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# ON THE DIFFERENTIAL MARKING OF DEFINITE OBJECTS IN ROMANIAN[1]

**Abstract:** We present the generalizations concerning differential object marking in Romanian, focusing on the *general* differential marking (as opposed to the preverbal differential marking) of *definite* DPs. To the main generalizations already known from the literature, we add some new fine-grained observations, pointing out some further instances when DOM is obligatory or highly preferred. For optional DOM, we argue that the notion of specificity relevant for definites is presupposition of existence, rather than epistemic specificity. We offer an analysis of DOM based on selectional features of object case heads. We argue that the feature Person does not account for all uses of DOM, but only for a part of them. At least a further selectional pattern S:DP[N$_{anaph}$+def/spec] is necessary.

## 1. Introduction

Differential object marking (DOM)[2] in Romanian is a very complex phenomenon, involving an interaction of several different parameters (besides animacy and definiteness/specificity, whose relevance for DOM is a linguistic universal, see Aissen's 2003 scales, for Romanian other factors need to be taken into account – the presence of noun ellipsis, the (non)-nominal status of a proper-name expression). Most of the in-depth studies of this phenomenon concentrated on DOM of indefinites, which is particularly interesting due to the existence of semantic effects of DOM such as specificity (see Farkas 1987, Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Tigău 2011, 2020, a.o.). We address DOM of definite DPs, which is mostly controlled by formal features but is not exempt of semantic effects. To the clear generalizations that can be found in the literature, we will add some new

[2] We use the abbreviation 'DOM' for 'differential object marking' and 'differential object marker'. We will also use the abbreviation 'ClD' for 'clitic doubling'.

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observations, and we will point out the implications of these facts on the analysis of definites, on one hand, and of Romanian DOM, on the other.

## 2. Types of DOM

The linguistic literature on Romanian analyzes as DOM the differential marking of direct objects by the preposition *pe*, adding the observation that this marking is sometimes accompanied by clitic doubling (ClD being sometimes obligatory and sometimes optional). However, there is a second type of marking of a sub-class of direct objects: preverbal objects that are definite or specific are obligatorily clitic-doubled, irrespective of the type of displacement they undergo (topicalization, focalization, wh-movement; see Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Alboiu 2002, a.o.)[3]; the specificity involved is chiefly partitive specificity (see (4); see Farkas 2002 on types of specificity); animacy is irrelevant (see the objects in (1)–(4), which are all inanimate and therefore lack the prepositional DOM *pe*):

(1)    Cartea,    însă,    am    pierdut-*(o)        (topic)
        book-the however have.1 lost-3FSG.ACC
        'The book, however, I lost'
(2)    CARTEA am    pierdut-*(o),    nu scrisorile.        (focus)
        book-the  have.1 lost-3FSG.ACC    not letters-the
        'It's the book I lost, not the letters'
(3)    Care    carte ai        pierdut-*(o)? /  Ce    carte ai        pierdut-(*o)?
        which book have.2S lost-3FSG.ACC    which book have.2S lost-(3FSG.ACC)
(4)    a. Trei cărţi    a citit şi    el la viaţa    lui. (weak indefinite, non-specific)
            three books has read also he at life-the his
            'Three books he definitely has read all his life.'
        b. Trei cărţi    le-a            citit deja.            (partitive indefinite)
            three books 3FPL.ACC-has    read already
            'Three of the books he has already read.'

This type of clitic-doubling qualifies as 'differential marking' because it only involves a sub-class of objects and positions. By contrast, *pe*-marking occurs with certain objects irrespective of their position with respect to the verb. We thus have to distinguish two types of DOM: *preverbal* DOM, as illustrated in (1)–(4), and *general* DOM, which holds for postverbal positions as well and is always manifested by the use of *pe*. Clitic doubling

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[3] The so-called 'secondary objects' selected by certain verbs such as *ask, teach*, which co-occur with the direct object and bear unmarked case (as opposed to ordinary indirect objects which bear dative), cannot be cliticized and do not allow ClD. Consequently, they cannot be fronted if they are definite/specific:
(i)    Îi        învăţ    muzica/    muzică pe    copii.
        3MP.ACC teach.1S music-the    music DOM children
        'I teach the children music'
(ii)    {MUZICĂ / * MUZICA} îi        învăţ    pe    copii /  *MUZICA (i)-o        învăţ    pe    copii.
        music    / music-the  3MP.ACC teach.1SG DOM children   music-the (3MP)-3FS teach.1S DOM children
        'It's music I teach children.'

is not restricted to preverbal DOM, it also occurs with general DOM, being sometimes obligatory, sometimes optional (subject to speaker variation) and sometimes impossible:

(5)    a. *(L-)am            întâlnit pe   el.
          3MS.ACC-have.1 met    DOM he
          'I met him.'
       b. %(L)-am            întâlnit pe   un prieten.
            3MS.ACC-have.1 met    DOM a   friend
          'I met a friend.'
       c. Nu (*l-)am            întâlnit pe    nimeni.
          not (3MS.ACC)-have.1 met    DOM nobody
          'I met nobody.'

When moved to preverbal positions, *pe*-marked objects use ClD under the rule of preverbal DOM, on a par with all other objects – thus, the clitic becomes obligatory in (5)b, which displays a specific object, and remains impossible in (5)c:

(6)    Pe    un prieten *(l-)am            întâlnit. / Pe nimeni nu (*l-)am              întâlnit.
       DOM a   friend   3MS.ACC-have.1 met      DOM nobody not (3MS.ACC)-have.1 met

This shows that general DOM comes in at least two varieties, with and without ClD. In the recent language there has been a tendency to use ClD with *pe*-marked objects whenever possible, eliminating thus the type *pe*+optional ClD by extending, for these objects, the type *pe*+obligatory ClD. This simplifies the system, reducing general DOM to two sub-types: with or without ClD. Impossible ClD is confined to non-specific (and non-definite) inanimate pronouns, where the use of *pe* is triggered by animacy + pronominality: *cine* 'who', *nimeni* 'nobody', *cineva* 'somebody'. As this article is concerned with definites, we will only be dealing with *pe*+(obligatory/optional) ClD. For space reasons, we will not discuss the system which has two sub-types of *pe*-marking of definites, with obligatory and with optional ClD. We will describe the system that represents our idiolect, where ClD of *pe*-marked definites is obligatory[4], see (7) (note that *profesor* in (7) is definite; the absence of the article is due to the so-called article-drop rule, by which the suffixal definite article is dropped after most accusative-taking prepositions if the maximal projection of N consists only of $D_{def}$ and the lexical N; see Giurgea 2022 for an analysis):

(7)    *(L-)am            întâlnit pe   George / pe    profesor.
          3MS.ACC-have.1 met    DOM George  DOM teacher
       'I met George/the teacher.'

