# NULL OBJECTS AND ACCUSATIVE CLITICS IN ROMANIAN

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**Abstract:** Starting from the identification of the obligatory contexts in which the Accusative clitic occurs in Romanian we offer a unifying analysis of its role across all the identified contexts. We argue that Accusative clitics in Romanian reflect a ban on D-linked null objects. The Person feature in D requires that it be overt with argumental individuated DPs and the Person feature in Inflection blocks feature matching between a referential null object and its antecedent. The analysis of the contexts in which Accusative clitics occur and of the role of the preposition *pe* in clitic doubling constructions reveals that Romanian has two syntactic means of signaling topicality: D-linked topicality is signaled by clitics and speaker-linked topicality by the preposition *pe*.

**Keywords:** Accusative clitics, Discourse-linked topicality, speaker-linked topicality, null object, Person

## 1. Introduction

In Romanian, Accusative clitics occur both in single clitic constructions (1) and in clitic doubling constructions (2):

(1) **L** -am văzut ieri.
clitic $_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$ have seen yesterday
'I saw him yesterday.'

(2) **L** -am văzut ieri **pe Ion**.
clitic $_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$ have seen yesterday *pe* Ion
'I saw Ion yesterday.'

Since in structures like the one in (2) the clitic co-occurs with a *pe* marked DP with which it is co-indexed, the standard analysis, following Kayne's generalization (in Jaeggli 1982), has been that the clitic absorbs case and the DP double can only occur within a prepositional phrase where it receives case from the preposition. Previous generative studies dealing with the properties of Accusative clitics in Romanian started from clitic doubling constructions and focussed on the relationship between the clitic and the preposition *pe*, which was analysed as a case marker. These studies focus mainly on a particular These studies focus mainly on a particular subset of data illustrating the complementarity of *pe*-marking and clitic omission (3a-b). Such an approach, however, faces at least two problems. Firstly, the empirical data indicate that the dependency between *pe*-marking and clitic-doubling is unidirectional: whereas the presence of a clitic doubling the direct object requires *pe*-marking on the object, the *pe*-phrase by itself does not require clitic-doubling. There is one single exception to this optionality: when the DP inside the *pe*-phrase is a definite pronominal, clitic doubling becomes obligatory (3a vs. 3d-e):

(3) a. *(O) avem aici pe aceasta.
*(clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$) have$_{1ST\ PL}$ here *pe* this$_{FEM.SG}$
'We've got this one here.'

b. e. (*L-) a văzut un copil.
(*clitic$_{3RD\ M\ SG\ ACC}$) has seen a child/child.the
'(S)he has seen a child.'

c. (*L-) a văzut copilul.
(*clitic$_{3RD\ M\ SG\ ACC}$) has seen child.the
'(S)he has seen the child.'

d. (O) avem aici pe Ruxi.
(clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$) have$_{1ST\ PL}$ here *pe* Ruxi.
'We've got Ruxi here.'

e. (L-) a văzut pe copil.
(clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC)}$ has seen *pe* child
'(S)he has seen the child.'

The optionality of the clitic in cases like (3d-e) indicates that a syntactic account alone cannot explain the behaviour of clitics. The fact that a *pe*-phrase can occur without a clitic suggests that the analysis of Accusative clitics can be dissociated from the analysis of the preposition *pe*. The use of *pe*, in its turn, also has some flavour of optionality. The same verb can assign Accusative case to DPs in complement position without the intervention of the preposition *pe* (3c), which indicates that the role of *pe* may not be (merely) that of a case marker used when the clitic has absorbed case. Direct objects interpreted as specific can be either *pe* marked and non-*pe* marked (3c-e).

The preposition in clitic doubling constructions in clitic doubling languages has not been analysed as a case marker in all studies. *A,* the Spanish equivalent of *pe*, for example, has been argued to be an animacy marker (Suñer 1988) or a topicality marker (Leonetti 2004). Farkas and Heusinger (2003) argue that the Romanian *pe* is a differential object marker. In traditional grammar, the role of *pe* is assumed to be that of differentiating the direct object from the subject or as a marker of individuation (Carabulea 2008: 398-399). This is more obvious in examples like the one in (4) (taken from Carabulea 2008: 399):

(4) Cui pe cui scoate.
nail *pe* nail takes.out
'Fight fire with fire.'

Secondly, understanding the role of Accusative clitics requires an investigation of all the contexts where a clitic can occur and distinguish between a permissible context for clitics, i.e. one where clitics can but need not occur, and the obligatory clitic context, i.e. one where the absence of the clitic necessarily leads to ungrammaticality.

The aim of the present paper is twofold: (i) to offer a unifying analysis for Accusative clitics in Romanian across all the contexts in which they occur; this, however, requires an investigation of the relationship between clitics and the preposition *pe* in the so-called clitic doubling constructions, with a focus on the role of the preposition; (ii) therefore, the second aim will be that of investigating this relationship.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: In section 2 we identify the obligatory contexts for Accusative clitics and we offer a unifying analysis for Accusative clitics across all these contexts. The role of the Person feature in the D-domain and in the I-domain for the use of Accusative clitics is discussed. Section 3 addresses the properties of clitic doubling constructions with a focus on the preposition *pe*. The conclusions are summarized in Section 4.

## 2. Obligatory Accusative clitic contexts in Romanian

### 2.1 The rationale

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, an account of the properties of Accusative clitics requires a careful investigation of all the contexts in which the clitic is obligatory in the

language. In this section we focus on the identification of the obligatory clitic contexts in Romanian[1]. This is necessary as a preliminary step in the description and analysis of the main syntactic and interpretative properties of Accusative clitics.

