

## Deconstructing SE constructions: number agreement and post-syntactic variation\*

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*[impersonal se] is a normal transitive structure with no exotic properties,  
and we do not have anything interesting to say about it here*  
(Raposo & Uriagereka 1996)

### Abstract

Most analyses of non-paradigmatic SE derive their agreement patterns structurally, forcing a passive/impersonal distinction against all evidence. Instead, we uniformly analyze them as regular sentences where the T-agreeing subject is *se* itself, an argumental clitic pronoun, with [person] but no number  $\phi$ -features, and show that the overt argument, which has object properties, does not genuinely agree in syntax. We reveal a new asymmetry between postverbal and preverbal/null arguments, which conceals two postsyntactic processes with very distinctive properties: morphological clitic *Mutation* into number agreement, and T's *Number Harmony* with a close DP, not ruled by syntax or morphology.

**Keywords:** non-paradigmatic SE-constructions, clitic mutation, number harmony, person/number agreement, quirky subjects, Feature geometry, Agree, Match

### 1 Introduction

Non-paradigmatic SE in Spanish distinguishes two constructions, traditionally referred to as *passive* (1a), where the verb agrees with its complement as in analytic passives (P-SECs), and *impersonal* (1b), where the verb shows default agreement, (I-SECs):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Se censuraron los documentos  
SE censored.PL the documents.PL  
'The documents were censored'
- b. Se censuró a los oponentes políticos  
SE censored.SG **DOM** the opponents political.PL  
'The political opponents were censored'

Distributionally, I-SECs (1b) are used in all contexts except in transitive configurations in which the object does not receive Differential Object Marking (DOM) (1a). Theoretical approaches overwhelmingly assume this state of affairs and complete (1) with the opposite pattern in (2), generally considered ungrammatical or dialectal in the literature:

- (2) a. \*Se censuró los documentos  
SE censored.SG the documents.PL
- b. \*Se censuraron a los oponentes políticos  
SE censored.PL **DOM** the opponents political.PL

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1 The only analysis we are acquainted of where passive and impersonal SE are treated as the same syntactic construction is developed in a series of papers by Pujalte and Saab (see Pujalte & Saab 2012, 2014, Saab 2018, 2021, Pujalte 2018). There are important empirical and theoretical differences between their analysis and ours, but we share the leading idea of eliminating construction-based stipulative distinctions. See discussion below.

This divergence is derived by assuming the existence of two constructions with their own structural and case-assignment properties (3) (there are a few exceptions, most explicitly Oca 1914 and Otero 1972, 1973; also see references in footnote 1):

- (3) “If agreement is taken to be a diagnostic for nominative marking (Chomsky 1981, 1995), then [1a] clearly exhibits nominative case. Less clear is the status of [1b].” (Ordóñez & Treviño 2016, p. 238)

However, the paradigm in (1)-(2) constitutes a simplification of the facts (MacKenzie 2013). In section 2, we show that variation on agreement in SECs is far more extended than assumed in previous analyses, which makes most theoretical approaches to SECs empirically unsound. Furthermore, we uncover a structural distinction that has gone unnoticed in the literature so far:<sup>2</sup> While number agreement with *postverbal* objects exhibits a high and random degree of variation internal to every dialect, variation with *preverbal* and *null* arguments is systematic and mostly dialectically determined. Agreement with preverbal and null arguments splits dialects between *A(greement)-varieties*, where the argument covaries with number agreement (4b), and *C(litic)-varieties*, where both object clitic (4a) and subject number agreement (4b) are possible outputs (see section 2.2 for details).

- (4) a. [Los documentos] se los censuró  
The documents.PL SE 3O.PL.MSC censored.SG
- b. [Los documentos] se censuraron  
The documents.PL SE censored.PL  
‘The documents were censored’

Our proposal is that (4a) and (4b) are two instances of the same Clitic Left Dislocation Structure (CLLD) where in (4b) post-syntactic morphological operations reshape the realization of the object clitic as number agreement. As shown in section 4.2, our analysis is supported by the behavior of SECs in Clitic Climbing and in idioms. We further argue that the change of the clitic into number agreement (*Clitic Mutation*) with preverbal and null objects (4), and the phenomenon of number agreement with postverbal objects (1)-(2) (*Number Harmony*) are two independent post-syntactic processes, neither of which constitutes a genuine subject agreement relation.

Our second goal is to present a unified analysis of SECs as regular sentences that do not require any construction-specific provision: Properties attributed to SECs follow from

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<sup>2</sup> DeMello (1995:71-72) mentions this asymmetry linked to the “educated language”, and Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) make a brief reference to it with respect to the Mexican dialect.

the lexical features of *se*, an argumental pronoun in subject position, together with the application of post-syntactic processes at the interface levels. These processes are triggered when the subject is not specified for number, including the case of *se*.

An advantage of our proposal is that it does not attribute to these structures emerging properties such as the removal of accusative case required to make the agreement pattern distinctions between [ $\pm$ DOM] objects in Spanish. Furthermore, getting rid of the distinction between P-SEC (1a), I-SEC (1b), and Clitic SEC (4a) is consistent with the absence of meaning differences between them (Mendikoetxea 1999) in spite of the fact that, with varying distribution, the three possibilities exist in all dialects. Evidence in section 2 shows that the patterns that allegedly support a passive approach are deprived of empirical motivation. An immediate consequence is that agreement cannot be used in these structures as a reliable test to uncover underlying syntactic relations. This poses a general issue about the meaning of overt evidence, and questions the foundations of approaches that require construction specific P-SECs. In contrast, a pure derivational approach is perfectly equipped to explain the complete absence of semantic differences and provides a syntax able to relate to the whole range of PF representations.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 describes number agreement in SECs and shows that it does not behave as a genuine subject agreement relation. In section 3 we summarize Ormazabal & Romero's (O&R) (2019a) logic and arguments to analyze SECs as regular active sentences where V complement is also its syntactic object and *se* is a pronominal subject. We detail the  $\phi$ -features specified in the lexical entry of *se*, which agree with T and, ultimately, determine the overt agreement patterns. Section 4 presents the syntactic derivation common to all SECs: In a nutshell, *se* merges as the highest argument and behaves as a subject pronoun, maintaining  $\phi$ -agreement and nominative case checking-relations with T. We also briefly discuss our proposal on Agree as applied to SECs. In section 5 we derive the asymmetry between null/preverbal arguments and postverbal ones. While preverbal or null arguments are CLLD structures where the DO clitic *lo(s)/la(s)* ('him/her/it/them') in most cases mutate into number agreement at Morphology, for postverbal complements, agreement is a post-syntactic, extragrammatical phenomenon not subject to syntactic conditions, but amenable to a sociolinguistic approach (Otero 1973) whose domain of application is tightly circumscribed by the syntactic derivation. We close the paper with some general conclusions on crosslinguistic variation and on the properties of

agreement in syntax and natural language processing.

## 2 Number Agreement in Detail

The regularity of number agreement in SECs has been grossly overestimated, possibly for reasons of normative pressure (MacKenzie 2013). In this section we review all the attested agreement patterns in transitive SE structures and we conclude that number agreement is not a reliable criterion to distinguish between P-SECs and I-SECs. In addition, we describe a new asymmetry between postverbal objects (section 2.1) and preverbal/null ones (section 2.2). Finally, in section 2.3 we briefly analyze agreement patterns with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person.

For each agreement-type discussed in this section, we have conducted an analysis of the data in *CORPES*, and added eventual searches in Google that corroborate our point.<sup>3</sup> Given the nature of the database, our samples are mostly from written sources, which are more prone to be conservative and match the standard. We expect oral speech to depart from the norm to a larger extent, supporting our conclusions further, but the variation observed in the written samples is rich enough for our purposes.

### 2.1 Dysfunctional Agreement with Postverbal Elements

According to traditional descriptions, only 3rd person objects not marked for DOM (1)-(2) trigger number agreement. Here we show that this description is not accurate, and that number agreement with postverbal elements cannot be accounted for in syntactic terms (see Gallego 2016, Planells 2018, and Pujalte 2018 for observations in the same direction).

#### 2.1.1 [-DOM] Objects

Apart from some scattered observations pointing out cases where agreement between the verb and [-DOM] objects fails in SECs (Lemus 2014, Ordóñez & Treviño 2011, 2016, and Pujalte 2018), the only systematic description on the range of variation is DeMello (1995). Our analysis of *CORPES* suggests that Central and Northern South-American dialects show a stronger tendency than Southern American and Peninsular Spanish for a default 3rd person singular form, with no subject agreement whatsoever (5)-(6).

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<sup>3</sup> Except when indicated, examples were retrieved from *CORPES*. The complete examples and source references, as well as a short explanation of our data retrieval procedure, are listed in Appendix. Each example is identified with its corresponding number in the main text. Introductory examples are created to illustrate the each basic pattern.

- (5) Se censuró los documentos [cfr. (2a)]  
 SE V.SG DP.PL  
 ‘The documents were censored’
- (6) a. se recuerda las versiones de Francesco Salviati, del Tintoretto...  
 SE remember.3SG the versions.PL of Francesco Salviati, of Tintoretto  
 ‘F. Salviati’s, Tintoretto’s... versions are remembered’
- b. ... donde se establecía las bases del nuevo gobierno  
 ... where SE established.SG the basis.PL of.the new government  
 ‘... where the foundations of the new government were established.’

Lemus (2014), from El Salvador, observes that in his own dialect both options, agreement and agreementless, are acceptable and are used interchangeably, underlining the complete absence of semantic effects in this alternation. It is also well known that, independently of the dialect, bare plural objects quite commonly do not trigger agreement (Sánchez 2002 and references).<sup>4</sup> But this agreement alternation is much more general and affects all kinds of objects (see Appendix). In order to understand its distribution, in addition to the mentioned dialectal trends, there is a more general sociolinguistic condition (DeMello 1995): when the pressure instilled by formal education diminishes, lack of agreement increases.<sup>5</sup>

Two LI reviewers suggest, following analyses for Italian (Cinque 1988, D’Alessandro 2007), that these facts might correspond to an alternation between a P-SEC and an I-SEC (see Ordóñez & Treviño 2016). However, this analysis is inconsistent with A-varieties. First, according to standard analyses, in I-SECs accusative case is not suppressed, but assigned to the object, as the presence of object clitics clearly indicates:

- (7) a. A tu hermana se la vio en malas compañías  
 DOM your sister SE 3O.SG.FM saw in bad companies  
 ‘Your sister was seen in bad company’
- b. Se nos obligó a hablar en público  
 SE 1O.PL forced to speak in public  
 ‘We were forced to speak in public’

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4 A search on the Internet gives 843.000 results for the agreeing form, *se venden<sub>PL</sub> casas* (‘houses are on sale’), compared to 718.000 for the non agreeing one, *se vende<sub>SG</sub> casas*. In the same direction, the collocation *dar las gracias* ‘to thank’ with plural *las gracias* (lit. ‘the thanks’) produces more hits in the non-agreeing version (*se da<sub>SG</sub> las gracias*: 150.000 hits) than with the prescriptive agreeing one (*se dan<sub>PL</sub> las gracias*: 119.000 hits) (Google 10/2/2018). Data are even more striking with singular dative clitic: 288.000 results do not agree (*se le da<sub>SG</sub> las gracias*) against 63.500 agreeing results (*se le dan<sub>PL</sub> las gracias*); hardly an 18% follow the Academie’s rule.