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[4] This system is a recent development of standard Romanian. In the first half of the 20th century, ClD of *pe*-marked definites with an overt N was still optional. For instance, in the first volume of Călinescu's *Enigma Otiliei*, published in 1938, *pe Felix* 'DOM Felix' appears without ClD 66 times and with ClD 16 times (we did not count the preverbal use, where ClD is required). The predominance of the absence of clitic doubling can be explained by the pressure of the norm of the time, which criticized ClD as 'pleonastic' (see Coteanu 1963).

In the following, our discussion will be confined to general DOM. The rule of preverbal DOM is much simpler: when it comes to definites, *all* need ClD.


## 3. General DOM of definites, formal/structural constraints


### 3.1. *In DPs with overt nouns/without ellipsis*

(i) With overt nouns, DOM is only found with animates (except in the special comparative construction discussed under (v) below):[5]

(8)     a. (O)         aştept   (pe)  profesoara de pian.
            3FS.ACC wait.1SG DOM teacher-the of piano
        b. Aştept   scrisoarea / * O         aştept     pe      scrisoare.
            wait.1SG letter-the     3FS.ACC   wait.1SG (DOM) letter

With common nouns referring to animals, DOM is possible but suggests that the animal is treated like a person (it is therefore common in stories, see examples in GALR II: 398 and Coteanu 1963: 244):[6]

(9)     a. Am     lăsat câinele  acasă / ? L-am              lăsat pe   câine acasă.
            have.1 left  dog-the home     3MS.ACC-have.1 left  DOM dog    home
             'I left the dog home.'
        b. Fotografiază        coţofana! / ?? Fotografiaz-o              pe coţofană!
            take-photo.IMPV.2S magpie-the     take-photo.IMPV.2S-3FS.ACC DOM magpie
            'Take a photo of the magpie!'

Because the issue of animals vs. persons is quite delicate and we cannot address it here at length, we will use in the following the more general terms 'animate' and 'inanimate' (instead of '+/–human' or 'person').

(ii) Among overt animate nouns,
(a) DOM is obligatory with proper names (see (10)–(12)), including names of animals (see (11)), proper names preceded by categorizing common nouns (see (12)) and kinship terms and relational nouns with a proper name behavior, interpreted as familiar definites,

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[5] In certain regional varieties, DOM can also occur with inanimates (see Nicula Paraschiv 2016 for an overview). In the standard language, DOM with inanimate overt nouns is restricted to a few fixed expressions where the subject and the object have the same N and no determiner:
(i)     Mână pe  mână spală.
        hand DOM hand washes
        'One hand washes the other.'
For space reasons, we only address DOM in the standard variety of Romanian.
[6] The use of DOM with animals is more widespread in regional varieties according to GA²:156.

with a rigid designation for the conversation participants (e.g. *tata* 'my/our father', *şefa* 'my/our (female) boss'), see (13):

(10) Îl      vom     întreba pe   George / *Vom     întreba George.
     3MS.ACC will.1PL ask    DOM George    will.1PL ask     George
     'We'll ask George.'

(11) *(L-)       am    pierdut *(pe) Grivei, câinele  nostru.
     3MSG.ACC-have.1 lost     DOM Grivei   dog-the our
     'We lost Grivei, our dog.'

(12) *(Îl)    vom     întreba *(pe) studentul  Ion Dumitrescu.
     3MS.ACC will.1PL ask     DOM  student-the Ion Dumitrescu.

(13) *(Îl)    vom     întreba *(pe) tata.
     3MS.ACC will.1PL ask     DOM  dad

(b) DOM is strongly preferred with DPs with possessors for which DOM is obligatory, e.g. pronouns (on DOM with pronouns, see (iii) below), proper names; with plurals, absence of DOM is sometimes less deviant than with singulars, see (14)c:

(14) a. *(Îi)     vom      întreba *(pe) părinţii   lui/ tăi/ Mariei   / fiecăruia.
      3MP.ACC will.1PL ask     DOM parents-the his/your/Maria.GEN every-one.GEN
      'We'll ask his/your/Maria'/every one's parents.'
    b. Au      invitat şi   profesoara (?? lui Ion).
      have.3PL invited also teacher-the   GEN Ion
    c. Am  întrebat şi   {??colegul/ ?  colegii}     lui.
      have.1 asked  also colleague-the/colleagues-the his
      'I also asked his colleagues.'

Compare (14) with examples in which the possessor is not among the DPs that would require DOM in object position; in such cases, DOM is optional:

(15) a. (Îi)     vom      întreba (pe) părinţii   acestei fetiţe / fiecărui   elev.
      3MP.ACC will.1PL ask     DOM parents-the this.GEN girl   every.GEN  student
      'We'll ask this girl's/every student's parents.'
    b. Au      invitat şi   profesoara băiatului.
      have.3PL invited also teacher-the boy-the.GEN
      'They also invited the boy's teacher'

(iii) DOM is strongly preferred with inanimate definite objects that are not registered as nouns in the lexicon: non-nominal expressions in a metalinguistic use (see *"şi"* in (16)), names of letters, names of numbers (see GLR II: 398–399, Pană Dindelegan 2013: 130); names of musical notes also belong here, presumably due to their being based on abbreviations:[7]

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[7] This rule covers the use of DOM with the non-nominal expression *vino-ncoace* 'come hither!' functioning as a kind-referring abstract term:

(16)  L-ai                        uitat   pe   {"şi"/ X /sol} / ?? Ai          uitat {"şi" / X/sol.}
      3MS.ACC-have.2SG forgot DOM and /X /G          have.2SG forgot   and   X/G
      You forgot the 'and'/ the 'X'/ the G (note).

