also Example [9]).

(12)   *I*   *dibattiti*   *nant'à*   *l'orìgine*   *di*   *i*   *nomi*   *di*   *lochi*   *sò*
     DET   debats   about_of   DET _origin   of   DET   names   of   places   are
     spessu   *passiunati*   *è*   *interessano*   ***à***   ***tutti.***
     often   impassionate   and   interest   DOM   all/everybody
     'The debats about the origin of place names are often impassionate and
     interest everybody.'
     (Nazione, "Lingua," no.13, 04/08)

In our corpus, demonstratives with human denotation are always followed by restrictive relative clauses that seem to inhibit DOM, a regularity which has to be further investigated:

(13)   *Chjama*   *tutti*   *i*   *principi*   *di*   *Grecia*   *per*   *sceglie*   ***ø***   ***quellu***   *chì*
     He.call   all   DET   princes   of   Greece   to   choose   that   who
     serà   *u*   *so*   *ghjennaru.*
     be   DET   his   son-in-law
     'He calls all the princes of Greece to choose the one who will be his
     son-in-law.'
     (Mitulugia: 21)

In the domain of definite nominals with a common noun or a name, all nominals are realized with a definite article, a definite article plus possessive or a demon-

strative and are never DOM-marked (Examples [14a–14c]), irrespective of their
denotation. Animacy thus plays no role at all:

(14) a. *Vigu   (*à)   l'omu.*
        See   (*DOM)   DET_man.
        'I see the man.'
        (Marcellesi 1986: 137)
     b. [. . .] *avia   dettu   Dumè, scusa   di furzà (*à)   u   so*
             have   said   Dumè excuse to force (*DOM) DET his
        amicu   à   parlà.
        friend   to speak
        '[. . .] had said Dumè, [an] excuse to force his friend to speak.'
        (Ostrisorma, 31)
     c. *Un tempu dopi, i   pastori   trovanu (*à)   issu   zitellu,*
        A   time   later DET shepherds find   (*DOM) this   child
        u   racoglienu chjamandu lu   Lisandru.
        him take   call   him Lisandru
        'Some time later the shepherds find that child, and take it, calling him
        Lisandru.'
        (Mitulugia: 20)

Furthermore indefinite pronouns, e.g., *qualcosa* 'something,' which always
denote inanimate entities, or *calchissia* 'whoever,' which denotes humans, are
not marked. Likewise *unu* 'one' never gets DOM-marked, regardless of the degree
of animacy of its referent, and even if it has a specific reading:

(15) *Per voi   carissimi lettori,   A Nazione hà   vulsutu sape   ne*
     For you   dearest   readers A Nazione have wanted   know   about
     di più,   scuntrendu (*à)   unu di l'autori   di sta
     of more meet   (*DOM) one of DET _authors of this
     inchiesta   esclusiva.
     survey   exclusive
     'For you, dearest readers, *A Nazione* wanted to know more about [it], by
     meeting one of the authors of this exclusive survey.'
     (Nazione, "Interviste," no.15, 07/08)

However, like universal quantifiers, negative pronouns denoting human beings
are always DOM-marked.

(16) *Ma   tù   ùn   fighjà   **à**   **nisunu**   sè   tù   voli   sta   invisibile.*
But   you   not   watch   DOM   nobody   if   you   want   stay   invisible
'But don't watch anybody it you want to stay invisible.'
(Mitulugia: 29)

As newly revealed by our corpus study, indefinite nominals realized with an indefinite article are never DOM-marked:

(17) *Agavè   chì   serà   sposa   d'unu   di   i   Sparti: Echione,*
Agavè   who   will.be   wife   of_one   of   DET   Spartiates   Echione
*è   chì   li   derà   (*à)   **un figliolu:** Penteu.*
and   who   him   give   (*DOM)   a   son   Penteu
'Agavè, who will be wife of one of the Spartiates, Echione, and who will
give him a son: Penteu.'
(Mituligia: 35)

The same holds for nominals with prenominally realized quantifiers or numerals, as shown in Examples (18a) and (18b):