5 A clear indication that agreement in this context is perceived as unclear by many Spanish speakers, is the countless queries made on this issue to normative linguistic institutions (RAE, Instituto Cervantes, FUNDEU, etc.). Otero’s (1972: 238) comment that while “educated people” exclusively use agreement forms, unagreeing forms are common “on the other side of the tracks”, goes in the same direction.

If non-agreeing forms were impersonal, we would expect parallel examples with clitics to be fully available. That prediction is not borne out. Examples like (8b) with an object clitic are not acceptable in general. Thus, contrasting with postverbal arguments (8a), preverbal ones always show number agreement (8c).<sup>6</sup>

- (8) a. Se recibió tarde las invitaciones  
SE received late the invitations  
'The invitations were received late'
- b. \*Se (las) recibió tarde  
SE 3O.PL.FM received.SG late  
'They were received late'
- c. Las invitaciones se recibieron/\*recibió tarde  
The invitations SE received.PL./received.SG late  
'The invitations, they were received late'.

Furthermore, if P-SECs were passives in that DOM is not assigned to the object, animate arguments would agree with the verb. However, that option is not attested, neither with 3rd person animate arguments nor with 1st/2nd person ones (9).

- (9) a. \*Se censuraron los oponentes políticos  
SE censored.PL the opponents political.PL  
'The political opponents were censored'
- b. \*Se censuraron/censuramos nosotros  
SE censored.PL/censored.1.PL we  
'We were censored'

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6 A reviewer observes that for Mexican Spanish Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) do report the existence of a doubling strategy:

- (i) A estos terrenos se les vendió a un buen precio  
DOM these lands SE 3plDat sold.SG at a good price  
'These lands were sold at a good price'

This is not a general pattern in dialectological terms: the only reference to it we know of is Ordóñez & Treviño (2016), and it is not clear to us how extensive the phenomenon is even in that area. It does not counterargument to our objection in the text, since the clitic strategy should be available each time the agreementless structure is an option; in other words, it should be general. Furthermore, the clitic is not the predicted accusative *lo* but the dative *le*. And, most importantly, the context is also exceptional in that the clitic doubles an inanimate DOM argument. In fact, Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) themselves explicitly observe that the clitic strategy is impossible in Mexico with [-DOM] objects; see footnote 13 below.

Altogether, these properties suggest that two independent processes are involved in (i). On the one hand, the use of the clitic *le* in contexts where the doubled objects are marked with DOM is common in American Spanish, except in the Southern Cone, with deep historical roots (see footnotes 9 and 33, and references). On the other hand, as a geographically limited phenomenon --most probably a linguistic innovation--, DOM extends to inanimate NPs in certain contexts in the same direction as in other American dialects mentioned in footnote 13; see references there for extensive discussion. Obviously, in a variety where DOM has extended to mark inanimate arguments, contexts where *le* surfaces are expected also to include cases in (i), where the doubled argument is a DOM inanimate.

The only way to allow Case assignment in (8a) and to block P-SEC in (9) is to resort to some mechanism where DOM objects are excluded *a priori*. We cannot see how that could be captured derivationally in a principled way and, in fact, we know of no attempt in the literature to explain this distribution of facts. In that sense, traditional analyses, including generative ones, are constructionist in nature.

To compound matters, finding a coherent proposal for the cases discussed so far would only cover one corner of the problem since, as we show next, the rule fails to apply also on the opposite side of the equation. In many cases, impossible syntactic agreement holds between the verb and any noun phrase in the sentence (long distance agreement 2.1.3, complements of prepositions, and even nominal adjuncts 2.1.4).

### 2.1.2 [+DOM] Objects

According to traditional descriptions, [+DOM] objects do not trigger agreement. For 3<sup>rd</sup> person objects, the description does not meet the data in these contexts either, and the sentence rendered as ungrammatical in (2b), repeated here as (10), is much more common than usually assumed (see DeMello 1995, Planells 2017).

- (10) Se censuraron a los oponentes políticos  
 SE V.PL DOM DP.PL  
 ‘The political opponents were censored’

As a matter of fact, examples in written texts are readily available in every Spanish dialect, and much more frequently in oral Spanish.

- (11) a. En 1996 se eligen a las primeras autoridades municipales  
 In 1996 SE elect.PL DOM the first authorities.PL municipal  
 b. Al iniciarse la menstruación se aislaban a las jóvenes  
 When beginning menstruation SE isolated.PL DOM the young.women.PL

MacKenzie (2013) studies frequencies of sg./pl. in ‘*se+V+a+plural object*’ sequences in CREA corpus for *elegir* (‘choose’), *invitar* (‘invite’), *nombrar* (‘name’) and *matar* (‘kill’). Agreement results range from 9.65% with *invitar* to 38.89% with *elegir*.

The distribution of agreement with [ $\pm$ DOM] objects, in consequence, hardly reflects anything more than a prescriptive choice. The weaker the influence of the Academy, the greater the asystematicity of the agreement patterns in SECs: Agreement between V and DOM objects permeate the Spanish language, and it is only consistently rejected by speakers that show a highly prescriptive behavior.

### 2.1.3 Long-Distance Agreement

A context where this dysfunctional agreement shows up frequently is in long distance agreement relations, where the complement of an infinitival clause agrees with the matrix V (Etxepare 2006, Bhatt 2005, Boeckx 2004, among others).

- (12) Se decidieron [                    censurar los documentos]  
SE     V.PL   [Tenseless clause V infinitive     DP.PL     ]  
'It was decided to censor the documents'

*CORPES* yields many such results for all geographical areas, and a Google search for *se requieren hacer* ('it is required to make') yields 17.400 hits. Among the examples we observe not only long-distance agreement with [-DOM] objects (13a-b) (Gallego 2019) but with verbs as *nombrar* ('to appoint') and also with [+DOM] ones (13c).

- (13) a.     En esta profesión se requieren hacer *evaluaciones*  
          In this    job    SE require.PL to.make evaluations.PL  
          'In this job you must conduct evaluations'  
      b.     Se valoran    reducir las superiores a 1300 euros  
          SE evaluate.PL to.reduce the superior to 1300 euros  
          'Reducing those (pensions) higher than 1300 euros will be considered'

Note that these structures disallow analytic passives (14a), and Clitic Climbing (14b).

- (14) a.     \*Las evaluaciones fueron requeridas hacer  
          The evaluations were.PL required to do  
      b.     \*las            requirió hacer  
          3O.PL.FM required to do  
          'She required to do it'

Therefore, agreement between the matrix verb and the complement of the embedded infinitive is completely unexpected in this syntactic context as well. Moreover, irregular agreement is found even in hyper-raising configurations.

- (15) Se consideran que hay            personas con categorías superiores e inferiores  
SE consider.PL that there.are persons with category superior and inferior  
'It is considered that there are people superior to others'

In (15) the matrix verb agrees with the subject of the finite subordinate clause. The number of hits for this structure rises up to 8.260.000 (30-6-2021), including cases of number agreement with embedded 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects (see Appendix).

### 2.1.4 Other Dysfunctional Agreement Patterns: P-Complements and Adjuncts

Agreement in SECs is even messier than described so far. The verb may agree with complements of lexical prepositions (Gallego 2016, examples from peninsular Sp.).

(16) Se hablaron [ de los documentos]  
SE V.PL [PP P DP.PL ]

(17) a. Dijo que se hablaron [PP con las autoridades]  
said that SE talked-3.PL with the authorities  
'He said that the authorities were talked to'

b. Es bueno reconocer cuando las cosas se hacen bien y se piensan en nosotros  
is good to.acknowledge when the things SE make.PL well and SE think.PL in us  
'It is good to acknowledge when things are well done and people think about us'

Although marginal compared with previous phenomena, it is not an isolated match: A Google search for "se hablaron de temas" produces 6.350 results of plural agreement between *hablar* and P's complement *temas* (18), in many cases from formal sources.

(18) [...] aclaró que tampoco "se hablaron de temas de la farándula"  
(he) explained that neither SE talk.PL about issues of the show.business  
'He explained that show business issues were not mentioned either'

We can find this kind of agreement even in long distance relations: For *se deben recurrir* ('it must be resorted to') Google returns 26.900 hits (19).<sup>7</sup>

(19) Indicó que se deben recurrir a otras figuras  
He pointed out that SE must.PL resort to other criminal definitions.PL

Finally, it is surprisingly common to find examples where agreement is not even triggered by arguments, but by temporal DP-modifiers:

(20) Se bailan los lunes  
SE V.PL DP<sub>Adjunct</sub>.PL  
'People dance on Mondays'

(21) a. ... donde no se abren los domingos, ...?  
where no SE open.PL the sundays.PL, ...?  
b. Se trabajan los fines de semana y festivos  
SE work.PL the weekends.PL, and holidays

For instance, in a Google search (2018/06/05) of *se abre los domingos* ('it is opened on sundays'), we find 27.400 hits for the irregular plural agreement pattern *se abren los domingos*, and 27.300 for the expected one, *se abre los domingos*. Although these data do not fit with standard P-SECs (verbs are not transitive), their morphological behavior mimics it. In the next section we argue that these agreement patterns cannot be understood as subject agreement in any syntactically coherent way.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the sequence "se pueden recurrir a" is ambiguous, showing regular agreement when it means 'to appeal', the first 50 examples are all instances of irregular agreement with the complement of the preposition, with the meaning 'to resort to'.

### 2.1.5 Number Agreement Is Not Subject Agreement

If we consider the whole range of data, subject agreement behavior is completely unexpected. Figures are big enough to dismiss them as performance errors. True subject agreement is much more regular and predictable: neither it appears with unexpected elements nor it suddenly disappears with agreeing ones. Thus, in contrast to (21), temporal nominal adjuncts never ever trigger agreement in other contexts, not even with impersonal verbs:

- (22) llueve/\*llueven todas las tardes/ los domingos  
rain.SG/rain.PL every the afternoons/the Sundays  
'It rains every afternoon/on Sundays'

And true subject agreement is never affected, not even in most favorable contexts. Thus, for instance, while bare plurals fail easily to agree in SECs (Mendikoetxea 1999, Sánchez 2002)), bare plural subjects of unaccusative sentences can never avoid agreement (23).

