

ANIMACY, DEFINITENESS, AND WORLD KNOWLEDGE INTERACTIONS IN DOM IN SPANISH*

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ABSTRACT. This article brings together insights from several proposals regarding differential object marking (DOM) in Spanish. It states observations about prominence, saliency, or atypicality of the object (Aissen 2003; Fábregas 2013; García García 2007; Morimoto & de Swarts 2003; Weissenrieder 1991; etc.) in terms of the animacy alignments in González (2021: 42). It also shows the relevance for DOM as a continuum on definiteness from object pronouns, to proper N(ouns), to definite Ns, to indefinite Ns, to bare Ns. The interaction of the animacy alignments in (1) with definiteness makes possible a highly intuitive explanation not only of which objects get DOM (including inanimate ones), but also when some animate objects do not get DOM. The animacy alignments offer an explanation for why the only participant of the existential verb *haber* ('there is/there are') does not accept DOM. World knowledge is invoked to explain cases in which DOM is expected but does not occur; both with animate arguments and with inanimate ones. This article also offers evidence against affectedness as a relevant factor for DOM, and against transitivity as a computation of ten parameters, as proposed in Hopper & Thompson (1980).

Keywords. Accusative *a*, animacy, dative, DOM, object marking, saliency

RESUMEN. Este artículo integra observaciones de varias propuestas sobre la marca diferencial del objeto (DOM) en español. Expresa observaciones sobre prominencia, conspicuidad o atipicidad del objeto (Aissen 2003; Fábregas 2013; García García 2007; Morimoto & de Swarts 2003; Weissenrieder 1991; etc.) en términos de los alineamientos de animacidad de González (2021: 42). También muestra la relevancia para la DOM de un continuo de definitud desde los pronombres de objeto a un sustantivo propio, a uno definido, a uno indefinido, a uno escueto. La interacción de los alineamientos de animacidad de (1) con definitud hace posible una explicación altamente intuitiva no solamente de cuáles objetos reciben DOM (incluyendo objetos inanimados), sino también cuándo algunos objetos—tanto inanimados como animados—no reciben DOM. Los alineamientos de animacidad explican por qué no hay DOM con el único participante del verbo *haber*. Se invoca conocimiento del mundo para explicar casos en los cuales se espera DOM, pero no ocurre—tanto con argumentos animados como con inanimados. También se ofrece evidencia contra el nivel de afectado ('affectedness') como un factor relevante para la DOM y contra la transitividad como el cómputo de diez parámetros, como lo propusieron Hopper & Thompson (1980).

Palabras clave. Animacidad, *a* personal, dativo, DOM, marca del objeto, prominencia

1. Introduction

In Spanish, a direct object preceded by the marker *a* is said to have differential object marking (DOM). This is a phenomenon attested in at least 300 languages in the world (Bossong 1985: viii). This article will show that the interaction of the animacy alignments in González (2021: 42) in (1),

* Thanks to Sid Subramanian, one of my undergraduate students. He researched DOM in Hindi, and his observations helped me understand DOM better in Spanish. This article also benefited immensely from suggestions and corrections by two anonymous reviewers. All disclaimers apply.

the definiteness/animacy hierarchy in (3), and the two statements in (4) constitute an intuitive proposal for DOM that can be understood by second language learners of languages with DOM. This proposal answers several questions raised by scholars and advances an explanation that connects insights from different scholars (Aissen 2003; Fábregas 2013; García García 2007; Næes 2004; Pensado 1995; Torrego 1999; von Heusinger & Kaiser 2011; Weissenrieder 1991; among others). This proposal also recognizes that there is some variation, as pointed out in every study on the subject. Interestingly, it appears that native speakers do not even realize that they are either including the marker *a* or leaving it out.

- (1) a. [+A], [-A] Typical alignment of NOM and ACC. No DOM.¹
 b. [+A], [+A] Atypical alignment of NOM and ACC. DOM & dialectal *leísmo*. (Parts of Spain and small enclaves in Latin America).
 c. [-A], [+A] Atypical alignment of NOM and ACC. DOM & general *leísmo*.²
 d. [-A], [-A] Atypical alignment of NOM and ACC. DOM & inanimate *leísmo*.

Givón (1989: 205), drawing on work by Russell (1905, 1919), states that *definiteness* is “a semantic matter of unique identification”. Givón (206) adds that it implies “assumptions the speaker makes about what the hearer knows, believes in, is familiar with or can identify”. *Specificity* and *individuation* are terms often used with *definiteness* or instead of it. Although few scholars are as explicit about these terms as is desirable, it is fair to state that specificity refers, roughly speaking, to the existence of the referent. RAE (2010: 660) states that a specific referent is identifiable and recognizable. Individuation can be equated with count nouns (as opposed to mass nouns). Intuitively, a count noun that is also singular has the highest degree of individuation. Pronouns and proper names are the “highest” examples of specific referents, as readers will see throughout this article. Readers can now better understand definiteness, as characterized by Givón (1989: 205) at the beginning of this paragraph.

The list of DEFINITE (and INDEFINITE) nouns and determiners in (2) will help us show the relevance of a continuum for DOM in Spanish from definite nouns (pronouns, proper names, nouns preceded by a definite determiner) to indefinite nouns (nouns preceded by an indefinite determiner) to bare nouns (determinerless nouns). That is the continuum in (3).

- (2) A list of definite (and indefinite) determiners:
 a. Pronouns and proper names are definite.
 b. Common nouns are definite if they have a definite determiner. The determiners in 1-4 are definite.
 1. A definite article: *He encontrado *(a) la niña*.³ ‘I found the girl’ (Ormazábal & Romero 2013: 222).
 2. A possessive pronoun: *Encontré a tus entrenadores* ‘I found your trainers’ (Kliffner 1995: 100).

¹ Abbreviations: 3 (third person); [+A] = animate; [-A] = inanimate; ACC(usative); DAT(ive); I(ndicative); MASC(uline); NOM(inative); PL(ural); PRON(oun); SG (singular); subj(unctive). We will code a true (underlying) NOM with underlining; a true ACC with **bold**; and a true DAT will be double underlined. See also footnote 4.

² *Leísmo* with an inanimate NOM and an animate ACC is general in all the Hispanic world. See §8).

³ See grammaticality judgements in footnote 7, as proposed in Maldonado ([1999]2006: 43). An asterisk (to indicate ungrammaticality) has been kept in quoted examples.

3. A demonstrative adjective: *Entrevisté a esos campesinos* ‘I interviewed those peasants’ (Kliffer 1995: 100).
4. *Todos* ‘all’, *ambos* ‘both’, and *cada* ‘every, each’ are definite determiners. I had compiled the preceding list of determiners (1-3) when I read a similar list in Laca (2017: 438). She adds the quantifiers in (4).
- c. An indefinite noun is preceded by an indefinite article: *una, unas, un, unos* (‘a, an, some’) or an indefinite quantifier: *algunas, algunos* (‘some’), *unas cuantas/unos cuantos* (‘a few’). A cardinal number is indefinite by the “test” of the existential verb *haber* ‘there is, there are’ (*hay 12 elementos en una docena* ‘there are 12 items in a dozen’). There is variation in the use of DOM with nouns preceded by a cardinal number: *La tormenta dejó a treinta heridos y a muchos arruinados* ‘the storm left thirty wounded and many in ruins’ (Laca 1995: 72). (Also on the same page: *La tormenta dejó treinta heridos y muchos arruinados*).
- d. A bare noun is determinerless: *Monstruos* is bare in *el sueño de la razón produce monstruos* ‘the dream of reason produces monsters’ (Title of one of Goya’s paintings. Used as an example in García García 2007: 79).
- (3) Definiteness/animacy hierarchy. Adapted from Silverstein (1976) and Aissen (2003)
- personal pronoun > proper name > animate N(oun) > definite N > indefinite N > inanimate N > bare N
- (4) A two-tier theory of DOM in Spanish (adapted from González 2024: 75)
- a. The marker *a* preceding an argument in a sentence indicates that the participant is not the verber.⁴
- b. An IO pronoun (coindexed with the argument that does not pass the **verbed** entailment) distinguishes the verbee from the **verbed**.

Readers familiar with research on DOM can see how the animacy alignments in (1) encompass several proposals regarding DOM in a very intuitive way. The first of those proposals is that an atypical, salient, or highly topical direct object (DO) will require or favor marking with *a* (Aissen 2003; Weissenrieder 1991; among others). A DO in a sentence with the alignment in (1a) would be typical, and therefore there is no marker *a*, under the assumption that the subject is also typical. Roughly speaking, close to 69% of transitive sentences have an animate subject and 90% have an inanimate DO while 89.8% of subjects were definite and only 10.2% were indefinite, as reported for Norwegian in Øvrelid (2004: 5-6). Similar counts have been reported for other languages. Vázquez Rozas (2006: 88) reports that the subject was animate in 85.75% of transitive sentences in the database used in her study (www.bds.usc.es). In Givón (1979: 51-52), 44% of direct objects were found to be indefinite as opposed to only 9% of subjects. Næss (2004: 1194) discusses similar data. A DO in a sentence with the alignments in (1b,c) would be atypical vis-à-vis the alignment in (1a). An inanimate DO is not atypical by itself (as in 1d), but a subject and a DO are in an atypical animacy alignment when both are inanimate.

⁴ Alarcos (1970 §7,9) had observed that *a* marks “no sujeto” (non-subject), as quoted in Pensado (1995: 26). The terms verber, **verbed**, and verbee will be briefly explained in §2. They are proposed and explained in detail in González (2021). Verber, **verbed**, and verbee are used to propose a simpler and more predictive analysis of reflexive sentences in González (2022) and of the indirect object in González (2024).

Second, the animacy alignments capture a more encompassing explanation for DOM which states that more than marking an atypical DO, DOM is due more to the relative animacy of the DO vis-à-vis that of the subject. As von Heusinger & Kaiser (2011: 617) put it, “[...] we need further studies that investigate (sic) this additional parameter besides individuation and transitivity, namely the relative ranking of the two arguments”. Delbecque (2002: 82, 83), García García (2007: 81), Morimoto & de Swarts (2006: 232), among others, are scholars who have also called attention to the relative animacy of the two arguments.

Notice that (4a) captures the apparent syncretism of those accusative objects that are marked with *a* and all dative objects, always marked with *a* in Spanish. The statement in (4b) distinguishes a dative argument from an accusative one. Although one can agree with the intuition that an animate accusative “looks like” a dative, it is uncontroversial that an accusative argument passes the verbed entailment in González (2021: 13), to be discussed in §2, but that a dative argument does not. A true dative is always the benefactee (or the malefactee) in a sentence with an accusative, or with a nominative that was the result of unaccusativization. See González (2021, Chapters 4-5). Although several scholars have shown the clear difference in Spanish between a dative object and an accusative one (González 2024, Chapter 2; Laca 1995: 74; among others), there are scholars who argue that DOM and dative marking are the same (Aissen 2003: 446-447; Ormazábal & Romero 2013: 223; Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007: 5; among others). Section 3 explores this issue in detail.

We will invoke *world knowledge* as a fifth factor (in addition to 1-4) to be considered in accounting for DOM, particularly when there is variation. World knowledge is a concept invoked by de Swarts (2007: 30, 91), Laca (1995: 65), Næss (2004: 1188), among others. World knowledge offers a more intuitive explanation for sentences whose subject is difficult to see as “agentive”. At the same time that we will invoke world knowledge to help us understand unclear cases when both the subject and the DO are inanimate, it is uncontroversial that world knowledge is also what is at play in the typical alignment in (1a). If there is an animate and an inanimate participant in a sentence, the animate is overwhelmingly the subject and the inanimate is overwhelmingly the object. Remember that in the study by Øvrelid (2004: 5-6), close to 69% of subjects are animate and 90% of objects are inanimate. That is precisely the animate-first effect rule of many languages (Verhoeven 2014 and references therein; de Swarts 2007: 144; among many others).

The following brief explanation shows what is meant in this article with world knowledge:

- (5) a. Kim painted her house.
 b. Kim painted the woods in front of her house.
 c. *Juan cazó una perdiz*. (Pensado 1995: 31).
 ‘Juan shot a partridge’

The most probable interpretation for (5a) is the one in which Kim paid someone to paint her house. It is also possible that she painted it herself, if we know that she is the type of person who would do that. However, if we know that Kim is an artist, and we know that she is not in the business of applying coats of paint to solid surfaces, we will immediately interpret (5a) as Kim producing a work of art, which is the only plausible interpretation for (5b). In other words, our world knowledge will help us process the intended interpretation, perhaps without other interpretations occurring to us. Although *una perdiz* is animate, several scholars have observed that not all animate objects require DOM (see §6.2 and §7 below). Interestingly, the dictionary in which I checked the translation for *perdiz* into English provided this example: *el perro recogió las*

tres perdices cazadas por su dueño ‘the dog picked up the three partridges shot by his owner’.⁵ This example has an animate DO preceded by two determiners: a definite article followed by a numeral. There is no need to differentiate it, though. People shoot partridges, but not the other way around; dogs get trained to fetch them, but not the other way around.