Here it appears that DOM is a way of supplying the difficulty of adding definite marking via inflection (recall that DOM triggers article drop); note indeed that acceptable versions of (16) without DOM involve the suffixal article, see (17), and in contexts where an indefinite noun would be used, e.g. with created objects, DOM does not appear, see (18):

(17)  Ai   uitat  *pe*-ul.
       you  forgot  *pe*-the
       'You forgot the letter *p*/the preposition *pe*.'
(18)  A    scris  "şi" /  A cântat sol în loc de   la /  A   pronunţat      "Ieuropa".
       has written *şi*    has played G in place of A   has  pronounced      Ieuropa
       '(S)he wrote "şi" / played G instead of A / pronounced "Ieuropa".'

However, absence of inflection is not sufficient for triggering DOM. With foreign names of places, DOM is impossible even if the article is hard to use because of the non-adapted pronunciation (see *Rouen* in (19), where the judgments hold for speakers who use the pronunciation [ru'ã]); in such cases, the name can appear bare, although some speakers prefer adding a classifying common noun, as a support of the definite article:

(19)  a. *Apoi l-au                cucerit    pe   Rouen / ?? Au    cucerit   Rouen-ul.
          then 3MS.ACC-have.3PL conquered DOM Rouen /  have.3PL conquered Rouen-the
       b. Apoi au           cucerit   %(oraşul) Rouen.
          Then   have.3PL conquered city-the Rouen
          'Then they conquered Rouen.'

For the acceptability of DOM in (16)-(17), as opposed to toponyms, we see two possible explanations: either these items are not registered as [-animate] in the lexicon (due to their being non-nominal) and DOM is sensitive to a formal [-animate] feature, or these items are registered as proper names in the lexicon whereas toponyms are registered as common nouns, and DOM is used with proper names regardless of animacy. The second hypothesis is supported by the fact that autochthonous toponyms usually require the definite article like common nouns[8] (see (20)a), and this includes the direct object use: as shown in (20)b, in the direct object position, a morphologically integrated toponym requires the definite article:

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(i)    Are  pe   vino-ncoace.
       has DOM come.IMPV.2s-hither
       '(S)he is attractive/fetching.'
[8] There are exceptions for the subject position: the article may be absent when cities are used as points on a map or occur in definitions:
(i)    Buşteni e după Sinaia / e un oraş în Prahova
       Buşteni is after Sinaia  is a  city  in Prahova
       'Buşteni comes after Sinaia / is a city in Prahova county.'

(20)   a. Bușteni(*ul) e   mereu frumos.
   Bușteni(-the) is  always beautiful
   'Bușteni is always beautiful.'
  b. Nu reușesc  să   găsesc Bușteni??(ul) pe hartă / *să-l   găsesc pe Bușteni....
   not manage.1S SBJV find.1S Bușteni(the) on map /  SBJV-3MS.ACC find.1S  DOM B.
   'I can't find Bușteni on the map.'

(iv) DOM is possible with overt inanimate nouns only inside elliptical comparative clauses in *ca* 'as, like' (which are known to allow *pe*-marking of inanimates, see Pană Dindelegan 2013: 131, Irimia 2018), see (21), without being obligatory (see (22))[9]:

(21)   Își       ține bebelușul ca pe    sacul    de cartofi.
  3MS.DAT holds baby-the   like DOM bag-the of potatoes
  'He is holding his baby as the potato bag.'
  (https://stirileprotv.ro/show-buzz/entertainment/...)
(22)   Bea vinul     ca apa     / ca pe    apă.
  drinks wine-the like water-the like DOM water
  '(S)he drinks/is drinking wine like water.'

(v) DOM is ruled out with definites associated to a dative possessor[10]:

(23)   **Și**-a     invitat **rudele** / * Și        le-a        invitat pe rude.
  DAT-has invited relatives-the 3REFL.DAT 3FP.ACC-has invited DOM relatives
  '(S)he invited her/his relatives.'


### 3.2. *With pronouns and other D(eterminer)P(hrase)s without an overt N*

(vi) DOM is obligatory with personal pronouns irrespective of animacy, see (24), where the object is inanimate (obviously, only strong forms are relevant; weak forms are clitic,

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[9] DOM of inanimates is disfavored if the comparative clause is the argument of a degree word:
(i)      Apreciază sonatele   la fel  de mult ca simfoniile    / *pe simfonii.
  appreciates sonatas-the equally of  much as symphonies-the  DOM symphonies
  '(S)he appreciates sonatas as much as symphonies.'
[10] This constraint appears to be sometimes suspended if the object is topicalized, see Irimia (2023):
(i)      Pe   prieteni, Ion și-i       ajută. / *Pe   soră, Ion și-o           ajută.
  DOM friends  Ion 3REFL.DAT helps     DOM sister Ion 3S.DAT-3FS.ACC helps
  'His own friends, Ion helps them.'     'His own sister, Ion helps her.'
Moreover, DOM is possible in the (substandard) construction in which the dative clitic doubles a DP-internal possessor:
(ii)     % Ion **și**-i            ajută doar pe   prietenii **lui**.
  Ion 3S.DAT-3MP.ACC helps only DOM friends-the his
  'Ion only helps his friends.'

so they cannot host a prepositional marker; insofar as they have a dedicated accusative morphology, clitics are *ipso facto* explicitly marked as objects):[11]

(24)  A: Şi  cărţile  de joc?  B: *(Le-)  am  pierdut şi  *(pe) ele.
      and cards-the of game   3FP.ACC-have.1 lost  also DOM they.FP
      'A: What about the game cards? B: I lost them too.'

Pronominal pre-D universals (*tot/toţi* 'all, the whole', *amândoi* 'both') with a nominal antecedent can be included here, if we assume that they combine with a null personal pronoun of the *pro*-type (whose features are licensed by the universal); as universals in Romanian always require a definite DP if the N is overt, it is reasonable to assume a null definite DP for the 'pronominal' use with a nominal antecedent[12]:

(25)  A: Şi  laptele?  B: L-am  băut  pe tot. / * Am  băut tot.
      and milk(M)-the  3MS.ACC-have.1 drunk DOM all.  have.1 drunk all.
      'A: And the milk? B: I drunk all of it.'