- (23) cayeron/\*cayó almohadillas  
fell.PL/fell.SG small pillows  
'Small pillows fell'

Moreover, as in SECs, in inchoative sentences (i) the verb ends up agreeing with its complement, and (ii) there is a *se* intransitivizing the verb (24). In spite of its similarity, agreement failure is unattested.

- (24) se durmieron/\*durmió los niños  
SE<sub>INCH</sub> slept.PL/slept.SG the children  
'Children fell asleep'

Finally, in analytic passive sentences, in contrast to data in section 2.1.1, lack of agreement between the verb and its complement is clearly ungrammatical.

- (25) a. fueron/\*fue asesinados muchos opositores al régimen  
were/was killed many opponents to the regime  
'Many opponents to the regime were killed'  
b. fueron/\*fue rescatados los cuerpos  
were/was recovered the bodies  
'The bodies were recovered'

The consequence is clear: agreement facts in SECs do not work as predicted by theories based on syntactic agreement. In order to explain their agreement patterns, we cannot simply treat them as subjects, because this is not the way subject agreement behaves. As shown in (22), we cannot resort to a default syntactic agreement either, because, in clear contrast to subject agreement behavior in SECs, default agreement is systematic (D'Alessandro 2007, López 2020). Furthermore in the next section we show that there is a

clear asymmetry in agreement behavior between postverbal and preverbal arguments, an asymmetry that, again, is not present in regular subject agreement relations.

## 2.2 Agreement with Preverbal/Null Arguments

When the internal argument is null<sup>8</sup> or appears preverbally, it covaries with an object clitic in some cases and with a verbal plural agreement in others. Both structures in (26) exist in all dialects of Spanish, but their distribution diverges, yielding what we have called A(greement) and C(litic)-varieties.

- (26) a. DP/∅ SE Object.Clitic + V  
 b. DP/∅ SE V.Number.agreement

Preverbal [+DOM] arguments, including first and second person ones, exhibit a completely uniform pattern cross-dialectally: they are always doubled by a pronominal clitic (27a) and never trigger subject agreement (27b) (cfr. (10)).<sup>9</sup>

- (27) a. Ayer (a las oponentes políticas) se \*(las) censuró  
 Yesterday DOM DP.PL SE 3.AC.PL V.SG  
 ‘The political opponents were censored’  
 b. \*Ayer (a las oponentes políticas) se censuraron  
 Yesterday DOM DPpl. SE V.PL  
 ‘The political opponents were censored yesterday’

Verbal agreement is strictly circumscribed to null/preverbal [-DOM] arguments in all varieties; no significant exceptions are found in corpora nor in oral elicitations in which any other preverbal element might trigger number agreement. (We will come back to the special case of relative clauses and A’-dependencies in section 5.2.)

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8 Following a reviewer’s suggestion, we use “null argument” as a term for contexts where the referential DP agreeing with the verb or doubled by the clitic is not overt; no theoretical content should be attributed to it. In fact, we do not think there is a null argument strictly speaking. In section 4 we argue that in both cases the argumental DP is the clitic itself, whose reference is a definite description previously introduced in the discourse (in the case of null topic contexts) or by the left dislocated DP (when that preverbal topic is present). In section 4 we will accommodate the terminology (null/left dislocated topics) accordingly.

9 There is interesting variation regarding which specific clitic is used and the extent of DOM in each speaking area, but it is mostly due to dialectal differences on DOM itself (Fernández Lagunilla 1975, Mendikoetxea 1999, 2008, Ordóñez 2018, De Benito 2013, Macdonald & Melgares 2021), rather than different conditions on SECs. The only case that does seem to be sensitive to SECs is the presence of *leísmo* in non-*leísta* dialects (see Mendikoetxea & Battye 1990, Fernández Ordóñez 1999, Rigau & Picallo 1999, Ordóñez & Treviño 2016, MacDonald & Melgares 2021). See footnote 33 for discussion.

- (28) Finalmente (los documentos) se censuraron/ \*censuró  
 Finally the documents SE V.PL V.SG  
 ‘Finally, they were censored’

In C-varieties the clitic strategy extends to [-DOM] objects, so that the described agreement option in (28) coexist with the clitic one in (29):

- (29) (Los documentos) se \*(los) censuró *C-Varieties*  
 The documents SE 3.PL.MSC V.SG  
 ‘The documents, they were censored’

With preverbal/null [-DOM] objects agreement is mandatory (28)-(29). There are no relevant cases lacking either agreement or an object clitic (cfr. (8)). Variation is strictly established on the agreement/clitic strategy distinction, it does not affect number.

The clitic strategy is reported in the literature (Santiago 1975, Sánchez 2002, and references), but it has not been exhaustively described, and standard theories on SECs tend to ignore it. The clitic strategy coexists with the agreement one in the southern half of South America (*NGLE*, García Negroni 2002). In those areas we commonly find them both in the *CORPES*, and all our (linguist) informants from the Buenos Aires area agree that (i) they are equally available, and (ii) there is no semantic difference between them:<sup>10</sup>

- (30) a. Se las puede sujetar en postes [las orquídeas]  
 SE 3.AC.PL.FM can fasten to wooden.poles [the orchids]  
 b. Se pueden sujetar en postes [las orquídeas]  
 SE can.3.PL fasten to wooden.poles [the orchids]  
 ‘The orchids can be fastened to wooden poles’
- (31) a. estas ponderaciones se las realiza por sectores  
 those considerations.PL.FM SE 3.AC.PL.FM make.SG by sectors<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> We are very thankful to Carlos Muñoz, Mercedes Pujalte, Andrés Saab and Pablo Zrodjewski for patient discussion and important clarifications.

<sup>11</sup> There is a subtle split between null and overt preverbal objects. For null ones, most of our informants (from Argentina) observe a slight preference for (30a), also noting some tendency to use clitics in colloquial contexts and agreement in formal ones. With preverbal objects, the situation is reversed and they highly prefer the agreement pattern over the clitic one. In fact, they find sentences like (ia), not ungrammatical but “strange” or even “somehow degraded”, in contrast to (ib), which they consider completely natural:

- (i) a. ??Las orquídeas se las puede sujetar en postes de madera  
 The orchids **SE 3Opl.fm** can fasten to wooden poles  
 b. Las orquídeas se pueden sujetar en postes de madera  
 The orchids **SE can.3pl** fasten to wooden poles

However, it may be a particularity of the Rioplatense dialect, as confirmed by our results in *CORPES*, where we find almost no clitic example with preposed objects in Argentina and Uruguay, but examples increase as we go North and become very common in Ecuador.

- b. estas ponderaciones **se realizan** por sectores  
 those considerations.PL.FM SE make.PL by sectors  
 ‘Those considerations are made by sectors’

In clear contrast, the clitic is impossible with [-DOM] postverbal objects in both varieties:

- (32) \*se las puede sujetar las orquídeas en postes  
 SE 3.AC.PL.FM can fasten the orchids to wooden.poles  
 ‘The orchids can be fastened to wooden poles’

In the rest of the dialects object clitics with preposed and null [-DOM] objects are sometimes attested, but in general terms subject number agreement (28) is the sole strategy for all speakers in A-varieties,<sup>12</sup> including dialects where postverbal arguments tend not to agree.<sup>13</sup> The result is that SECs may be agreementless with postverbal arguments but they show obligatory agreement with preverbal ones:

- (33) a. Se censuró/censuraron los documentos  
 SE V.SG/ V.PL DP.PL  
 b. Los documentos se censuraron/ \*censuró  
 DP.PL SE V.PL V.SG  
 ‘The documents were censored’

Standard descriptions fall short regarding the significance of the clitic structure. Inasmuch as our description is right, approaches based on constructions are forced to postu-

Our Argentinian informants “save” these examples DOM-marking the preverbal object, which suggests that in Rioplatense the conditions under which DOM applies are gradually changing. According to Di Tullio & Zdrojewski (2013), Di Tullio, Saab & Zdrojewski (2019), SECs, together with ECM and causatives, are the contexts where inanimate [+DOM] is most evident, but the phenomenon is general, and very productive, in left dislocated contexts. Also see Liman Spanish (Sánchez 2006, 2010, Sánchez & Zdrojewski 2013 and references) and Santiago de Chile’s dialect (Silva-Corvalán 1980) for a similar process.

12 Examples from a variety of geographic areas are occasionally elicited, but they are uncommon outside the area described as belonging to the C-variety, where examples are legion. This clitic/agreement alternation has a strange status outside that area: even for people that do not elicit the clitic form (including the authors), clitic sentences do not strike as ungrammatical, they often go unnoticed if elicited by other speakers, they do not induce interpretive issues and, as said, some examples appear in the corpus now and then (see Appendix), but speakers clearly differentiate the status of the clitic strategy as extraneous to their own grammar and generally do not make use of it.

13 Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) and MacDonald & Melgares (2021) report that in Mexico and Honduras the clitic strategy is impossible with [-DOM] objects. Our *CORPES* data include some cases from both areas, but they are very infrequent (see previous footnote):

- (i) a. [... las estrellas fugaces], **se las puede ver** con mayor facilidad.  
 the shooting stars SE cl.fpl may.SG see with beager easiness  
 ‘[... the shooting stars], you may see them more easily’  
 b. [Sus funciones...] cuando se las quiere simular por esquemas clásicos  
 Their functions when SE cl.fpl want simulate by schemes classics  
 ‘[...] when you want to simulate them by classical schemes’

late three different constructions --passive, impersonal and clitic SECs-- that show no meaning or use differences and, quite tellingly, extend to all dialects in one way or another.

To complete the picture, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person objects show no dialectal or idiolectal variation whatsoever. They never allow number or person subject agreement, and always manifest themselves through an obligatory object clitic, as in any transitive clause.

- (34) a. \* (nosotros) se censuramos /censuraron (nosotros)  
           us           SE censored.1PL/censored.PL us
- b. (A nosotros) se nos censuró  
           ‘(Us), we were censored’

### 2.3 Summary

The behavior of number agreement in *SECs* is completely exceptional among Spanish subject agreement in different respects:

- (i) With preverbal/null arguments, subject agreement alternates with object clitics in some dialects, systematically occurs with [-DOM] objects only, and never fails.
- (ii) With first and second person as well as with preverbal 3rd person [+DOM] objects, no agreement is possible; they are uniformly represented as object clitics.
- (iii) With postverbal elements agreement is erratic; it frequently fails with [-DOM] objects and unexpectedly occurs with other DPs: [+DOM] DOs, long distance DPs or complements of Ps and adjuncts. This distribution sharply contrasts with analytic passives, where subject agreement is robust and systematic.