World knowledge also offers an explanation for (6a,b) below. As Alarcos Llorach (1994: 279) explains the contrast, “in the first case *Italia* se refiere a la conocida noción geográfica y en el segundo alude a otro equipo distinto del nuestro”.⁶

- (6) a. *Nuestro equipo recorrió Italia.* (Alarcos Llorach 1994: 279)
Our team traveled around all Italy
‘Our team traveled around all Italy’
b. *Nuestro equipo venció a Italia.* (Alarcos Llorach 1994: 279)
our team defeated DOM Italy
‘Our team defeated Italy’

Finally, consider (7a), a sentence with a definite inanimate subject and a definite inanimate DO. Most speakers will agree that speakers of any language will utter the equivalent of the sentence in (7a), but it is hard to think of a situation where (7b) would be true. Are speakers computing the agentivity of the *tree* and the themehood of the *garage*, as the proposal in García García (2007: 71) would imply? Or might speakers know that (7a) is part of their world knowledge, but (7b) might not be? As for (8a), people see that accidents interrupt traffic all the time. An event of traffic interrupting accidents should be an event without any reason to be reported in any language. These questions will be addressed in §7.

- (7) a. *El árbol destruyó el garaje.*
‘The tree destroyed the garage’
b. ??*El garaje destruyó el árbol.*⁷
??‘The garage destroyed the tree’
(8) a. *El accidente interrumpió el tráfico durante doce horas.* (Fábregas 2013: 25. Ex. 76b).
‘The accident interrupted the traffic for twelve hours’
b. ??*El tráfico interrumpió el accidente.*
‘Traffic interrupted the accident’

This article is organized as follows. Section 1 is an introduction. Section 2 shows that knowing who does what to whom in a sentence is easier by using verber, **verbed**, and verbee rather than by using subject, direct object (DO), and indirect object (IO), the traditional grammatical relations.⁸

⁵ <https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/perdiz>

⁶ In the first case Italy refers to the known geographic notion and in the second case it alludes to a team different from ours. (Translation by this author).

⁷ Grammaticality judgements. See also footnote 9.

?: A sentence produced by few speakers. A questionable sentence;

?: A sentence produced by very few speakers. This notation is modeled after Maldonado ([1999]2006: 43), for whom the notation “??” means a **marginal sentence**. Carlota de Benito Moreno (PC, 2022) explained to me that she prefers the notation “??” to an asterisk (*) because she has found many “ungrammatical” sentences in corpora.

⁸ From now on, we will underline the sender (more generally, the verber), bold the **sent** (**verbed**), and double underline the sendee (verbee).

Section 3 shows that DOM is different from dative marking in Spanish. Section 4 adds to the evidence that an object pronoun always requires DOM. Section 5 explains why there is no DOM with the existential verb *haber* ‘there is; there are’ in Spanish. Section 6.1 explores DOM with definite animate **verbeds**; 6.2 with determinerless animate **verbeds**; and 6.3 with indefinite animate **verbeds**. Section 7 explores DOM with inanimate **verbeds**. Section 8 explains the difference between dialectal *leísmo* and general *leísmo* (psychological verbs). Section 9 shows that some apparent cases of DOM with an “accusative” are really a dative. Section 10 shows that affectedness is not a necessary condition for DOM, or for verbedhood. Section 11 offers some arguments against the distinction between high and low transitivity. Section 12 summarizes some issues for further research mentioned throughout this article. Section 13 offers some conclusions.

2. Subject and direct object or verber and verbed?

González (2021; 2024) shows that rules of languages are easier to state, understand, apply, and retain by using the verber entailment (as in 9d) and the **verbed** entailment (as in 9e) than by using subject and direct object. We will use verber instead of subject, **verbed** instead of DO, and verbee instead of IO, unless we are quoting or unless it is needed for clarity.

Consider the sentences in (9a,b) and the entailments in (9c-h).

- (9)
- a. We sent Grandma **our children**.
 - b. We sent **our children** to Grandma.
 - c. #We sent Grandma to our children.⁹
 - d. We were the sender. (The verber entailment).
 - e. **Our children** were (the) **sent**. (The verbed entailment).
 - f. Grandma was the sendee (the recipient).
 - g. Grandma was sent **our children**.
 - h. #Grandma was (the) sent.

If (9a) is true, then (9b) is true, but (9c) is not true. Furthermore, the entailments in (9d-g) are true, but the one in (9h) is not true. Observe that Grandma is consistently the verbee (the “recipient” of the children), regardless of whether she is expressed as the indirect object (9b), the primary object (9a), or the subject (9g). Speakers of English do not utter a sentence like (9h) as an entailment from (9a,b). If speakers of English start with *Grandma* as the subject of a sentence, they know that whom/what was sent to her must be expressed in the sentence, as (9g) shows. Observe that (9e) is the passive voice. The subject is the **verbed**. This shows that verber and **verbed** are not just another label for subject and DO. The subject of a sentence in the passive voice is the **verbed**. So is the subject of a “passive se” sentence with a reflexive pronoun (see González 2022, Chapter 2). If there is a verber in a sentence, it is always the subject (9a,b,d). If there is no verber, either the **verbed** (9e) or the verbee (9g) is promoted to subject.

3. How an object with DOM is different from a dative object

The “surface” similarity of *a Margarita* in sentences similar to (*ellas*) *invitaron a Margarita* ‘they invited **Margarita**’ and (*ellas*) *le dieron un pastel a Margarita* ‘they gave Margarita **a cake**’/‘they gave **a cake** to Margarita’ in (10, 11) below is one of the reasons which has led many scholars to claim that DOM marking and dative marking are identical. As Aissen (2003: 446-447,

⁹ The notation “#” indicates a sentence not entailed by a sentence being discussed (9a in this case). It can also indicate a semantically anomalous sentence (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 35).

footnote 10) put it, “In a number of the languages discussed below, accusative case in a DOM system is identical to dative case, e.g., Spanish, Hindi, Catalan, Yiddish”. These claims come in part from the understanding that a dative (a Margarita) can be optionally doubled with an indirect object pronoun (le). Presumably, if the verb is a three-place predicate, the doubling is not needed (Company Company 2017: 489; Gutiérrez Ordóñez 1999: 1872; RAE 2009: 2696; Strozer 1976: 137-144; among others). In that case, our sentence would be (ellas) *dieron un pastel a Margarita*.

Whereas it is certainly difficult to distinguish a direct object from an indirect object in many sentences using the notions of direct object and indirect object, the verbed entailment in González (2021, Chapter 1; 2024, Chapter 2) shows that a true direct object (**un pastel**) passes the verbed entailment, but the indirect object (a Margarita) does not. The same entailment holds in the Spanish equivalent of the double object construction in English (*le dieron a Margarita un pastel* ‘they gave Margarita a cake’). Interestingly, Spanish also allows dative shift, although it is not as prominent as dative shift is in English, perhaps because there is no omission of the marker *a* in Spanish. According to Company Company (2017: 515), dative shift occurs in 31% of the sentences in Spanish in the 20th century—it was 37% in the 13th century.¹⁰ The percentage of sentences with dative shift in English is at least 78.6%. When only the first and the second person are counted, that percentage increases to 91% (Godfrey & Holliman & McDaniel 1992, as reported in Bresnan & Nikitina 2008).

Table 1 summarizes the differences between **a Margarita** as the **invited** (an accusative) and a Margarita as the **givee** (a dative). See González (2024: 17) for a discussion of why **Margarita** would usually be referred to in English as an invitee (a false verbee); however, the *cake* will never be referred to as the givee (the recipient). The **invited** (person) is the same as the **invitee**; the **given** (**the cake**) is different from the **givee** (a Margarita).

Table 1. *A Margarita* is the **invited** in (10); *a Margarita* is the **givee** (recipient) in (11)

(10) (<u>Ellas</u>) invitaron a Margarita . (<u>They</u> invited Margarita .)	(11) (<u>Ellas</u>) <u>Le</u> dieron un pastel a Margarita . (<u>They</u> gave a cake to Margarita .) (<u>Ellas</u>) <u>Le</u> dieron a Margarita un pastel . (<u>They</u> gave Margarita a cake .)
<p>a. Invitaron a Margarita. b. A Margarita la/??le invitaron. c. Margarita fue invitada (por ellas). d. Margarita se invitó. (She got invited [<u>they</u> invited her] or she invited <u>herself</u>).</p> <p>e. Margarita está invitada. f. Margarita es la invitada. g. A Margarita se le/se la invitó.</p> <p>(Margarita is the verbed).</p>	<p>a. ?Dieron un pastel a Margarita. b. <u>A Margarita</u> ??la/<u>le</u> dieron un pastel. c. ??Margarita fue dada un pastel. d. ??<u>Margarita se</u> dio. (cf. #<u>Margarita</u> was given away; #Margarita gave herself away (to another person).) e. #Margarita está dada. f. #Margarita es la dada. (cf. El pastel es el dado.) g. <u>A Margarita se le/??se la</u> dio un pastel.</p> <p>(<u>Margarita</u> is the verbee; that is, the benefactee or recipient in the giving event).</p>

Sentence (11a) is acceptable under the assumption that a verb with an IO in its argument structure does not need dative clitic doubling (Company Company 2017: 489; Gutiérrez Ordóñez

¹⁰ A similar percentage is reported by Roberto Aranovich (2011: 172).

1999: 1872; RAE 2009: 2696; Strozer 1976: 137-144; among others). González (2024, chapter 4) shows uncontroversial evidence that a dative clitic does not double its IO, but rather that the dative clitic is generated as a marker for the dative case (as several scholars have proposed) and that a “full” IO in postverbal position can be omitted when it is known information, but that the dative clitic pronoun stays as a trace to keep track of who (verber) does what (**verbed**) to/for whom (verbee). Although some speakers tend to omit the clitic pronoun in sentences like (11a), it can always be in the sentence, and it is in fact present more often than it is omitted. Actually, the clitic is more often present alone in the sentence than it is with its PP (the IO in full), as table 2 shows.

Table 2. Frequency of clitic alone, clitic doubling, and PP alone in three studies

	Clitic only	Clitic + PP	PP only
Belloro (2007: 141)	85.6%	12.8%	1.7%
Vázquez Rozas (2006: 84)	78.66%	13.38%	8.77%
Weissenrieder (1995: 173)	75%	20%	5%

Sentence (10b) with *la* pronominalizing **a Margarita** is the rule in all the Hispanic world, including central and northern Spain, where *le* is the norm to pronominalize an accusative if the referent is singular and masculine. This is the famous dialectal *leísmo*, which rarely applies to a singular and feminine referent. Although speakers from Madrid and surrounding areas pronominalize a dative with the accusative clitic *la* (*las, lo, los*), as in (11b), it is reasonable to conjecture that the frequency of this use (*laísmo*) is perhaps even lower than *leísmo* for a feminine, singular referent. Furthermore, the former use (*laísmo*) might be more restricted geographically than the latter use.¹¹

Sentence (10c) shows the passive voice of (10a). Spanish does not allow passivization of a dative (Fábregas 2013: 2, Gutiérrez Ordóñez 1999: 1874; RAE 2009: 3042; Vázquez Rozas 2006: 84; among many others), as (11c) shows. Sentence (10d) shows the passive *se* for (10a). If (10a) is true, it is necessarily true that **Margarita** was (got) invited. If (11a) is true, it is NOT true that Margarita was (got) given or that *Margarita se dio*. The given was the **cake**.

Sentence (10e) is the resultative alternation of (10a). That is, (10e) expresses a result. If (10a) is true, (10e) is necessarily true. However, if (11a) is true, (11e) is not true. Margarita has not been given in the event expressed in (11a).

Sentence (10f) shows that **a Margarita** passes the verbed entailment (González 2024, Chapter 1)-if applied to (10a). However, a Margarita does not pass the verbed entailment if applied to (11b) because she is not the given; the given is the cake. Sentences (10e,f) and (11e,f) suggest that a verbed can be the preverbal participant of a sentence in the passive voice and of a resultative sentence, but a verbee cannot be the preverbal participant of either type of sentence.

Sentence (10g) is what might be called a “passive *se* topicalization” of an accusative object (**Margarita**). This accusative topicalization is slightly different from the one in (10b). Observe that in this topicalization, *Margarita* can be pronominalized with the dative clitic (*le*). This is a case of general *leísmo*; that is, the pronominalization of an accusative, regardless of gender or number, with the dative clitic. This is done in all the Hispanic world. The pronominalization with *la* (**a Margarita se la invitó**) would be what traditional Spanish grammar has called the etymological

¹¹ ??A Marta nunca le detuvieron. Cf. **A Marta** nunca **la** detuvieron. In a search in [Corpes XXI](#) for *le detuvieron*, the first 18 sentences refer to a masculine referent. That masculine referent is a DO, but it is tagged as a “dative”. The *le* in sentence 19 (in Corpes XXI) refers to a feminine referent, but it is a true IO (*Micaela y Felicitas le detuvieron las manos*). (Searched done in November 2022). This is clearly an issue for further research.

use; that is, the use that pronominalizes or replaces an accusative with an accusative pronoun and a dative with a dative pronoun. It is attested, but it is more infrequent vis-à-vis *se le invitó*.¹² Sentence (11g) is the topicalization of a dative object (a Margarita). This is the equivalent in Spanish of the passivization (topicalization) of a dative in English (Margarita was given **a cake**).