**2.2 Accusative clitics and overt antecedents**

In Romanian, the presence of Accusative clitics is required in left dislocation structures with D-linked direct objects (illustrated in 5):

(5) a. Cartea # am dat *(-o).
book.the # have given clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$
b. o carte # am dat *(-o) [under specific reading]
a book # have given clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$
c. pe Ion # l -am văzut.
*pe* Ion # clitic $_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$ have seen

As can be seen in (5) the clitic is obligatory with both animate and non-animate antecedents, and with both definite and indefinite left dislocated DPs. But the clitic must be omitted with dislocated bare NPs (6a), bare Quantifier Phrases (6b) or generic DPs (6c):

(6) a. Vin # (* l-) am băut.
wine # (*clitic$_{3RD\ SG.\ MASC\ ACC}$) have drunk
b. Ceva # (*l-) am citit.
something # (clitic $_{3RD\ SG.\ MASC\ ACC}$) have read
c. Un film bun # nu (*l) -am mai văzut de secole.
a movie good # not (*clitic $_{3RD\ SG.\ MASC\ ACC}$) have more seen in ages

The clitic is also obligatory in direct object relative clauses (both restrictive and non-restrictive) introduced by the relative pronoun *care* 'who, which'[2]:

(7) a. Mărul pe care *(l-) am mîncat.
apple.the *pe* which *(clitic $_{3RD\ SG\ MASC\ ACC}$ ) have eaten
'The apple which I have eaten.'
b. Fata, pe care *(o) văzuse deja, era acolo.
girl.the *pe* whom *(clitic $_{3RD\ SG\ MASC\ ACC}$) see $_{PAST\ PERF}$ already was there
'The girl, whom she had already seen, was there.'

The relative clauses in (7) show that the distinction [+/- animate] does not affect the obligatoriness of the clitic or of the preposition.

D-linked *wh*-questions with *care* (illustrated in 8) represent one more obligatory context for Accusative clitics:

(8) Pe care *(l) -ai ales?
*pe* which/whom *( clitic $_{3RD\ SG\ MASC\ ACC}$ ) have $_{2ND\ SG}$ chosen
'Which one have you chosen?'

[1] The analysis is concerned only with the obligatory contexts for 3rd person Accusative clitics. We believe that these are the only genuine clitics. One important property which distinguishes them from 1st and 2nd person Accusative clitics is optionality. Only 3rd person clitics are subject to optionality (Coene and Avram 2009).

[2] Romanian is not singular in this respect. Alexiadou and Anagnastopoulou (2000) argue that the Greek *pu*_Restrictive Relative Clauses are in essence clitic doubling constructions.

In terms of interpretation, the only possible reading in (8) is the one according to which the *wh*-phrase *pe care* (*pe* whom) refers to a previously mentioned set. Compare this to a *cine* ('who') question, illustrated in (9), where no such reading arises and where the clitic cannot occur:

(9) a. Pe cine ai văzut?
*pe* whom have$_{2ND\ SG}$ seen
'Whom have you seen?'
b. *Pe cine l-ai văzut?
*pe* whom clitic $_{3RD\ SG\ MASC\ ACC}$ have seen

In all the identified obligatory contexts the antecedent of the clitic is overt and placed in a left peripheral position of the clause. In Romanian, D-linking (Pesetsky 1987) plays an important role. Motapanyane (2003) provides evidence that there is a systematic contrast between non-D-linked *wh*-phrases and D-linked *wh*-phrases. An analysis of *care*-questions and *care* relatives (which both imply D-linked *wh*-phrases) reveals that they do not display the movement effects that other *wh*-structures do. The DP element placed at the left periphery should allow narrow scope reading if movement had applied, i.e. it should allow an interpretation as if it occupied the position with which it is associated. But *care*-questions and *care*-relatives are compatible with a wide scope reading only, as can be seen in (10), whereas *wh*-structures which display the movement effect are ambiguous, allowing both a narrow scope reading and a wide scope reading (11):

(10) a. Pe care copii i -a felicitat fiecare profesor?
*pe* which children clitic $_{3RD\ MASC\ PL\ ACC}$ has congratulated every teacher
'Which children did every teacher congratulate?'
(= every teacher congratulated the same children)
b. Amintiri din copilărie este o carte pe care a citit -o fiecare
Childhood Memories is a book *pe* which has read clitic $_{3RD\ SG\ FEM\ ACC}$ every
copil.
child
'Childhood Memories is a book that every child has read.'

(11) a. Ce carte a citit fiecare copil?
what/which book has read every child
'What /which book has every child read?
b. Ce copii a felicitat fiecare profesor?
what/which children has congratulated every teacher
'What/which children has every teacher congratulated?'

The *ce*-structures in (11) allow both a wide scope reading (= every child read the same book// every teacher congratulated the same group of children) and a narrow scope reading (= every child read a different book// every professor congratulated a different group of children). This difference indicates that the *care* structures in (10) do not involve movement (i.e. the *care*-phrase has not moved from the internal argument position) and that they are non-quantifiers, since they allow only wide scope reading. The *ce*-phrase, in examples like (11), on the other hand, has moved and allows both a narrow and a wide scope reading. It follows that the two phrases cannot occupy the same structural position. In

particular, the *care*-phrase is in an A'-position, most probably SpecTopicP (within Rizzi's 1997 split C-layer).

In the case of the clitic left dislocation structure, it has always been a controversial issue whether a movement or a non-movement analysis (as assumed for Romance in general in Cinque 1990) is more appropriate for Romanian, since the data are not conclusive for either of the two. We believe, though, that a non-movement analysis can be defended[3] for D-linked constituents. The same scope reading effects noticed in the case of D-linked *wh*-phrases in (10) obtain in the case of left dislocation structures. The topic at the left periphery does not have narrow scope reading with respect to Negation, for example, as one would expect if movement had applied. In (12) the element in a left peripheral position can only take wide scope reading with respect to Negation; the sentence can only read as 'I have not seen any of these students', indicating absence of reconstruction effects:

(12) Pe aceşti studenți nu i- am văzut de anul trecut.
*pe* these students not clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC PL ACC}}$ have seen since last year
'I haven't seen these students since last year.'

A second argument comes from sensitivity to strong islands. Extraction from a strong island is possible (though in a small number of cases):

(13) a. Pe Vasile îmi surîde ideea să îl invit la cină.
*pe* Vasile me$_{\text{DAT}}$ appeals idea.the SUBJ him invite$_{\text{1ST SG}}$ at dinner
'The idea to invite Vasile to dinner seems attractive to me.'
b. Pe Vasile îmi surîde ideea că îl inviți la cină.
*pe* Vasile me$_{\text{DAT}}$ appeals idea.the that him$_{\text{ACC}}$ invite$_{\text{2ND SG}}$ at dinner
'The idea that you invite Vasile to dinner seems attractive to me'.