(18) a. *U   Cicloppe   li   risponde   ch'ellu   si   n'empippa di*
DET   Ciclop   him   answer   that_he   SELF   not_care   about
*e   so   sciagure,   si   pesca   **ø   due omi**, i   sbatte di*
DET   his   injuries   one   catch   two   men   them   beat   to
capu   nant'à   una   petra   è   i   si   manghja   crudi crudi.
head   on_of   a   stone   and   them   SELF   eat   raw   raw
'The Ciclops responds to them that he does not care about their injuries,
catches the two men, beats them with their heads on a stone and eats
them raw.'
(Mitulugia: 24)
   b. *Hà   scambiatu   **ø   tutti   i   to   cumpagni** in   purchetti*
Have   turned   all   DET   your   fellows   in   pigs
è   ti   ferà   listessa   cosa.
and   to you   make   DET_same   thing.
'He has turned all your fellows into pigs and he will do the same thing to
you.'
(Mitulugia: 26)

In the corpus, almost all bare nominals denote inanimate entities and are never DOM-marked. The two bare nominals denoting human referents, *moglie* 'wife'

and *maritu* 'husband,' show up in most cases in incorporation structures with the verbs *tene* 'keep' and *piglià* 'take' and are never DOM-marked:

(19)   *Omu   si   dumandava cum'elli   avianu fattu   à   truvà, è*
        One   SELF ask   how_they have   made to find   and
        *sopratuttu à   tene   ø   **moglie**, issi for di legge è   di*
        above_all to keep   wife   this out of law   and of
        sucietà [...] *Per Zarafinu, paria più   chè   incerta   quella*
        society   for Zarafinu seem more than uncertain this
        *di piglià ø   **moglie**.*
        to take   wife
        'One asked oneself how they managed to find and above all to keep a wife, [and] this beyond law and society [...] To Zarafinu it seemed more than uncertain this getting of a wife.'
        (Ostrisorma: 8)

4 Discussion

As we can see in Table 3, our corpus data suggests that we have no really fluid case alternations in Corsican DOM. We find almost 100% of marking in the case of strong personal pronouns, proper names and kinship terms that have no nominal determiners or other prenominal functional elements, and with universal and negative quantifiers used pronominally with human denotation. In all other cases, including definite pronouns such as demonstratives followed by restrictive relative clauses, definite nominals and also names with a prenominal determiner (sometimes even lexicalized as such, see Example [1b]), the DOM marker *à* does not show up, irrespective of the animacy or the semantic definiteness of the DO-nominal in question. Except for the class of universal quantifiers and their semantic counterpart, negative pronouns, the Corsican system looks like a case of "incipient DOM" (cf. Iemmolo 2010: 257 on Northern Italian, Gallo-Italian dialects, and French varieties), where only personal pronouns and, partially, kinship terms and proper names are case-marked with the DOM-marker. However, the Corsican system is different, as our examples show that topicalization of the DO is not (no longer?) a prerequisite.

Two main triggers can thus be identified as responsible for three splits for Corsican DOM (following Klein and de Swart 2011): syntactic definiteness and, to a much lesser extent, animacy (only in the domain of pronominal elements):

- Split I: DP-type: [+pro] – [−pro]
- Split IIA: animacy, in the domain of [+pro]: [+*human*][12] – [−human]
- Split IIB: (syntactic) definiteness, in the domain of [−pro]: [+*name, without any determiners etc.*] – [−name]