Notice that (11g) has *se le* as an “unmarked” sequence (the most frequent sequence) of an intransitivizing *se* (a *se* replacing the verber, as González 2022 shows) and a *le* indicating that a Margarita is a dative object. The sequence *se la* (in 11g) would be the less frequent form produced by *laísta* speakers in Madrid and surrounding areas (cf. 11b).

Let us look at the main distinction in Table 1 from a slightly different angle by considering sentences (12a-b) from Fábregas (2013: 5). I have added (12c-g). The fact that we can assume that the subject is a third person singular (Pepe’s daughter for the sake of argument—*la hija* ‘his daughter’) allows us to show the need for *le*, not only with a verb like *lavar* ‘wash’ (which would presumably not have a dative in its argument structure, and would therefore require *le*), but also with the verb *dar* ‘give’ (the prototypical dative-taking verb, which by virtue of having a dative in its argument structure would presumably not require *le*).

- (12) a. *Atacamos a Pepe.*
we.attacked DOM Pepe.ACC
‘We attacked Pepe’
- b. *Le robamos el coche a Pepe.*
him.DAT we.stole the car to.Pepe.DAT
‘We stole his car from Pepe’
- c. *?Robamos el coche a Pepe.*
we.stole the car to Pepe
‘We stole his car from Pepe’
- d. *(La hija) Le lavó el coche a Pepe.*
(the daughter) him.DAT washed the car for.Pepe.DAT
‘(His daughter) washed his car for Pepe’
- e. *?(La hija) lavó el coche a Pepe.*
(his daughter) washed the car for.Pepe.DAT
‘(His daughter) washed his car for Pepe’
- f. *#Lavó el coche a Pepe.*
washed the car DOM Pepe
(Might be interpreted as: ‘the car washed Pepe’)
- g. *#Dio el coche a Pepe.*
gave the car DOM Pepe
(Might be interpreted as: ‘the car gave Pepe’)

If we do not have *le* to tell us that a Pepe is the verbee in (12d), not the verbed (as in 12a), then the sentence would be (12f). This sentence would mean that the car is the one doing the washing, something that (12d) does not mean. Cars do not wash people. If we were to admit that *le* cannot be left out because the verb *to wash* is not a three-place verb, the same problem would arise if we used the prototypical three-place verb *dar* ‘give’, as in (12g). The sentence in (12g) would mean that *el coche* is the giver and *a Pepe* is the given. Cars do not give people.

¹² A search in [Ngram Viewer](#) in September 2024 produced 79.6% for *se le*, 11.1% for *se la*, and 9.2% for *se lo*. Data from 2021.

To summarize this section, Table 1 shows uncontroversial evidence that **a Margarita** is a **verbed** (a DO) in (10a), but a Margarita is a verbee (an IO) in (11a). The marker *a* indicates non verber (non subject) in both sentences; the marker le in (11a) distinguishes a Margarita as the verbee from the **verbed (a cake)**.

The discussion in Table 1 shows the difference between **a Margarita** and a Margarita in (*ellas*) *invitaron a Margarita* and (*ellas*) *le dieron un pastel a Margarita*. It does so with two simple entailments that González (2021, Chapter 6) proposes as a better theory of argument structure than proposals based on subject (nominative), direct object (accusative), and indirect object (dative), as it is the case in virtually all current linguistics theories (Davis 2001; Dowty 1991; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2006; van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Williams 2015; among others). This discussion also shows that the dative a Margarita cannot become the accusative (the undergoer) **a Margarita** in a dative-shifted sentence either in English or in Spanish, as claimed in Role and Reference Grammar (Portero Muñoz 2003: 140; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 336; Van Valin 2004; among others).

4. There is always DOM when the verbed is an object pronoun

Let us turn now to the hierarchy in (3). Since it is uncontroversial that “No proper name lacks accusative marking”, as von Heusinger & Kaiser (2011: 601) expressed an observation with which all scholars agree, the hierarchy in (3) explains why an object pronoun always requires DOM, as virtually all scholars have observed (Fábregas 2013: 9; Laca 1995: 66; Pensado 1995: 19-20; RAE 2010: 319-321; Rohlf 1971 [quoted in Laca 2017: 426]); etc.). As Kliffer (1995: 97) pointed out, “[...] *nombre propio implica singular, numerable, referencial y definido*”.¹³ We are referring, of course, to proper names for animate referents. An object pronoun (*a mí* ‘to me’, *a ti* ‘to you’, *a ella* ‘to her’, etc.) seems, in a sense, more definite, referential, and individuated than a proper name. The pronoun can replace the proper name as in (13a,b) below, but not the other way around, as in (14a,b). Notice that both (14a,b) are sentences of Spanish if they appear in discourse in the proper context, as in (13a,b). They are odd if (14b) is an answer to (14a), which is odd without having introduced the nouns to which the pronouns (*ella, él*) correspond.

- (13) a. ¿Viste a Isabel y a Fernando?
 (you).saw DOM Isabel and DOM Fernando
 ‘Did you see Isabel and Fernando?’
 b. *La vi a ella, pero no lo vi a él.*
 her.ACC I.saw DOM her.ACC but not him.ACC I.saw DOM him.ACC
 ‘I saw her, but I did not see him’
- (14) a. ??¿La viste a ella y a él?
 her.ACC you.saw DOM her.ACC and DOM him.ACC
 ‘Did you see her and him?’
 b. ??*Vi a Isabel, pero no vi a Fernando.*
 (I).saw DOM Isabel but not (I).saw DOM Fernando
 ‘I saw Isabel, but I did not see Fernando’

Laca (2017: 435) observes that stressed object pronouns have DOM 100% of the time since *Cantar de mio Cid*. All scholars concur. Once we have the definiteness hierarchy to help us understand why stressed object pronouns (*mí, ti, ella, él, usted, nosotras, nosotros, vosotros*,

¹³ [...] a proper name implies singular, count, referential, and definite. (Translation by this author).

vosotros, ellas, ellos, ustedes) always require DOM, it is reasonable to extend that understanding to other pronouns referring to animates. Observe that these pronouns replace a **verbed** (DO) or a **verbee** (IO) in a sentence. When these pronouns are **verbees**, their corresponding pronoun appears with them (*la presidencia de un país no se le da a cualquiera* ‘the presidency of a country is not given to anybody’). By the same token, examples like the following (Fábregas 2013: 22, Exs. 15-17) will require DOM. This author has added (18):

- (15) *No vi *(a) nadie en el parque.* not I.saw DOM nobody in the park
‘I did not see anybody in the park’
- (16) *Vi *(a) alguien en el parque.*
I.saw *(DOM) someone in the park
‘I saw someone in the park’
- (17) *¿*(A) quién viste en el parque?*
*(DOM) whom you.saw in the park
‘Whom did you see in the park?’
- (18) *La gente no elige a cualquiera como presidente de un país.*
the people not elect DOM anybody as president of a country
‘People do not elect anybody as the president of a country’
(*a cualquiera = a cualquier persona* ‘anybody’ = ‘any person’).

A alguna persona ‘any person’ and *a ninguna persona* ‘any person’ function similarly to the pronouns in (15-18), as well as a *a otra/a otro* ‘another’ and *a otras/a otros* ‘others’ when referring to people.

Therefore, there is a consensus that when the accusative is a pronoun, the marker *a* is mandatory.¹⁴ In a sense, it appears that a pronoun referring to an animate object has a high degree of definiteness.

5. Why there is no DOM with the only argument of *haber* ‘there is/there are’ in Spanish

A theory of DOM that looks at “the relative animacy of the two arguments”, as von Heusinger & Kaiser (2011: 617) expressed an observation shared by many other scholars, can answer the question as to why the only argument in a sentence with the verb *haber* ‘there is/there are’ does not accept DOM. That is exactly what the animacy alignments in (1a-d) predict. Since *haber* has just one argument—the verbed—there is no need to “differentiate” it from anything else.¹⁵ Sentences with *haber* are verberless, and their only argument—the **verbed**—need not be “differentiated” from any other argument. See sentences (19a-c) from Fábregas (2013: 24). This author has added (19d):

- (19) a. *Hay *(a) alguien.*
there.is (*DOM) someone
‘There is someone’.

¹⁴ One reviewer raised a point for which this author does not have an answer yet. The reviewer writes, “it is a contradiction that *nadie* ‘nobody’ has a higher degree of definiteness than, let us say, *un estudiante* (a student)”. That is an issue for further research.

¹⁵ This explanation had occurred to me before I read a similar explanation in Delbecque (2002: 107), who was drawing on work by Suñer (1982).

- b. *No hay (*a) nadie.*
not there.is (*DOM) nobody
'There is not anybody' (Intended: nobody is [here])
- c. *¿(*a) Quién hay?*
(*DOM) who there.is
'Who is there?'
- d. *¿Hay alguien ahí?*
is.there somebody there?
'Is there anybody there?'

The only participant of *haber* is often indefinite (20a) or even a bare noun (20b,c):

- (20) a. *Hay una mosca en la sopa.* (cf. ??*Hay la mosca en la sopa.* Cf. also *La mosca está en la sopa*).
there.is a fly in the soup (cf. ??*there.is the fly in the soup.* Cf. also *The fly is in the soup.*)
'There is a fly in the soup' (cf. ??*There is the fly in the soup.* Cf. also *The fly is in the soup.*)
- b. *Hay gente que no respeta los derechos de los otros.*
there.are people who not respect the rights of the others
'There are people who do not respect the rights of other people'
- c. *No hay amigos en la vida.*¹⁶
not there.are friends in the life
'There are no friends in life'

6. Connecting the dots from a definite verbed, to an indefinite one, to a bare one

The (a)typicality of a **verbed** runs in two dimensions, at least. The first one is animacy. An animate **verbed** is atypical. An inanimate **verbed** is not atypical by itself, but it is in an atypical animacy alignment if the verber is also inanimate. Since atypicality of the **verbed** (DO) is at the heart of DOM, and the verber (subject) is overwhelmingly definite, but the **verbed** is often either indefinite or determinerless (in 1,000 transitive sentences in Øvrelid 2004: 6, the subject is indefinite only in 4.2% of the sentences whereas the direct object was indefinite in 33.2% of the sentences), this proposal also shows why definite animate **verbeds** require DOM most of the time, indefinite animate **verbeds** show presence or absence of DOM (variation), bare animate common **verbeds** reject DOM (Laca 1995: 79), and an inanimate **verbed** requires or favors DOM when the verber is also inanimate, particularly when the **verbed** is as high as or higher in definiteness than the verber.¹⁷

6.1. DOM with definite animate verbeds

Consider the Naked Noun Constraint (NNC) proposed in Suñer (1982: 209):

- (21) An unmodified common noun in preverbal position cannot be the surface subject of a sentence under normal conditions of stress and intonation.

¹⁶ Line from a song from the 1970s.

¹⁷ Givón (1979: 51-52) reports that 44% of direct objects are indefinite as opposed to only 9% of subjects.

Comrie (1979: 19) had observed that “subjects are typically animate and definite”. Animacy for verbers is easily closer to 90% than to 80%, as the data from Øvrelid (2004: 6) shows. Definiteness for verbers might be even higher than animacy under the assumption that an inanimate subject tends to be definite when it is the verber, as the count of inanimate verbers from all of the examples in García García (2007) shows in §7 below. There are a few verbers introduced by an indefinite determiner (*una/unas/un/unos* ‘a/an’, *algunas/algunos* ‘some’, *varias/varios* ‘several’), but those subjects are not determinerless; those sentences are presentational; that is, those sentences introduce a new referent in discourse. Remember that indefinite verbers are around 10% according to Næss (2004: 1194) and 4.2% according to Øvrelid (2004: 6). Interestingly, an indefinite verber does not prevent DOM from occurring:

- (22) *Una descarga eléctrica mató al primer electricista de mi pueblo.*
 a discharge electric killed DOM.the first electrician of my town
 ‘An electric shock killed the first electrician in my hometown’

DOM with human proper names is close to 100%, as had already been observed by Bello ([1847]1940: 294-295) more than 175 years ago. Other animate nouns which are definite have a strong tendency to require DOM. Fábregas (2013: 13; Ex. 34) observes that, “With proper names of animals there is a strong tendency to *a*-mark the object, so strong that speakers tend to reject (23b) –assuming Fido is a dog–“. This author’s examples below show a definite animate that seems to reject DOM (24a), a proper name that requires it (24b), and yet another definite that seems to accept variation (24c). The discussion below helps in explaining (24a), but not the variation in (24c).