Such constructions do not license parasitic gaps:

(14) *Cartea asta am returnat _ fără să citesc _.
book.the this have$_{\text{1ST SG}}$ returned _ without SUBJ read$_{\text{1ST SG}}$
'This book I have returned_ without reading _.'

One further argument is related to the interpretation of these dislocated constituents. As already mentioned, they are always interpreted as D-linked.

And finally, a weaker argument: the possibility of an intonation break between the main verb and the sentence initial element suggests that this element may not be in argumental position. One has to mention though a certain asymmetry (which is also present in right-dislocations with clitics, see the discussion below). Whereas the intonation break can be always detected in the case of dislocated DPs (15a), with PPs (15b) the intonation break does not seem to be obligatory:

(15) a. Mărul # l- am mîncat.
apple.the clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ have eaten
'The apple, I have eaten.'
b. Pe Ion (?) # nu l- am văzut.
*pe* Ion no clitic $_{\text{3rd SG MASC ACC}}$ have seen

[3] For the same position, see Motapanyane (2003).

The data lead us to conclude that a non-movement analysis for D-linked topics is not off the track. All the obligatory clitic contexts identified so far contain a D-linked topic base-generated in a position at the left-periphery of the clause. It cannot be an operator, since it can only take wide scope. In this, D-linked left peripheral constituents differ from non-D-linked ones and they occupy different structural positions (see Cornilescu 2002 for Romanian or Krapova and Cinque 2005 for Bulgarian).

The clitic is also obligatory in right-dislocation structures, as in the example in (16):

(16) *(L-) am mîncat # mărul.
*(clitic $_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ ) have eaten # apple.the

In terms of identification, the clitic is co-indexed with a D-linked DP. (16) is felicitous only if *the apple* is a D-linked topic.

The data analysed so far suggest that D-linking is crucial for the obligatory nature of the clitic. Actually, this property seems to play an important part in other constructions in Romanian and also cross-linguistically. For example, only D-linked *wh*-phrases can be extracted from *wh*-islands in Romanian (Comorowski 1989). Rizzi (1990) limits the assignment of referential indices to those *wh*-phrases which are used referentially, i.e. which are D-linked. Romanian clitic constructions then are not exceptional in this respect.

### 2.3 Accusative clitics and null antecedents

Accusative clitics are also obligatory when the post-verbal complement position is phonetically empty and the null direct object has a (salient) antecedent in the preceding discourse. The antecedent has been mentioned in the previous discourse (illustrated in 17) but it does not occur in the same clause:

(17) A: Ce-ai făcut cu mărul?
'What have you done to the apple?'
B: *(L-) am mîncat.
clitic $_{\text{3rd MASC SG ACC}}$ have eaten
'I have eaten it.'

The contexts identified so far indicate that the Accusative clitic is obligatory when the antecedent is a referentially stable topic, i.e. when it can function as a D-linked element. In all the identified obligatory clitic structures the clitic is referentially anchored to one particular antecedent, it has *no choice* reference.

In the previous subsection we saw that Accusative clitics obligatorily occur in the absence of an overt full lexical DP in direct object position when their antecedent is an overt D-linked element, placed at the left periphery of the clause. Obviously, Accusative clitics in those contexts should not be different from those in which the antecedent does not surface in the clause. By analogy, we take the clitic constructions in (17) to contain an antecedent in SpecTopP[4]; the difference is that in this case the clausal antecedent is null. Since it is placed

[4] The same idea is put forth in Delfitto (2002), where it is hypothesized that "the reason why clitic-constructions are interpreted as sentences is that they involve an additional structural layer, where a (possibly null) topic is realized [...]". According to Delfitto, there is an inherent link between pronominal clitics and clitic resumption of left-dislocated topics. The same line of investigation is taken for Greek clitics in Androulakis (2001), where it is argued that clitics in dependencies should be analysed in the same way as simple clitics.

in a left-peripheral position which cannot be c-commanded, its identification will occur through discourse.

Summing up, the clitic is obligatory when the left peripheral position (presumably SpecTopP) is occupied by a D-linked constituent (overt or null) co-indexed with the direct object which is phonetically null. The advantage of this analysis is that it captures the uniformity of clitics across the identified obligatory contexts.

### 2.4 Accusative clitics and the ban on null objects

#### 2.4.1 Clitics and referentially stable D-linked null objects

The contexts identified in 2.2 and 2.3 provide evidence that in Romanian Accusative clitics signal a ban on referentially stable D-linked null objects (null topics). That Romanian is indeed a non null object language is further indicated by the fact that Romanian disallows referential null objects even in the recipe context (18b), where a language like English, also typically a non null object one, does not (18a) (Massam and Roberge 1989). In Romanian, in this context a reflexive construction is favoured (as in 18c).

(18) a. Take the cake mix, 1 cup of water, and 3 eggs. Mix well and beat_for 5 minute. Pour into a well-greased cake pane and bake for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and cool. (Massam and Roberge 1989:135)

b. *Luați zahărul şi amestecați _cu gălbenuşurile.
'Take the sugar and mix _ with the yolks.'

c. Se ia o lingură de făină, se amestecă bine ...
refl$_{3RD\ SG\ ACC}$ take$_{3RD\ SG}$ a spoonful of flour refl$_{3RD\ SG\ ACC}$ mix $_{3RD\ SG}$ well
'Take a spoonful of flour, mix it well ...'

We have already shown that constructions like (14) cannot license parasitic gaps (unless the omitted object is a bare NP). (14) becomes grammatical if a clitic surfaces making the argument associated with both gaps visible:

(19) Cartea asta am returnat-**o** fără să **o** citesc .
book this have returned clitic $_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$without $_{SUBJ}$ clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$ read
'I have returned this book without reading it.'

Chomsky (1982) defined parasitic gaps as silent pronouns which are licensed under conditions predicted by the general system. The difference in grammaticality between (14) and (19) points out that the system of Romanian does not allow such pronominal elements to remain silent. They have to be overt. The general system bans silent pronominals in direct object position if the direct object is interpreted as D-linked.

