
TOWARDS A HISTORICAL DIALECTAL APPROACH TO DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN CATALAN*

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ABSTRACT This paper offers a description of the emergence and development of Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Old Catalan, focusing on the perspective of historical dialectology and thus paying special attention to the dialectal differences that emerge. It does so by means of a large corpus study comprising the period from the first written texts to the 18th century. Although, in present-day Catalan, DOM is widespread with human direct objects in most dialects, its use is generally rejected by prescriptive grammar, as the phenomenon has often been attributed to Spanish influence. However, diachronic findings point to an analysis of DOM in Catalan as a fruit of the internal evolution of the language: instances of the phenomenon with human direct objects are found in earlier Catalan texts. Spanish influence (related to a series of sociopolitical events) only comes into play later, causing an exponential increase of the frequency of DOM in Catalan. Interestingly, consistent geolectal differences can be observed when analysing Old Catalan texts, with Valencian texts offering the highest number of occurrences. In this context, one must take into consideration the influence of Aragonese in Valencia (people from Aragon repopulated the area) as well as Spanish, whose effects in the Catalan-speaking area became particularly prevalent especially from the 16th century onwards. The conclusions of this study aim to provide empirically and theoretically informed research not only to identify historical dialects within Romance languages – in this case Catalan – but also

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to pave the way for more studies on historical comparative dialectology. As a matter of fact, in this study, the status of DOM in Old Spanish and Old Aragonese has also been taken into account.

1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon I analyse in this paper through the lens of historical dialectology is Differential Object Marking (DOM), which consists of attributing a special morphological marking to some objects. In general, the animacy and definiteness of a direct object are the properties that regulate the emergence and expansion of DOM across and within languages (Silverstein 1976, Dixon 1979). The two hierarchies proposed in the literature are set out below. Categories ranked higher are more likely to show DOM than those ranked lower.

- (1) (a) **Animacy scale:**
human > animate > inanimate
- (b) **Definiteness/Specificity scale:**
pronouns > proper names > definite NPs > specific indefinite NPs > non-specific indefinite NPs (> bare NPs)

The existence of DOM is well-established in several Romance languages and varieties, such as Spanish and Romanian, where its use extends to several types of direct objects (DO). For other languages in the Romance family, like Catalan, DOM is often considered to be absent – at least from the perspective of normative grammar – except for personal pronouns and a few other cases, such as pronominal quantifiers (e.g. *tots* ‘all’ or *tothom* ‘everyone’), relative and interrogative pronouns (e.g. *qual* ‘whom’ or *qui* ‘whom’), dislocated human objects and cases of potential ambiguity between a subject and an object interpretation (see Pineda 2021, 2023a,b). However, as shown by Hualde (1992: 86–87, 237–241), Aissen (2003: 451), Næss (2004: 1188) and Escandell-Vidal (2009: 840), DOM is a widespread phenomenon in Catalan. More recently, Pineda’s (2023a,b) large-scale survey of 400 Catalan speakers from all dialect areas has shown that, in most varieties of Catalan, DOM applies to human direct objects generally, including proper names, definites and some indefinites, and even occasionally extends to bare plurals or inanimates.

While one might initially assume that this is the result of the influence of Spanish, such instances of DOM (at least partially) might, in fact, have arisen from the internal evolution of Catalan. Crucially, instances of DOM were remarkably abundant in Old Catalan, although this has sometimes gone quite unnoticed. The data of my corpus study show that rejecting DOM in Catalan

prescriptively, as is the case nowadays (Pineda 2023a,b), may not have sufficient historical basis, since the influence of Spanish, given the timeline of the phenomenon, cannot be the sole source of the existence of the phenomenon in Catalan, but *only* a significant catalysing factor for the quantitative expansion of the phenomenon. Likewise, the corpus data also show that there are strong regional differences in the history of DOM in Catalan, with Valencian texts ahead, and that language contact with Spanish and Aragonese (especially in the case of Valencian Catalan) played a crucial role.

2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The data presented in this paper come from a large-scale corpus study of the emergence and development of DOM in the diachrony of Catalan. The corpus studied comprises a wide range of texts, from the earliest ones, written in the 11th–13th centuries,¹ to the 18th century. This corresponds to the periods usually classified as Old Catalan (11th–15th centuries) and Modern Catalan (16th–18th centuries). It must be clarified, however, that the data from the 16th century are presented in the graphics below as part of the Old Catalan period, since they are included in the Old Catalan corpus, the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic*.² The reason is that the curators of this corpus wanted to include some texts of early Modern Catalan in order to show the continuity of the language, while the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Modern*³ was still under construction.

None of the corpora is lemmatised, so I proceeded with a manual reading of a selection of works, with the aim of conducting a manual search of all DOs susceptible to bear DOM in order to analyse and classify each occurrence. This selection of works amounts to around 1,500,000 words and corresponds to a representative choice of the diachronic, diatopic, diaphasic and diastratic variation of the ancient language, as it corresponds to a selection (named *Corpus essencial* ‘essential corpus’) accurately established by the curators of the corpora in order to provide an adequate compilation of texts for the study of linguistic phenomena in the context of the project *Gramàtica del català antic / Old Catalan Grammar* and *Gramàtica del català modern / Modern Catalan Grammar*, in which the author of this paper participates (however, with respect to the representativeness of corpora, see Leech 2007 and Kabatek

1 The data from the 11th and 12th centuries for the categories studied in this paper (proper names, definite NPs and indefinite NPs) are very scarce and therefore do not allow for sound generalisations, and we must rather focus on the data from the 13th century onwards.

2 *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* (CICA), Joan Torruella (dir.), with Manel Pérez Saldanya and Josep Martines. www.cica.cat [last access: 05.08.2022].

3 *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Modern* (CICA), under construction [last access: 05.08.2022].

2013). The list of all the works (69 in total) studied can be found in the *Corpora* section at the end, where each text is classified according to the century and the dialect it belongs to, and the number of words analysed in each case is also specified.⁴ At this point, we should recall that Catalan has two main dialectal blocks: Eastern dialects and Western dialects. Eastern dialects include Central Catalan, Rossellonese Catalan, Balearic Catalan and Alguerese Catalan; Western dialects include Valencian Catalan and North-Western Catalan. A map is provided in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Catalan dialectal division. Source: own work on the basis of a map on Wikipedia

Given the high frequency of human direct objects in a text, for each work, a sample of words was taken (between 20,000 and 30,000 in most cases, depending on the need to obtain a balance per century and dialect), except in the case of works that were shorter than this sample amount, as indicated in

⁴ The dialectal classification of texts is based on the classification found in the source corpora. In some cases, these corpora tag a text as belonging to General Catalan, because there is no consensus or insufficient information on its specific dialectal ascription. In most cases, however, the specific dialect is provided: reference is made, at least, to whether the text belongs to the Eastern or Western dialects and, if possible, to the specific dialect.

the aforementioned corpus list.