- (23) a. *Vi a Fido.*
 I.saw DOM Fido
 ‘I saw Fido’
 b. **Vi Fido.*
 I.saw Fido
 ‘I saw Fido’
- (24) a. *Les cuidamos el perro /??al perro a los vecinos cuando no están en casa.*
 them.DAT we.take.care.of the dog /??DOM.the dog for the neighbors when no they.are in house
 ‘We take care of their dog for our neighbors when they are not home’
 b. *Les cuidamos ?(a) Fido a los vecinos cuando no están en casa.*
 them.DAT we.take.care.of ?(DOM) Fido for the neighbors when no they.are in house
 ‘We take care of Fido for our neighbors when they are not home’
 c. *Vimos el/al perro de los vecinos escarbando la basura.*
 we.saw the/DOM.the dog of the neighbors scratching the trash
 ‘We saw our neighbors’ dog scratching around the trash’

Company Company (2017: 506-507) states that sentences with DOM with a **verbed** when there is also a dative (always marked with *a*), are “gramaticalmente raras, inusuales e incluso agramaticales”. Company Company continues on page 507:

[...] el OD toma preposición en oraciones monotransitivas, pero carece de marcación en las bitransitivas, o en otras palabras, el OD personal se desmarca en presencia de un OI, o bien el OD se marca solo en ausencia de un OI. Puede verse en ([25j,k below]) que la marca prepositiva sobre ambos objetos se permite en español si el OI refuerza su presencia en la estructura oracional con una doble marca. Todo lo anterior puede ser interpretado como que el OI confirma su carácter prototípicamente humano, tiene léxicamente un estatus mayor que el OD y requiere ser consistentemente marcado, reforzando su presencia frente al OD y empleando una doble codificación: duplicación y marca prepositiva.

All the examples in (25) come from Company Company (2017: 507), except for (25m). The grammaticality judgments are as they appear in her chapter. I assume that the order is V ACC DAT. I coded the ACC with **bold** and the DAT with double underline to help readers.

- (25) a. *El maestro presentó **Ø** su mujer a Juan.*
 ‘The teacher introduced his wife to John’¹⁸
 [Alarcos 1994: 280; in Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20a]
- b. *Para ofrecer **Ø** su hija al fuego de Dios.*
 ‘In order to offer his daughter to God’s fire’
 [Roegiest 1998: 475; in Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20a]¹⁹
- c. *?El Maestro presentó **a** su mujer a los alumnos.*
 ‘The teacher introduced his wife to his students’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20b]
- d. **?El maestro presentó **a** su mujer a Juan.*
 ‘The teacher introduced his wife to John’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20b]
- e. **El cacique dio **a** su hija a los conquistadores.*
 ‘The Indian chief gave his daughter to the conquerors’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20b]
- f. *??El cacique entregó **a** su hija a los conquistadores.*
 ‘The Indian chief delivered his daughter to the conquerors’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20b]
- g. *El maestro le(s) presentó **a** su mujer a los alumnos.*
 ‘The teacher introduced his wife to his students’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20e]
- h. *El maestro le presentó **a** su mujer a Juan.*
 ‘The teacher introduced his wife to John’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20e]
- i. *?El cacique le(s) entregó **a** su hija a los conquistadores.*
 ‘The Indian Chief delivered his daughter to the conquerors’
 [Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20e]
- j. *Di **a** Diana a don Sancho. (cf. Le di **a** Diana a don Sancho).*
 ‘I gave Diana to don Sancho’
 [Tirso de Molina; *apud* Gili Gaya 1943/1961 §158; Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20c].

¹⁸ A simple gloss is offered because Ø/DOM and Ø/DAT clitic is discussed in the paragraph following these sentences.

¹⁹ In Company Company (20a,b,c,e) has each several sentences. The total number of sentences is 17, plus 1 for (20d).

k. *Allí se daría orden de llevar a Dorotea a su padre.* (cf. *Allí se daría orden de llevarle a Dorotea a su padre.*)

‘There a command to bring Dorotea to her father would be issued’

[Quijote I, 29, apud Gili Gaya Gaya 1943/1961 §158; Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20c]

l. *El traidor Judas vendió a Jesús a los sacerdotes y fariseos.*

‘The traitor Judas sold Jesus to the priests and Pharisees’

[Bello [1847]1978: §900; quoted in Company Company 2017: 507, Ex. 20c].

m. *El traidor Judas les vendió a Jesús a los sacerdotes y fariseos.*

‘The traitor Judas sold Jesus to the priests and Pharisees’

⚭ [This author has added *les* to 25].

Several observations follow from these examples. First, the clitic pronoun that appears with a dative appears to have been optional in old Spanish but has become more frequent. As González (2024, Chapter 4) shows, a dative pronoun does not double the dative object. The pronoun is “generated” with the sentence (because it is an agreement marker that distinguishes the *verbee* from the *verbed*), and the dative object stays in the sentence if it is new information. If it is old information in postverbal position, the prepositional dative phrase is omitted, but the dative clitic stays. That explains why the sentences “seem more acceptable” with the “doubling” clitic. Most native speakers will agree that sentences (25j,k) accept or even require the clitic (*le/les*). Second, the hierarchy in (3) predicts the presence of DOM (the marker *a* preceding the ACC) with proper names, even if there is a dative—also animate—in the sentence. Third, the statement in (4) also predicts that “the prepositional marking in both objects is allowed in Spanish if the IO reinforces its presence in the sentential structure with a double marking”, as Company Company (2017: 507) put it.²⁰ In fact, (4) predicts that if both *verbed* and *verbee* have the marker *a*, then the dative pronoun will distinguish the *verbee* from the *verbed*.

To summarize, animate *verbeds* overwhelmingly require or favor DOM the more definite they are. This rule applies virtually always with pronouns and proper names, including proper names of animals. When co-occurring with a dative, an accusative has DOM if it is a proper name (25j-l) or a common noun that is almost as definite as a proper name (*a su mujer*, *a su hija* in 25g,h above). There are some exceptions with animate common nouns with a definite determiner. See Laca (1995: 62, 63, 66) for some examples with and without the marker *a* by the same author. See also Rodríguez-Mondoñedo (2007: 100-105). Let us turn now to the other side of the animacy/definiteness continuum in (3) to see that DOM is highly disfavored with a bare noun, even when animate.

6.2. Absence of DOM with a determinerless, animate verbed

There is general agreement regarding sentences like those in §6.3 below. There is variation, and that variation is often connected to a difference in meaning (indicative in 40a vs. subjunctive in 40b). However, when the difference in meaning is difficult to determine, as for example in (26a,b) below, there seems to be another possible explanation for the alleged variation. The explanation for the difference in meaning in the following two sentences from Torrego (1998: 21) is questionable. The possible interpretations advanced have been whether there was a single search during the two years or several searches. As Fábregas (2013: 25) observes, scholars seem to disagree on which of the two sentences similar to those in (26a,b) is the one with both of these

²⁰ Translation by this author.

interpretations (the one similar to 26a or the one similar to 26b) and which one would allow only one of those interpretations. See Fábregas (2013: 25) for further discussion.

- (26) a. *Laura buscó a una secretaria durante dos años.*
 Laura searched for DOM a secretary for two years
 ‘Laura was looking for a secretary for two years’
 b. *Laura buscó una secretaria durante dos años.*
 Laura searched a secretary for two years
 ‘Laura was looking for a secretary for two years’

The sentences in (27a,c,d) below suggest that sentences like (26a,b) should be more frequently expressed as in (28):

- (27) a. *Un médico cura pacientes.* (Fábregas 2013: 20; Ex. 58)
 a doctor cures patient
 ‘A physician cures patients’
 b. *La situación exigía (*a) un médico.* (Fábregas 2013: 26; Ex. 78b)
 the situation required (*DOM) a physician
 ‘The situation required a physician’
 c. *Juan busca novia.* (Pensado 1995: 31)
 Juan looks girlfriend
 ‘Juan is looking for a girlfriend’
 d. *No recibe visitas.* (Pensado 1995: 31). (*Visitas* = visitors = people visiting)
 No she.receives visitors
 ‘She does not receive any visitors’
 (28) *Laura buscó secretaria durante dos años.*²¹
 Laura searched secretary for two years
 ‘Laura was looking for a secretary for two years’

Laca (1995: 79) provides further evidence for the absence of DOM with a determinerless animate when she writes, “En cambio, un objeto animado contable en singular carente de determinados no aparece jamás con la preposición”. (On the contrary, a count, singular, animate object which lacks any determiner never appears with the preposition).²² The data in (31) below will show that the restriction for the bare noun to be singular is unnecessary.

García & van Putte (1995: 117) explain, “en inglés *I am looking for a secretary* puede traducirse al español de dos formas”. (In English, *I am looking for a secretary* can be translated into Spanish in two ways).²³

- (29) a. *Busco una secretaria.*
 (I).search a secretary

²¹ The point made here is not that sentences like (26a,b) are not sentences in Spanish. The point is that the corresponding sentence in (28) should be more frequent. From the perspective of second language learning, the rule will be that a determinerless animate common noun **verbed** favors the absence of DOM.

²² Translation by this author.

²³ Translation by this author.

- ‘I am looking for a secretary’
 b. *Busco a una secretaria.*
 (I).search DOM a secretary
 ‘I am looking for a secretary’

It turns out that a rule found in textbooks for Spanish as a second language offers an explanation that better describes what native speakers say or write for sentences similar to (29a,b). That rule states that an unmodified noun referring to profession, religion, political affiliation, or nationality is determinerless (Dozier & Iguina 2017: 33; RAE 2010: 297; Whitley & González 2016: 295; among others). Those nouns require the indefinite article in English and presumably in other languages:

- (30) *Busco secretaria.*
 (I).search secretary
 ‘I am looking for a secretary’

Data from Google supports the proposal that the sentences in Torrego (1998: 21) and in García & van Putte (1995: 117) should be as in (30). The query was done by searching each string within double quotation marks. The Google search was done in November 2023; the Google Scholar search, in December 2023.

- (31) a. *Aceptamos nuevos pacientes.* = 16,200 (Google)
 (we).accept new patients
 ‘We are accepting new patients’
 b. *Aceptamos a nuevos pacientes.* = 0 (Google)
 (we).accept DOM new patients
 ‘We are accepting new patients’
 c. *Aceptando a nuevos pacientes* = 20 (Google); (Google Scholar = 0)
 accepting DOM new patients
 ‘(We are) accepting new patients’
 d. *Aceptando nuevos pacientes* = 29,200 (Google); (Google Scholar = 44)
 accepting new patients
 ‘(We are) accepting new patients’
 e. *Aceptando a pacientes* = 13,700. (Google); (Google Scholar = 7)
 accepting DOM patients
 ‘(We are) accepting patients’
 f. *Aceptando pacientes* = 456,000. (Google); (Google Scholar = 33)
 accepting patients
 ‘(We are) accepting patients’

The sentences in (27a,c,d), the sentences with a higher frequency in (31), and the observation by Laca (1995: 79—after 28 above) suggest that sentences similar to (26a,b) might be more frequently expressed in Spanish as (28). If this turns out to be what most speakers do, we will have to ask ourselves whether (28) will have a single search interpretation, a repeated search interpretation, or both. That is an issue for further research.

Since a preverbal determinerless common noun—even if it is animate—cannot be the verber (per Suñer 1982 Naked Noun Constraint), there is no need to *a*-mark it when it is the **verbed**, even

if the verber is inanimate. Remember (27a-d) above (*un médico cura pacientes*, etc.). García García (2007: 78) provides a telling example.²⁴

- (32) *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos.*
 the dream of the reason produces monsters
 ‘The dream of reason produces monsters’

A determinerless animate **verbed** might be the explanation for the absence of DOM in the following sentences, without the need to stipulate that the verb *tener* ‘to have’ does not follow the rule of an animate object requiring DOM.(33)

- a. *¿Tienes mamá/papá?*
 you.have mother/father?
 ‘Do you have a mother/father? (Intended: is your mother/father alive?)’
- b. *No, ya no tengo papá ni mamá.*
 no, no longer have neither mother nor father
 ‘I no longer have a mother or a father. (Intended: neither my mother nor my father is alive.)’
- c. *¿Tienes hijos?*
 you.have children
 ‘Do you have any children?’
- d. *Tengo hijas, pero no tengo hijos.*
 (I).have daughters but no (I).have sons
 ‘Yes, I have daughters but not sons’
- e. *¿Tienes novia?*
 you.have girlfriend
 ‘Do you have a girlfriend?’
- f. *No, no tengo novia. Estoy casado. Tengo esposa.*
 No, no (I).have girlfriend. (I).am married. (I).have wife
 ‘No, I do not have a girlfriend. I am married. I have a wife’
- g. *Brasil elige presidente este domingo entre Lula y Bolsonaro.*
 Brazil elects president this Sunday between Lula and Bolsonaro
 ‘This Sunday, Brazil elects a president between Lula and Bolsonaro’
- h. *No le sería demasiado difícil encontrar (*a) marido.* [*El Colombiano*, October 28th, 2022].
 no her.DAT would.be too difficult find.inf (*DOM) husband
 ‘It would not be very difficult (for her) to find a husband’

Observe (34a,b), which apparently contradicts the determinerless verbed rule. A possible answer might be that the determiner in (34a) is the cardinal number, not the indefinite article. Indeed, **verbeds** whose determiner is a cardinal number show variation similar to the variation seen with the indefinite article and with other quantifiers. Cardinal numbers and indefinite determiners share the observation that they refer to subsets of larger sets. On the other hand, the definite article refers to the totality of the referents that its noun plus its other modifiers denote.

