

## Experimental evidence from Ibero-Romance for fine-grained distinctions on prominence scales

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Prominence scales (Silverstein 1976, Haspelmath 2021) are frequently invoked in the context of differential object marking (DOM) to account for the splits and the variation observed in grammars. Over time, the scales have become ever more fine-grained, as for instance the revised version of the so-called extended animacy hierarchy in (1) proposed by Caro Reina (2020: 250), where four different kinds of names have been added.

(1) first/second-person pronoun > third-person pronoun > deity name > personal/kinship name > animal name > place name > human common noun > non-human animate common noun > inanimate common noun

While such scales have been established mainly with evidence from cross-linguistic comparison, sometimes corroborated with quantitative corpus data from individual languages, they are less well-understood from a psycholinguistic perspective. For instance, it is unclear whether (all) the fine-grained distinctions are made by speakers of some particular language and how the cognitive distinctions that are available map on the language-particular categories used by speakers. We use gradient acceptability judgment tasks (AJTs) to investigate these questions.

This work reports the results from four comparably designed AJTs on Spanish, Catalan, European Portuguese (EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP). The experiments test (i) the proposal in Caro Reina (2020) to introduce the *identifiability* feature on the scale in (1) to distinguish the category of deity names from personal proper names for Portuguese; (ii) the intuition by Cyrino (2017) that DOM, although hardly ever used by speakers, is optionally available in Brazilian Portuguese; and (iii) a proposal based on own previous work on Spanish to further divide the inanimate category for abstract nouns, depending on the availability of human or animate referents in the cognitive frame of the noun.

In the experiments, we used a 3X2 factorial design, crossing the presence and absence of the differential marker with three degrees from the scale (number of participants in parentheses):

Experiment 1 and 2: human > animate > inanimate (Spanish (42), Catalan (240))

Experiment 3: deity name > person name > inanimate noun (EP (44), BP (44))

Experiment 4: collectives of animates > institutions > other abstract nouns (Spanish (210))

In each AJT, 60 written sentences (50% distractors) were rated individually on a 7-point Likert scale. An example item from each experiment can be found in the table below. Results show effects for the three-way animacy distinction in Experiment 1 and 2, which is categorical in the Spanish data but shows optionality in some conditions in Catalan. We also found partial confirming evidence for the proposal regarding EP in Caro Reina (2020) and the claim regarding BP in Cyrino (2017) in Experiment 3. Finally, the results from Experiment 4 support the idea that inanimate abstract common nouns are also sensitive to the animacy hierarchy: animacy is more prominent on nouns denoting collective sets of animates than on nouns denoting institutions which do not denote sets of humans but rather are created and only may

be instantiated by them. Still, animacy is more prominent in their cognitive frame than in those of other abstract nouns.

### Example items

S NP [+anim]	Trans. V	DOM	DO NP	AdvP
La muchacha <i>the girl</i>	ha encontrado <i>found</i>	<b>a / Ø</b> <b>DOM/-</b>	la amiga <i>the friend</i>	en el patio de la escuela. <i>in the schoolyard</i>
La muchacha	ha encontrado	<b>a / Ø</b>	la gata <i>the cat</i>	en el patio de la escuela.
La muchacha	ha encontrado	<b>a / Ø</b>	la pelota <i>the ball</i>	en el patio de la escuela.

*Example experiment 1 (Spanish)*

El director <i>the director</i>	va filmar <i>filmed</i>	<b>a / Ø</b> <b>DOM/-</b>	la meva nora <i>my daughter in law</i>	per al documental sobre la vila. <i>for the documentary about the village</i>
El director	va filmar	<b>a / Ø</b>	la meva mula <i>my mule</i>	per al documental sobre la vila.
El director	va filmar	<b>a / Ø</b>	la meva granja <i>my farm</i>	per al documental sobre la vila.

*Example experiment 2 (Catalan)*

Os legionários <i>The legionnaires</i>	honraram <i>honoured</i>	<b>a / Ø</b> <b>DOM/-</b>	Marte. <i>Mars</i>
Os legionários	honraram	<b>a / Ø</b>	Eduardo.
Os legionários	honraram	<b>a / Ø</b>	anfiteatro. <i>amphitheater</i>

*Example experiment 3 (Portuguese)*

El jubilado <i>the retiree</i>	denunció <i>exposed</i>	<b>a / Ø</b> <b>DOM/-</b>	la familia <i>the family</i>	en la entrevista de televisión. <i>in the interview on TV</i>
El jubilado	denunció	<b>a / Ø</b>	el gobierno <i>the government</i>	en la entrevista de televisión.
El jubilado	denunció	<b>a / Ø</b>	el programa <i>the program</i>	en la entrevista de televisión.

*Example experiment 4 (Spanish)*

### References

- Caro Reina, J. (2020). Differential Object Marking with proper names in Romance languages. In L. Kempf, D. Nübling & M. Schmuck (eds.), *Linguistik der Eigennamen*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 225–258.
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