One further argument comes from secondary predicates. Consider the ungrammatical sentence in (20) below, which contains a secondary predicate of a phonetically empty object, to (21) and (22), where the direct object is overt. The ungrammaticality of (20) indicates that Romanian disallows null objects even in contexts in which the object can be interpreted as arbitrary or generic. Again, the sentence in (20) becomes grammatical either if an overt lexical DP surfaces in direct object position (as in 21) or if a clitic is used (22):

(20) *Muzica asta face _ fericiți.
this music makes _ happy$_{PL}$

(21) Muzica asta face oamenii fericiți.
'This music makes people happy.'

(22) Muzica asta îi face fericiți.
'This music makes them happy.'

In all these cases the clitic has a "saving" function: it makes the features of the null object (Person, number, case) visible[5]. In this respect Romanian patterns with Greek and Spanish, where a specific null object is also obligatorily rescued by a full DP or a pronominal clitic (Papangeli 2000, Androulakis 2001, Tsimpli and Papadoupoulou 2006). The fact is far from trivial. As we have seen, the antecedent of the null object is salient in the discourse and, consequently, retrievable from discourse. However, there seems to be a constraint on the computational system which blocks this discourse identification procedure.

### 2.4.2 Accusative clitics and the Person feature

The obvious question which arises at this point is why Romanian bans D-linked topics which are phonetically null. In terms of interpretation, since a D-linked topic is prominent, its reference could in principle be retrieved from context. Discourse identified referential null objects exist in a variety of languages (Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean). But in Romanian the derivation does not converge without a clitic. All the investigated contexts point to a "saving" function of the clitic. Following Avram and Coene (2002, 2006, 2007) we assume that Accusative clitics are copies of the features of a referential null object, created in the derivation as a Last Resort. Object clitics resemble resumptive pronouns in having a saving function. The crucial difference, though, is that in finite clauses Accusative clitics (with the exception of the feminine clitic *o* 'her') do not surface *in situ*. Clitics move to the left periphery in finite clauses. They are the overt features (person, gender, number) of an otherwise null DP, placed in an Accusative case-marked position. In the present paper we have argued that Accusative clitics signal a ban on D-linked null objects in the system. We propose that this ban can be accounted for in terms of the value of the Person feature in Romanian, a language in which D has to be overt when the setting for this feature is positive.

Recent work by Chomsky (1999), Platzack (2004), Longobardi (2006) argues that the D category in the nominal domain essentially consists of the Person feature, which plays the role formerly assigned to the [D] or [N] features. Since D was associated with referentiality[6], one can infer that this important property is taken over by the Person feature. Nouns are different from pronouns in that the latter will always surface in D, whereas with the former,

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[5] Unspecified null objects are obviously licit, as is the case in (i) – (ii), where the null object is either incorporated in the lexical meaning of the verb or has an arbitrary reading:

(i) Ion mănîncă.
'Ion eats.'

(ii) Pisicile zgîrie.
'Cats scratch'.

Spoken Romanian also allows a specific null object provided their reference can be pragmatically controlled by the extralinguistic context. However, pragmatically recovered null objects are not allowed with any verb. Compare (iii) and (iv) below:

(iii) Cauți cartea? Gata, am găsit. " Are you looking for the book? It's OK, I have found _'.

(iv) Citeşti cartea? *Gata, am citit. 'Are you reading the book. Ready, I have read _.'

(v) Repari maşina? * Da, repar. 'Are you repairing the car? Yes, I repair _.'

(vi) Mănînci merele? Bine, mănînc. 'Will you eat these apples? OK, I'll eat _.'

As the examples above show, the aspectual properties of the predicate do not seem to be relevant for the constraints imposed on pragmatically recovered null objects. What seems to be relevant is whether the verb is associated with a prototypical object. The frequency of such latent objects is very low. As expected, imperatives can also create a context where pragmatically controlled objects can be omitted.

[6] Chomsky (1999) states that referentiality might be associated with one variant of D: "Similarly D, D – or at least one variant of D – might be associated with referentiality in some sense, not just treated as an automatic marker of "nominal category" (Chomsky 1999:35fn10).

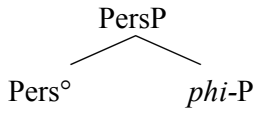
movement to D is subject to parametric variation. These differences are said to be related to Person, as both categories are fully specified for gender, number and case but only pronouns are also specified for Person. Longobardi (2006) redefines D as Person, individual denotation crucially involving D, i.e. Person. This is known as the *Revised Denotation Hypothesis*, which takes entities to turn into individuals through association with a person category:

(23) Individuals are denoted by association with a (specified or default) person feature.

Crucially, such an association is said to be absent in the case of properties, which are inherently personless. Variation amongst languages in the association of lexical content to Person may be formulated in terms of a Person parameter: languages with strong Person refer to individuals by overt association of the lexical content of nouns to Person, while weak Person languages do not. A number of morpho-syntactic manifestations of the contrast between Germanic and Romance languages in the setting of the Person feature may be found in (i) person agreement; (ii) the overt association of nouns functioning as referential constants (proper nouns and referential generics) with D; and (iii) the definite reading of nominal arguments as being dependent on the overt association of morpho-syntactic material (with features of a definite operator) with D through fronting to D° or Spec DP. Romanian is a language which refers to individuals by overt association of nouns to Person, i.e. it is a language with strong Person.

Along the line of Longobardi (2006), we propose a distinct representation of the person head which will host the feature associated with referentiality. We take the "traditional" DP (Abney 1987) to contain *two* projections: Person Phrase and *phi*–Phrase. The former is the projection of the referentiality feature. The latter is a projection of the number and gender features:

(24)




Our proposal is partially in line with Longobardi (2006) in assuming the existence of a Person Phrase which replaces the traditional DP. But we do not replace the entire D head with a Person head; we take the traditional DP to have two types of features, each projecting into a different phrase, one of which is the Person Phrase. Following Coene (2005), Avram and Coene (2008), we take /+person/ to be the feature responsible for the projection of D, rather than some kind of /definiteness/ feature, as often proposed in the literature. The motivation for such a proposal goes back to Postal (1969), who shows that determiners and pronouns are expressions of the same person feature, i.e. that personal pronouns and determiners are in fact variants of the same category. For Romanian such a view is supported by the fact that 3rd person Accusative clitics are homophonous with determiners: the feminine singular clitic is identical to the indefinite article and all the other clitics are identical to the definite article, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1. Article - 3rd person Acc clitics homophony**[7]

| | | singular | | plural | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | masc | fem | masc | fem |
| article | Indefinite | | o | | |
| | Definite | -l | | -i | -le |
| 3rd person Acc clitic | | -l | o | i- | le |

[7] The table only shows those elements which are homophonous, it does not fully illustrate the article system.

