

# **An experimental study on the discourse properties of Romanian direct objects**

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**Abstract:** Differential Object Marking (DOM) and Clitic Doubling (CD) have been argued to signal prominence of the marked direct object (DO) along various dimensions, such as animacy, referentiality, topicality, affectedness. They have also been shown to mark syntactic prominence in the sense that a marked DO occupies a higher position in the syntactic representation than its unmarked counterpart. This paper investigates whether these mechanisms also signal discourse prominence, measured by two parameters: a) choice of reference and b) topic shift potential. We provide preliminary results from a sentence continuation task that measures the two parameters and we show that marking increases discourse prominence. As it will be seen, a differentiation between two types of marking is crucial, as it is only clitic doubled and differentially marked DOs that exhibit a higher discourse prominence; undoubled but differentially marked counterparts exhibit no increase regarding discourse prominence and fare similarly to unmarked DOs across tasks.

**Key words:** indefinite direct object, clitic doubling, differential object marking, discourse prominence.