Let us now show the exact dialectal distribution of the texts studied for Old and Modern Catalan. Starting with Old Catalan, Figure 2 shows the balanced distribution of Old Catalan texts belonging to the Western and Eastern dialectal areas, with a total of around 350,000 words per area. There are also 60,000 words corresponding to texts whose characteristics do not allow their classification as Western or Eastern.

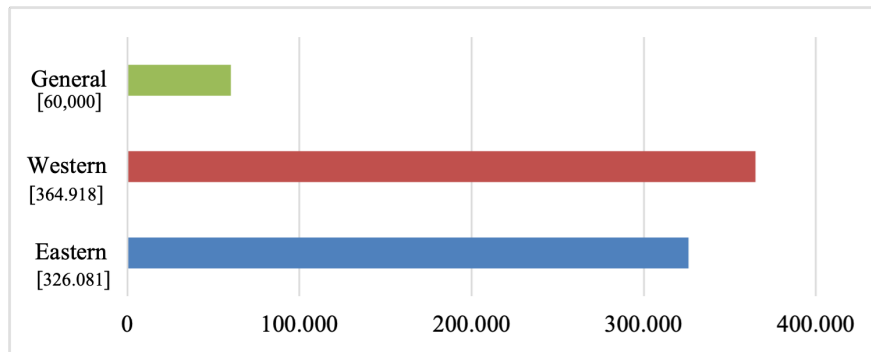


Figure 2 Dialectal distribution of the analysed texts for Old Catalan, per dialectal block, based on the number of words

Leaving aside now the texts classified as General, Figure 3 is the distribution per dialect, with red bars corresponding to the western part and blue bars to the eastern part:

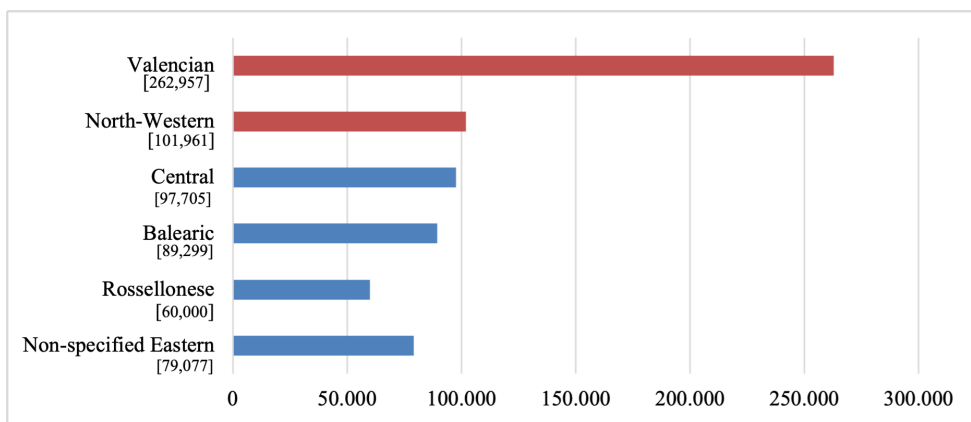


Figure 3 Dialectal distribution of the analysed texts for Old Catalan, per dialect, based on the number of words

Turning now to Modern Catalan, there is a balance of around 250,000 words per dialectal part, as shown in Figure 4.

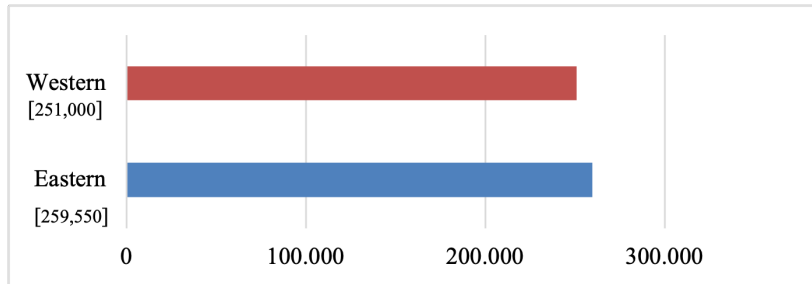


Figure 4 Dialectal distribution of the analysed texts for Modern Catalan, based on the number of words

Figure 5 shows the distribution per dialect:

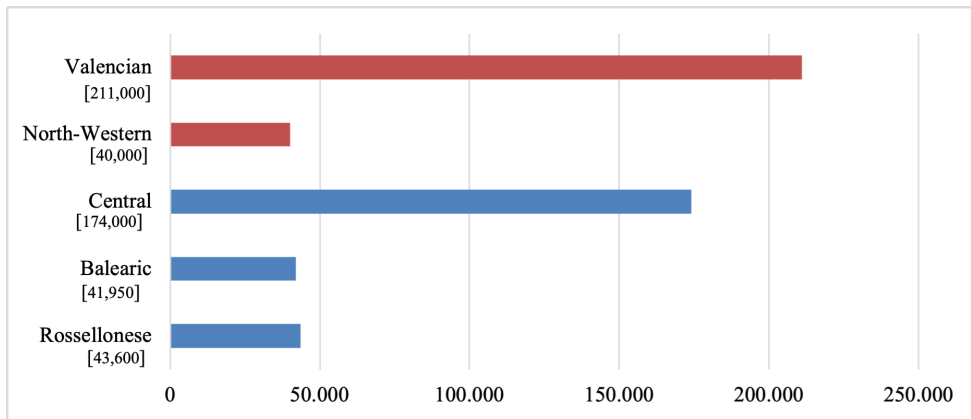


Figure 5 Dialectal distribution of the analysed texts for Modern Catalan, per dialect, based on the number of words

The corpus analysis consisted of reading the portions of texts selected and classifying each occurrence of a direct object, annotating: the presence or absence of DOM, the context of appearance of the object, the semantic and syntactic conditions of the object (human, animate, etc.; proper noun, definite NP, etc.), the type of verb introducing the object, other contextual factors, if relevant (dislocations, etc.), as well as the properties of the text in which the example is found (type of text/genre, dialect, century).