In what follows we present an integral analysis of SECs that derives the distribution in (i)-(ii). We also argue that although (iii) should be analyzed by extra-grammatical mechanisms —thus, its distribution is not predictable in morphosyntactic terms—, the properties of the derivation condition their domain. With that goal in mind, we summarize the gist of O&R (2019a) argumentation supporting a unified analysis of I-SECs and P-SECs, and present the lexical properties of *se* that make it possible. In sections 4 and 5, we detail the derivation and discuss the post-syntactic operations responsible for “subject” number agreement with the object, and the distribution of facts presented in this section.

### 3 The Properties of *SE* Structures in a Nutshell

The primary focus of most analyses on *SECs* has been to justify P-*SEC* status as a “selective passive” where accusative case is removed, but only for [-DOM] complements.<sup>14</sup>

These analyses not only require *ad hoc* mechanisms, but they are also based on false empirical claims. First, [-DOM] objects may be realized as object clitics, which dismantles the idea that they may not receive accusative case.<sup>15</sup> Second, preverbal and postverbal arguments present a radically different behavior, which questions their subjecthood. More generally, their behavior in *SECs* invalidates number agreement as evidence for nominative Case or subjecthood. This alone already indicates that the passive approach is not on the right track, but there are independent positive arguments that confirm the same conclusion.

#### 3.1 A Regular Active Sentence with *Se* as the Subject

O&R’s 2019a proposal,<sup>16</sup> developing a suggestion by Oca (1914),<sup>17</sup> is that P-*SECs* are just active transitive sentences, where the internal argument of V is a regular direct object and the subject is the clitic *se*. The peculiarities of these constructions --especially those regarding agreement-- are due to the lexical properties of *se*, with no difference between passive and impersonal *SECs*:

A) P-*SECs* are active sentences morphologically and syntactically (Raposo & Uriagereka 1996, Rivero 2001). First, P-*SECs* may be formed with all transitive predicates allowing [-DOM] complements (with the only restrictions imposed in C below). That includes, cru-

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14 Proposals can be broadly divided between those that argue for two different *se* tokens, and those which argue that *se* is inserted in different designated positions. For a good state-of-the art on non-paradigmatic *se* and throughout discussion of the issues involved see, especially, Mendikoetxea (1999) for Spanish, D’Alessandro (2007) for Italian and Sánchez (2002) for Romance in general with special attention to Spanish. We set aside the case of Romanian, which may require an independent analysis (Dobrovie-Sorin 1998).

15 Mendikoetxea (1992), Ordóñez (2004) and Torrego (2008) argue that Italian and Spanish differ in that the former allows the clitic strategy but Spanish does not. As the discussion in the previous section shows, that is not the right generalization.

16 In many respects, the present paper and O&R (2019a) complement each other and may be seen as two sides of the same proposal. Space limitations and the very dynamic of the paper advise against extending section 3 further by repeating our arguments there. The reader is referred to the original paper, to Mendikoetxea (1999), and references there for extensive discussion on the properties listed in this section and for some additional ones.

17 Otero (1972, 1973) makes a similar proposal; also see Raposo & Uriagereka 1996 for some suggestions in the same direction, although they end up proposing a mechanism of accusative-absorption in the direction of standard passive-like analyses.

cially, predicates completely reluctant to analytic passivization, where it is not even clear that the alleged accusative case existed in the first place (e.g. measure complements, Mendikoetxea 1999). Second, they do not accept *by*-phrases (Pujalte 2013, Saab 2014, *NGLE*, 41.6.1, and references). Finally, they do not “passivize” [+DOM] objects.

B) Consequently, contrary to what number agreement might suggest, the internal argument is the syntactic object. That is shown, among other things, by the fact that it can be modified by pseudorelatives (Aldama 2016, O&R 2019a), and that, unlike subjects of analytic passives, it may not be controlled from outside (MacKenzie 2013). Furthermore, idiomatic readings of fixed object idioms are not lost in P-SECs, showing that grammatical relations have not been altered (O&R 2019a; also see section 5.1).

C) The subject of the sentence is the clitic *se* (Oca 1914). As such, it shows properties typical of overt pronominal subjects in Spanish, including its animacy interpretation: the structure is only possible when the subject is argumental, and it is disallowed by verbs that reject animate subjects (Mendikoetxea 1999). *Se* receives nominative Case: it is therefore incompatible with infinitives that do not license nominative subjects, but allowed in tensed clauses in general as well as in infinitival constructions licensing overt subjects (Cinque 1988, Mendikoetxea 1999). It also raises in raising-to-subject contexts (Mendikoetxea 1999, Martins & Nunes 2016 and O&R 2019a: section 3.2 for extensive discussion).

D) *Se* is syntactically active. It may host secondary predication (Demonte 1986, Rivero 2001, Martins & Nunes 2016, O&R 2019a and references. See Pujalte & Saab 2012 for different judgments; also see Collins 2017, 2021 for a related discussion regarding short passives in English and, more generally, implicit arguments). It also shows the same obligatory control/disjoint reference distribution in infinitive/subjunctive alternations as any other active sentence, no matter whether it is interpreted as a generic or an indefinite, and may bind anaphoric elements vague enough not to conflict in features with it, as we argue next.

The idea that *se* is the missing argument has already been proposed for I-SECs (Cinque 1988, Mendikoetxea 1999, D'Alessandro 2007, and references therein). The reasons to discard it for P-SECs are theory-internal pre-minimalist arguments that do not hold anymore (see O&R 2019a, section 3 for discussion). In sum, a derivation of I-SECs and P-SECs where *se* itself is the sentential subject and receives nominative case from T, straight-

forwardly derives all the structural properties of non-paradigmatic SECs listed above in a natural and unified way. In the next subsection we present the details of *se*'s lexical entry. Extending MacDonald (2017), we consider *se*'s binding properties as particularly indicative of its syntactic status, giving us a clear indication about its formal feature specifications.

### 3.2 Interpretable Features in Se

Saab (2014) observes that unlike other impersonal elements such as *uno* 'one' or *la gente* 'people', the subject of SECs does not allow pronominal binding (35), and concludes that there is no syntactic subject.<sup>18</sup>

- (35) Aquí uno/la gente/\*se puede dejar su saco y marcharse  
 here one/the people/SE can leave.INF **his/her** coat and leave  
 'Here one/people may leave their coat and leave'

However, the inability to bind the pronoun may also reflect a feature mismatch between *su* and its antecedent *se*. In Romance, determiners may act as bound variables, but unlike the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun *su*, this variable gets its person from the binder.<sup>19</sup> Contrasting with (35), *se* may bind the less specified determiner variable (ex. from MacDonald 2017):

- (36) Aquí **se** puede dejar el saco.  
 here SE can leave.INF the coat  
 'One<sub>i</sub> can leave his/her<sub>i</sub> coat here.'

If the divergence is derived from the feature specifications of *su* and the deter-

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18 Also see Otero (1986) and Burzio (1986). Burzio discusses the contrast in (i) and notes, attributing the observation to Cinque (p.c.), that *si* cannot bind a possessive (we adapted Burzio's glosses and translations):

- (i) b. \* SI ama i suoi-loro eroi  
 SE loves the his/their heroes  
 'One loves his heroes'  
 b. Si loda spesso se stessi  
 SE praises often themselves  
 'One often praises oneself'

Burzio interprets this as indicating that SI has number features but lacks person features, and third person reflexive *se stessi* is an impersonal form, while *suoi/loi* are specified for third person; but see discussion in the text for a different interpretation. We are very grateful to Andrés Saab, who brought Burzio's observation to our attention and contributed with very valuable discussion.

19 We frame the discussion in a weak definite approach (e.g. Guéron 1983, 2006; see Espinal & Cyrino 2017 for recent extensions) because it is based on the morphological features of the determiner and maps most directly to the observation that determiners and possessive pronouns behave differently with respect to binding by *se*. However, in virtually all approaches (e.g. Vergnaud & Zubizarreta's 1992) the non-denoting determiner and its difference with possessive pronouns plays a role and our point may be equally raised.

miner,<sup>20</sup> two conclusions may be driven. First, *se* is a syntactically active subject and, as such, has the ability to bind a c-commanded anaphoric element; in that sense, non-paradigmatic *se* clearly contrasts with other *se*-clitics (Alcaraz 2021). Second, given the contrast between minimally specified determiners and fully specified 3rd person pronouns, we must conclude that *se* is not 3rd person. This conclusion is supported by the fact that SEC interpretation is not confined to generic or existential 3<sup>rd</sup> person, but it may refer to any animate argument, including first (37a) and second person (37b) (examples from Oca 1914; also see Cinque 1988, Menuzzi 1999, Mendikoetxea 1999, D’Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003, O&R 2019a, among others).

- (37) a.     ¿*se* puede? [knocking on the door]  
           SE can.3SG  
           ‘May I?’
- b.     aquí no *se* habla [a father looking at his son]  
           here no SE speak.3SG  
           ‘You cannot speak here’

The specific interpretation *se* adopts is mostly determined on pragmatic grounds. Notice, also, that first and second person subjects in the next clause may corefer with the subject of the impersonal construction in these contexts:<sup>21</sup>

- (38) a.     ¿*se* puede?... Si te viene mejor, venimos en otro momento...  
           SE can.3SG If 2.DAT.SG come better, come.1PL in other moment  
           ‘May we?... If it suits you better, we will come some other time...’
- b.     ¡Aquí *se* cumplen las reglas! Si no, te vas a vivir por tu cuenta.  
           Here SE comply.PL the rules! If not, 2DAT.SG go.2SG to live by your own  
           ‘Here you must comply with the rules! Otherwise, better go live on your own’

Since *se* is always animate, following Richards (2014) we assume that animacy in pronouns is encoded as [person]. We thus interpret its ability to bind anaphoric determiners but not 3rd person pronouns as indicating that the person feature is underspecified, in the sense that it lacks a specific 1st, 2nd or 3rd value. Let us see how these results may be put together.

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20 Eric Reuland (p.c.) observes to us that in general, underspecification does not create an offending feature mismatch: *zich*, underspecified for number and gender, is generally bound by a full DP. Similarly, in Russian a full DP may bind *sebjá*, underspecified for person, gender and number. However, in those cases, the most specified object is the binder, and the least specified one is the bindee. The binding problems with SECs arise in the reverse situation: the binder *se* (underspecified for person and lacking number) fails to bind *su*, which is specified for person. In that respect, the contrast with *uno* as a potential binder of *su*, mentioned by Saab, and the possibility of weak determiners in the bindee position are quite revealing. See Collins (2021) for a similar argument to argue for the presence of an implicit argument in passive constructions.