(vii) With other definite DPs without an overt N, DOM is obligatory with animates. For inanimates, it is by and large obligatory in case of N ellipsis (see Cornilescu 2000, Pană Dindelegan 2013: 132, Irimia 2020a,b, Cornilescu and Tigău 2022) – see (26)a for N ellipsis licensed by *al*-genitives[13] (*al* is a genitival marker agreeing with the possessum, showing, in (26), the features of an elided noun identified as *calculator* 'computer'), (26)b for N ellipsis with a postnominal modifier and the definite article realized as the strong form *cel*, (26)c for elliptical demonstratives[14], (26)d for N-ellipsis after ordinals and the fused definite alternative (*celălalt* 'the other'):

(26)  a. Deşi  calculatorul  meu  nu merge perfect, nu vreau
         although computer(NEUT)-the.MS my.MSG not goes  perfectly not want.1S
         să -*(l)  folosesc *(pe) al  altuia.
         SBJV-(3MS.ACC) use.1S  DOM al.MS other.MS.GEN
         'Although my computer doesn't work perfectly, I don't want to use somebody else's.'
      b. A: Cu ce  maşină să  vin?  B: Ia-*(o  pe) cea  nouă!
         with what car(F) SBJV come.1S take.IMPV.2S-3FS.ACC DOM the.FS  new.FS
         'A: Which car should I use? B: Take the new one.'

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[11] Although for the 1st and 2nd person singular the nominative vs accusative distinction is morphologically marked also in the strong forms (*eu/mine*, *tu/tine*), DOM is obligatory with *mine* 'me.ACC', *tine* 'you.S.ACC'.

[12] (25) also allows a version with clitic and without DOM – *L-am băut tot* (cf. the overt N version *Am băut laptele tot* 'I drank the milk all'). In this case, *tot* is not DP-internal, but it is a floating quantifier. This analysis is based on the generalization that ClD-ed DPs are always *pe*-marked.

[13] *Calculatorul* 'the computer' is a neuter noun. Neuter nouns in Romanian behave as ambigenerics, triggering masculine agreement and masculine anaphors in the singular, and feminine agreement and feminine anaphors in the plural.

[14] For demonstratives, we test for both long and short forms (see *aceia* and *ăia* in (26)c), which differ in register, the latter being colloquial.

    c. Nu-mi      plac  aceşti pantofi. Daţi-mi-\*(i               pe) aceia/ăia.

      not-me.DAT like.3P these  shoes  give.IMPV.2P-me.DAT-3MP.ACC DOM those

      'I don't like these shoes. Give me those ones!'

    d. Cu ce  tren        să  vin?  (Ia-l               pe)  al     doilea /

      with what train(NEUT) SBJV come.1S take.IMPV.2S-3MS.ACC DOM *al*.MS second

      ultimul    / celălalt.

      last-the.MS the.MS-other.MS

      'Which train should I take? Take the second/last/other one.'

Absence of DOM is somewhat less degraded with superlatives + N-ellipsis, see (27)a; relative superlatives occurring in typically indefinite contexts such as objects of I-level *have* allow absence of DOM even with animates, for some speakers, see (27)b (on the indefinite behavior of the so-called 'comparative' or 'relative' superlatives, see Szabolcsi 1986, Heim 1999):

(27)  a. Trebuie să-i        placă bomboanele: ? (le)-am      cumpărat ?(pe)

      must    SBJV-3S.DAT like.3 candies(F)-the  3FP.ACC-have.1 bought    DOM

      cele     mai  scumpe.

      SUP.FP  more expensive.FP

      'She must like the candies. I bought the most expensive ones.'

    b. Ca fundaşi  centrali – % Cine are cei      mai  buni?

      as defenders central    who has SUP.MP more good

      'As for central defender – who has the best ones?'

(viii) DOM is optional or ruled out with inanimate noun-less definite DPs that do not involve N-ellipsis:

(a) Feminine demonstratives with a non-elliptical inanimate interpretation, referring to perceptually accessible objects that are not presented as included in a class denoted by a noun (see (28)a) or to propositional objects, introduced in the previous discourse by clauses or other non-nominal expressions (see (29)), usually disallow DOM; in the context in (28), with no available nominal antecedent, the use of DOM forces an animate interpretation, where the non-anaphoric [$_N$Ø] is +human +female, see (28)b:

(28)  [out-of-the-blue, no salient nominal antecedent]

    a. Vezi  **aia**?  Ce-o        fi?

      see.2SG that.FS what-may.3S  be

     'Do you see that? What could it be?'

    b. O      vezi    pe aia?

      FS.ACC see.2S   DOM that.FS

      'Do you see her/that woman?'

(29)  [Ea e căsătorită]$_i$, dar el nu  ştie  **asta**$_i$ / \* n-o        ştie    pe-asta$_i$.

    she is married    but he not knows this.FS  not-3FS.ACC knows DOM this.FS

    'She is married, but he doesn't know this.'

DOM is exceptionally allowed with pronouns anaphoric to clausal constituents if the pronoun refers to an event or event type (see the selecting verbs 'try' and 'do' in (30)–b as opposed to 'know' in (30)c) and is contrasted with other similar objects, see the additive particle *şi* 'also' in (30); the use of DOM gives the impression of selecting an item from a list of familiar concepts:

(30)  a. A: I-ai              trimis flori  ca        să     te        ierte?
           3S.DAT-have.2S sent flowers so-that SBJV you.ACC forgives
         B: Am   încercat  şi  **asta** / încercat-**o** şi   **pe-asta**.
            have.1 tried     also this  tried-FS    also DOM this
         'Did you send her flowers to get her forgiveness? I tried that too.'
      b. A: Ai    urcat    vreun optmiar?  B: Am   făcut-(**o**)      şi  **(pe-)asta**.
            have.2S climbed any 8000m-mountain have.1 done-(3FS.ACC) also (DOM) this.FS
            'Have you ever climbed a 8000m. mountain? I've done this too.'
      c. A: O deranjează dezordinea. B: Nu-i nevoie să-mi spui, (??**o**) ştiu  şi (??**pe**)-**asta**.
            her bothers    mess-the  not is need SBJV-me tell.2S  3FS know.1S also DOM this
            'A: She's bothered by mess. B: You don't need to tell me, I know this too.'

In the colloquial register, even inanimate demonstratives which arguably have a nominal antecedent, as reflected by gender, can sometimes lack DOM, especially if the antecedent is extralinguistic (as opposed to (26)c) – thus, in (31) the demonstrative is masculine due to the fact that the referred object is categorized via the neuter/masculine noun *rucsac* 'backpack' (see also Cornilescu and Tigău 2022:66, ex. 28):

(31)  % Dă-mi                 ăla!      [pointing to a backpack]
         give.IMPV.2S-me.DAT that.MS
         'Give me that!'