3 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EMERGENCE AND EXPANSION OF DOM IN CATALAN. OVERALL RESULTS OF THE CORPUS STUDY

Pineda's (in press) diachronic corpus study of the emergence of DOM in Catalan shows that the phenomenon was present in the language in the 13th–15th centuries, long before the influence of Spanish was relevant, from the 16th century onwards (see below). Examples with personal pronouns (2), human proper names (3), deity names (4) and definite NPs (5) are provided below:

- (2) (a) *lo fil de na Godoi qui venc contra ela*
the son of the Godoi who come.PST.3SG against her
[...] *e requerí a ela*
and request.PST.3SG DOM her
'Godoi's son, who came to her [...], and requested her'
(13th c., *Clams* I: 72)
- (b) *el dit Matheu a él pagar no volia*
the mentioned Matheu DOM him pay.INF no want.IPFV.3SG
'that guy, Matheu, didn't want to pay him and didn't pay him'
(13th c., *Clams* I: 83)
- (c) *enassí con tu ab dejunis as treballat a*
just like you with fastings have.PRS.2SG worked DOM
tu
you
'just like you have worked yourself with fastings'
(13th c., *Vides*: 29)
- (3) (a) *Maria Domingo prèns a na Joanna, [...] ab*
Maria Domingo take.PST.3SG DOM the Joanna with
abdues les mans als cabels
both the hands in.the hair
Lit. 'Maria Domingo_j grasped Joanna_i by her hair_i [...] with her
own hands'
'Maria Domingo_j grasped Joanna's [...] hair with her own
hands'
(13th c., *Clams* I: 46)
- (b) *Aquel encalsava ab lo coltel treit al*
that.one chase.IPFV.3SG with the knife out DOM=the
dit Apariçi
mentioned Apariçi
'That one was chasing the mentioned Apariçi while holding a
knife'
(13th c., *Clams* I: 50)

- (c) *tenien en terra a Michel Mercer*
 have.IPFV.3PL in ground DOM Michel Mercer
 ‘they kept/had Michel Mercer on the ground’
 (13th c., *Clams* I: 76)
- (d) *e víu que volia ociure a Othó*
 and see.PST.3SG that want.IPFV.3SG kill.INF DOM Othó
 ‘and he saw that he wanted to kill Othó’ (15th c., *Curial*: 67)
- (4) (a) *él amà a Déu sobiranament*
 he love.PST.3SG DOM God very.much
 ‘he loved God very much’ (15th c., *San Vicent Sermons* IV: 82)
- (b) *tots veurem clarament a Déu*
 all see.FUT.1PL clearly DOM God
 ‘we will all see God clearly’ (15th c., *San Vicent Sermons* IV: 9)
- (5) (a) *ells desonraren als nostres hòmens*
 they dishonour.PST.3PL DOM=the our men
 ‘they dishonoured DOM our men’ (14th c., *Jaume I, Fets*: 16r)
- (b) *lo rey prèns per la mà a l’ ermità*
 the King take.pst.3sg by the hand DOM the= hermit
 ‘the king took the hermit by his hand’
 (15th c., *Martorell, Tirant*: 102)
- (c) *yo penjaré als jurats*
 I hang.FUT.1SG DOM=the jurors
 ‘I will hang the jurors’
 (15th c., *Epistolari* IIa: letter 10, written in Valencia)

The Spanish influence on Catalan began in the 16th century, when the Crown of Aragon joined the Crown of Castile and the court centre moved to Castilla. From that point onwards, the influence grew stronger and stronger, leading to a period (especially during the 17th and 18th centuries) that can be qualified as a cultural and linguistic decline of Catalan.

The use of DOM in Catalan, however, is documented well before that. This makes it difficult to attribute the spread of this phenomenon exclusively to an external influence of Spanish, since such influence would not begin until later. In this context, it is especially appropriate to recall [Salvador & Pérez Saldanya \(1993\)](#), who state that

[i]f Catalan had evolved, before undergoing the sociolinguistic pressure of Spanish, towards a given grammatical solution

that was born during its time of configuration as a language, the fact of considering the result as a Spanish loan would become problematic [...] some recent studies about the 15th-century authors Martorell and Corella call for caution as to the position of normative grammar on this matter.

(Salvador & Pérez Saldanya 1993: 60)⁵

However, it is also true that, around the late 15th–early 16th century, the sociolinguistic pressure from Spanish unquestionably played a significant role in the evolution of the Catalan language in many respects. During that time, the percentage of DOM increases gradually across all types of objects, both with personal pronouns and with proper names and human NPs. This can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 6, reflecting the overall results of the corpus study:

CENTURY	Personal pronouns	Personal names	Definite NPs	Indefinite NPs	Deity names
11 th –12 th	0% (0/1)	–	0% (0/6)	–	–
13 th	7.2% (6/83)	12.1% (17/140)	0% (0/471)	1.2% (2/170)	0% (0/140)
14 th	35.1% (34/97)	3.6% (11/303)	3.4% (25/725)	2.6% (5/191)	0% (0/29)
15 th	62.1% (36/58)	12.8% (23/180)	9.9% (58/586)	7.4% (14/190)	21.8% (12/55)
16 th	97.3% (36/37)	65.4% (100/153)	27.8% (119/428)	12.3% (18/146)	92.6% (25/27)
17 th	100% (5/5)	82.7% (129/156)	60.8% (194/318)	20.5% (36/176)	86.7% (13/15)
18 th	100% (20/20)	77.5% (100/129)	63.1% (248/393)	34% (67/197)	90.1% (30/33)

Table 1 Evolution of DOM across different types of DO in Old and Modern Catalan

⁵ Original quote: “Si le catalan avait évolué, avant de subir la pression sociolinguistique du castillan, vers des solutions grammaticales déterminées qui sont nées pendant son époque de configuration comme langue, le fait de considérer le résultat comme un castillanisme deviendrait problématique [...] quelques études récents à propos des auteurs du XV^e siècle, Martorell et Corella, invitent à être prudent en ce qui concerne la position de la grammaire normative sur le sujet.”

