Maltese exhibits what has been called "object reduplication," whereby the direct object first appears as a pronominal clitic affixed to the verb before being named directly (1a), when it is preceded by dative *lil*, incorporating the preposition *l*- with what must be an erstwhile definite article *il*. More commonly is the nominal object marked with the dative preposition without reduplication (1b):

```
Maltese
(1)
   a. Raj-t-u
                                      lil
                                             żewġ-i
      see.PVF-1.SG-PRO.MSG
                                      husband-PRO.1SG
                               DOM
       'I saw my husband'
   b. Raj-t
                        lil
                               Ğorġ
       see.PVF-1.SG
                        DOM
                               name
       'I saw George'
```

This tends to apply to definite high-animacy direct objects, whereas, indefinite low-animacy objects do not usually accept *lil*:

(2) Maltese

rajt karozza oħra

see.PVF-1.SG automobile PRO
'I saw another automobile'

Named as such "differential object marking," the phenomenon also occurs in Levantine Arabic, which tends to mark objects in the same manner as Maltese (3a), although doing so is not obligatory (3b):

```
(3) Lebanese Arabic
a Sali šāf-ā la-l-binit
name see.PVF.3MSG-PRO.FSG
'Ali saw the girl'
b Sali šāf il-binit
name see.PVF.3MSG DET-girl
'Ali saw the girl'
```

Romance languages, notably Spanish and Sicilian also exhibit DOM, prompting speculation that the Maltese arises from contact with Romance. An alternative is that DOM entered Levantine Arabic, thence to Maltese, through contact with late Aramaic, which marks direct and indirect objects with *l*-. Another is that DOM arose independently in all Arabic varieties in which it occurs, including Maltese, meaning that Arabic DOM is not a contact phenomenon at all.

Aramaic, Andalusi Arabic, and Old Spanish, exhibit DOM without object reduplication. Meanwhile, Levantine Arabic, Maltese, and Sicilian exhibit both, but only Levantine Arabic and Maltese affix the clitic pronoun to the verb. This indicates that DOM with object reduplication did not enter Maltese through contact with Sicilian but is likely one of a bundle of Levantine features in Maltese.