This picture is only provisional and certainly requires further specification and explanation; it is only an attempt to summarize what we have found in our corpus data. Let us state the following for the moment: The first split does not split all Corsican DOs into a marked and unmarked class, but is necessary to subdivide them into two subclasses where two different triggers provoke the subsequent and decisive splits. Inside the domain of pronominal elements, the DOM-marker *à* occurs with strong personal pronouns that are only used to refer to human beings and with universal quantifiers and negative pronouns denoting humans. Other pronominal elements do not occur with *à* in our corpus, even if they denote human beings. Still, we would like to formulate the rule under "Split IIA" in this way, as all demonstratives with human denotation in our corpus are followed by a restrictive relative clause. This fact also triggers irregularities in other DO-categories and has to be investigated further; data outside of our corpus attests that there is a strong tendency to *à*-mark other indefinite pronouns with human denotation. In the domain of non-pronominal DOs, only those which are inherently definite without any prenominal determiners or quantifiers, i.e., names or kinship terms used as names, are DOM-marked. DOs with prenominal functional elements that indicate their definiteness or indefiniteness or bare nouns with non-specific readings remain unmarked. This applies even to those names (e.g., Example [1b], *U Scupatu*) which have a determiner as a lexicalized part of their internal structure – in Corsican, as soon as functional elements appear in complex nominals in direct object position, they will not be marked by *à*.

4.1 Disambiguation or individuation?

The Corsican corpus data seems to confirm the criticism of the disambiguation hypothesis. Within the domain of strong personal pronouns and proper names, DOM is present as long as there is no determiner. But full lexical nouns are never DOM-marked, as they are realized either with a determiner (article, demonstrative), a numeral or a quantifier, or as bare nouns. The class of kinship terms shows variation in this context, depending on the grammatical category they are assigned to: either they behave like complex noun phrases and are not marked, or

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12 Italics indicate DOM-marking.

they behave like proper names and are marked. In neither case can DOM be considered a disambiguation device, because the regularities behind it have nothing to do with the respective subject properties; rather they are exclusively driven by the DO's properties. Furthermore, as strong personal pronouns show different lexical forms for accusative and nominative case in Corsican and yet are always DOM-marked, the disambiguation hypothesis fails again (this also goes against Rohlfs [1949: vol. II]). Only universal and negative quantifiers are marked, depending on the degree of animacy of their respective referents.

While the disambiguation hypothesis does not offer a plausible explanation of the Corsican data, the concept of [±individuation] seems more promising. As Hopper and Thompson (1980) argue, a high degree of animacy (humanness) and/ or referentiality contributes to the individuation of a DO(-referent, see Table 2). Now, in Corsican, only highly referential DOs are marked by *à*: Proper names are inherently definite and refer to one-of-a-kind entities; strong personal pronouns are inherently definite and refer to identifiable humans, and the same holds for kinship terms referring in a definite-specific way in a given context. Universal and negative quantifiers denoting human entities are a special case and have to be considered separately. They do not denote single individuated entities, but they do not denote an indefinite partition of sets into more or less big parts neither (like "mid-scalar quantifiers" following Haspelmath (1997), as English *some*, *many*, *a few*, and the equivalents of which never show up with the DOM-marker in Corsican in our data). How this can be related to the concept of [±individuation] is left open to future research.

It is important to underline that in our corpus data animacy is not the main trigger for Corsican DOM, contrary to many previous assumptions (cf. Bottiglioni 1957 [1932]: 120; Rohlfs 1949: vol. II, Section 632, 434–437; Albertini 1972: 92). It is semantic and most prominently *syntactic definiteness* (DP-type) which plays a major role in Corsican DOM-marking. Elements that are very high on the referentiality scale are marked, while complex lexical noun phrases or bare nouns are not DOM-marked. Thus, among the features enumerated in Table 2 that account for the semantic feature of [individuation], [proper] and [referential/definite] seem to play a major role, the last one being understood as a syntactic rather than a semantic property of the DO-nominals in question.