²⁴ Titles of works of art are not everyday language. However, this example seems a phrase that can occur in everyday speech.

- (34) a. *Tengo una hija y un hijo.*
(I).have one daughter and one son
'I have one daughter and one son'
- b. *Tengo dos hijos.*
(I).have two children
'I have two children'

As many scholars have observed, it is interesting that DOM is required when sentences like those in (35b) have a different meaning.

- (35) a. *Ya no tenemos abuela(s).*
no.longer no (we).have grandmother(s)
'We no longer have (a) grandmother(s)' (Intended: our abuela(s) is/are not alive)
- b. *Tengo a una hija en Canarias.* (Pensado 1995: 34).²⁵
(I).have DOM one daughter in Canarias
'I have a daughter in Canarias' (Intended: One of my daughters is/lives in The Canary Islands)
- c. *Tenemos a la abuela en el hospital.*
(we).have DOM the grandmother in the hospital
'We have grandmother in the hospital' (Intended: Our grandmother is in the hospital)

Although it might be hard to argue that (35c) is not a sentence that speakers of Spanish utter, it appears that such a sentence might be more common in examples by scholars than in the everyday use of the language. I wonder why one would say (35c) and not simply *la abuela está en el hospital* 'Grandma is in the hospital'.²⁶ Interestingly, a search in Google Scholar in December 2023 returned three hits for "*la abuela está en el hospital*" and zero results for (35c), both with *tenemos* 'we have' and with *tiene* 'she has, he has, you have'. When "regular" Google was used, no results were obtained with *tienen/tenemos*. "*Tiene a la abuela en el hospital*" returned one result. "*La abuela está en el hospital*" returned 67,400 results.

Several scholars (see Pensado 1995: 34 for references) have dubbed the following phrases as having a special *conexión semántica* 'semantic connection': *enviar emisarios* 'to send emissaries', *elegir diputados* 'elect representatives', *nombrar prefectos* 'appoint prefects', *sobornar testigos* 'bribe witnesses', *reclutar soldados* 'recruit soldiers', etc.

The preceding discussion and the statement in Laca (1995: 79) show that there is no need for stipulations like the last one regarding phrases with a special semantic connection and similar ones. It is clear that animate nouns that are determinerless (naked) favor the absence of DOM. Therefore, although the animacy alignments give us a better picture of DOM than previous proposals, it is clear that definiteness, indefiniteness, and determinerlessness play a role.

The relative scarcity of discussion about bare animate objects might be due to the fact that Suñer's NNC is rarely mentioned in the literature on DOM. Suñer's NNC has made this writer

²⁵ Observe that this meaning of *tener* 'have' clearly contrasts with the meaning of *tener* as giving birth (*mi esposa tuvo* '(??) una niña esta mañana 'my wife gave birth to a baby girl this morning'). It also contrasts with (*no tener* *mamá, hijos, esposa/esposo*, etc. '(not) having a mother, any/some children, a spouse, etc.'). Might grammar be coding a difference in meaning relatively anchored in world knowledge?

²⁶ This sentence might have two different interpretations, but world knowledge will lead speakers to process just one (Grandma is hospitalized or Grandma works at the hospital, and she is there now).

much more aware of the contribution of definiteness (particularly of the contribution of the definite article) to the meaning of a DP, whether that DP is the verber or the **verbed**. That same awareness led this writer to look at determinerless animate **verbeds** from a new perspective. The observation in Laca (1995: 79) and the examples discussed in this section strongly suggest that the absence of DOM with determinerless animate nouns (singular or plural) might show less variation than DOM with nouns that include the definite article, a cardinal number, or a combination of the two. That correlation is a topic for further research.

Based on the discussion in this section, we can propose an improvement to a rule for Spanish stating that the indefinite article (*un/una/unos/unas* ‘a’ and ‘some’) is omitted before an unmodified noun referring to profession, religion, political affiliation, or nationality (*mi tía es senadora* ‘my Aunt is a senator’). The improvement to the rule is that the equivalent of a common noun preceded with an indefinite article in English (and presumably in other languages) will often be expressed in Spanish without the indefinite article, unless that noun is a preverbal verber (*una senadora tiene muchas responsabilidades* ‘a senator has many responsibilities’). This new rule does away with the four stipulations mentioned (profession, etc.), and covers other nouns (family, patients, monsters). It will also cover the nouns in the phrases with a “semantic connection” mentioned above, as well as *casa* ‘home’, *amigos* ‘friends’, *pan* ‘bread’ and *palabra* ‘word’ in the following stanza from “Romance del desterrado”, a poem by Emilio Prados.²⁷

(36) Romance del desterrado. A stanza

*No tengo casa ni amigos, ni tengo un lecho caliente, ni pan que calme mi hambre, ni palabra que me aliente.*²⁸

This is a rule that occurred to me as I was writing this section. It might evolve as other scholars offer improvements for it as they find possible counterexamples. But it is a rule worth exploring further. Observe that the rule is not restricted to objects, as Laca (1995: 79) expressed. *Soy colombiano* ‘I am a Colombian’. Nor is it restricted to singular referents.

There is general agreement that DOM is variable with **verbeds** with an indefinite determiner. However, part of that variation is due to some scholars not recognizing that some **verbeds** are better expressed without a determiner than with an indefinite determiner (*busco asistente* should be more frequent than *busco un asistente* ‘I am looking for an assistant’). Although Balasch (2012: 137) recommends that examples must come from data, and her own study follows this mandate, she also quotes newspaper headlines, as in (37a,b) below. Newspapers headlines might not be an optimal representation of native speaker speech. There is obviously pressure for succinctness. The following two headlines show the opposite of the tendency to disfavor DOM (35a), as this section shows. As for (37b), there is variation with cardinal numbers, which sometimes behave as indefinite determiners, at least regarding DOM (§6.3 below). Interestingly, the first two results with the search “asesinan a comerciante” read on the first line of each result as follows: *asesinaron al comerciante Gustavo Torres/asesinaron al comerciante Álvaro Luis González* ‘the business person GT was assassinated/the business person ALG was assassinated’.²⁹

²⁷ <https://la-maleta.org/desterrado/?lang=es>

²⁸ I do not have a house, nor do I have any friends,
Nor do I have a warm bed,
Nor do I have a piece of bread to take my hunger away
Nor a word to cheer me up. (Translation by this author)

²⁹ The link to that article is

One must wonder whether the definite referent (*al comerciante GT/ALG* ‘DOM the business person GT/ALG’) played a role in the journalist’s intuition to use the marker *a*. Native speakers of Spanish are not aware that they are “inserting” or “not inserting” the marker *a*. Only if you are a teacher of Spanish as a second language or a linguist familiar with DOM might you sometimes be aware of the marker *a*.

- (37) a. *Asesinan a comerciante*. (Headline in *El Universal* (Venezuela), April 2011)
 (they).killed DOM business.person
 ‘A business person was assassinated’
 b. *Asesinan dos monjas en Argelia*. (Headline in *El Universal* (Venezuela), October 1994)
 (they).kill two nuns in Argelia
 ‘Two nuns were assassinated in Argelia’

As Laca (1995: 79) observed, “a count, singular, animate object which lacks any determiner never appears with the preposition”.³⁰ That statement does not require the number (singular) specification. Her observation also better explains some of the putative variation with some indefinite **verbeds**, which should be determinerless, not indefinite.

If scholars were to agree that the presence of DOM in (37a) might be world knowledge, we have an explanation for (37a). The referent is a proper name, which will require DOM, but which does not get to appear in the headline.

6.3. DOM with an indefinite animate verbed

Animate nouns preceded by an indefinite determiner (*un/una/unos/unas* ‘a’, ‘an’, ‘some’) show more variation than that described in §6.1 and §6.2. Remember the hierarchy in (3), repeated below for convenience in (38).

- (38) personal pronoun > proper name > *animate N(oun)* > definite N > *indefinite N* > inanimate N > bare N

Observe that out of seven parameters, an *animate N* is the third one from the left and *indefinite N* is the third one from the right. These two “discontinuous” parameters are in the middle zone of the hierarchy. By the intuition behind a continuum, that is the zone where more variation is to be expected. The strength of that variation can be easily seen in pairs like (29) and (30) above, pairs that fail to recognize the optimal solution (no DOM) when the object (*secretaria* ‘secretary’) in those pairs is recognized as a bare noun, as it should be. Interestingly, part of the reported variation might be due to a failure to recognize that a bare noun would be preferable to a noun with an indefinite determiner. Granted, it is clear that there is more variation with indefinite animates than with those discussed in §6.1 and §6.2 above.

There are determinerless nouns that can have DOM, but those nouns tend to have modifiers after the noun.

- (39) a. [...] *admiten hoy a estudiantes de color*.
 (they).admit today DOM students of color
 ‘These days, they admit students of color’

[Fernández Ramírez 1986: 167]

³⁰ Translation by this author.

- b. *El comité busca (a) estudiantes con buenas calificaciones.*
 the committee looks for (DOM) students with good grades
 ‘The committee is looking for students with good grades’

[Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007: 127]

Let us turn now to a legitimate case of variation. The variation has been associated with the distinction between specific (known and existing) referents and referents about whose existence the speaker asks, as in pairs involving the indicative mood (40a) vs. the subjunctive mood (40b):

- (40) a. *buscar *(a) una secretaria que habla inglés* (Fábregas 2013: 19)
 to.search for DOM a secretary that speaks.ind English (ind = indicative)
- b. *buscar (*a) una secretaria que hable inglés* (Fábregas 2013: 19)
 to.search for DOM a secretary that speaks.subj English (subj = subjunctive)

As Fábregas (2013: 19) explains this contrast, “it is generally reported (Pérez Saldanya 1999) that only specific direct objects are *a*-marked. Knowing that presence of subjunctive in a relative clause is a diagnostic of non-specificity, (40) shows pairs where the first member is specific and is *a*-marked, while the second has the opposite properties”.

Pensado (1995: 32) discusses two sentences similar to those in (40a,b) and offers an explanation that might force scholars to rethink, or at least fine-tune, the preceding explanation. Notice that the preceding example shows a difference in meaning with pairs with and without DOM. Consider (41a,b):

- (41) a. *Tiene a su mujer enferma.* (Pensado 1995: 32)
 he.has DOM his woman ill
 ‘His wife has an illness’
- b. *Tiene una mujer muy inteligente.* (Pensado 1995: 32)
 he.has a woman very smart
 ‘He has a very smart wife’

Pensado explains that “En el primer ej. se habla de una persona ya conocida y en el segundo está siendo presentada” (In the first Ex., we are talking about a person already known, and in the second one, [the person] is being introduced).³¹ Sentence (41b) contradicts the general understanding that lack of DOM will mean that the existence of *una mujer* is not asserted, and consequently that the verb should be in the subjunctive.³² The existence of *una mujer* is asserted in (41b) and the verb would be in the indicative mood under the hardly uncontroversial assumption that (41b) is a variation of a sentence that has undergone copula deletion: *tiene una mujer [que es] muy inteligente.* (*Es* is in the indicative mood). The sentence *tiene una mujer [que sea] muy inteligente* is a sentence that native speakers of Spanish would rarely utter. (*Sea* is in the

³¹ Translation by this author.

³² This discussion is based on the explanation that an adjectival clause takes the indicative if the speaker asserts the existence of the antecedent (*conozco (a) un hombre que tiene una mujer inteligente* ‘I know a man who has an intelligent wife’) whereas the subjunctive is used if the speaker asks about the existence of the antecedent, denies its existence, or casts doubt about its existence (Whitley & González 2016: 308). Observe these examples: (1) *¿Conoces un hombre que tenga una mujer inteligente?* (2) *Dudo que conozcas un hombre que tenga una mujer inteligente.* (3) *No conozco a ningún hombre que tenga una mujer inteligente.*

subjunctive mood). If world knowledge overrides the need for case marking, and therefore for DOM, as Næss (2004: 1188) proposes, world knowledge seems a better explanation for the behavior of *tener* ‘have’ with nouns, preceded by an indefinite determiner, referring to family members.

The problem is that the explanation that absence of DOM correlates with non-specificity does not square with the absence of marking in (41b) as showing that the referent is non-specific, if being non-specific means that the speaker wonders whether the referent exists or is asking about the existence of that referent. The existence of the referent in (41b) is asserted; therefore, that referent is specific, yet there is not the expected DOM. It appears that the explanation of lack of DOM with an indefinite determiner preceding a noun needs fine-tuning. It might be that (41b) is a very marginal case. Nonetheless, the point raised here is worth exploring further.

Let us summarize this section with a few observations in Laca (2017: 469). Except for pronouns and proper nouns, whose DOM is categorical since *Cantar de mio Cid*, DOM has been expanding from human definite nouns to human indefinite nouns, to definite animate nouns. On the other hand, indefinite human nouns, which reached 75% in a text in the 18th century, went back to around 40% in the following centuries. The latter percentage is very consistent with the hierarchy in Laca (2017: 439), and with the one in (38), a slightly different hierarchy that this author had used in Whitley & González (2016: 80) before reading Laca’s work.