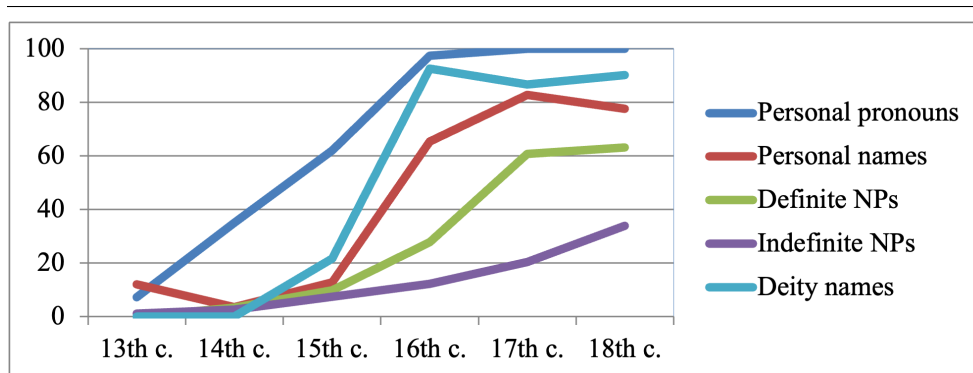


Figure 6 Evolution of DOM across different types of DO in Old and Modern Catalan

The main insight from the diachronic data presented in Table 1 is that DOM is a phenomenon native to Catalan, and that the influence of Spanish, especially from the 16th century onwards, was probably more quantitative than qualitative. It is impossible to determine how DOM would have evolved in Catalan in the absence of any influence from Spanish but, in any case, one should additionally take into account that: (i) DOM is a phenomenon that exists in many very different languages of the world, including the Romance family; and (ii) in the languages of the world, the cases of retraction of a syntactic phenomenon like this one are particularly scarce, whereas the general pattern is the progressive enlargement of the set of contexts where DOM is allowed, in line with the animacy and definiteness hierarchies in (1), repeated here as (6) (see Silverstein 1976; Keenan & Comrie 1977; Dixon 1979; Croft 1988; and, for the specific case of DOM, Bossong 1991: 152–153; Aissen 2003: 472, fn. 33; Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011: 211–215).

- (6) (a) **Animacy scale:** human > animate > inanimate
 (b) **Definiteness/Specificity scale:**⁶ personal pronoun > proper name > definite NP > indefinite NP [specific] > indefinite NP [non-specific]

⁶ Other authors talk about the *scale of referentiality*, another key factor in ordering these levels. In fact, the categories of definiteness, referentiality, specificity and individuality are quite complex and closely interrelated, and not all authors understand them in the same way (see Givón 1978, Comrie 1979, Hopper & Thompson 1980).

These scales, as proposed by a number of scholars, are considered to regulate the emergence and expansion of several morphosyntactic phenomena such as DOM, both within a language and cross-linguistically (Silverstein 1976; Keenan & Comrie 1977; Dixon 1979; Croft 1988; Aissen 2003: 437). The scales order objects in terms of *prominence* or *syntactic markedness*. The higher an object is on these scales, the more likely it is to bear DOM both within a language and cross-linguistically. Actually, another important observation from Table 1 is that DOM in Catalan, as it generally does cross-linguistically, emerges with personal pronouns and human proper names, located at the top of the animacy and definiteness hierarchies in (6).

With the overall picture of the diachrony of DOM in Catalan in mind, the following section sets out to investigate dialectal differences regarding the evolution of the phenomenon under study.

4 DIALECTAL DIFFERENCES IN THE DIACHRONY OF CATALAN DOM. DETAILED RESULTS OF THE CORPUS STUDY

When analysing the emergence and expansion of DOM in the diachrony of Catalan, one observes the existence of relevant dialectal differences, with Valencian texts generally ahead in terms of frequency of occurrence of the phenomenon, in contrast with the texts of the Eastern dialects, especially the Balearic ones. Thus, from a historical geolectal point of view, one can conclude that Valencian is the most innovative dialect, while Eastern dialects are the most conservative.

In the following section, I will show how these dialectal differences regarding the greater or lesser presence of DOM, i.e. the more or less advanced degree of grammaticalisation of DOM, are consistent across the different grammatical categories. I focus on three categories of objects, leaving aside personal pronouns (for which DOM is quite general from the 13th century onwards, with no relevant dialectal differences). For the very scarce appearance of DOM with animate (non-human) objects and with inanimate objects in the diachrony of Catalan, see Pineda (in press). In addition, the role of verbal and contextual factors, such as the lexical type of verb or the particular syntactic context (causative constructions, dislocations, etc.), is analysed in detail in Pineda (in press).

4.1 *DOM with proper names*

The frequency of DOM with proper names increases over the centuries, at an especially high pace from the 16th century onwards, stabilising at around 80% of proper names with DOM in the 17th and 18th centuries. This is shown in

detail in the rightmost column of Table 2.

PROPER NAMES		
CENTURY	Ø	DOM
11 th –12 th	100% (1/1)	0% (0/1)
13 th	87.9% (123/140)	12.1% (17/140)
14 th	96.4% (292/303)	3.6% (11/303)
15 th	87.2% (157/180)	12.8% (23/180)
16 th	34.6% (53/153)	65.4% (100/153)
17 th	10.7% (26/244)	89.3% (218/244)
18 th	22.2% (30/135)	77.8% (105/135)

Table 2 Evolution of DOM with proper names in Old and Modern Catalan

At first sight, the relatively high proportion of DOM with proper names in the 13th century, compared to the 14th century, may seem surprising. In this regard, in addition to the possible influence of the different textual types or genres (such as fiction, administrative prose, legal and juridical documents, etc., see [Pons Bordería 2008](#), [Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2014](#), [Gerards & Kabatek 2018](#)) of the texts from one century and the other, it must be noted that all DOM occurrences in the 13th century correspond to Valencian texts, with one example from *Cocentaina*⁷ and 16 more from *Clams I*, a text which, in addition to its Valencian ascription, contains a greater proportion of proper names acting as DOs, up to 77, whereas all the other texts analysed for that century show around 10 or, at most, 20 proper names acting as DOs. Thus, the percentage of DOM with proper names among Valencian authors in the 13th century, with 17 occurrences, reaches almost 20% (19.3%, 17/88), or 22% if one focuses only on *Clams I*.