(b) *Cel* 'the' allows a non-elliptical reading with certain postnominal modifiers or preceded by the feminine plural pre-D universal *toate*; DOM is ruled out:

(32)  a. Nu (*le)      avea          (*pe) cele     trebuincioase.
         not  (3FP.ACC) had.IMPF.3S (DOM) the.FP necessary
         '(S)he/It lacked what was needed.'
      b. E important să    (*le)      ţineţi   minte   (*pe) cele   de mai sus.
          is important SBJV (3FP.ACC) keep.2P in-mind  (DOM) the.FP of more up
          'It is important to remember the above.'
      c. Ştie   toate   cele.
          knows all.FP the.FP
         '(S)he knows everything.'

(c) The pre-D universal *tot* 'all.MSG' meaning 'everything' (as mentioned under (vi) above, we include universals because they combine with definite DPs) rules out DOM:

(33)  [Context: no noun contextually available as an antecedent]
      Ştie     tot    / * Îl        ştie    pe   tot.
      knows all.MS    3MS.ACC knows DOM all.MS
      '(S)he knows everything.'

Its plural counterpart *toate* 'all.FPL', even when it lacks a nominal antecedent, can take DOM:

(34)  [Context: no noun contextually available as an antecedent]
      El (le)        ştie     (pe)  toate.
      he (3FP.ACC) knows DOM all.FP
      'He knows everything.'

## 4. Optional DOM with definites and its semantic correlates

The generalizations so far have been formulated in formal or structural terms. This includes the elliptical interpretation of DPs without an overt N, because there is evidence that nominal anaphora is syntactically represented (by special features or items, see Giurgea 2010, 2013 for Romanian).

In the case of animate overt nouns, as in (8), DOM appears to be optional, but its presence is known to be correlated to specificity, referentiality or individuation (see Niculescu 1965, Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Cornilescu 2000, a.o.). Generic definites and weak definites, which are both clearly non-specific, reject DOM (Cornilescu 2000, Cornilescu and Tigău 2022). Thus, the Romanian translation of the generic sentence *John loves women* will use a definite object without DOM (the '#' marks the fact that the sentence is inappropriate with the generic interpretation):

(35)  Ion iubeşte femeile    / # le     iubeşte pe  femei. (Cornilescu 2000: 104, ex. 40c–d)
      Ion loves   women-the  3FP.ACC loves  DOM women
      'Ion loves women.'

Weak definites are arguments involved in prototypical activities; they are new, non-unique and have variable reference in various environments, showing narrowest scope (see Carlson and Sussman 2005, Aguilar-Guevara 2014, Schwarz 2014, a.o.). An example is 'the plumber' in the VP 'call the plumber'. (36) shows that in the relevant interpretation, where each of the two called a different person and there is no plumber among the familiar entities in the context, DOM is not allowed:

(36)    Amândoi au  chemat instalatorul / #l-au          chemat pe    instalator.
         both      have called plumber-the   3MS-have.3P called   DOM plumber

Regarding generics, Cornilescu (2000: 104–105) cites some counterexamples which involve an inanimate subject (see (37)a), which may be related to her claim that inanimate subjects in general strongly favor the use of DOM (Cornilescu 2000: 99); however, absence of DOM is not excluded with inanimate subjects, see (37)b. A typical context with an inanimate subject and a generic animate object is 'X made man Y', see (37)b. We performed a Google search for this context, testing the DOM string *l-a împins pe om să* '3MS.ACC-has pushed DOM man SBJV' and the DOM-less string *a împins omul să* 'has pushed man-the SBJV'. The results – 20 examples with DOM and 7 without DOM – confirm that there is a preference for DOM, without DOM being obligatory.

(37)    a. Mânia   îl        orbeşte pe   om.           (Cornilescu 2000: 105, ex. 45a)
            anger 3MS.ACC blinds  DOM man
            'Anger blinds the man.'
         b. Această dorinţă arzătoare de a şti    a  împins omul     să    cerceteze   lucrurile
            this    desire  burning  of to know has pushed man-the SBJV investigates things-the
            asupra cărora nu se      dumirea.    (G. Aslan, *Pedagogia*, p. 82)
            about which  not REFL understood.3S
            'This ardent desire of knowledge made man investigate the things he didn't
            understand.'

The acceptability of DOM in (37)a may also be related to the fact that the subject itself is generic (unlike in (35)), see (38), where the subject is animate, but generic:

(38)    Femeia       frumoasă îl        orbeşte pe   bărbat.
         woman-the beautiful 3MS.ACC blinds DOM man
         'The/A beautiful woman makes a man blind.'

Kind-referring definites must be distinguished from individual-denoting definites occurring under a generic operator. The latter freely allow DOM, as shown by Cornilescu (2000), see (39). In this example, the object is interpreted as "the patients in situation $s$", where $s$ is bound by a generic operator ("in most situations $s$, $x$ treats [the patients in $s$] with care"). The object is definite because the quantified situations are known to contain patients (the subject must be someone working in healthcare). A similar example of a narrow scope definite under a quantificational adverbial is (40), where, likewise, DOM is allowed:

(39)    El îi        tratează pe   pacienţi cu   grijă.        (Cornilescu 2000: 104, ex. 43)
         he 3MP.ACC treats   DOM patients with care
         'He treats patients with care.'
(40)    [context: somebody employs an order in making the invitations, irrespective of the
         actually invited persons]

De obicei invită  întâi fetele   / De obicei le        invită întâi  pe  fete.
usually    invites first girls-the  usually   3FP.ACC invites first DOM girls
'(S)he usually invites the girls first.'

These examples show that DOM definites need not refer to specific individuals, familiar to the discourse participants. If the notion of 'specificity' relevant for DOM involves presupposition of existence (which is found in partitive specificity and epistemic specificity, which characterize optional DOM with indefinites, see Tigău 2011), it is expected that the definites in these examples should allow DOM, in spite of narrow scope and lack of speaker-oriented specificity (definiteness normally involves presupposition of existence, see Elbourne 2005, 2013, Heim 2011, a.o.). Another example showing that specificity in the sense of having a particular individual in mind is not necessary for DOM is (41). The presupposition of existence is satisfied by virtue of the relation with *romanul* 'the novel', which is a familiar or anaphoric definite.

(41)    Ar      trebui să-l           invite  pe  autorul   romanului      (oricine
        would.3 must  SBJV-3MS.ACC invite.3 DOM author-the novel-the.GEN  whoever
        ar       fi el).
        would.3 be he
        'They should invite the author of the novel (whoever that is).'