Historically, in some Romance languages, among which Romanian, 3rd person clitics and determiners derive from the Latin demonstratives.

Returning to the null object in our analysis, it is important to state that it is a referential argumental object. Arguments are individuated, they are [+Person] and consequently D has to be overt in languages like Romanian, a language with strong Person. Person is a property of any referential (individuated) nominal. When this property is strong and maximally grammaticalized in the language it will force Person marking in D when the setting for this feature is positive. Case will make it visible. Evidence in favour of this view comes from the fact that null objects are allowed when their antecedent is a clausal constituent. Compare the two sentences below:

(25) a. Ştiai că e plecat în Belgia? Nu, nu ştiam [ ].
'Did you know he was in Belgium?' No, I did not know [ ].'
b. Ştii poezia? * Nu, nu ştiu [ ].
'Do you know the poem? *No, I do not know [ ].'

Complementizer phrases do not have a Person feature which has to be made overt, so a null object is allowed in this case.

The clitic will spell-out the Person Phrase of the null object. Notice that the null object cannot be PRO (since it occurs in a governed position); nor can it be *pro*, because it cannot be inflection-licensed. Agreement object is not pronominal in Romanian, so the null object cannot be locally identified through Agreement. In this it differs from *pro* in subject position, which can be identified via Spec-head agreement with Agreement subject. Since no movement has taken place, it cannot be a trace. As already shown, it has *no choice* reference. In this respect it behaves like an R-expression. It is licensed by syntax[8], since it is the internal argument of the transitive verb. The Person feature of the argumental null object has to be made visible. As a Last Resort strategy, the features of the null object are spelled-out by the clitic, which thus becomes visible for the computation. The position where the clitic is created in the derivation is the post-verbal one. Romanian is transparent in this respect: the feminine singular clitic *o* 'her' occurs in post-verbal position in some finite constructions, as illustrated in (26):

(26) Am pierdut-o.
have lost clitic$_{\text{3RD FEM SG ACC}}$
'I have lost it.'

In a nutshell, we assume that the clitic is the spell-out of the Person Phrase features of a null D-linked argument. It is not an independent item part of the Numeration; it gets created in the derivation. The Person Phrase, i.e. precisely the locus of theta-role assignment, is spelled-out as a clitic which inherits all the features of the null R-expression (Person and *phi*-features). It obviously follows that, being a copy of the null D-linked direct object, the clitic also inherits its referential stability as well as its D-linked topic feature[9].

But how does the system identify the features of the null object? We have seen that one important property of the null object is that it is chain-connected to a non-quantifier (as

[8] Pîrvulescu and Roberge (2005) argue that the direct object position is always projected. It merges to all verbs in the syntax as a property of Universal Grammar. This position can be occupied by an overt constituent or it can be phonetically null.

[9] On a specificity scale, pronominal clitics occupy the highest position, higher than pronouns and proper names.

suggested in Rizzi 1992 for null constants). The null object is an R-expression, and consequently it cannot be A-bound. The element which binds the null object must be placed in an A'-position. As we already argued, the antecedent of the clitic is in an A'-position, at the left periphery of the clause, where it can be linked into discourse. The identification of the null object is ensured via a chain which contains an antecedent (null or overt) in the left periphery of the clause. Identification along a chain requires feature matching. Because the antecedent is a referentially stable D-linked topic, one of the most important features is that of [+Person]. The [+Person] feature will match the features of the null object provided there is no other intervening [+Person] feature. In Romanian Agreement in Inflection is pronominal, i.e. it has a positive value for the [Person] feature, allowing *pro* subjects; there will always be a potential barrier between the features of the antecedent in the left periphery and those of the null object. The [+Person] feature of Inflection disrupts the feature matching relation between the antecedent and the null object. That is why the clitic will have to move to a position higher than the intervening blocking feature. In finite constructions Accusative clitics surface at the left periphery of the clause. The clitic moves for identification reasons, i.e. so that the referential index of the null object be rescued via matching with the antecedent. In non-finite constructions Inflection is not pronominal, so it will not intervene between the antecedent in the left periphery and the clitic, making movement unnecessary; the identification of the referential index of the clitic is possible if the clitic remains *in situ*:

(27) văzînd-o pe fată…
see$_{\text{GER}}$ clitic $_{\text{3RD FEM SG ACC}}$ *pe* girl

One question which is in need of clarification concerns the status of the moving element. The clitic is a copy of the features of a DP/PersonP with a phonetically null NP in complement position. Movement to a higher projection would require a sort of pied-piping to take place when movement is overt, under the assumption that a bare set of features is an ill-formed PF object. However, the movement analysis which has been assumed does not violate this restriction because pied-piping is not obligatory when PF is not affected. The object is null, and null elements are not relevant at PF. The attracted features, i.e. the clitic, do not have to pied-pipe the null element[10]. So, the clitic is created as a copy of a DP/PersonP but it moves and surfaces as D/Person in the head position of the Topic projection, leaving the null NP behind. It can surface as D/Person because it has moved as a bundle of features. Clitics are a 'substitute' of the whole DP, i.e. they inherit both its argumental status and its D-linked feature. Clitics are, after all, (impoverished) pronominals.

It is important to stress that the clitic is created across the vP domain and the C-domain, i.e. after movement to the Topic projection. In some languages, such as Romanian, the information structure is syntactically encoded (Tasmowski and Popescu-Ramirez 1988, Avram 1999, Alboiu 2002). In such languages, there is a pre-verbal landing site that is specifically designed to encode this type of information. When clitics are involved, they match the abstract feature of a projection in this field. The ban on null overt objects which are D-linked topics provides further support in favour of the proposal in Tasmowski and Popescu-Ramirez (1988). Information structure features, such as topic and D-linking are syntactically encoded in Romanian.