21 We are grateful to Eric Reuland for bringing those facts to our attention.

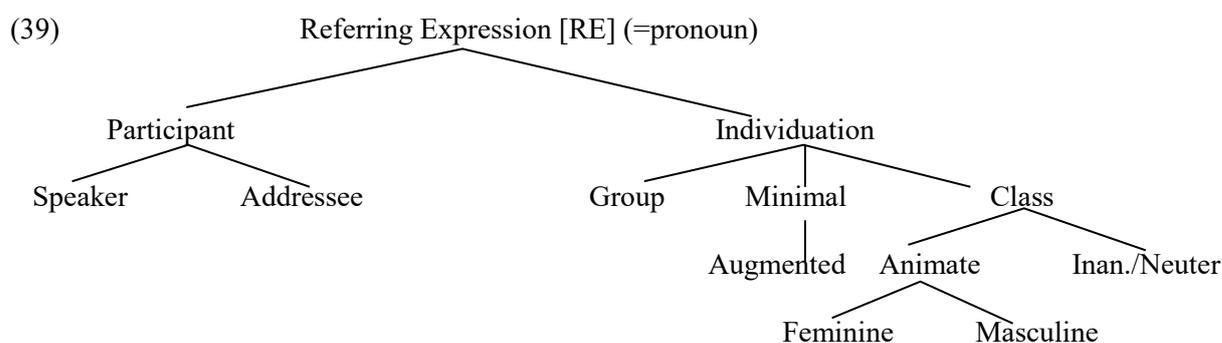
$\Phi$ -features, as well as their internal organization, play an important role at different grammatical levels and their interfaces (also see Ackema & Neeleman 2018 and references for extensive, though slightly different, discussion and implementation):

A) At the computational level, interpretable features determine the behavior of lexical items and the corresponding feature values of the functional projections they agree with.

B) At the semantic level the feature structure of these syntactic objects—in the cases we are discussing, the pronouns-- must be interpreted.

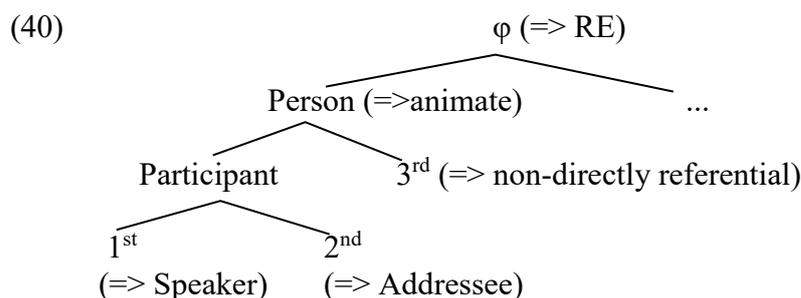
C) The morphology component operates on the features of the pronoun as well as on the non-interpretable features valued in the agreeing functional heads.

Focusing on its person features, semantically *se* is always animate (e.g. [person]), but truly devoid of any person value and interpreted contextually. It must be therefore distinguished from 3rd person animate pronouns (*ella/él* ‘she/he’), and from no-person ones, such as sentential subjects or object clitics *lo(s)/la(s)* (‘it’/‘he’/‘she’/ ‘them’), as we discuss below (also see Trommer 2008). Most feature hierarchies stemming from Harley & Ritter’s (2002) are morphology-oriented and do not leave enough room for such fine-grained distinctions in the syntactic derivation, far less in the semantic component. In particular, both their hierarchy in (39) and their conception of underspecification are too narrow (see Bianchi 2003, D’Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003, McGinnis 2005, D’Alessandro 2007, a.o.).

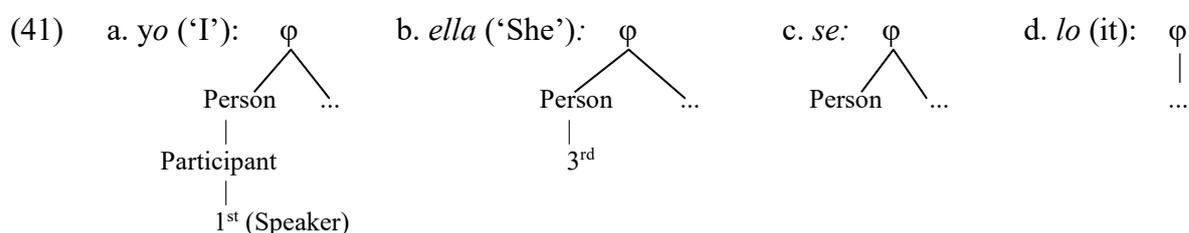


Assigning a 3rd person value by default to underspecified [person], as in Harley & Ritter’s morphological hierarchy --or Béjar’s (2003) syntactic version-- makes the wrong interpretive predictions even if an overruling mechanism is allowed. In order to capture the distinction observed, we need a more articulated [person] geometry that incorporates Harley & Ritter’s unmarked values (see, e.g., McGinnis 2005; also see D’Alessandro 2007:26ff

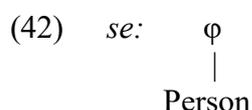
for a similar discussion and a different solution):<sup>22</sup>



The resulting feature specification of the relevant forms are distinguished in (41); we also include a 1st person pronoun for illustration:



To complete the picture, there is independent evidence and general consensus that *se* lacks number feature specifications (Mendikoetxea 2012, Harris & Halle 2005 and references).<sup>23</sup> In sum, its lexical entry contains the feature information in (42):



With these ingredients, in the next section we present a formal analysis of SECs as regular sentences that derives the agreement distribution in section 2 as well as the structural properties summarized in section 3.1 and developed in detail by O&R (2019a).

## 4 The Derivation

### 4.1 The Syntax of *Se*-Constructions

From the point of view of the syntactic derivation, the initial quote heading this article, from Raposo & Uriagereka, may be extended to all non-paradigmatic SECs:

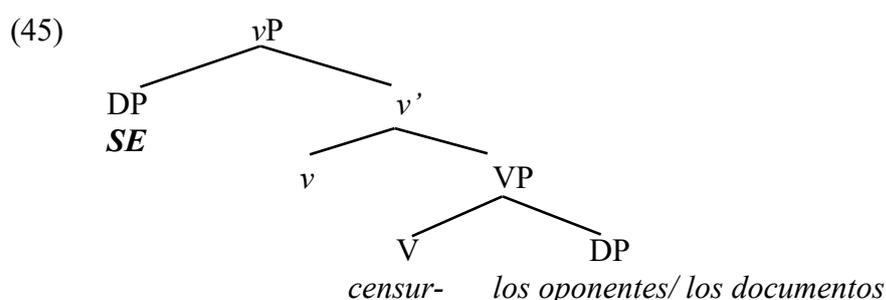
<sup>22</sup> Harley & Ritter place the animate/inanimate distinction as a hierarchical subdivision under the Class node. It must also be reconsidered accordingly; see O&R (2022).

<sup>23</sup> In the Italian tradition, Napoli (1976), Belletti (1982), Burzio (1986), among others, propose that *se* is singular while Chierchia (1995) argues that it is semantically plural. See also D'Alessandro 2007 and references for discussion.

(43) P-SECs and I-SECs are normal syntactic structures with no exotic properties.

That is, no selective Case-absorption or argument suppression operation is involved in P-SECs, and they both, P-SECs and I-SECs, follow the same derivation. *Se* is introduced by external merge in the argument position determined by the predicate: the external argument position for transitive active sentences (44) and unergatives, and the internal argument position for unaccusatives and passive sentences. We illustrate the derivation with transitive structures because they cover all the relevant structural properties under discussion.

- (44) a. Se censuraron los documentos [=1a]  
 SE censored.PL the documents.PL  
 ‘The documents were censored’
- b. Se censuró a los oponentes políticos [=1b]  
 SE censored.SG DOM the opponent political.PL  
 ‘The political opponents were censored’

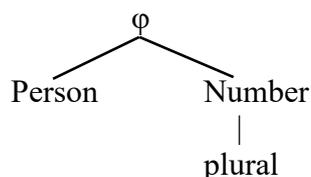


The difference in the derivation between [ $\pm$ DOM] objects is equally observed in any transitive structure; it is therefore independent of the properties of *se*. Following Torrego (1998), López (2012), O&R (2013a,b, 2016, 2019b), we assume that [+DOM] and [-DOM] objects are structurally different, and that object agreement is triggered only by [+DOM] objects, the ones encoding person (Richards 2014). [-DOM] objects (44a) lack [person] and do not enter into an agreement relation with *v*.<sup>24</sup> In conclusion, the DP has the following  $\phi$ -feature representation:

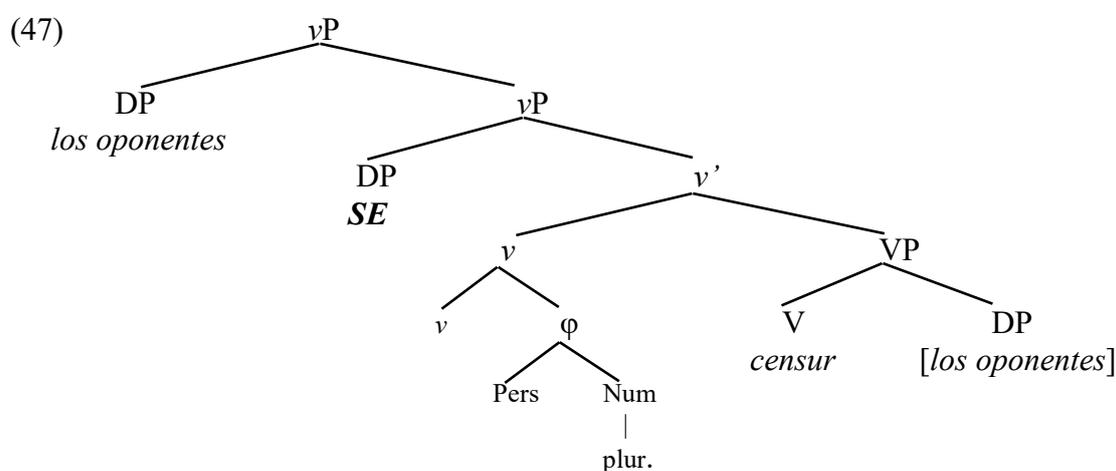
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24 See O&R (2013a,b, 2022) for extensive discussion, including dialectal variation, and for some differences between Case and agreement relations; also see next footnote. The “inert nature” of inanimate objects from the point of view of agreement explains, for instance, why these elements may incorporate in polysynthetic languages, why they do not trigger PCC effects or why in Spanish 3rd person inanimate object clitics behave as determiners, and not like agreement markers (Roca 1996, Bleam 1999, O&R 2013a, Alcaraz 2021).