4.2 A key property of Corsican DOM

While many aspects of these observations are more or less comparable with common analyses of DOM in Romance (more with the facts described for Rumanian than e.g., for Spanish, cf. Stark [2011] and Klein and de Swart [2011:

10]), one very intriguing fact lies in the systematic incompatibility between the DOM-marker *à* and determiners, numerals or quantifiers with NPs as their complements. Thus, lexical noun phrases with an (in)definite article (cf. *Vigu (*à) l'omu* 'I see the man'), demonstratives (cf. *Vigu (*à) quiss'omu* 'I see that man'), numerals (cf. *U Cicloppe si pesca (*à) due omi* 'The Cyclops catches two men') or quantifiers (cf. *Vigu (*a) tutti omi* 'I see all men') never get DOM-marked, independently of their semantic definiteness or the denotation of their noun. The Corsican object marker *à* appears to take as its complements only inherently definite and thereby highly individuated elements (or "rigid designators", following Kripke [1979]) with no further descriptive content, like strong personal pronouns and proper names. It does not take complex DPs, QPs or NumPs, where information about person (in D°, cf. Longobardi [2008]), number (in Num°) and countability (= *LATT*, lattice interpretation for non-countable NPs; cf. Link [1983]; Stark [2009]) are marked in different functional heads and all amount "compositionally" to a bigger or smaller degree to the [individuation] of the complex nominal. [Individuation] can depend either on identifiability by context localization or on quantification, e.g., via number-marking (cf. Stark 2009). In a similar vein, Deprez (2006) sees in principle two possibilities of [individuation] of nominals, i.e., (1) concepts or descriptions (in N°) can be mapped onto concrete instances of these descriptions, either by quantification or by number-marking. Or (2), they can be individualized by a contextually given localization independent from number, which holds especially for proper names. Corsican *à* seems to be sensitive to this latter form of [individuation], in that it marks only "inherently individualized" items, but no nominal expressions containing a description or a predicate (N° or a clause), which has to be combined with different functional heads in order to get an individualized reading. This perspective would also explain the absence of *à* with demonstratives or universal quantifiers followed by restrictive relative clauses ('those who', 'everybody who'), where the identification of the intended referents depends also on a "compositional" interpretation of different functional and descriptive elements.

Of course, all these remarks are preliminary in the sense that they have to be confirmed or refuted by a much bigger amount of data from different sources (spoken material, grammaticality judgments, etc.), which will be gathered in the projected field work.[13]

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13 A detailed syntactic analysis is still outstanding and part of the upcoming research.

5 A short conclusion and questions for further research

This paper described and discussed the distribution of Corsican DOM in a small corpus of written data against the background of the general discussion of DOM and previous studies on Corsican. Section 1 provided a short introduction to the phenomenon of Differential Object Marking and Section 2 discussed the features of animacy and referentiality and the possible motivations for DOM-systems, notably the disambiguation-hypothesis and the transitivity-hypothesis. In Section 3, a detailed description of Corsican DOM revealed the following major points: Corsican nominals without an overt morphological marker for definiteness, such as strong personal pronouns, proper names (plus certain pronominal quantifiers with human denotation), are marked by *à*. Those nominals whose referentiality is already marked with an article or prenominal demonstrative or quantifier cannot have another overt marker and are therefore excluded from DOM. Against the broad assumption of previous work, animacy is relevant only for a very limited number of DO-nominals in Corsican DOM (universal and negative quantifiers, among others). This was followed by a discussion of the data in Section 4, resulting in the assumption that Corsican *à* seems to be incompatible with determiners, numerals or quantifiers + NPs or CPs. At the semantic-functional level, the corpus data clearly indicates that DOM in Corsican is a marking strategy for highly contextually localized and therefore individuated referents, i.e., DOM in Corsican is perhaps a marker of contextual [individuation].

These findings suggest a strong need for a systematic fieldwork in order firstly to enrich the too small and partially eclectic data base of our corpus (i.e., authentic spoken data, and if possible, native speaker judgments), secondly to complement Table 3, especially in the realm of animate but not human DO-referents, and thirdly to answer at least the following crucial questions revealed by our data: How are names with lexicalized determiners really marked? Does animacy really not play any role in this area? What is the role of restrictive relative clauses? To which extent is the feature [human] relevant in the domain of pronouns? What about *wh*-elements in DO-position? And finally: Can we find an overall generalization which allows us to explain and model the syntax of Corsican DOM?

Future research and a broader database are needed to complete the picture and to confirm or revise our tentative hypothesis on the [individuation] marking function of Corsican DOM.

Data corpora

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