[10] Minimalism allows isolated features to be subject to the rules of the phonological component: "Just how considerations of PF convergence might extend is unclear, pending better understanding of morphology and the internal structure of phrases. Note that such considerations could permit raising without pied-piping even overtly." (Chomsky 1995: 264)

To sum up, we propose that Accusative clitics in Romanian reflect a ban on null D-linked direct objects. They represent a syntactically created copy of features of a null DP; both feature spell-out and movement are related to the strong value of the Person feature. Movement to a higher projection is forced by identification requirements. The [+Person] feature of Inflection blocks the feature matching relation between the antecedent (at the left periphery) and the null object in postverbal position. This analysis finds cross-linguistic support. Other languages in which Person is maximally marked in Inflection, such as Italian[11], also ban referential null objects (Rizzi 1986):

(28) *Gianni sa che Maria _ vide.
Gianni knows$_{3RD\ SG}$ that Maria _ saw

We have already mentioned that English also bans null objects; in the recipe context, though, null objects are allowed. However, they are allowed only provided the canonical subject position is empty (Massam and Roberge 1989) (see18a above). This indicates that in a language like English, where Person is not even minimally marked in Inflection (Coene and Avram 2004, Avram and Coene 2008), an overt subject is a possible intervener, blocking the Matching relation between the referential null object and its antecedent.

## 3. Clitic doubling constructions

### 3.1 On the prepositional double

Our proposal is, however, challenged by the so-called clitic doubling constructions (illustrated in 2). So far we have identified only clitic contexts where the postverbal position was phonetically empty; the direct object was null and "rescued" by the clitic. But Romanian clitics also optionally occur in sentences in which they are co-indexed with an overt *pe* marked DP, in the so-called clitic doubling constructions. At first sight, such constructions might pose a problem for our previous conclusions. According to Kayne's generalization a clitic-doubled direct object must always be preceded by a preposition, *pe* in the case of Romanian :

(29) L- am văzut *(pe) Ion.
clitic $_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$ have seen *pe* Ion
'I have seen Ion.'

The question which arises at this point is whether the role of the clitic is indeed the same across all the identified obligatory contexts and, implicitly, whether our analysis is on the right track. This is not so obvious at first sight, since in the clitic constructions identified so far the postverbal position was empty whereas in this case the postverbal position seems to be occupied by a *pe*-phrase.

Two possibilities present themselves with respect to the position of the lexical double in clitic doubling constructions. Both have been proposed in the literature. In principle, the *pe* phrase could occur in argument position (as argued, for example, in Kayne 1994) or in adjunct position (as argued for clitic doubling structures in Greek by Androulakis 2001). If our analysis of clitic constructions is on the right track, then the argument position is already occupied by the null object, the internal argument of the verb. In which case the *pe*-phrase

[11] Avram and Coene (2004, 2008) define maximally marked Person in Inflection as Inflection in which the 3rd person is distinctly marked in both the singular and the plural, in at least one tense.

cannot occur in argument position. In what follows we will provide evidence in favour of an adjunct or adjunct-like analysis for the Romanian *pe*-phrase, i.e. we will argue that it does not occupy the direct object position.

In the debate with respect to the structural position of the prepositional phrase in clitic doubling constructions, argumental vs. adjunct (-like), one property which has often been invoked concerns intonation. For the proponents of an argumental status there is no intonation break between the verb and the preposition phrase. This distinguishes clitic doubling from clitic right dislocation structures, where there is a break between the verb and the displaced DP. For Romanian, this would amount to stating that there is an obligatory intonation break in right dislocation structures but no such break in clitic doubling constructions. Besides the fact that such data have never been seriously tested, one has to mention that nothing forces the absence of an intonation break in clitic doubling constructions in Romanian. It is true that the break is salient with dislocated DPs, but it is not excluded with the *pe*-phrase either. One has to mention that the availability of a break with the latter may interfere with the fact that in Romanian prepositions do not receive stress. Preposition phrases used as adjuncts seem to have the same intonational contour as the *pe*-phrase in clitic doubling constructions. This is why we believe that this argument is inconclusive.

One reason which makes us believe that the *pe*-phrase does not have argumental status derives, on the one hand, from the fact that the preposition seems to assign case to the direct object of a verb which is transitive (30a) and, as such, can assign Accusative case to the DP, and from the optionality of the clitic in sentences with *pe*-phrases, on the other hand.

(30) a. Am văzut copilul.
have seen child.the
b. (L-) am văzut pe copil.
clitic $_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ have seen pe child
'I have seen the child.'

Sentences with a *pe*-phrase without a clitic are well-formed; if the *pe*-phrase occupied the direct object position this would mean that one and the same verb can directly assign Accusative case to a postverbal DP in some cases (30a) but not in others, requiring a case marking preposition (30b), an undesirable conclusion.

Kayne's argumentation in favour of an argumental position relies on two facts: (i) in Italian right-dislocations the clitic is optional, and (ii) clitic left dislocations are derived by movement of the dislocated phrase from complement position (contra Cinque 1990). His arguments do not seem to carry over to the Romanian data. We have shown that in Romanian right-dislocations the clitic is obligatory. Evidence from reconstruction has revealed that the left dislocated structures with obligatory clitics do not display movement effects.

A second argument against an argumental position for the *pe*-phrase comes from non-finite clauses with clitics. In non-finite constructions, according to our analysis, the clitic surfaces *in situ*, i.e. in postverbal position. Such constructions can contain both a clitic and a *pe*-phrase. The argumental position being already occupied by the postverbal clitic, it follows that the *pe*-phrase must be placed in an adjunct position:

(31) Auzindu-l pe tata în sufragerie...
hear$_{\text{GER}}$ clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ *pe* Father in dining-room
'Hearing Father in the dining-room...'