(46) (a) *los oponentes políticos* ('the political opponents'):

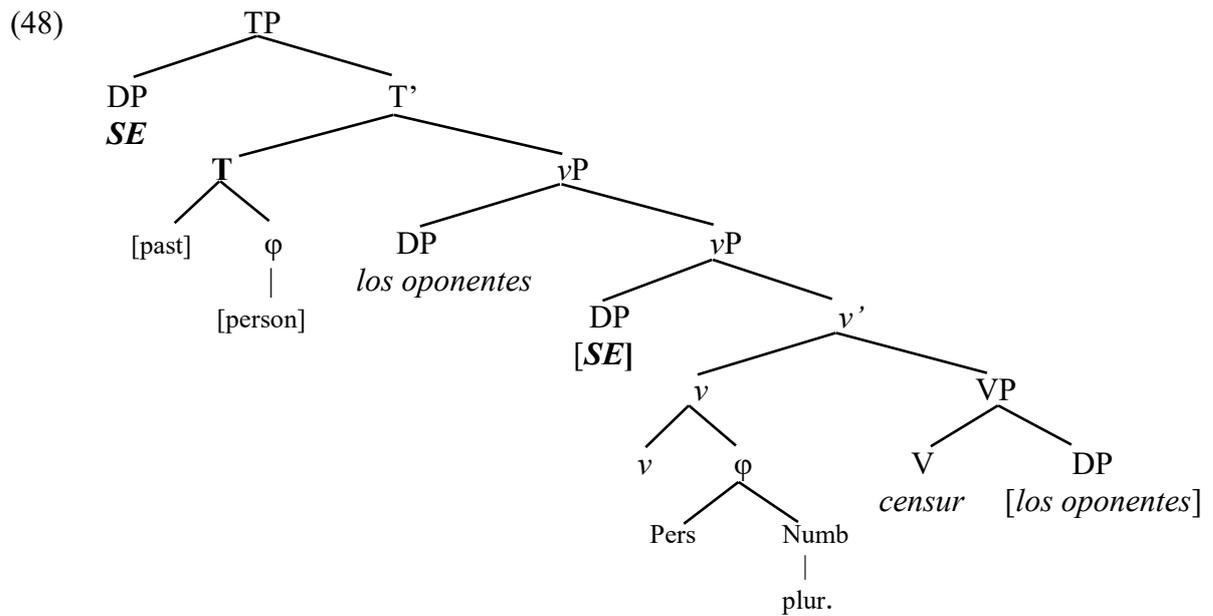


Simplifying things a bit, assume that Agree is realized in (Spec, *v*P), and that *v* enters the derivation as [*uφ*] and is valued via Agree, which copies the feature specifications of its controller, the DOM object (see section 4.3 for details, discussion and references). The resulting structure after the application of Agree between the probe *v* and the animate argument *los oponentes* is as in (47).<sup>25</sup>



In (47) accusative Case has been assigned to the object in both constructions. From that point on, the derivation is the same for (44a) and (44b). T is merged and triggers agreement with *se*, as with any other subject. T enters the derivation specified as [*uφ*] and copies the feature values of the closest argument, *se*, (see section 4.3.). Finally, *se* moves to (Spec, TP) where it checks the EPP feature in T, and receives nominative Case:

<sup>25</sup> The analysis extends to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person objects (see O&R 2013a,b, 2022). However, our analysis works equally well if person clitics are not agreement markers but pronominal clitics (e.g. Baker & Kramer 2018 and references). Their distinctive behavior does not depend on our specific analysis of DOM and dative doubling, but on the fact that 1st and 2nd person clitics and animate arguments are specified for person while inanimate *lo(s)/la(s)* are not.



This part of the derivation is the same independently of whether *se* is generated in the external or the internal argument position, as in passives:

- (49) En este país, cuando se nace opositor, se es asesinado  
 In this country, when SE born opposing, SE is assassinated  
 'In this country, when you are born a dissident you are assassinated'

In sum, no *ad hoc* mechanism is postulated. The derivation is restricted exactly by the same general conditions constraining any other syntactic derivation where the subject has a more articulated  $\phi$ -feature structure, and by nothing else. Its characteristic features are determined by those of the lexical elements involved, as in any other case. The only remaining issue is the agreement pattern, to which we will return in section 5.

#### 4.2 Clitic Left Dislocation and Dialectal Variation

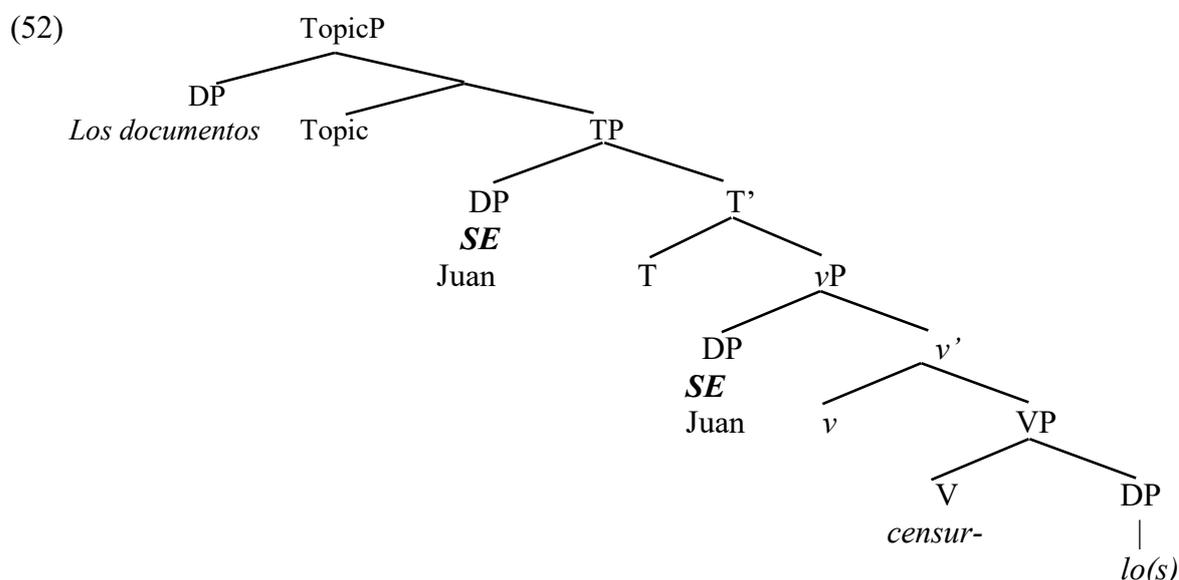
Consider the derivation of sentences containing a preverbal/null argument. Remember that, as discussed in section 2.2, this structure is subject to dialectal variation (50a-b).

- (50) a. (Los libro-s) se vendieron  
 (The books.PL) SE sold.PL  
 b. (Los libros) se **los** vendió  
 (The books.PL) SE Cl.masc.PL sold.SG.  
 'The books, they were sold'

Raposo & Uriagereka (1996) and Martins & Nunes (2016) argue that preverbal arguments

in sentences like (50a) are not in subject position, nor associated to it, but left dislocated.<sup>26</sup> According to our approach, the structure of (51b) is the structure we find in CLLD in Romance languages (51a). We assume that the object DP is base-generated in a non-argumental position (van Riemsdijk 1997),<sup>27</sup> and that D-clitics *lo(s)/la(s)* are merged in the internal argument position from where they cliticize to the verb (Uriagereka 1997, Roca 1996, O&R 2013a, a.o.). The derivation is represented in (52):

- (51) a. Los documentos (Juan) los censuró \_\_\_\_  
 The documents Juan 3AC.PL. MSC censored.SG  
 ‘The documents, John censured them’
- b. Los documentos se los censuró \_\_\_\_  
 The documents SE 3AC.PL. MSC censored.SG  
 ‘The documents somebody censured them’



As we show in section 5.1, there are strong reasons to assume that (52) is the structural description for both (50b), with an overt clitic, and (50a), where the clitic shows up as number agreement. The derivation extends to non overt arguments, where a null topic stands for the dislocated element, and to animate and 1st/2nd person objects. In this case, however, there is no variation: all dialects and speakers follow the object clitic strategy:

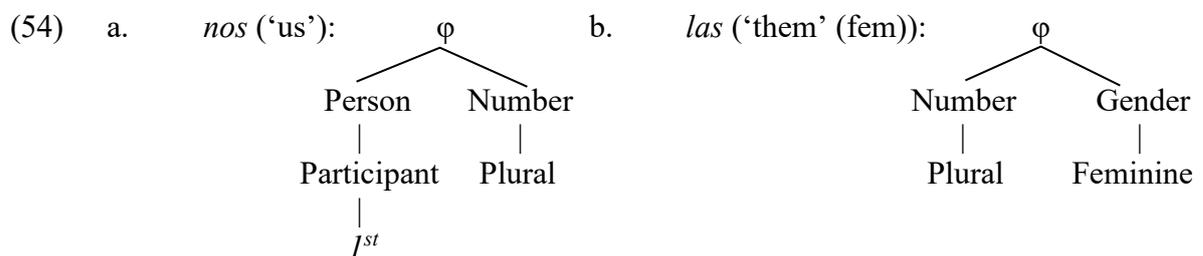
- (53) a. A vosotros (Juan) os censuró  
 DOM you (Juan) 2.AC.PL censored.SG  
 ‘As for you, John censured you’

<sup>26</sup> They present a battery of arguments concerning Galaico-Portuguese, but many of their arguments extend to Spanish and Romance in general.

<sup>27</sup> We represent the dislocated element in the specifier of TopicP, but nothing hinges on this decision as long as the pronoun cliticizes from the argumental position.

- b. A vosotros se os censuró  
 DOM you SE 2.AC.PL censored.SG  
 ‘As for you, you were censored’
- c. \*A vosotros se censurasteis  
 DOM you SE censored.2PL

We will come back to the ungrammaticality of (53c) in section 5.1. At this point it is important to stress that the main difference between (50) and (53) is that 1st/2nd person pronouns are fully specified for person and number, while the clitic *lo(s)* has no [person] (Roca 1996, O&R 2013a, b, Alcaraz 2021; in (54) we abstract away from issues concerning the feature geometry of number and gender):



From this point on, the derivation continues as in (48), where the subject *se* agrees with T.

#### 4.3 Excursus on Formal Features, Agree and Match

We have concluded that *se* is a subject pronoun specified for person and lacking number features. This is not the only context where the subject is not fully specified for agreement features (see section 5.2), and any approach to T-agreement must account for them. The Agree mechanism in Chomsky (2000, 2001) is subject to a completeness condition on Match, under feature identity; however, contexts where the goal is not  $\phi$ -complete and the derivation converges show that it cannot be a general condition for agreement. To illustrate, consider SECs: even if our analysis of P-SECs (55b) were not on the right track, I-SECs (55a) still constitute one case among a myriad of cases where the subject —be it *se*, a null pronoun, etc.— could never qualify to ‘completely’ satisfy subject agreement  $\phi$ -features.