In (42), DOM is excluded because the object does not refer to an individual, but is interpreted as a question: 'we do not know who the author of the painting is'.

(42)    [Context: the guide presents a painting whose author is not known]
        #Nu(-l)       ştim        pe  autorul    tabloului.
        not(-3MS.ACC) know.1P DOM author-the painting-the.GEN
        'We do not know the author of the painting.'

Likewise, with verbs such as 'seek, look for', 'find', a definite object interpreted below the intensional arguably lacks the presupposition of existence, which explains the impossibility of DOM:

(43)    N-am       găsit-(*o)      încă (*pe) {cea  mai  potrivită   persoană / persoana
        not-have.1 found(-3FS.ACC) yet (DOM) SUP.FS COMP appropriate person(F) / person-the
        care să   îndrăznească să i         se    opună}.
        who SBJV dares          SBJV him.DAT REFL opposes
        'We still haven't found the right person/the person who may dare to oppose   him.'

Note also that in (41) the object, although epistemically non-specific, carries a presupposition of existence because it contains a definite possessor, referring to an established discourse referent (*romanului* 'of the novel') and world knowledge ensures that a novel must have an author. With an indefinite possessor interpreted as brand-new

(*institut de cercetare* in (44) interpreted as 'some institute or other', not 'some of the institutes'), DOM is no longer acceptable:

(44)   Ar    mai trebui să- ??#(l)        invităm  şi  ??#(pe) directorul  unui  institut
       would still  must  SBJV-3MS.ACC invite.1P also     DOM director-the a.GEN institute
       de cercetare.        (with a non-specific reading)
       of research
        'We should also invite the director of some research institute.'

An unmarked definite does not imply non-specificity, see (45), which is about a specific individual, known to the discourse participants (the object is epistemically and scopally specific):

(45)   Am    adus    fata    acasă.
       have.1 brought girl-the home
       'I brought the girl home.'

However, when the context allows an epistemically non-specific reading, the unmarked version tends to receive this reading. Thus, (46)b is appropriate in a context where the only reason for inviting that person is him or her being the manager:

(46)   a. Îl        vom      invita  pe  director.
           3MS.ACC will.1PL invite  DOM manager
       b. Vom    invita  directorul.
          will.1PL invite  manager-the
          'We'll invite the manager.'

The unmarked version is degraded with anaphoric definites (including demonstratives):

(47)   a. Am întâlnit acolo un scriitor, un critic şi  alte  persoane. L-am              invitat
          have.1 met there a writer   a  critic and other people  3MS.ACC-have.1 invited
          pe  (acel) scriitor la cină / ? Am   invitat scriitorul (acela)/acel scriitor la cină.
          DOM that  writer to dinner  have.1 invited writer-the (that) that  writer to dinner
          'I met there a writer, a critic and other people. I asked the writer to dinner.'
       b. [Senatorul  Fenechiu]ᵢ a  făcut  mai multe propuneri legislative. Jurnaliştii
          senator-the Fenechiu  has made several    proposal legislative journalists-the
          {l-au         criticat  pe  politicianᵢ / ?? au  criticat    politicianulᵢ.}
          3MS.ACC-have criticized DOM politician     have criticized politician-the
          'Senator Fenechiu made several legislative proposals. The journalists criticized the
          politician.'

The unmarked version is better if the referent of the definite is already familiar to the conversation participants, see e.g. (48), acceptable in a context where the girl has been

talked about for a long time or has occurred in previous discussion, as opposed to the newly introduced referents in (47):

(48)  Invită        fata     la cină!
      invite.IMPV.2 girl-the to dinner
      'Invite the girl to dinner.'

A similar distinction between anaphoric definites and familiar definites occurs in the West Germanic varieties which mark anaphoric definites by strong article forms (see Schwarz 2009). The existence of a contrast in Romanian with respect to DOM supports the idea that anaphoric definites rely on a special representation, which includes an index argument (as proposed by Schwarz 2009), even in languages that do not mark the contrast morphologically.

Summing up, we may conclude the following: (i) epistemic non-specificity is not sufficient to rule out DOM (see *autorul romanului* 'the author of the novel' in (41) and generics in (37)a, (38)); (ii) presupposition of existence (at the world of evaluation of the clause) is required for DOM (see (43), (44)); (iii) for anaphoric definites DOM is strongly preferred or required; (iv) the fact that DOM is excluded with weak definites may be derived from (ii): weak definites are known to have narrow scope and to form conceptual units together with the selecting predicate ('read the newspaper', 'call the doctor/plumber' refer to stereotypical activities). This is captured by analyses that make them dependent on the event introduced by the main predicate – see Krifka and Modarresi (2016), Schwarz (2014). Since the existence of this event not presupposed, but asserted, weak definites cannot introduce a presupposition of existence at the world of evaluation of the clause. Moreover, by their referential dependency on the event, they resemble another type of definites that reject DOM, namely definites associated to a dative possessor (see (v) under 3.1, ex. (23)), which are referentially dependent on a constituent outside the DP (the dative). We leave a formal treatment of these types of definites for further research.

In section 3.2 we have seen that DPs without an overt N often require DOM. We may wonder what happens in the case of DPs that reject DOM for semantic reasons: is N-ellipsis blocked? It appears that elliptical DPs that do not satisfy the semantic restrictions are degraded, but maybe not so much as DPs with overt Ns, see (49) vs. (43). More research is needed on this issue:

(49)  Tot          căutăm       interpreţi pentru rolul     Feliciei. {N-am        găsit
      on-and-on    search.1P    performers for    part-the  Felicia.GEN not-have.1 found
      încă interpretul    / ? Nu l-am              găsit încă pe   cel     /*N-am
      yet  performer-the     not 3MS.ACC-have.1 found yet  DOM  the.MS    not-have.1
      găsit încă cel  }   care   să    satisfacă gusturile tuturor.
      found yet  the.MS which  SBJV  satisfies  tastes-the all.MP.GEN
      'We keep looking for performers for Felicia's part. We still haven't found the performer who satisfies everybody's tastes.'