The following table from Caro Reina & García García & von Heusinger (2021: 354) also summarizes this section with data. Observe that if we disregard the first line, the average of the four other percentages for DOM with an indefinite NP is 41.75%, very close to being 50% of the average for DOM with a definite NP (81.25%).

Table 3. Diachronic overview of DOM with definite and indefinite human direct objects (Table 2 in Caro Reina & García García & von Heusinger 2021: 354)

	Definite NP	Indefinite NP
16 th -century European Spanish (Laca 2006)	74% (26/35)	17% (1/6)
16 th -century European Spanish (Romero Heredero, this volume)	65% (468/720)	35% (85/240)
19 th -century Cuban Spanish (CORDE)	95% (120/126)	56% (9/16)
20 th -century Cuban Spanish (CORDE)	95% (118/124)	43% (13/30)
Modern Cuban Spanish (Alfaraz 2011)	70% (168/240)	33% (10/30)

7. DOM with an inanimate verbed

There are at least two well-known proposals regarding DOM with an inanimate object (and subject) that have contributed to our understanding of this part of the phenomenon. The first one is the distinguishability principle in Morimoto & de Swarts (2006: 232):

(42) Distinguishability:

Mark objects that are not outranked by the subject in prominence (animacy, specificity).

The second one is the proposal of thematic distinctness in García García (2007: 71):

(43) Thematic Distinctness:

DOM with inanimate direct objects is correlated primarily with the thematic relation between subject and object. When the direct object is equally or more agentive than the subject, a-marking is required.

Notice that these two proposals are expressed in the animacy alignments in (1) in a way that is easier for second language learners to understand. However, the alignments would predict that all inanimate **verbeds** are marked if the verber is inanimate. The alignments must factor in definiteness or make reference to meaning (or world knowledge) to exclude objects that will stay unmarked. This is the main point of this section.

With an inanimate verber and an inanimate **verbed**, DOM occurs about 50% of the time (García García 2007: 69). These data are restricted to only five verbs, though. Those verbs favor the “equal agentivity” of subject and DO. García García (2007: 69) also reports that in Buyse (1998), the frequency of DOM with inanimate subject and DO is only 9%. García García clarifies that Buyse did not explicitly state this frequency, but that he (GG) deducted it from Buyse’s data. In the study by Balasch (2012: 76), a-marking with an inanimate **verbed** is only 2%. These data suggest the need for more robust sampling.

According to Givón (1979: 51-52), the frequency of indefinite subjects (a subject with an indefinite determiner) is approximately 9%. The Naked Noun Constraint and the observation that transitive presentational sentences whose verber has an indefinite determiner should be relatively low in frequency lead to several predictions regarding the definiteness of inanimate **verbeds**. First, based on the definiteness that goes together with animacy with verbers, it should also be the case that inanimate verbers will tend to be definite. Second, a definite inanimate **verbed** should favor DOM if their verber is definite, since they are atypical objects in two dimensions (they are definite and their verber is inanimate). Third, a determinerless inanimate **verbed** should reject DOM. According to Laca (1995: 79), 100% of determinerless animate **verbeds** lack DOM. If determinerless animate **verbeds** are virtually always unmarked, the prediction is that determinerless inanimate **verbeds** should also be unmarked.

As for the first prediction mentioned in the preceding paragraph, only one out of 16 examples with an inanimate verber in García García (2007) had a verber that was not definite. That example is *un adjetivo acompaña a un sustantivo*. That example comes from (Torrego 1999: 1788). Observe that although the verber is indefinite, so it is the **verbed**. In that sense, the “clue” of a definite verber and an indefinite **verbed**, which would favor absence of DOM, is not there. Interestingly, that example had the definite article both in the verber and the **verbed** in Roegiest (1980: 147), as quoted in Laca (1995: 74). All other five examples in Torrego (1999: 1788) have definite determiners, both in the verber and in the **verbed**. Therefore, it is clear that inanimate verbers in sentences with inanimate **verbeds** which require DOM tend to be definite. Or they at least have the same degree of definiteness as the verber. This is an issue for further research.

Notice that the preceding paragraph offered evidence not only for the first prediction in the paragraph preceding it. It also confirmed the second prediction as well.

Let us turn now to the third prediction because the examples will help us understand why DOM is called for in other cases.

- (44) a. *La herida exige sutura.*
 ‘The wound requires stitching’

- b. *Las preocupaciones producen dolor de cabeza.*
 the worries produce ache of head
 ‘Worries produce headaches’
- c. *El/*al dolor de cabeza lo provocan las preocupaciones.*³³
 the headache PRON.3.SG-ACC.-MASC.I trigger-3.PL the worries (GG’s gloss)
 ‘The headache is caused by worries’
- [García García 2007: 79, Ex. 29]

Now we can make an important connection. As §6.2 showed, there is no DOM when the **verbed** is a determinerless animate. The same is the case with determinerless inanimate **verbeds**. This reasoning takes us back to the predictions regarding definiteness with inanimate **verbeds**. The question here is when there is no DOM with inanimate verbeds that are definite. Let us observe these examples:

- (45) a. *El accidente interrumpió el tráfico durante doce horas.*
 the accident interrupted the traffic for twelve hours
 ‘The accident interrupted traffic for twelve hours’
 [Fábregas 2013: 25. Ex. 76b]
- b. *El gobierno interrumpió la celebración por el accidente (*durante dos días).*
 the government interrupted the celebration for the accident
 ‘The government interrupted the celebration due to the accident’
 [Fábregas 2013: 25. Ex. 76a]
- c. *La hipótesis de trabajo precede/orienta la verificación empírica.*
 the hypothesis of work precedes/orients the verification empirical
 ‘The working hypothesis precedes/drives empirical verification’
 [García García 2007: 76, Ex. 22; taken from Delbecque 2002: 92]

Davis (2001: 2) asked why subject and DO cannot be reversed in countless sentences. The verber and **verbed** entailments in González (2021: 3) offer an answer to that question. There are plenty of events in which the **verbed** cannot be the verber. In an event of *interrupting* in which the participants are *an accident* and *traffic*, it is uncontroversial that only one of them can be the interrupter and the other one the interrupted. Traffic does not interrupt accidents, but accidents do often interrupt traffic. Regarding (45b), it is hard to see a celebration interrupting government; therefore, there is no DOM.

Although the verb *preceder* ‘precede’ appears with DOM in almost 100% of the sentences (it is 100% in García García 2007: 69), sentence (45c) offers a revealing counterexample. In an event of *preceding*, *a working hypothesis*, and *empirical verification*, the hypothesis precedes its verification. Now we can state the Thematic Distinctness from García García (2007: 71) in terms of verber and **verbed** as follows:

³³ Two observations regarding this topicalization (DO preposing). El [Diccionario panhispánico de dudas](#) states that inanimate subject and inanimate DO require marking with DO preposing. First, a determinerless DO (*dolor de cabeza*) would require a definite determiner, if preposed. Second, if that DO is determinerless (in postverbal position) and this example is representative, a determinerless DO without DOM would be preposed without DOM. This issue is left for further research.

(46) DOM with inanimate verber and **verbed**:

With inanimate verber and **verbed**, there is no DOM if the **verbed** cannot be the verber.

I would like to claim that this statement is an improvement on the one in García García (2007: 71). The difference is that the evidence that speakers are processing verber and **verbed** is stronger than the evidence that we are processing *agent*, one of many thematic roles. Agent is the prototypical semantic role associated with subject. An instrument is often a subject, but it is clearly not agentive. The stimulus in a subject-stimulus sentence will rarely, if ever, be agentive (*tests frighten students, the spectacular sunset delighted the beach goers*). Interestingly, in a sentence like *students fear tests*, the subject is neither agentive nor is it the cause (the cause of the fear is the tests). If it is true that *students fear tests*, it is also true that students are the fearer, and that tests are the feared. If there is a verber in a sentence, it is always the subject. Most speakers do not explicitly know the difference between stimulus-subject sentences (*tests frighten students*) and stimulus-object ones (*students fear tests*). However, all speakers intuitively know that *things or people frighten people*, but that *people do not frighten things*; and that *people fear things or people, but that things do not fear people*.

There is strong evidence that speakers are processing verber and **verbed** and not subject and direct object, as shown in González (2021; 2022; 2024). Nor are speakers processing some ten thematic roles. At least five thematic roles have been invoked just for IOs: beneficiary, experiencer, goal, recipient, source.

Let us test (46) with two contiguous statements in which it is easy to see the intuition behind using DOM. Sentences (47a,b) come from a publication by El Instituto Nacional del Cáncer from the USA. Sentence (47a) is a subheading in the article. Sentence (47b) is the first line that introduces the factors at play.

(47) a. *¿Qué factores afectan el riesgo de presentar una enfermedad relacionada con el asbesto?*

Which factors affect the risk of presenting a disease related to the asbestos
‘Which factors affect the risk of contracting a disease related to asbestos?’

b. *Varios factores pueden ayudar a determinar cómo afecta a un individuo la exposición al asbesto.*

Several factors can help to determine how affects DOM an individual the exposure to.the asbestos

‘Several factors can help determine how exposure to asbestos affects an individual’

It is clear that the factors are the affecters or contributors to the risk of an individual contracting an asbestos-related disease, and not the other way around. Even more interesting is the presence of DOM before *un individuo*. If *un individuo* were not DOM-marked, it might be interpreted as the affecter. The last part of the sentence (*afecta a un individuo...*) is actually the alignment in (1c), but with the word order *verb* + **verbed** + verber. DOM makes processing easier and faster by flagging *an individual* as the **verbed**.

To summarize this section, there is no DOM if the **verbed** could not be perceived to be the verber. That tendency is close to 100% when the **verbed** is a bare noun. In fact, an animate bare noun does not allow DOM either, as §6.2 shows.

8. DOM, dialectal *leísmo*, and psychological verbs (general *leísmo*)

Observe that the animacy alignments in (1b-d) double as a rule of *leísmo*. The alignment in (1b) is the dialectal *leísmo* from central and northern Spain, with the proviso that it is mostly restricted to a masculine, singular referent, according to RAE (2010: 316) and many others. The alignment in (1c) is general *leísmo*, as described in González (2021, Chapter 3). This *leísmo* occurs when the verber is inanimate and the **verbed** is animate, and it occurs in all the Hispanic world, regardless of gender and number of the accusative. This is a rule that explains why many two-place predicate verbs “*regían dativo*” (‘governed dative’) in Latin. It is the rule that explains psych(ological) verbs not only in Spanish but in many languages. See González (2021, Chapter 3) for discussion. Roughly speaking, an accusative animate (and even an inanimate one) tends to be marked as a dative when the nominative is inanimate. Table 3.1 below shows that the surface similarity of sentences (48, 49) does not reflect the fact that **a muchos** ‘many’ (people) is an accusative (a **verbed**) marked as a dative in (48a,f), but that a muchos is a true dative in (49a,f). *A muchos* can include females, of course. Indeed, *a muchos* can be changed in (48) to *a muchas* (feminine, plural) and nothing changes. RAE (2009: 2681) states that there is no doubt that *a muchos* is an indirect object in (48a) when the sentence includes *les*. It is not.

Table 4. *Incomodar* has verber and **verbed**; *importar* has **verbed** and verbee. (From González 2024: 10)

<u>Verber, verbed.</u> (Sentence 1)	Verbed, verbee (sentence 2)
(48) a. <u>La lucha</u> (les) incomoda a muchos . b. <u>La lucha</u> incomoda a muchos . c. Muchos son (los) incomodados (por la lucha). d. <u>La lucha</u> es la incomodadora. e. Muchos <u>se</u> incomodan. f. A muchos les incomoda <u>la lucha</u> . g. A muchos los incomoda <u>la lucha</u> . h. Muchos están incómodos (incomodados). i. ??La lucha es la incomodada.	(49) a. La lucha <u>les</u> importa <u>a muchos</u> . b. ??La lucha importa a muchos. c. ??Muchos son importados (por la lucha). d. ??La lucha es la importadora. e. ??Muchos se importan. f. <u>A muchos</u> <u>les</u> importa la lucha . g. ??A muchos los importa la lucha. h. ??Muchos están importados. i. La lucha es la importada (what matters [to many]).

Table 5. Translation of Table 3.1 into English. (From González 2024: 10)

<u>Verber, verbed.</u> (Sentence 1)	Verbed, verbee (sentence 2)
(50) a. <u>The fight</u> makes many uncomfortable. b. <u>The fight</u> makes many uncomfortable. c. Many are made uncomfortable by the fight. d. <u>The fight</u> is the uncomnmfortable-er. (i.e. is the maker uncomfortable; the thing making many uncomfortable) e. Many became uncomfortable. (Many were made uncomfortable.) f. To many , the fight makes them [DAT in form] uncomfortable. g. To many , the fight makes them [ACC] uncomfortable. h. Many are uncomfortable. (Resultative)	(51) a. The fight matters <u>to many</u> . b. ??The fight matters many. c. ??Many are mattered by the fight. d. ??The fight is the matterer. e. ??Many to themselves matter. f. <u>To many</u> , the fight matters <u>to them</u> . g. ??Many, the fight matters them.