This dialectal bias is maintained over time. It is very noticeable in the 15th century, when Eastern texts have a much lower percentage of DOM with proper names than the average for the century (0% Malla, *Memorial*, 0/4 occurrences; 4.3% in Safont, *Dietari*, 3/69 occurrences). In contrast, Western

⁷ On the influence of Aragonese on this text, see § 5.

texts are more in line with the average for the century (16.7% in *Lleida*, 2/12 occurrences) and, in some cases, even exceed it by far. For example, 85.7% of proper names show DOM in Sant Vicent's *Sermons* 6/7; this text is by a Valencian author, but it is classified as belonging to North-Western Catalan because its transcriber is from Morella, a village administratively belonging to the Valencian territory, but with linguistic characteristics in many respects assimilated to North-Western Catalan. It is also interesting to mention the case of the chivalric novel *Curial*, a text whose dialectal affiliation has been much debated and which, in the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic*, is treated as a general Catalan text. Most linguistic arguments seem to point to the novel being Valencian, as recently defended by Soler (2017). The fact that, according to my data, this text displays a percentage of DOM with proper names of 14.9% (10/67) could be taken as another indicator in this direction.

However, dialectological observations need to be combined with insights from textual genres and discursive traditions too. These play an important role in the 15th century texts under study. Crucially, DOM with proper names in administrative texts and chancery prose is very discreet: this becomes especially obvious in texts such as *Epistolari II*, which, in spite of its Valencian ascription, displays DOM with proper names only in 10.5% of cases (2/19), a percentage lower than the average for the century.

The dialectal divide continues to be remarkable as the grammaticalisation of DOM advances. In the 16th century, the proportions of presence and absence of DOM with proper names are reversed to the point that DOM clearly becomes the majority option. This coincides with the period when the influence of Spanish starts – in this language, DOM with personal names was nearly systematic from the earliest texts (Laca 2006: 443).

An individualised analysis of some texts reveals, however, important diatopical variation in the 16th century, with Western texts, and concretely Valencian ones, leading this generalisation of DOM with proper names. The phenomenon appears in 100% of cases in Conques's *Job* (14/14), in 94.1% of cases in *Antiquitats* (32/34) and in 87.5% of cases in Liori's *Epistolaris* (26/32), all three texts of Valencian affiliation – several of the letters in the latter text are written in a Spanish linguistic context, since they are written by Hipòlita Roís de Liori's daughter while she was living in Madrid. The average proportion of DOM with proper names in Valencian texts is 90% (72/80) in the 16th century. Results are diametrically opposed in Eastern texts: in that century, DOM only appears in 37.9% of cases in *Grandeses* (11/29), belonging to Central Catalan; and in only 23.3% of occurrences in the *Antologia* of Balearic Catalan texts (7/30).

Finally, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the period corresponding to a greater linguistic subordination to Spanish, proper names in Catalan show DOM in a very systematic way, in accordance with the prominent position they occupy in the scales. Thus, the trend initiated in the previous centuries is consolidated. The dialectal bias, though, remains in this period (17th–18th centuries): on the one hand, in Valencian texts, 99.5% of personal names have DOM (197/198) and in North-Western texts, 87% (20/23); on the other hand, proportions are much lower in Eastern dialects, with around 70% in Central Catalan and Rossellonese Catalan (84/121 and 21/30, respectively) and only 14.3% (1/7) in Balearic Catalan.

4.2 *DOM with definite NPs*

According to the scales that regulate DOM, human (and divine) definite NPs are maximally prominent elements in terms of animacy and also very prominent in terms of definiteness. Nevertheless, one observes that, during the earliest centuries, these elements do not show very relevant DOM proportions. There is thus a gradual increase over time in the frequency of DOM, reaching considerable proportions in the 16th century, coinciding with the beginning of the strong pressure from Spanish, a language in which, at that time, DOM with definite NPs exceeds 50% of cases as early as the 14th century, and reaches 70% of occurrences in the 16th century (Laca 2006: 443). Moreover, during the 17th and 18th centuries, the amount of DOM instances increases heavily, as summarised in Table 3 below. It must be clarified that the category of definite NPs includes NPs introduced by the definite article, demonstratives and possessives, in line with the extensional definition of definites proposed by Laca (2006: 438) when studying DOM in the diachrony of Spanish. However, there are no particular differences between the different types of definites in terms of greater or lesser presence of DOM (for more details see Pineda *in press*).

DEFINITE NPs		
CENTURY	Ø	DOM
11 th –12 th	100% (6/6)	0% (0/6)
13 th	100% (471/471)	12.1% (0/471)
14 th	96.6% (700/725)	0.4% (25/725)
15 th	90.1% (528/586)	9.9% (58/586)
16 th	72.2% (309/428)	27.8% (119/428)
17 th	35.5% (137/386)	64.5% (249/386)
18 th	35.8% (147/411)	64.2% (264/411)

Table 3 Evolution of DOM with definite NPs (human and divine) in Old and Modern Catalan

Interestingly, across all the centuries, the occurrence of DOM with definite NPs varies according to dialectal affiliation, as we will see. A closer examination of the data reveals that, as early as in the 14th century, important dialectal differences exist, with Valencian texts clearly ahead. For example, in *Epistolari I*, a Valencian text from the 14th century, DOM reaches 11.1% (7/63 occurrences). In contrast, in many Eastern texts from the same century, DOM is nearly absent or even non-existent – remember that my study is based on the first 30,000 words – as in *Marquès* (Eastern Catalan, 0/39), *Somni* (Eastern Catalan: Central Catalan, 0/59), *Diàlegs* (Eastern Catalan: Rossellonese Catalan, 0/88), *Doctrina* (Eastern Catalan: Balearic Catalan 2/105), *Filla* (Eastern Catalan: Central Catalan 3/71) or *Cort reial* (Eastern Catalan: Balearic Catalan, 1/82).