- (55) a. Se corre mejor en pista  
 SE run.SG best on track  
 ‘One runs best on track’
- b. Se censuraron los documentos [=1a]  
 SE censored.PL the documents.PL  
 ‘The documents were censored’

The mere existence of default verbal agreement in all impersonal contexts, where no

possible number agreement checker is available, may be taken as evidence that number agreement does not need to be valued. The same extends to [person]; see, e.g., Béjar’s (2008:148) analysis of Subject [3rd person]-Object [3rd person] combinations in Mordvinian. By the same token, given that (55a) is grammatical, a second cycle analysis for (55b) would be stipulative; in fact, as shown in section 2, that is not what happens. If there were a second cycle (Rezac 2003, Anagnostopoulou 2003, 2005, Béjar & Rezac 2009, among others), we would expect number features that remain unvalued in the first cycle to be available for Agree to be established with the object, showing a consistent pattern, contrary to facts. If, as we have argued, number agreement in transitive contexts is not syntactic, not only second cyclic agreement cannot be imposed over the derivation, but in fact, it must be prevented.<sup>28</sup>

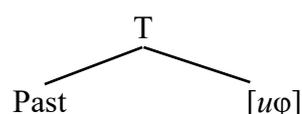
As observed by Baker (2008), Match lacks explanatory power. While probably appropriate to feed the morphological component, the idea of a set of pre-arranged, arbitrarily defined, feature slots to be valued by the goal looks like a conspiratorial prerequisite that fails to capture the systematic properties of agreement in natural language. It is, in some sense, a very short-sighted “look ahead” from the lexicon into the computation.

Notice, in addition, that when combined with a hierarchy where features do not have intrinsic values but depend on their place in the geometry, Match, as established standardly, is hard to codify from a strictly formal point of view. As Béjar (2003, 2008) observes, each node entails the presence of all the superordinate nodes, so that when a pronoun is specified for [1st person], it is entailed that all the nodes up to the root of the hierarchy are also specified. Given those entailment relations and assuming that the hierarchy of features in T is identical to the one of pronouns (the null hypothesis), a [*u*person] probe would be general enough to target all goals that have person features. Following our proposal in section 3, bearing person features would include *se* [person], as well as [3rd person] and all [participant] goals. Generalizing even further, the simplest system would be one where the probe in T is specified as [*u*  $\phi$ ] (see Deal 2021 for a related proposal):

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<sup>28</sup> This conclusion has important consequences for the treatment of agreement restrictions, especially those phenomena associated with the Object Agreement Constraint (the Person-Case Constraint and its extensions). See O&R (2007, 2013ab, 2019b) for some evidence that facts similar to those described here are also present in PCC contexts.

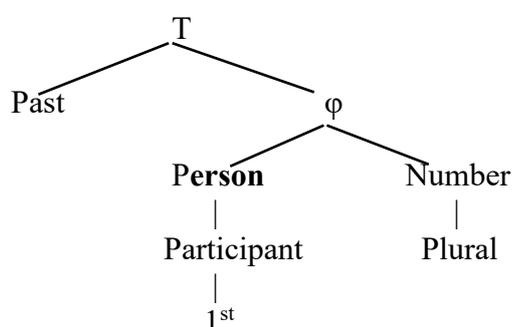
(56) T as a syntactic probe [before Agree]:



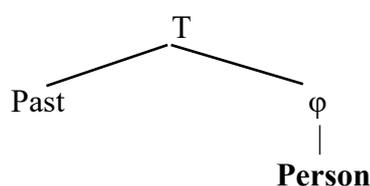
The Agree relation copies the entire hierarchical structure of the goal into the probe.<sup>29</sup> Since T  $\phi$ -features are uninterpretable, the idea that Agree copies whatever the goal brings to the picture is both suitable for its morphological analysis and in compliance with standard views on agreement in natural languages. The resulting complex head will be different depending on the set of features the subject contributes to the agreement relation, as desired:

(57) Result after application of Agree:

a. with *nosotros* ('we'):



b. with *se*:



Under these natural assumptions, agreement in SECs is regular by all criteria. Consequently, T's  $[u\phi]$  is completely valued in the syntax. However, the resulting matrix of features has the number slot empty, since it is absent in the feature matrix of *se*. In other words, the agreement problem is not syntactic, but morphological.

Given the discussion so far, the agreement asymmetry between postverbal and preverbal positions corresponds to the difference between *in situ* and CLLD objects in regular transitive clauses. As we discuss next, the two resulting structures will be exposed to different fates after syntax.

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29 The result is close to Baker's desideratum, which we fully share, for a design where: "all Fs are potential agreeers and they agree with whatever features they can find in their environment according to structural principles. If agreeing functional heads are not prespecified as agreeing in particular features, it follows that there cannot be any matching condition of the kind Chomsky envisions. This condition should become superfluous – at least if agreement in  $\phi$ -features is the only relevant kind of agreement in natural languages." (Baker 2008: 44)

## 5 Post-Syntactic Processes

We have shown that agreement behaves differently depending on the position of the NP. With preverbal topics, its morphological manifestation is obligatory, either as an object clitic or as subject agreement. In contrast, with postverbal NPs the only morphological device used is subject number agreement, but in a semi-random fashion. As a consequence, we conclude that each one follows a different path. For preverbal/null topics the A-position is occupied by a clitic. In some dialects it mutates post-syntactically into number subject agreement (section 5.1). For postverbal NPs, the verb may show up marked with a default singular number or it may harmonize post-syntactically with a plural NP (section 5.2).

### 5.1 Dialectal Variation in Morphology: Clitic Mutation

The pronoun *se* is the only subject clitic in Spanish. It cliticizes into T just in the same way French *il* ('he') or impersonal *on* do. Similarly, the determiner head *lo(s)/la(s)* ('it/him/her/them') in object position cliticizes into the verbal complex. The result of the computational component's inner workings is a morphological word that includes the two clitics, the verbal root and all the T features.

(58) *se* + *los* + *censur* + IND.PAST.PERSON  
SE + 3AC.PL + *censor* + IND.PAST.PERSON  
'They were censored'

The presence of the object clitic in C-varieties is the straight manifestation of the structure in (58), while in A-varieties it is spelled out as subject number agreement. Subject agreement is therefore an alternative morphological expression of the very same structural description expressed in C-varieties by the clitic. We term this particular morphological process *Clitic Mutation* (CIMut), an instance of a family of agreement effects including clitic cluster phenomena, agreement displacement, and eccentric or omnivorous agreement (Bonet 1991, Hale 2001, Rezac 2008, a.o.). In other words, there is no P-SEC, but a regular active structure whose object clitic is morphologically camouflaged as subject agreement.

In what follows, we present direct evidence supporting our analysis (section 5.1.1); and we detail the conditions under which CIMut applies in Morphology (section 5.1.2). To finish, we provide independent crosslinguistic evidence for the proposal (section 5.1.3).

### 5.1.1 Evidence for Clitic Mutation

There are three different contexts which constitute strong evidence for CIMut. Consider first idioms containing a non-referential clitic, such as *liarla parda* ('to make a complete mess'), *matarlas callando* ('to go about things slyly'), *pasarlas canutas* ('to have a rough time'), *verlas venir* ('to see them coming'), etc. The clitic is part of the idiom and must be present under all circumstances (59) (García-Page 2010 and references). As expected, passivization is completely impossible (60):

- (59) a. En esos pueblos, siempre \*(la) liamos parda  
 In those villages, always 3AC.SG.FM mishandle.we brown.SG.FM  
 'In those villages we always make a complete mess'
- b. En la guerra, siempre \*(las) pasamos canutas  
 During the war, always 3AC.PL.FM pass.we canutas  
 'During the war we always have a rough time'
- (60) a. \* En esos pueblos, siempre es liada parda (por nosotros)  
 In those villages, always is mishandled.SG.FM brown.SG.FM (by us)  
 'In those villages we always make a complete mess'
- b. \* En la guerra, siempre son pasadas canutas (por nosotros)  
 In the war, always are passed canutas (by us)  
 'During the war we always have a rough time'

Non paradigmatic SECs are the only exception where the clitic disappears. In those cases, which sound completely natural in A-varieties,<sup>30</sup> if the clitic of the idiom is singular the verbal form shows up in singular (61a), and if plural, it is obligatorily plural (61b).

- (61) a. En esos pueblos, siempre se (\*la) lia parda  
 In those villages, always SE 3AC.SG.FM mishandle.SG brown.SG.FM  
 'In those villages people always make a complete mess'
- b. En la guerra, siempre se (\*las) pasan canutas  
 During the war, always SE 3AC.PL.FM pass.PL canutas.PL  
 'During the war people always have a rough time'

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30 Speakers of the C-varieties only allow the clitic version and consider the agreement (CIM) version impossible (examples from Andrés Saab, personal communication):

- (i) a. En estas lides, nunca se \*(la) saca barata  
 In those affairs, never SE it.fem get cheap  
 'In those affairs, you never get it easy'
- b. Cuando se las tiene/\*se tienen todas a favor  
 When SE them have/SE have.pl all in favor

The contrast in (i) makes the clitic origin of the agreement in (61) fully evident. On the other hand, the fact that the clitic is part of the idiom, combined with Rioplatense speakers' strong preference for the clitic strategy in null argument contexts (see footnote 11) might be responsible for the unavailability of the agreement strategy in these cases, though we do not have a formal explanation at this point.

Consider Clitic Climbing. In transitive structures (62), including SECs (63), all dialects show enclisis to the embedded infinitive (62a)-(63a). The clitic may also climb to the finite verb; there it appears as a proclitic (62b). However, in SECs there is a split: in C-varieties the clitic is preserved (63b), while in A-varieties it shows up as subject agreement (63c).

- (62) a. intentó censurar**las**  
SE tried.SG to.censor.**3AC.PL.FM**
- b. **las** intentó censurar  
**3AC.PL.FM** tried.SG to.censor
- (63) a. se intentó censurar-**las** *All dialects*  
SE tried.SG to.censor-**3AC.PL.FM**
- b. se **las** intentó censurar *C-varieties*  
SE **3AC.PL.FM** tried.SG to.censor
- c. se intentaron censurar *A-varieties*  
SE tried.**PL** to.censor  
'Somebody or other tried to censor them'

The parallelism is maintained across the board. In long distance Clitic Climbing, A-varieties retain the clitic in all the intermediate positions (64a-b), and mutate it only when it reaches the *se*-clause (64c), exactly what CIMut predicts:<sup>31</sup>

- (64) a. Se tiene que venir a comprar-**los**  
SE must.SG that come.INFIN to buy.INFIN-**3AC.MSC.PL**
- b. se tiene que venir-**los** a comprar  
SE must.SG that come.INFIN-**3AC.MSC.PL** to buy.INFIN
- c. se **tienen** que empezar a comprar  
SE must.**PL** that come.INFIN to buy.INFIN  
'Someone has to begin to buy them'

Finally, CIMut is also subject to clitic clustering effects. When there is more than one clitic, the entire cluster must climb together (65a,b) vs. (65c,d). As expected under CIMut, SECs subject agreement behaves in this respect as a clitic (66). If it were true subject agreement, the ungrammaticality of (66c) would be completely unexpected, since subject agreement does not interfere with clitic clusters in other contexts (65a,b):

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31 This agreement is subject to all the constraints clitic climbing shows in parallel contexts: adjunct wh-islands (i), intervention effects with negative heads, etc.