<p>i. ??The fight is uncomfortable. (??It is the one that is uncomfortable).</p>	<p>h. ??Many are mattered (i.e. ??are in a state of ‘matterhood’). i. The fight is the thing mattered (i.e. what matters to many)</p>
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The alignment in (1d) provides strong motivation for DOM with inanimate arguments, as well as for *leísmo* “de cosa” (inanimate *leísmo*). There are other types of *leísmo* different from the ones alluded to in (1b-d). I leave that discussion to scholars who research that issue in more detail. See, for example, Nogués Graell (2016). However, I would like to point out another type of general *leísmo*, the *le* in the sequence *se le* in sentences similar to *a Margarita se le/se la invitó* (sentence 10g). See the Diccionario panhispánico de dudas §4f for some discussion.

How do we know that a *le/les* is a case of *leísmo*? When that *le/les* can be replaced with *la/las/lo/los* and the sentence is grammatical (52b). If the sentence is ungrammatical, the referent of that *le/les* is a legitimate dative that does not pass the **verbed** entailment (52c,d).

- (52) a. La claridad de las explicaciones sorprendió a las revisoras.
the clarity of the explanations surprised DOM the reviewers
‘The clarity of the explanations surprised the reviewers’
- b. A las revisoras les/las sorprendió la claridad de las explicaciones.
to the reviewers les.DAT/las.ACC surprised the clarity of the explanations
‘The reviewers were surprised by the clarity of the explanations’
- c. La claridad de las explicaciones les/??las importó a las revisoras.
the clarity of the explanations les.DAT/??las.ACC mattered to the reviewers
‘The clarity of the explanations mattered to the reviewers’
- d. A las revisoras les/??las importó la claridad de las explicaciones.
to the reviewers them.dat/them.ACC mattered the clarity of the explanations
‘The clarity of the explanations mattered to the reviewers’

The fact that the animacy alignments in (1c,d) double as an explanation for the main facts of general *leísmo* (1c) and inanimate *leísmo* (1d) —both general in the Hispanic world—is strong evidence for the alignments as an explanation for DOM in Spanish. Interestingly, the alignment in (1b) suggests that the dialectal *leísmo* of central and northern Spain, which is mostly restricted to the use of *le* for *lo* (and excludes *le* for *la*; *les* for *las*; and less often *les* for *los* or *les* for *las* and *los*) is also restricted to sentences with an animate verber. Cuervo ([1847]1925): 114) had already observed that a single animate object tends to be marked with the dative when the subject is inanimate. This observation should have led Cuervo to propose general *leísmo*, but he missed the prediction of his insightful observation. González (2021, Chapter 3) formulated that prediction as a rule of dative overriding of the accusative. Dative instead of accusative is a clearer wording for that rule.

General *leísmo* as in (1c) is not restricted to Spanish. It is the marking of an accusative object (a **verbed**) with dative marking, the phenomenon known as psych verbs in many languages. Perhaps in hundreds of languages. Notice that the **verbed** in (52a,b) can be marked with dative or accusative. The **verbed** in (52c,d) is marked with nominative and the verbee is a true dative. In that sense, the true members of the *gustar* class belong to a different class of psych verbs. See González (2021, Chapter 3) for discussion.

Finally, observe that *les* can be added to (53) below (=52a) if *a las revisoras* is postverbal. However, *las* cannot be added. On the other hand, *les* is mandatory in (53b), as (4) predicts (to differentiate the verbee from the **verbed**).

- (53) a. *La claridad de las explicaciones (les)/(?las) sorprendió a las revisoras.*³⁴
 the clarity of the explanations (them.DAT)/(them.ACC) surprised DOM the reviewers
 ‘The clarity of the explanations surprised the reviewers’
 b. *La claridad de las explicaciones ??(les) importó a las revisoras.*
 the clarity of the explanations ??(them.DAT) matter to the reviewers
 ‘The clarity of the explanations mattered ??(to) the reviewers’

This section has added to the evidence in §3 that DOM is not the spell out of dative marking. The marker *a* is the part of DOM that distinguishes a **verbed** or a verbee from a verber in the animacy alignments in (1b-d). A dative pronoun generated with a dative (as a dative agreement marker, as proposed by several scholars—See Company Company 2017: 536 and references therein) distinguishes the verbee from the **verbed**. As González (2024, chapter 4) shows, a postverbal verbee can be omitted when it is known information, but the corresponding pronoun stays as a trace, as (54c,d) shows. Notice that *a las revisoras* is old information that is overwhelmingly omitted, as in (54d).

- (54) a. *¿Qué pensaron las revisoras de la claridad de la evidencia?*
 What thought the reviewers-FEM of the clarity of the evidence
 ‘What did the reviewers think about the clarity of the evidence?’
 b. *??Gustó a las revisoras.*
 appealed the reviewers
 ‘??(It) appealed the reviewers’
 c. *?Les gustó a las revisoras.*
 them.DAT appealed to the reviewers
 ‘It appealed to the reviewers’
 d. *Les gustó.*
 Them-DAT appealed (it).
 ‘It appealed to them’

With verber and **verbed**, a simple rule explains the nominative and dative marking in most psychological verbs in many languages. A **verbed** is often marked as a verbee when the **verbed** is higher in animacy than the verber. In terms of case marking, an accusative is marked as if it were a dative when the accusative is higher in animacy than the nominative.

9. Apparent cases of DOM with an “accusative” that is really a dative

On the surface, (55a) is a case of “tier one” DOM; that is, *a* marks the obeyed, since *a la razón* appears to be a direct object. If we think about it, the verb *obey* has obeyer, **obeyed**, and obeyee. The same is true for *forgive*, *promise*, *recommend*, *talk*, *tell*, *write*, etc. *We talk to people*, and we do not “talk people” because *we talk words to people*. To see why *a la razón* is the obeyee and not the **obeyed**, let us look at (55b,c).

³⁴ An animate postverbal accusative can co-occur with an accusative pronoun in the River Plate dialect of Spanish.

- (55) a. *Su voluntad obedece a la razón.* (Fábregas 2013: 15. Ex. 42b)³⁵
 his will obeys DOM the reason
 ‘His will obeys his reason’
 b. *Su voluntad le obedece [*las órdenes*] a la razón.*
 his will her.DAT obeys the commands to the reason
 ‘His will obeys [*its commands*] to reason’
 c. *Su voluntad le obedece a la razón.*

Now it should be clear why *a la razón* is the verbee. We have a **verbed** in (55b), and we know now that *le* is an agreement marker that co-refers with *a la razón* as the verbee, as (55c) shows. This distinction is what (4) predicts. The sentences in (55a,c) are the result of indefinite object deletion (Heath 1976: 203; Mittwoch 1982; among many others). This sentence has verber (obeyer) and *a la razón* is the obeyee. The **obeyed** is the deleted *las órdenes* ‘its commands’, as (55b) shows.

Let us consider an example from Balasch (2012: 60, Ex. 41).

- (56) *Ahorita por lo menos estoy ayudando a mamá con la cerámica.*
 right.now at least (I).am helping DOM mother with the pottery
 ‘At least for right now, I am helping my Mom with her pottery’

As González (2021: 87-89) has shown, the verb *help* takes a single object in the dative in Spanish, in German, and in other languages. The presence of a single dative object with a handful of verbs is due to indefinite object deletion.³⁶ *Help someone* is to *give someone help*, as *thank* is to *give thanks to someone*; *forgive* is to *forgive someone for their offense*, etc. This explains the dative marking of these verbs when used with just one object, without the need to invoke inherent case marking; that is, the need for the verb to be marked as a special case. With verber and **verbed**, there is no need for inherently dative-marking verbs.³⁷

Consider now a final example in (57). For some reason, English allows indefinite object deletion with many verbs, and as far as I can tell, an interpretation in which the invitees are the food does not seem to come to mind (*We served our guests*). My intuition of the guests as the servees (not the **served**) leads me to always include the marker *le(s)* in sentences like these in Spanish, as (57c) shows. This makes processing easier, which is, I believe, the purpose of grammar. *Les* is a marker that goes with the invited folks to let us know that they are the servees, not the **served**. In an event of serving, everybody would like to be a servee; nobody would like to be a **served**.

- (57) a. *??Servimos a los invitados.*
 (we).served DOM the guests
 b. *(Nosotras) Les servimos **perdiz** a los invitados.*
 (We.FEM) them.DAT served partridge to the guests
 ‘We served **partridge** to our guests.’

³⁵ This sentence can be traced back to *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas (*la voluntad a la razón no obedece*), p. 15.

³⁶ Other scholars have argued the same point.

³⁷ In RAE (2010: 661) it is also implied that *a muchos en ayudar a muchos* ‘help many’ is an accusative. *A muchos* is a dative, as the pair *darles ayuda a muchos* vs. *??darlos ayuda a muchos* shows.

- c. (Nosotras) Les servimos a los invitados.
(We.FEM) them.DAT served to our guests.DAT
'We served our guests'
- d. *A los invitados se les/se ??los sirvió*.
to the guests se them.DAT/se ??them.ACC served
'Our guests were served' (Intended: our guests were served **some food**).'

How do we know when a participant with the marker *a* is a **verbed** or a verbee? If it is a true verbee, it will always accept and often require the marker le/les if it is in postverbal position, but it will not accept the “doubling” pronoun **la/las/lo/los** (in postverbal position). If it is a **verbed** in one of the animacy alignments in (1b-d), it will often prefer le/les when in preverbal position, but it will also accept **la/las/lo/los**.

Balasz (2012: 95) also explains that 18 out of 20 sentences with *help* had DOM. It appears that she is counting that dative as an accusative. If that is the case, there is another problem here: difficulty in distinguishing a **verbed** from a verbee, which leads to inaccurate counts. The difficulty in distinguishing a **verbed** from a verbee is a reasonable mistake when working with direct object and indirect object.

Let us summarize this section with (4). The marker *a* marks non verber. It is mandatory or preferred in the alignments of (1b,c). The agreement marker le(s) distinguishes the verbee from the **verbed**. The alignment in (1d) predicts that DOM should always obtain. It does not obtain when the **verbed** cannot be the verber, as §7 shows.

10. Affectedness is not a determining factor for DOM

Næss (2004: 1202) is one of the scholars who argues more explicitly for affectedness as the motivating factor for DOM.

I propose, then, that what is being marked by the accusative case is not a high degree of individuation, but a high degree of affectedness. In other words, the objects that get case marking in a DOM system do so not because they are definite and animate, but because they are affected.

The observation that affectedness plays a deciding role in DOM (Camacho Ramírez 2023: 166; Malchukov 2006: 333; Torrego 1999: 1791; Tsunoda 1985: 393; among many others) is questionable. It can be traced back to Greek grammar, when it was proposed that the direct object was the participant that was affected in a sentence. Butt (2006: 14) observes that *accusative*, the case in Latin for the DO, was one of several possible translations for the Greek *aitiatike*, but perhaps not the best one. Butt suggests that a better term for *aitiatike* would have been the *affected*. Affectedness was a central notion in Fillmore (1968: 46), perhaps one of the main sources for the ten parameters of transitivity in Hopper & Thompson (1980), and subsequent re-thinking of the parameters by Malchukov (2005; 2015) and Tsunoda (1985; 2015). If there is affectedness in a transitive sentence, it has more to do with the meaning of the verb than with a sentence being transitive. Consider the affectedness of the **verbed** in each of these sentences, all of them transitive:

- (58) a. A tree branch killed a **man**.

- b. *María golpeó a Juan.* (Fábregas 2013: 67, Ex. 216)
 Mary hit DOM John
 ‘Mary hit John’
- c. The painkiller took **my pain** away.
- d. Antonio has read **my books**.
- e. Smoking causes **cancer**.
- f. Students fear **tests**.³⁸
- g. We admired **the beauty of the Tennessee river**.
- h. I like **swimming**.
- i. Who does not enjoy **the smell of freshly baked goods**?
- j. *El adjetivo modifica al sustantivo.*
 The adjective modifies DOM.the noun
 ‘An adjective modifies its noun’

[Fábregas 2013: 68. Ex. 219; from Roegiest 1980: 147].

A man and *Juan* in (58a,b) are affected. Is *the pain* in (58c) affected in any relevant way? The person who has the pain is affected, but the person is represented in the sentence just as a modifier of the **verbed**. Sentence (58c) in Spanish would be *el calmante me quitó el dolor*. Who is the affected? The benefactee (me) is the affected. The pain is not affected in any relevant way. Who or what is affected when someone reads a book? I would say that the reader, not the book. The affected in (58e) does not appear in the sentence. Cancer is not the affected, of course. Interestingly, if there is some affectedness, the subject will be the affected one(s) in (58f-i). As for (58j), adjectives attribute properties to nouns, but there is no relevant affectedness for a noun, regardless of the way an adjective modifies it. Therefore, we can state that affectedness is a property of the meaning of the verb, not of a sentence being high or low in transitivity, as proposed in Hopper & Thompson (1980). A sentence is transitive if it has a verber and a **verbed**; it is intransitive if it has either a verber or a **verbed**, but not both, as González (2021: 6) shows. In fact, it might be preferable to state that a sentence is used intransitively or transitively depending on whether one or two participants are present or strongly implied.³⁹ *I wrote (to) my mom* implies that *I wrote something to her*. If *I gave you a hand*, *I helped you*; that is, *I gave you some help*.