Of the few examples of DOM with definite NPs in Eastern Catalan, many correspond to syntactic contexts favouring DOM, such as the parallelism with a personal pronoun (7)b, the elision of the verb (7)b,c, the causative construction with *fer* + infinitive (7)d,e or potential ambiguity between subject and object, occurring for example when both the subject and the object are postverbal (7)f, as also occurs in the expression *l'un a l'altre* 'one another', which in fact in the rest of the corpus appears very often with *a* (7)g:

- (7) (a) *los de Daroca desonraren als nostres*
 the from Daroca dishonour.PST.3PL DOM=the our
hòmens
 men
 ‘those from Daroca dishonoured our men’
 (14th c., Jaume I, *Fets*: 16r)
- (b) *que no la volguem auçure a ela ne a son*
 that no her want.PST.1PL kill.INF DOM her nor DOM his
fil
 son
 ‘that we did not want to kill her or her son’ (14th c., *Filla*: 55)
- (c) *lo comte [...] va-la abressar e la*
 the count hug.PST.3SG=her and the woman
dona atretal al comte
 likewise DOM=the count
 ‘the count hugged her, and the women did it too’
 (14th c., *Filla*: 58)
- (d) *Pietat fa donar, perdonar, passificar, amar,*
 piety make.PRS.3SG give.INF forgive.INF pacify.INF love.INF
humiliar, ajudar, e pietat fa confiar
 bow.INF help.INF and piety make.PRS.3SG trust.INF
al home en los dons que-l Sant Esperit
 DOM=the man in the gifts that the Holy Spirit
dóna
 give.PRS.3SG
 ‘Piety makes give, forgive, pacify, love, bow, help, and piety
 makes the man have faith in the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives’
 (14th c., Lull, *Doctrina I*: 95)
- (e) *e fassa hom confíger en vulgar a sson*
 and make.IPFV.SBJV.3SG one read.INF in Vulgar DOM his
fiyl al comensament d’ assò que apendrà,
 son at.the beginning of this that learn.FUT.3SG
per tal que entena so que confígerà
 so.that understand.PRS.SBJV.3SG this that read.FUT.3SG
 ‘and one should make one’s son read in Vulgar at the beginning
 of what he will learn, so that the understands what he will read’
 (14th c., Lull, *Doctrina I*: 8)
- (f) *·iii· vegades àn vençut los chrestians*
 three times have.PRS.3SG defeated the Christians

- als sarraïns, e ·ls sarraïns als chrestians*
 DOM.the Saracens and the Saracens DOM=the Christians
·iii· vegades.
 three times
 ‘3 times have the Christians beaten the Saracens, and the
 Saracens the Christians 3 times’ (14th c., Jaume I, *Fets*: 38v)
- (g) *E asalavòs tornaren-sa afarar la ·i· a l’*
 and then go.back.PST.3PL=REFL grab.INF the one to the
altre a cabeills e a barbes
 other by hairs and by beards
 ‘And then they grab each other again by their hair and beards’
 (14th c., *Cort reial*: 284)

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the frequency of DOM with definite human NPs increases markedly, and it reaches very relevant levels in the 17th and 18th centuries, as shown in Table 2 above. Over these centuries, there continues to be considerable variation depending on the dialectal ascription of the works. For example, in the 15th century 72.4% of occurrences (42/58) belong to Valencian texts, the great majority to the chivalric novel *Tirant* (35/58) – if one adds the other chivalric novel *Curial*, for which Valencian affiliation has recently been proposed (see Soler 2017), this figure rises to 81% (47/58); and further still, if we add the religious text *Sermons* (by a Valencian author, but classified as North-Western because of the transcriber, who comes from Morella, belonging to the Valencian territory but with linguistic characteristics in many respects assimilated to North-Western Catalan), the total reaches 98.3% of cases with DOM (57/58). However, the fact that most DOM examples with definite NPs belong to these texts does not mean that DOM was the majority option there: for example, in *Tirant*, DOM with definite NPs reaches 25.2% (37/147), a number that far exceeds the average for the century, but which continues to represent a minority option.^{8,9} It is also necessary to keep in mind the influence of textual typology on the frequency of DOM: in a Valencian text like *Epistolari II*, the cases of DOM with definite NPs represent

⁸ In the case of *Tirant*, regarding NPs introduced by a definite article or a demonstrative, my conclusions align with Perera’s (1986: 70–72), who notes the predominance of unmarked cases; in contrast, in the case of possessives, also included under *definite NPs* in my study, Perera (1986: 71) states that DOM cases prevail, while I only detected DOM in 23.3% of cases (7/30). Recall that these differences are probably due to the fact that I only analysed the first 30,000 words of the text, and Perera’s study examines the whole text.

⁹ In *Curial*, however, only 4.6% of definite human NPs (5/109) have DOM: given that, in contemporary Spanish, DOM with these elements was already the majority (Laca 2006: 443), it does not seem that this specific area of *Curial*’s syntax reflects the Spanish influence pointed out by Ferrando (2007: 17, 2017: 35–39).

only 4.5% of definite NPs (5/111), far below the mean for the century. This can be related to its proximity to the chancery language.

Finally, at the opposite end of the spectrum from Valencian texts, we find Eastern texts, in which DOM with definite NPs is often non-existent: there is no occurrence of DOM in Safont's *Dietari* (Central Catalan, 0/54), probably also attributable to the textual characteristics of the text, and there is only one example in *Memorial* (Eastern Catalan, 1/56).

The greatest grammaticalisation of DOM in Valencian texts is also observed in the 16th century: 63.9% of DOM occurrences with definite NPs belong to Valencian works (76/119). If one looks at the total number of definite NPs (DOs) in Valencian texts, however, the incidence of DOM is 27.4% (76/277), coinciding with the century average for all dialects. Valencian texts, therefore, are no longer such a clear leader; rather, one can say that, in the 16th century, unlike in previous centuries, DOM becomes more widespread from a dialectal point of view. For example, 18.5% of occurrences (22/119) belong to North-Western Catalan, and these marked definite NPs represent 56.4% of definite NPs (24/39) in this dialect, well above the century mean – it should be noted, though, that this dialect is represented by a single text (Despuig, *Col·loquis*), from the Tortosí area, which shares many features with Valencian Catalan. Likewise, 15.1% of occurrences (18/119) come from Balearic texts and represent an incidence of DOM with definite NPs of 23.7% in this dialect (18/76), quite close to the average for the century. Lastly, only 2.5% (3/119) of the DOM cases for this century belong to Central Catalan, represented in my corpus for that century by a single text (*Grandeses*), with a very low incidence of DOM with definite NPs, of only 8.3% (3/36).

The leading role of Valencian texts seems to surface clearly again in the last two centuries studied, the 17th and 18th. During this period, well over half of DOM occurrences with definite NPs, 63.9% (328/513), correspond to Valencian texts. These numbers amount to an incidence of DOM within definite NPs in this dialectal area of 87.7% (328/374), well above the century mean. This clearly contrasts with what occurs in Eastern dialects (Central, Balearic, Rossellonese), where only 43.9% (166/378) of definite NPs are marked in that period. Actually, if we look at each Eastern dialect individually, more differences emerge: in Central Catalan, 51.5% of definite NPs are marked (140/272),¹⁰ whereas in Balearic and Rossellonese Catalan, these

¹⁰ The instability of the phenomenon with definite NPs in Central Catalan is shown by the following example containing an enumeration with two occurrences lacking DOM (in small caps) and two other NPs with DOM (boldfaced):

(8) *haver preses a la muller de dit comte de Vilalonga, SA*
 have.INF taken DOM the wife of the said count of Vilalonga, his

percentages are much lower, 23.5% (12/51) and 25% (14/56) respectively. In North-Western Catalan, in turn, the percentage of DOM is higher: 44.4% (19/43).