Interestingly, if N-ellipsis does not require DOM, DPs that reject DOM for semantic reasons are allowed. This can be illustrated for weak definites. In the case of ellipsis of the entire complement of D, the $D_{def}+[_N\emptyset]$ configuration surface as personal pronouns (see Elbourne 2005, 2013, Giurgea 2010, a.o.). Weak definites with N-ellipsis may surface as personal pronouns, provided that clitics alone are used. Strong forms, that require DOM, are ruled out (using the strong form in (50) brings about reference to a specific individual, familiar to the discourse participants):

(50)  Trebuie să  chemi  şi tu   instalatorul. Eu **l**-am           chemat (#pe el) duminică.
      must  SBJV call.2S also you plumber-the I  3MS.ACC-have.1 called DOM him Sunday
      'We must call the plumber too. I called him on Sunday.'

## 5. Discussion: the features that trigger general DOM

### 5.1. *Syntactic assumptions*

We analyze *pe* as spelling-out the functional category Case, abbreviated $K^0$ (Giurgea 2014, 2022, Cornilescu 2020, Cornilescu and Tigău 2022)[15]. Following Giurgea (2022), we assume that when no prepositional case marker is present, K is null but triggers feature spreading to D (and other functional items), being spelled-out as inflectional case (see e.g. for the dative, *la doi copii* 'DAT two children' vs. *copii-l-or* 'children-the-DAT.PL'). For the accusative, although there is no dedicated case morpheme, the difference appears in article drop contexts (i.e., where the complement of K only contains $D_{def}$ and $N^0$): when K is realized as a preposition, article drop applies (see (51)a), and otherwise the article is not dropped (see (51)b). Giurgea (2022) proposed that the article is not dropped when D contains a Case feature. In other words, the article is not dropped in (51)b because it hosts case (following Norris 2014, Giurgea assumes feature spreading from K to D in the case of inflectional case):[16]

(51)  a. L-am        chemat **pe**  băiat. / b. Am   chemat băiat-**ul**.
         3MS-have.1 called  DOM boy         have.1 called boy-the
         'I called the boy.'

---

[15] For the proposal of a functional projection KP for case, see Abney (1987), Lamontagne and Travis (1987), Loebel (1994), Bittner and Hale (1996), a.o. For the analysis of the Spanish DOM as $K^0$, see López (2012).

[16] Some studies assume that KP is absent with unmarked objects (López 2012 for Spanish, Cornilescu and Tigău 2022 for Romanian). Since unmarked objects also need licensing, occurring in object structural case contexts, this requires the assumption that the feature Case can occur on D irrespective of the presence of a $K^0$. But then it becomes unclear why Case cannot simply occur on D (without K being projected) in the DPs that need DOM. Cornilescu and Tigău (2022) propose that K is needed for licensing the Person feature of the DP, but Person is arguably interpretable on D and does not need special licensing in other environments such as PPs, genitives. It is important to notice that *there is no other environment in which DPs split into two types that match DOM and DOM-less DPs in object position*. We take this as evidence that the split is *triggered by the features of object $K^0$* rather than by features of the DPs.

We analyze the distribution of DOM in terms of selection: the $K^0$ spelled-out as *pe* (the DOM $K^0$) selects for DPs bearing certain features. The null $K^0$ associated to feature spreading occurs with DPs that do not bear these features. This does not need to be encoded as a selectional feature if we assume that structure-building syntactic operations obey the Elsewhere Principle – in other words, because the conditions of use of the DOM $K^0$ are a sub-set of the conditions of use of the null accusative $K^0$, the DOM $K^0$ must be used whenever its particular conditions of use obtain.[17]

### 5.2. *The features triggering DOM*

Given the very complex distribution of DOM we have seen in sections 3–4, it is not clear that a single feature can cover all the DPs that DOM-$K^0$ selects for. Cornilescu (2000) proposed a special *semantic gender* feature in order to describe the distribution of DOM: according to her, this feature has the value [+Person] for the DPs that must take DOM, [-Person] for the DPs that cannot take DOM and [αPerson], i.e. unspecified for Person in the lexicon, for the DPs with optional DOM. Inanimate nouns and the inanimate pronouns discussed under (viii.a) in section 3.2 above (see *aia*, *asta* in (28)a, (29)) are assumed to be [-Person] in the lexicon, hence the impossibility of DOM; for animate common nouns, the assignment of a [+Person] value to this feature brings about the semantic effects discussed in section 4 (and similar effects for indefinites). Whenever semantic gender is [+Person], DOM occurs[18]. In subsequent work (Cornilescu 2020, Cornilescu and Tigău 2022), this account is simplified by replacing the feature-value combination [semantic gender:+Person] with the feature Person, under the assumption that DPs that are not +Participant fall into two groups, some carrying a Person feature with the value [–Participant] (3rd person) and the others lacking this feature. This proposal is based on Richards's (2008) idea that the feature responsible for the special syntactic behavior of DPs that occupy a high position in the Animacy and Definiteness scales is the feature Person. The special syntactic behavior that Richards discusses concerns blocking in certain environments – such as object of ditransitives, low nominatives – for which failure of an Agree relation involving the feature Person can be assumed. For Romanian, such an environment has been discussed in Giurgea (2019): as noticed by Cornilescu (1998), certain DPs cannot occur as nominative Theme of *se*-passives, and these DPs are also characterized by requiring DOM:

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[17] The Elsewhere Principle, or 'Subset Principle', is mostly used in Morphology (see Anderson 1992, Kiparsky 1973, Halle 1997). The version of this principle that applies to the choice between a more general and a more specific functional head, which belongs to syntax, can be written as follows:
(i)      For any functional heads F and G that are identical in features except for selectional features,
         if F selects L(+f) and G selects L, then G cannot combine with L(+f).
[18] For the use of DOM with DPs without an overt N irrespective of animacy, she proposes that in the absence of a lexical N, the NP lacks a specification for semantic gender (the null N is analyzed as "nominal *pro*") and the [Masculine]/[Feminine] features trigger the value [-Neuter], i.e. [+Person] for semantic gender.