As Fábregas (2013: 67-68) observed, “if we consider an affectedness hierarchy, the surprising fact is that Spanish seems to use DOM at both extremes of the scale: when the transitivity is quite high (as in 216—58b above—*María golpeó a Juan*) and when it is unusually low (as with transitive statives like 219—58j above)”. García García (2007: 72) concurs when he writes, “Unlike a murderer or a builder, an observer or a hearer does not cause a change of state (16c) in another participant, they neither need to move (16d) nor be volitionally involved (16a) in a proper sense”.⁴⁰ If it is true that *students fear tests*, it is true that students are the fearer (as per the verber entailment) and that tests are (the) feared (as per the **verbed** entailment). The cause of the fear is the DO (tests), not the subject (students). The affected are the students, not the tests, the opposite of what Dowty’s Proto Agent and Proto Patient properties predict. Balasch (2012: 110) also concurs that affectedness is not a deciding factor. In her study, verbs of perception have a high frequency of DOM, and among them, *ver* ‘see’ stands out. *Ver* accounts for 35% of the tokens of DOM with

³⁸ Many—if not all—subject experiencers are more affected than the stimulus. As García García (2007: 72) states: “an observer or a hearer does not cause a change of state”. That is, a stimulus object is hardly ever affected.

³⁹ This point was already made by Gonzalo Correas in his *Arte grande de la lengua castellana*, published in 1626.

⁴⁰ The numbers (16a,c,d) refer to the patient proto role properties (volition, cause, movement) in Dowty (1991: 573).

verbs of perception in her corpus from Madrid. She observes that affectedness is hard to correlate with the DO of the verb *ver*.

Affectedness is expressed in many sentences. But any degree of affectedness comes from the meaning of the verb, not from the sentence requiring or accepting a DO. We as scholars might have skewed the representativeness of affectedness when we have repeated statements and examples about it. Let us think about the statement that a **transitive** sentence is a sentence in which there is “**transfer of energy**” from subject to direct object. If true, that observation might leave abstraction out of language. With verber and **verbed**, affectedness is not needed for transitivity, the same way that a sentence cannot be said to be high or low in transitivity. A sentence is intransitive if it has a verber or a **verbed**, but not both. A sentence is transitive if it has a verber and a **verbed**, even if the verber and the **verbed** is the same participant, as the following section shows.

11. Some arguments against high or low transitivity favoring or not DOM

Discussing their highest parameter for high transitivity (number of participants), Hopper & Thompson (1980: 253-254) find “one potentially less comfortable consequence: a sentence with two participants may rate lower than one with a single participant”, as they show with 59a (their Ex. 3), which is transitive in English, but is low in affectedness, kinesis, punctuality, and telicity in spite of having two participants. On the other hand, sentence 59b (their Ex. 6) seems to satisfy more of the parameters of transitivity in their hierarchy, yet this sentence would appear to be “low” in transitivity because it has only one participant. Notice that affectedness is hardly relevant if someone moves. Hooper & Thompson try to explain (59a) by invoking ergativity and the fact that, in several languages, the only object of sentences like (59a) is marked with the dative, as Spanish shows with *Me gusta la cerveza* (me.DAT pleases the beer), their example 8 (p. 254). Observe that in modern English, *Jerry* is the liker and *beer* is the **liked**.

- (59) a. Jerry likes beer.
b. Susan left.

Consider (60a,b) and let us track verber and **verbed**.

- (60) a. Susan moved **the chair**. (The chair changed location).
b. **Susan** moved. (Susan changed location).

In (60a), Susan is the mover and the chair is **the moved**. What is Susan in (60b)? She is the mover and **the moved**—hence underlining and bolding. Spanish and languages with robust reflexive morphology will express (60b) as *Susan se movió*. The SE means that the verber was omitted and that the only participant in the sentence is the **verbed**, as González (2022: 10) shows. Therefore, (60b) appears to be intransitive, but it is really a transitive sentence with a “surface” **moved** and an underlying mover. A grammar based on verber and **verbed** does not have to invoke ergativity or “various of the trappings found in intransitive clauses” (Hooper & Thompson 1980: 254) to show why (59a) is a transitive, stative sentence in English. *Susan left* (59b) appears to be intransitive in FORM for being a sentence with just one “visible” argument (the one doing the leaving); however, it is transitive in MEANING because verber and **verbed** let us see now that she is the leaver (the one doing the leaving), and the one who left. What will *Susan* be in the related sentence *Susan went away*? She is the goer and **the gone**. If *Susan went away*, she is gone. There

is no doubt that she is also the goer. There is clear evidence for this double role in the word *goner* in English: **The gone** and the goer.

Thus, the sentence *Jerry likes beer* is transitive, but it cannot be said to express affectedness, kinesis, punctuality, telicity, etc. The sentence *Susan left* does not show two participants on the “surface”, but it can be said to show kinesis, punctuality, and telicity. Number of participants is indeed important for transitivity, but we must look at it with the appropriate tools. We have seen only one participant because we have only been looking with subject and direct object, but now we can see the two participants if we look with verber and **verbed**. It appears that at least four of the ten parameters for transitivity are not relevant. Verber and **verbed** show that number of participants on the “surface” is not relevant for transitivity. Since a sentence is transitive or it is not, then a sentence cannot be high or low in transitivity. Therefore, high transitivity is not a factor in DOM.

Let us finish this section with the outline of a theory of case marking in English based on verber and **verbed** in González (2021: 42): “All of the sentences with the dozen or so verbs in English whose only object must be an indirect object are intransitive. All other sentences whose only object does not require a preposition are transitive”. As the verber and **verbed** entailments predict, the subject (NOM) of any transitive sentence in English passes the verber entailment and any prepositionless object (ACC) passes the **verbed** entailment. As explained in González (2021: 58), the verbs in English that require *to* in order to introduce a single object are *appeal(2)*, *appear*, *belong*, *cost*, *happen*, *matter*, *occur*, *remain*, *seem*, *sound(2)*, and the copular verb *be*. Since sentences with those verbs are verberless (González 2021, Chapter 4), those sentences are intransitive. Furthermore, the subject of those sentences passes the **verbed** entailment. The object is a benefactee or a malefactee; that is, a verbee.

12. Some issues for further research

Counts for DOM which distinguish a true dative (a verbee) from a “dative” that is really an accusative (a **verbed**) in sentences with dialectal *leísmo* and with general *leísmo* will be more accurate. There are errors in counting in both directions. First, datives which might get counted as accusatives (*la voluntad obedece a la razón* ‘will obeys reason’, with *a la razón* counted as an accusative rather than as a dative). *Reason* is a dative (*will obeys its rules to reason*). There are more than a few cases of this phenomenon. See §9 above. Second, hundreds of cases of dialectal and general *leísmo* in which an accusative object is counted as a dative object. Vázquez Rozas (2006: 103) lists 61 verbs which can mark their single object either with dative or with accusative in Spanish. Those 61 verbs are a subset of the psychological verbs in Spanish. Levin (1993: 38, 191) lists 264 in the combined classes of *fear* and *frighten* in English. The list in Vázquez Rozas (2006) leaves many verbs uncounted. The two lists in Levin might have done so as well. A related phenomenon is DOM with the so-called impersonal *se*. This author came across a book chapter on the topic by Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) when this manuscript was already 40 pages long. Suffice it to say that their proposal and this one will probably benefit from insights from the other. But that study is beyond the scope of this article. That is a good topic for a graduate paper that might turn into a dissertation.

13. Conclusions

Let us repeat (1) as (61), together with (3) as (62), to see how a **verbed** requires DOM the higher it is in definiteness, and how a determinerless **verbed** cannot have it, in the animacy alignments in (61b-d), as this article has shown:

- (61) a. [+A], [-A] Typical alignment of Nom and **ACC**. No DOM
 b. [+A], [+A] Atypical alignment of Nom and **ACC**. DOM & dialectal *leísmo*
 c. [-A], [+A] Atypical alignment of Nom and **ACC**. DOM & general *leísmo*
 d. [-A], [-A] Atypical alignment of Nom and **ACC**. DOM & inanimate *leísmo*
- (62) Definiteness/animacy hierarchy. Adapted from Silverstein (1976) and Aissen (2003)
 personal pronoun > proper name > animate N(oun) > definite N > indefinite N > inanimate N > bare N

There is general agreement that 100% of **verbeds** that are a personal pronoun or a proper name—including proper names of animals—requires DOM. World knowledge blocks DOM with certain animate objects, notably when the **verbed** cannot be the verber (*el perro trajo las perdices matadas* ‘the dog fetched the dead partridges’). World knowledge also explains the presence or absence of DOM when both verber and **verbed** are inanimate (§7). The alignments also explain why the existential verb *haber* ‘there is/there are’ does not allow DOM.

As explained in §6.3, there is some variation with animate **verbeds** with an indefinite determiner, as the continuum in (62) predicts, since an animate object with an indefinite determiner is in the middle of the continuum.

The two-tier theory of DOM in (4), repeated below as (63), explains why DOM (marking of some accusatives) has been confused with dative marking, since both share the marker *a*. However, (63b) shows why DOM and dative marking are different, as unequivocally shown in Table 1.

- (63) A two-tier theory of DOM in Spanish (adapted from González 2024: 75)
 a. The marker *a* preceding an argument in a sentence indicates that the participant is not the verber.
 b. An IO pronoun (coindexed with the argument that does not pass the **verbed** entailment) distinguishes the verbee from the **verbed**.

Section 7 offers an account of DOM when both the verber and the **verbed** are inanimate, perhaps the less studied aspect of DOM, and one which can benefit from the use of more robust data.

The discussion of psych verbs in §8 shows that with **verbed** and verbee, it is easier to determine whether a single object marked with the dative is an underlying **verbed** (an accusative object) or a true verbee (a dative object). If the dative-marked object is a **verbed**, the sentence is transitive, and the single object allows the six entailments in (48b-e,g,h), which all transitive sentences allow. When that single-object dative is a true verbee, the sentence will be intransitive, none of those six entailments is allowed, and the verb will be a truly unaccusative verb (*piacere* verbs in Italian, *gustar* verbs in Spanish, *belong* verbs in English, etc.). With verber and **verbed**, unaccusative verbs are verberless verbs whose accusative must unaccusativize; that is, become the nominative. The marking of the single object of most psych verbs in Spanish with dative instead of accusative is the phenomenon called general *leísmo* in González (2024: 11-12).⁴¹ The same analysis should be possible in many other languages. Crucially, in languages that have kept—at least in the third

⁴¹ The verberless verbs in Spanish are around 40 (González 2021, Chapter 5). Levin (1993: 38, 191) lists 264 psych verbs in English. At least the equivalent in Spanish of the 220 *frighten* verbs should be psychological transitive verbs; that is, verbs that tend to mark their single **verbed** with dative instead of accusative.

person—a difference in the equivalent of the pronouns for dative (*le, les*) and accusative (*la, las, lo, los*).

The observation that verbs like *ayudar* ‘help’ accept a dative clitic but reject an accusative one when only one of its two objects is expressed in postverbal position is evidence that the object is a true dative (a verbee). Sentences with other *ayudar* ‘help’ verbs (*forgive, lie, obey, pay, read, write, etc.*) are the result of indefinite object deletion, as §9 shows. See González (2021: 83-86) for discussion.

The **verbed** entailment helps us understand that most psych verbs are transitive. This new understanding helps us see how affectedness is not relevant for objecthood (§10), since an object need not be affected for a sentence to be transitive. Likewise, speakers are computing only verber and **verbed** in a given sentence to intuit whether that sentence **is** transitive, or **it is not**, with no gradation in transitivity; even if an underlyingly transitive sentence requires only the verber or the **verbed**, as in *Susan did not eat (breakfast) because she left too early*. As §11 shows, Susan is the leaver and the **left**. This explanation solves for Hopper & Thompson (1980: 253-254) “one potentially less comfortable consequence: a sentence with two participants may rate lower than one with a single participant”. By “rate lower” they mean “lower in transitivity”, and the two sentences at issue are *Jerry likes beer* and *Susan left*. Both sentences are transitive in meaning simply because both have verber and **verbed**. The notion of subject hid the observation that the only argument of many sentences is the **verbed** until the Unaccusative Hypothesis in Perlmutter (1978: 160). More importantly, it had also hidden until now the observation that a good few “intransitive” sentences in form do have the two roles that argument structure requires for transitivity, as the sentence *Susan left* shows. Verber and **verbed** let us see now the underlying transitivity.

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