4.3 DOM with indefinite NPs

Let me finally examine how dialectal differences are traced back in the category of indefinite NPs with human (and divine) referents. This category includes NPs introduced by the indefinite article *un, una, uns, unes* ‘a, a, some, some’, numerals and existential quantifiers such as *alguns* ‘some’, *altres* ‘other’, *molts* ‘many’, *pocs* ‘few’, etc., following the extensional definition of the indefinite category proposed by Laca (2006: 438).

Indefinite NPs are less prominent elements on the definiteness scale. However, if we look at those that designate human (or divine) entities, clearly prominent on the animacy scale, we see that they may, in some cases, show DOM. As far as the diachrony of Catalan is concerned, DOM within this category is quite incidental, although it experiences remarkable gradual growth over time, reaching significantly higher percentages in the latest centuries under study. Details are shown in Table 4.

From a geolectal perspective, we note again that Valencian/Western texts lead the extension of DOM with indefinites. In the 15th century, all the occurrences belong to the Western dialectal area (7/14 to *Lleida*, North-Western; 2/14 to *Tirant*, Valencian; and 5/14 to *Sermons*, a text by a Valencian author and a transcriber from Morella, as explained above). In the 16th century, 83.3% of DOM occurrences (15/18) belong to the Western dialectal area: in particular, 55.6% (10/18) are Valencian and 27.8% (5/18) are North-Western. Recall that it is in this period that the notable influence of Spanish becomes a reality – in the later language, DOM with indefinites is not rare (Laca 2006: 443, 458–460).

The lead of Valencian texts in particular continues to exist in the subsequent centuries: in the 17th century, Valencian occurrences represent 61.3% (38/62) of indefinites with DOM, and these 38 occurrences amount to 60.3%

<i>NORA,</i>	<i>filla</i>	<i>de [...],</i>	<i>SON FILL MAJOR Y</i>	<i>al</i>	
daughter-in-law,	daughter	of [...],	his son older	and DOM.the	
<i>dit</i>	<i>son fill y</i>	<i>altre fill y</i>	<i>a una filla</i>	<i>casada ab</i>	
mentioned his	son and	other son and	DOM a	daughter	married to
[...]					
[...]					
‘have taken the wife of the said count of Vilalonga, his daughter-in-law, daughter of [...], his older son and the mentioned son of him and another son and a daughter married to [...]					
(Pujades, <i>Dietari</i> : 42) [17 th]					

INDEFINITE NPs		
CENTURY	Ø	DOM
11 th -12 th	–	–
13 th	98.8% (168/170)	1.2% (2/170)
14 th	97.4% (186/191)	2.6% (5/191)
15 th	92.6% (176/190)	7.4% (14/190)
16 th	87.7% (128/146)	12.3% (18/146)
17 th	70.6% (149/211)	29.4% (62/211)
18 th	62.2% (125/201)	37.8% (76/201)

Table 4 Evolution of DOM with indefinite NPs (human and divine) in Old and Modern Catalan

of DOM within all Valencian indefinites (38/63); likewise, in the 18th century 59.2% (45/76) of indefinites with DOM come from Valencian texts, and these 45 cases represent an incidence of DOM of 58.4% among Valencian indefinites (45/77). The leading role of this dialectal area is not surprising, as DOM was most advanced in this dialect, and it is therefore expected that it spread to the lower levels of the definiteness scale. Close behind, we find North-Western Catalan, represented in this period by two texts (belonging to the first and second half of the 17th century, respectively), in which 9/16 indefinites bear DOM (56.3%).

At the other end of the scale, we find Eastern dialects. In Balearic texts, DOM with indefinites is practically absent, with 0/7 in the 17th century and 1/8 in the 18th century. In Rossellonese texts, it is only represented in the 17th century, with 6.3% of indefinites showing DOM (4/63). Finally, in Central Catalan, proportions are slightly higher: in the 17th century DOM appears with 17.7% of indefinites (11/62), and in the 18th century in 25.9% of cases (30/116).

We thus find, across time and categories, a clear dialectal divide between Western texts (especially Valencian), in which the grammaticalisation of DOM

is far more advanced, and Eastern texts, in which the phenomenon is, generally, at a more incipient stage, especially in Balearic and Rossellonese texts.

5 ACCOUNTING FOR THE HISTORICAL DIALECTAL DIFFERENCES

In the sections above, I have repeatedly shown the leading role of Valencian texts when it comes to the emergence and expansion of DOM in the diachrony of Catalan. There are several factors that can help explain this situation

Firstly, the Valencian area is not a *constitutive* area of the Catalan linguistic domain, but a *consecutive* one (ergo, a late area) since the language was brought there with the conquest of the territory and the constitution of the Kingdom of Valencia (1229–1245). In addition, a significant part of the settlers who went there came from Aragon. According to [Cabanès Pecourt \(2017: 15–18\)](#), the study of several documents referring to the population census and the distribution of houses leads to the conclusion that around 26% of the settlers came from Aragon, including the ecclesiastical sector and the nobility (on this last point, see [Guinot Rodríguez 2017](#)). For this reason, the influence of Aragonese (which is increasingly diluted in Spanish) on Valencian cannot be dismissed ([Ferrando & Nicolàs 2011: 176–177](#)). Crucially, Old Aragonese had DOM. I know of only one study that addresses this issue: [Ponsoda Alcázar \(2018\)](#). This author compares two works from the 14th century, one in Aragonese and one in Spanish, and concludes that in, Old Aragonese, DOM abounds with pronouns, proper names and definite human NPs, although, in the case of the latter type of DO, the phenomenon was far less widespread as in the Spanish of the time.