In Romanian, the same type of argument comes from finite clauses in which a feminine clitic placed in postverbal position can be followed by a *pe*-phrase:

(32) Am iubit- o pe această femeie.
have loved clitic$_{\text{3RD FEM SG ACC}}$ pe this woman
'I have loved this woman.'

Earlier in the analysis, we showed that the presence of a *pe*-phrase does not obligatorily require the presence of an Accusative clitic. There are simple clitic constructions and there are also *pe*-phrase constructions without a clitic. Romanian Accusative clitics are obligatory only when the postverbal position is occupied by a *pe* marked definite pronoun (Carabulea 2008):

(33) *(L-) am invitat pe el/pe acesta.
clitic $_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ have invited *pe* him/*pe* this
'I have invited him/this one.'

According to some more restrictive speakers, Accusative clitics are obligatory both when the postverbal position is occupied by a *pe* marked definite pronoun and by a *pe* marked proper name (Farkas 1978, Avram 2000, Cornilescu 2001, Farkas and Heusinger 2003). With any other elements, the clitic can but need not be used. This is illustrated for indefinite pronouns in (34), for indefinite DPs in (35) and for numerals in (36):

(34) a. (I-) am văzut pe unii.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC PL ACC}}$ ) have seen *pe* some$_{\text{MASC PL}}$
b. (I-) am văzut pe alții.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC PL ACC}}$ ) have seen *pe* other $_{\text{MASC PL}}$ (Carabulea 2005:382)

(35) (L-) am salutat (pe) un vecin.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ ) have greeted (*pe*) a neighbour
' I have greeted a neighbour.'

(36) (L-) am ales pe al patrulea.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ ) have chosen *pe* the fourth (Carabulea 2005:382)

These contexts are optional clitic contexts. They indicate that the presence of the preposition *pe* is not directly related to Accusative clitics, i.e. *pe* does not make up for the absorbed case related to the clitic.

The so-called clitic doubling construction contains a *pe* marked DP; *pe* has been analysed as obligatory with DPs which are either [+ human]/[+animate] or high-ranked in some way, so that they could be interpreted as [+human]:

(37) (L-) am întîlnit pe Ion.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ ) have met *pe* Ion

(38) (L-) au spălat pe cățel.
(clitic$_{\text{3RD MASC SG ACC}}$ ) have washed *pe* dog

But the preposition is equally obligatory with [-human] or [-animate] DPs in direct object Relative clauses or in *care* questions.

Summing up, the presence of *pe* does not require the use of the clitic (with the exception of *pe* marked definite pronominals) nor does the presence of the clitic force the use of the preposition. If this is indeed the case, it follows that the role of *pe* is not merely that of an Accusative case assigner. The (obligatory) use of *pe* with DPs irrespective of their semantic features indicates that its role goes beyond signaling the +/-animacy feature.

In what follows we will argue that the preposition *pe* is more than a mere case marker and that the *pe*-phrase occurs in a position compatible with its features.

### 3.2 Accusative clitics and the preposition *pe*

As already mentioned, in the generative literature dealing with the preposition *pe* in clitic doubling constructions, *pe* has been analysed mainly as a case marker. More recently, *pe* has been analysed as a DOM (Farkas and Heusinger 2003) or as a topic marker (Avram and Coene 2006, 2007). Cornilescu (2000) proposed a semantic analysis of *pe,* suggesting that it is a marker of semantic gender, marking [personal] gender. Since [+personal] DPs are high-ranked and force an object level denotation, *pe* is argued to establish a semantic partition between property denotations and object level denotations. This partition is overtly marked by the contrastive uses of *pe* with the same nominals (Cornilescu 2001). The consequence is that when *pe* is used with inherently [+Person] elements, i.e. when it is obligatory, there will be no interpretative effect. This is the case of definite pronouns. The presence of *pe* triggers obligatory clitic doubling with definite pronouns, whose reference is fixed by previous discourse, i.e. which are inherently D-linked; it is permissible – not obligatory - with all the other *pe* marked objects, because their reference can in principle be fixed only through the speaker, i.e. they are not inherently D-linked. When used with elements whose setting for the Person feature is context dependent it will force a topic reading. The 'high-ranking' effect of *pe* is obvious in particular in those contexts in which it is apparently optional. Consider for example (39a), a chunk of child-directed speech, where *pe* marks a [-animate] DP for prominence (or high ranking purposes), or (39b) used in a recent TV show, where *pe* marks a [-animate] DP:

(39) a. Vrei să speli pe balon?
want $_{2ND\ SG}$ SUBJ wash $_{2ND\ SG}$ *pe* balloon
'Do you want to wash the balloon?'

b. Tu crezi topurile dacă vrei să le crezi pe topuri.
you trust rankings.the if want$_{2ND\ SG}$ SUBJ clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$ trust$_{2ND\ SG}$ *pe* rankings
'You trust rankings if you choose to trust them.'

We propose that in (39) *pe* signals prominence within the event structure; the direct object is prominent. This is possible only if the DP is referential, i.e. [+Person]. This is further supported by the incompatibility of *pe* with *irrealis* constructions (Farkas and Heusinger 2003). Consider (40) below, where the use of *pe* is licit in an indicative clause but illicit in a subjunctive one:

(40) a. Maria o caută pe o studentă care ştie sintaxă.
Maria clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$ look for *pe* a student who knows syntax

b. *Maria o caută pe o studentă care să ştie sintaxă.
Maria clitic$_{3RD\ FEM\ SG\ ACC}$ look for *pe* a student who should know syntax

(examples adapted from Farkas and Heusinger 2003)

The present analysis captures the difference between definite pronouns and proper names, which are both inherently [+Person]. The former are always discourse bound, they always have a discourse antecedent and, consequently, the clitic will be obligatory; the latter may but need not have a discourse antecedent. It can also explain why the non-specific indefinites *cineva* 'someone' and *nimeni* 'nobody' must always be *pe* marked (because they are inherently [+Person]) but are incompatible with clitic marking[12] because they cannot be D-linked:

(41) a (*L-) am văzut *(pe) cineva.
(*clitic$_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$) have seen (**pe*) somebody.
'I have seen someone.'
b. Nu (*l-) am văzut *(pe) nimeni.
not (*clitic$_{3RD\ MASC\ SG\ ACC}$) have seen (**pe*) nobody
'I have not seen anyone.'