(52)   a. S-a                    {prizonierul / *Ion /*el} la tribunal (cf. Cornilescu 1998, ex. 17)
            REFL-has brought prisoner-the Ion   he  to court
            'The prisoner/Ion/He was brought to court.'
       b. Am     adus {prizonierul/*Ion/*el}  / L-am             adus     pe Ion/el.
            have.1 brought prisoner-the Ion him   3MS.ACC-have.1 brought DOM Ion/him
            'They brought the prisoner/Ion/him'

Giurgea (2019) proposes that the DPs that are excluded in (52)a have a Person feature and this feature cannot enter the Agree relation with T necessary for nominative licensing because *se*-passives introduce a covert Agent marked as [+3rd Person], which intervenes between T and the Theme-DP[19]. DPs that are allowed in this configuration, lacking Person, establish only a Number-agreement relation with T, which is not blocked by the null Agent. This is exactly the type of phenomenon for which Richards (2008) proposed a distinction between Person-bearing and Person-less DPs (among the DPs traditionally considered as '3rd Person'). The fact that these DPs also require DOM (see (52)b) indicates that Person is, indeed, selected by the DOM-$K^0$. But can the feature Person cover all uses of DOM?

Note that this account of the restriction on the subjects of *se*-passives implies that those DPs that are allowed as subjects of *se*-passives lack Person. We may use this as a test, to see whether the DPs that require DOM are indeed always +Person. The test gives a negative answer: there are DPs that require DOM but are allowed in *se*-passives, hence do not bear Person. We found at least two types of DPs with this behavior: (i) inanimate DPs with N-ellipsis, see (53), and (ii) indefinite animate pronouns (where by 'pronouns' we mean determiners that disallow an overt N and do not involve N-ellipsis in their interpretation, such as *cineva* 'somebody', *nimeni* 'nobody'), see (54).

(53)   a. Mâine    se     va      vinde cea nouă / *(o)     vom    vinde *(pe) cea nouă.
            tomorrow REFL will.3S sell the.FS new  (3FS.ACC) will.1P sell  (DOM) the.FS new
            'Tomorrow the new one will be sold / we'll sell the new one.'
       b. Ale  mele se    vor    vinde / *(Le)    va      vinde *(pe) ale  mele.
            *al*.FP my REFL will.3P sell      3FP.ACC will.3S sell    DOM *al*.FP my
            'Mine will be sold / (S)he will sell mine.'
(54)   a. Se  știa      de   mult timp că se     va      aresta **cineva** de la vârf
            REFL knew.3S since much time that REFL will.3S  arrest somebody from top
            'It had been known for a long time that somebody at the top would be arrested'
                                    (www.gsp.ro/..., on-line comment, in Giurgea 2019: ex.18)
       b. Vor    aresta *(pe) cineva     de la vârf.
            will.3P arrest   DOM somebody from top
            'They will arrest somebody at the top.'

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[19] An alternative to using a null Agent is to propose a [+3rd] Person associated to the Agent on the Passive Voice head itself, see Giurgea (2019) and Dobrovie-Sorin (2021) for discussion.

The type of DOM illustrated in (54)b is different from the DOM in (52)b (and the DOM discussed in this article, more generally) in that it disallows ClD, so it is not unexpected that it should involve a different feature. But the DOM of N-elliptical inanimate definites is associated to ClD (see (53)), just like the DOM of personal pronouns and animate proper names in (52)b. Based on (53), we conclude that neither *pe* nor ClD require a Person feature.

For inanimates, it appears that the relevant feature is [$N_{anaph}$] – the fact that the DP contains a null N that requires the recovery of a contextual nominal description (i.e., an anaphoric N). The fact that this feature is visible for selection at the DP level (the complement of K is a DP) can be explained as follows: the categorial label N forms part of the label of functional projections in the extended nominal projection (as proposed for functional heads in general by Citko 2008); this label is a complex of features which may include the [anaph] feature of the anaphoric N.

If we look at indefinites, we discover that this feature is not sufficient. With inanimate indefinites, DOM is optional and requires specificity/D-linking (the specificity involved is most of the time partitive specificity):

(55) a. Sunt dificil de înţeles      cărţile      lui. A trebuit s-**o**          citesc **pe**
     are  hard  to understand books(F)-the his  has must SBJV-3FS.ACC read.1S DOM
     **una**    de mai multe ori    ca      să  înţeleg.
     one.FS of several      times so-that SBJV understand.1S
     'His books are hard to understand. I had to read one (of them) several times to understand.'
    b. Nu mai trebuie cărţi.    (*O)        are  el (*pe)  **una**.
     not still need    books(F)  (3FS.ACC) has  he (DOM)  one.FS
     'We don't need books any longer. He has one.'

We conclude that DOM-$K^0$ may select DPs marked as {+$N_{anaph}$, +def} and {+$N_{anaph}$, +spec}, in addition to DPs marked [+Person], which covers the obligatory DOM with personal pronouns and proper names and might be extended to the optional DOM of animates.

The fact that syntax must have access to an +$N_{anaph}$ feature shows that NP ellipsis cannot be treated as a mere PF-deletion of de-accented material, with no feature correlate in syntax. This does not mean that it is incompatible with a deletion analysis, but it requires the existence of a feature that triggers deletion. Merchant (2001) proposed, indeed, such a feature, called [E], for ellipsis in general (for its use for nominal ellipsis, see Giurgea 2010, Saab 2019). Possible evidence that NP-ellipsis is at least sometimes an instance of deletion comes from the existence of remnants of ellipsis c-selected by the elided N, see (56) where the preposition does not have an independent meaning, but occurs as a result of the sub-categorization by the noun *încredere* 'trust, confidence'. This example shows that this type of ellipsis triggers DOM:

(56) Încrederea  în autorităţi  n-o          depăşeşte  [pe  cea/aceea    în biserică].
     trust(F)-the in authorities not-3FS.ACC exceeds    DOM the.FS/that.FS in church
     'The confidence in authorities does not exceed that in church.'

To conclude, the distribution of DOM-$K^0$ cannot be accounted for by using a single feature. This examination of DOM with definites showed that this head has at least the selectional patterns S:DP[+Person] and S:DP[$N_{anaph}$+def][20] (whether [+def] can be covered by [+spec] is not clear, we leave this issue open). For definite inanimate non-nominal expressions that take DOM (see (iii) in section 3.1 above: expressions used metalinguistically, names of letters, musical notes, etc.), we can assume a proper name status, in which case they can be covered by the feature [Person] if the D involved in syntactical proper names bears Person irrespective of animacy. As explained in section 3.1, toponyms show a common name behavior in Romanian. The alternative indicated in section 3.1, namely, that the null accusative $K^0$ should select for an [-animate] feature, is problematic because of the use of DOM with inanimates in N-ellipsis contexts.

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[20] For the notation of selectional features using "S:...", see Bruening (2013).

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