However, a Valencian text like *Cocentaina*, a priori one of the most interesting texts for observing the contact with Aragonese given the proportion of settlers of this origin in the town of Cocentaina ([Ponsoda 1996](#)),¹¹ does not seem to support this possible influence clearly in the case of DOM, as the text is not particularly advanced when it comes to the phenomenon. For example, in the first 30,000 words, there is only one instance of DOM with proper nouns, and none with NPs.¹²

11 According to [Ponsoda \(1996: 28–29\)](#), using the origin of surnames, one can deduce that, in the 13th century in the Cocentaina area, the Christian settlers of Aragonese (and Navarrese and Castilian) origin must have represented a little more than 50% and those who spoke Catalan around 45% (the remaining percentage, less than 5%, would correspond to Occitans).

12 In this regard, [Ponsoda \(1996: 323\)](#) states that, overall, this text is written “in genuine Catalan imported by the Catalan-speaking Christian settlers” and clarifies that “the only remarkable particularity it presents [...] is the fact of containing a relatively considerable number of Aragonisms and also a lot of Arabisms” (my translation). Regarding the particular case of DOM in this text, [Ponsoda \(1996: 216\)](#) only says that “there are examples of DOs with *a: forçà a sa filla* (‘he forced his daughter’) [...], *el baylle prés a el dit Berenguer e al moro* (‘the mayor took the

Another noteworthy factor in relation to the Valencian territory is that it is a lateral area within the Catalan linguistic domain, which probably explains why this area, over the centuries, was more subject to the influence of Spanish, a language that, in the 16th century, reached a degree of clear pervasiveness in all Catalan-speaking lands. Indeed, the overview of the evolution of DOM in Catalan points to a view of the neighbouring Spanish as a significant catalysing factor for the quantitative expansion of the phenomenon.

When it comes to the extension of DOM, we have seen that at the other end of the dialectal axis, we find the Eastern Catalan area, in particular the Catalan of the Balearic Islands, whose conservativeness is related to the fact that it is also a consecutive dialect, but originating in a geographically isolated (insular) area and, especially, from a base of settlers from the areas of Central and Rossellonese Catalan.

The existence of such clear dialectal contrasts may seem surprising if we consider the words of [Veny \(1978\)](#) regarding Old Catalan texts: “Catalan is one of the most unitary languages in the Romance-speaking world [...], the differences observed are based on the chronology of the writing rather than the authors’ geographical origin” ([Veny 1978: 11](#)).¹³

This assessment probably reflects the fact that, in general terms, dialectal variation in Catalan occurred to a greater extent in colloquial language, but was little reflected in the written code ([Torruella 2017: 85](#)). Perhaps because it is reduced to such a small amount of phonetic material of which speakers and writers may easily not be aware, DOM seems to be an exception to this general tendency, given the clear and consistent dialectal differences my corpus study reveals. Additionally, it is also true that some of the texts with the greatest presence of DOM correspond precisely to texts imitating orality, such as trial testimonies or religious sermons, whereas some of the texts with the lesser presence of DOM are chancery texts or other examples of administrative prose that follow the chancery model. As an anonymous reviewer suggests, the greater pervasiveness of DOM in texts imitating orality could be interpreted as the phenomenon being a more colloquial feature at first, or a change originating from below. However, it would be necessary to analyse more texts of this type to establish a more definitive conclusion. In any case, what my data indicate about the supposedly more conservative nature of chancery texts, as opposed to texts reproducing (fictitious) orality, can possibly be explained in terms of discourse traditions and in relation to the more

mentioned Berenguer and the Moor’), but without any further remark on the frequency of the phenomenon.

¹³ Original quote: “el catalán es uno de los idiomas mas unitarios de la Romania [...], las diferencias que se observan están en función de la cronología de la redacción más que de la procedencia geográfica de los autores”.

latinising character of these texts.

6 CONCLUSIONS

I have provided a comprehensive picture of Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Catalan, analysing its diachronic evolution with a perspective based on historical dialectology. From this perspective, I have been able to draw significant conclusions from my discussion.

The morphosyntactic phenomenon under study shows clearly differentiated behaviour depending on the dialect we are focusing on. In particular, texts belonging to Western Catalan, and especially to the Valencian area, show a much more advanced stage of grammaticalisation of DOM. In these texts, DOM appears earlier and also spreads faster to the different types of objects, from the more prominent ones in terms of animacy and definiteness to the less prominent ones, that is, from personal pronouns to proper names, then to definite NPs and, eventually, even to indefinite NPs.

Adopting the perspective of historical dialectology within Romance contact requires a general warning, though. One should be cautious when talking about *dialects of Old Catalan*, as it is certainly tricky to equate the present-day dialectal classification to the reality of the older stages of the language, modelled by a variety of sociopolitical events such as conquests, subsequent expulsions of population from some territories, and movements of new settlers to those newly conquered areas during medieval times.

In any event, I am convinced that the comparison of how ancient texts originating from different areas of a linguistic domain behave with respect to a particular morphosyntactic phenomenon – DOM in this case – certainly provides interesting hints as to the directions and paths of language change, thus contributing to the general body of knowledge about how languages change over time. I hope that this study will encourage other research aimed at identifying historical dialects in the Romance area and, at the same time, evaluating the phenomena and sources suitable for a historical comparative dialectology. In this paper, I have also considered the role of language contact, since other Old Romance languages, especially Spanish and Aragonese, played a significant role in the development of the linguistic phenomenon under study in Catalan. However, I have defended the idea that DOM is a genuine phenomenon in Catalan, as it emerged and had a significant presence well before this contact period started. The subsequent contact situations expanded the range of contexts and the frequency of the use of DOM.

As for the phenomenon itself, in my opinion, DOM is undoubtedly an interesting candidate for future studies on historical dialectology, as it is present in hundreds of languages around the world and, even within a given language

family (Romance in this case), it is subject to a wide range of variation. It is my belief that theoretically and empirically informed studies of how this phenomenon evolved in different languages and varieties can definitely help to draw conclusions about how language change processes operate in the area of morphosyntactic object marking.

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CORPORA

List of analysed works for Old and Modern Catalan

[most of them come from the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic* and the *Corpus Informatitzat del Català Modern*]

Origins / 11th–12th centuries

(Primers textos): *Primers textos de la llengua catalana*. Edited by Josep Moran and Joan Anton Rabella. Barcelona: Proa, 2001: 102–103. [3,750 words, Eastern Catalan; 250 words, Western Catalan]

13th century

(*Cancelleria*) *Col·lecció documental de la Cancelleria de la Corona d'Aragó. Textos en llengua catalana (1291–1420)*. Edited by Mateu Rodrigo Lizondo. Valèn-

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