Nominal projections which lack a [+Person] feature are property denoting and hence they cannot be identified as prominent arguments. Contextual upgrading is impossible in this case:

(42) a. * Am băut pe vin.
have drunk *pe* wine
b. *Am văzut pe ceva.
have seen *pe* something

The analysis of *pe* which we put forth in this paper is rooted in the one in Farkas and Heusinger (2003), where *pe* is analysed as a realization of differential object marking in Romanian, a language where differential object marking is, according to them, sensitive to referential stability and topicality. Leonetti (2004) proposes a similar analysis for the Spanish Accusative case marker *a*, the equivalent of the Romanian *pe*, where *a* is argued to be an *internal topic marker*. The author, however, acknowledges that no distinction is made in the analysis between topics which act as anchors for new assertions (in this case animacy is not involved) and topics defined as prominent arguments in event structure (in this case animacy and affectedness are involved). In our terms, one can distinguish between D-linked topics, which act as discourse anchors for new assertions, and topics which are high ranked arguments. The former are always identifiable on inspection of the discourse. They have an antecedent either in the same clausal domain or in the previous discourse. The latter are the ones high ranked within the event structure by the speaker[13], who marks them for prominence. But in both cases the DP must have a [+Person] feature. For convenience, we will label these two types *D-linked topics* and *S(peaker)-linked topics*. The Romanian *pe* is a marker of S-linked topicality. Our proposal is that Romanian signals topicality with two markers: Accusative clitics and *pe*. The former signal D-linked topicality (their reference is drawn from

[12]*Cineva* 'someone' and *nimeni* 'nobody' cannot be D-linked, but they are inherently [+Person] (vs. *ceva* 'something' and *nimic* 'nothing'). Exception: context specific *cineva* (marginal), when *cineva* is used as an epithet.

[13] This distinction is similar to the one which Heusinger (cf. Leonetti 2004) identifies when defining specificity. According to him, specificity can be defined as the property of a DP of having a referent which is functionally *linked to the speaker* or to a referential expression contained in the same discourse**,** i.e. in our terms, its reference can be D-linked or part of the knowledge of the speaker.

an antecedent previously introduced into discourse and, consequently, part of the common ground shared by speaker and hearer) whereas the latter encodes S-linked topicality (the speaker identifies the argument as prominent in the event structure; the DP need not have been mentioned in previous discourse). Obviously, S-linked topicality is compatible with D-linked topicality, so we expect the two markers to co-occur in "topic doubling constructions".

The Romanian data provide evidence in favour of two Topic positions: one in the C-domain (Rizzi 1997) and one in the low IP area (Belletti 2004). The clitic, being related to D-linked topicality, will surface in the left periphery. The *pe*-phrase, which is heavier and directly related to the structure of the event, will surface in the right periphery of the clause, where it can signal that the (null) object is prominent in the event structure. This position might be the Topic projection (the clause-internal topic position) in the low IP area, i.e. the area immediately above vP (Belletti 2004). Since verbs move to Inflection in Romanian, the *pe*-phrase will surface in postverbal position.

Indirect evidence that the lexical double does not occupy the argument position comes from doubling constructions with Dative clitics illustrated in (43a) which are used in some varieties of Romanian. Such constructions differ from the standard Dative clitic doubling constructions (43b) in that the lexical DP does not surface in the Dative but within a PP headed by the preposion *la* 'at/to':

(43) a. I- am zis la mama că plec.
clitic$_{3RD\ SG\ DAT}$ have told at Mother that leave
b. I- am zis mamei că plec.
clitic$_{3RD\ SG\ DAT}$ have told Mother$_{DAT}$ that leave
'I told Mother I was leaving.'

What is interesting is that the Dative indirect object clitic in (43a) is 'doubled' by a prepositional phrase headed by *la*, an Accusative case assigning preposition. Similarly, the verb *a da* 'to give' in spoken Romanian also allows a prepositional object instead of the prepositionless Dative indirect object (most probably because of its Goal interpretation) as in (44):

(44) Eu nu le dau ciocolată la copiii răi.
I not clitic$_{3RD\ PL\ DAT}$ give chocolate at bad children
'I do not give chocolate to bad children'.

If the clitic occupied the argumental position associated with a Dative indirect object we would expect it to surface as a (prepositionless) Dative (as in 43b). The fact that there are 'doubling' structures in which there is no matching between the case form of the clitic and the case form of the lexical double reinforces the claim that the two are not as directly related as previously assumed.

## 4. Conclusions

In all the identified contexts the Accusative clitic makes the features of a null direct object visible; the null object is co-indexed with a D-linked topic placed in an A'-position at the left-periphery of the clause. We have argued that the Accusative clitic has the same properties in all the contexts where it occurs (clitic doubling, clitic dislocation structures and simple clitic constructions) (see also Sportiche 1996, Kayne 1994, Androulakis 2001, Delfitto

2002). We remain agnostic on whether all these constructions have the same underlying structure (they probably don't). What is relevant is the obvious similarity: in all these constructions the Accusative clitic occurs when a phonetically null direct object is coindexed with a D-linked topic in SpecTopP[14]. The topic can be overt or null. The ban on null D-linked topics has been accounted for as the consequence of the properties of the Person feature in the system, both in the D-domain and in the C-domain. The clitic rescues the derivation making the [+ Person] feature of a DP argument visible. In terms of information structure, its contribution is systematic across all the contexts: it signals D-linked topicality. *Pe*-marked phrases indicate S-linked topicality. They occupy a position compatible with their topic feature within the low IP area.

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[14] The position could also be the highest *wh*-left periphery position, the clitic-resumed D-linked topic projection,as argued for Bulgarian in Krapova and Cinque (2005), higher than the position hosting D-linked *wh*-phrases and non D-linked *wh*-phrases : clitic-resumed D-linked topic – D-linked *wh*-phrase – non-D-linked *wh* phrase. Placing the clitic resumed topic at the very left edge has the advantage of capturing its core role of discourse anchor. At the same time, the fact that it occupies a different position from the one of non-D-linked *wh*-phrases can be nicely correlated with the difference concerning quantification properties.

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