- (i) a. Se sabe leerlas  
SE know.SG to.read.them
- b. Se saben leer  
SE know.**pl** to.read
- c. se sabe cómo leerlas  
SE know.SG how to.read.them  
'It is known how to read them'
- d. \*Se saben cómo leer  
SE know.**pl** how to.read  
[cfr. \**las sabemos cómo leer*]

- (65) a. Intentaron censurá**rtelas**  
 tried.they to.censor.2DAT.SG.3AC.PL.FM
- b. **Te las** intentaron censurar  
 2DAT.SG 3AC.PL.FM tried.they to.censor
- c. \***Te** intentaron censurar**las**  
 2DAT.SG tried.they to.censor.3AC.PL.FM
- d. \***Las** intentaron censurarte  
 3AC.PL.FM tried.they to.censor.2DAT.SG  
 ‘They tried to censor them to you’
- (66) a. Se intentó censurá**rtelas**  
 SE tried.SG to.censor.2DAT.SG.3AC.PL.FM
- b. Se **te** intentaron censurar  
 SE 2DAT.SG tried.PL to.censor
- c. \*Se intentaron censurarte  
 SE tried.PL to.censor.2DAT.SG
- d. \*Se **te** intentó censurar**las**  
 SE 2DAT.SG tried.SG to.censor.3AC.PL.FM  
 ‘Someone tried to censor them to you’

We know of no previous discussion of these facts in the literature, but we see no possible explanation for them in traditional terms. In contrast, this is precisely what CIMut predicts, since subject number agreement is structurally an object clitic, and it only surfaces as number agreement after morphological manipulation.

### 5.1.2 Clitic Mutation and its Domain of Application

In this section we make explicit the properties of the interface syntax-morphology. We do not pretend to lay out a morphological analysis in such an intricate area as clitic-agreement interactions, but thoroughly describe the conditions syntax imposes to CIMut. According to our analysis, syntax supplies Morphology with a Tense head valued for [person], but not for [number]. Since the exponent of the T head in Spanish encodes number, Morphology needs to assign it a value. A priori, there are two options: (i) it may be assigned by default; or (ii) some element is blended into the morphological word to provide a value for it. C-Varieties have both options generally available. In (67a) object features are realized as a clitic and subject agreement is set by default, while in (67b) object clitic features blend with subject agreement. In A varieties, only CIMut (67b), is available.<sup>32</sup>

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32 An *LI* reviewer raises the possibility of relating the optionality/obligatoriness of CIMut in C- and

- (67) (Los documentos) se los censuró > b. se censuraron  
 DP<sub>Topic.PL</sub> SE 3AC.PL V.past.SG > SE V.PL  
 ‘The documents, they were censored’

Following Distributed Morphology postulates, for instance, we can assume that an impoverishment rule is applied. This rule removes any conflicting feature --in this case, gender and accusative-- paving the way to CIMut. A strikingly similar effect is found in the interaction of clitics. Bonet (1991, 1994) observes that in many clitic clusters in Romance the output is opaque with respect to the information encoded by the same clitics in isolation. According to her, in those contexts the clitics suffer an impoverishment process, as a consequence of which their representation corresponds to the PF realization of another clitic.

Consider now the distribution of the clitic/agreement strategies for [+DOM] objects, including pronouns (53a-c), vs. [-DOM] objects:

- (68) a. A las oponentes políticas (Juan) \*(las) censuró  
 DOM DP.PL (Juan) 3AC.PL.FM V.SG
- b. A las oponentes políticas se \*(las) censuró [= (27a)]  
 DOM DP.PL SE 3AC.PL.FM V.SG
- c. \*A las oponentes políticas se censuraron [= (27b)]  
 DOM DP.PL SE V.PL  
 ‘The political opponents were censored’

Remember that, unlike number, person agreement has been valued between *se* and T (section 4.3). The difference between these contexts and those where CIMut applies is that the clitics in (68), [+DOM] object clitics, contain [person]. We may thus assume that these features conflict with the [person] feature in T, and, in consequence, the clitic cannot mutate.<sup>33</sup>

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A-varieties to “a more general property of the availability or lack thereof of clitic doubling in the respective varieties”. That is an interesting possibility, although there are some complications: what makes clitic doubling in Rioplatense, etc. different is i) that the clitic co-occurs with post-verbal objects in contexts where it is impossible in other dialects and ii) it is tightly linked to the presence of DOM (see footnote 11). In contrast, the contexts where CIMut applies are precisely those where doubling is possible also in the other dialects, and there are many examples of the C-variety where DOM is not involved. We have not been able to overcome these two complications to make the proposal coherent with the whole picture, but it certainly is a very good trend to follow, especially from a diachronic and a dialectological perspective.

<sup>33</sup> Two reviewers raise the question of why many non-*leísta* speakers use the clitic *le* in these particular contexts. This generalized use of *le* poses a problem to virtually all approaches, since it specifically arises in I-SECs, commonly analyzed as regular transitive structures since Cinque (1988). We do not have a full explanation for this fact, but within the logic of our proposal it is probably linked to the blocking effects on CIMut compelled by clitics specified for person features. In this specific context there is evidence that *le* has not the same syntax as in other transitive clauses. Consider the following sentences:

Similarly, when T fully specifies [person] and [number] (e.g. (62)), the clitic has no room in T's resulting morphological exponent to mutate into subject number agreement, not even with *lo(s)/la(s)* (68c). In sum, CIMut is possible when the lack of [number] in the subject and the lack of [person] in the object cooccur.

With CIMut, Spanish morphology deals with the fact that subject agreement is morphologically mandatory at the expenses of object clitics. As we discuss next, with some interesting differences, all these are properties that CIMut shares with other morphological phenomena crosslinguistically.

### 5.1.3 Extensions: Clitic Mutation in a Broader Morphological Context

Crosslinguistically, CIMut belongs to the family of effects known as *agreement displacement*. To illustrate, in Basque, under certain conditions, ergative agreement takes the form and position of absolutive agreement. In order for this Ergative Displacement (ED) to take place, a necessary condition is for the absolutive argument to be third person, an agreement that happens to lack a morphological exponent (69c,d) vs. (69a,b).

- (69) a. Nik zu maite **z** -intu - da -n  
 I.erg you.abs love **2ABS-AUX-1ERG-PAST**  
 'I loved you'
- b. Zuk ni maite **n** -indu- zu -n  
 You.erg I.abs love **1ABS-AUX-2ERG-PAST**  
 'You loved me'
- c. Zuk bizitza maite **z-** enu -en (vs. \*u - **zu** -n)  
 You.erg life.abs love **2ERG-AUX-PAST** (vs. AUX-**2ERG-PAST**)  
 'You loved life'
- d. Nik bizitza maite **n** - u - en (vs. \*u - **da** -n)  
 I.erg life.abs love **1ERG-AUX-PAST** (vs. AUX-**1ERG-PAST**)  
 'I loved life'

Most analyses interpret that distribution as indicating that absolutive agreement is defective for [participant], but we have extensively argued that no agreement relation holds with third person objects in many languages including Basque (O&R 2007). If correct, the ergative

- 
- |     |  |      |   |
|-----|--|------|---|
| (i) | *A nadie le viste<br>DOM anybody 3Osg saw.you<br>'You did not see anybody' | (ii) | A nadie se le vio<br>DOM anybody SE 3Osg saw<br>'No one was seen' |
|-----|--|------|---|

Negative quantifiers cannot be clitic-doubled in Spanish unless the clitic is the morphological exponent of a syntactic agreement node (O&R 2013a and references therein). The contrast between (i) and (ii) suggests that the clitic is realizing different features in each sentence: While in (i) it is a pronominal clitic, in (ii) it is an agreement head.

element colonizes the absolutive slot in (69c,d) when it lacks person features altogether. That description is not very different from diachronic accounts (Gómez & Sáinz 1995, Lakarra 2005, Ariztimuño 2017), where the subject pronoun is argued to occupy the first position precisely in those cases where no object pronoun may occupy it (historically Basque lacks third person pronouns).

Current analyses of Ergative Displacement mostly lay out syntactic solutions (Ortiz de Urbina 1989, Rezac 2008, Béjar & Rezac 2009, a.o.); however, there is also a long tradition of morphology-based explanations (Laka 1993, Albizu & Eguren 2000, Fernández & Albizu 2000, Arregi & Nevins 2012, a.o.). The clear similarities between CLMut and ED argues for a morphological approach. The main difference between ED and CIMut is that while in the later [person] has been checked between T and *se*, in the case of Basque there is no person agreement in *v*. That explains why the entire  $\phi$  feature set of the ergative can take over the object agreement slot in Basque while only number is involved in CIMut, and why it does not apply to animate clitics. The differences then follow from the different morphological specifications of the host exponents in each case, as desired.

## 5.2 *A postsyntactic phenomenon (II): Number Harmony*

Agreement in SECs with postverbal DPs exhibits properties radically different. In addition, its structural description does not include an object clitic, and in consequence, it cannot be an instance of CIMut. In this section we argue that this agreement is the reflex of a post-PF procedure that we call *Number Harmony* [NH].

### 5.2.1. *Conditions for Number Harmony*

The only role syntax plays in NH is in providing a structure where the set of  $\phi$ -features in T includes a [person] value supplied by *se* but no [number], and where there is a DP closeby in postverbal position (70). In contrast to CIMut, the V-object relation is not represented in V's morphological word:

- (70) *se* + censur + **past.indic.person**    los documentos  
       SE + censor + **past.indic.person**    the documents  
       ‘The documents were censored’

Agreement follows two different paths in that context: either it takes a default value (71a) or it adopts the value of the closest nominal (71b). When the closest nominal is singular, as expected, the verb never shows up in plural (71c).

- (71) a. Se censuró los documentos  
SE censored.SG the.PL documents
- b. Se censuraron los documentos  
SE censored.PL the.PL documents
- c. \* Se censuraron el documento  
SE censored.PL the.SG document

In all cases, “closest” is computed in pure linear proximity terms, as shown by the battery of long distance cases discussed in section 2.1.

In sum, the distribution of agreement in these contexts does not show any of the properties of a syntactic checking relation. Additionally, it lacks a morphological motivation: there is no possible source for the plural morpheme within the morphological word in (71) and, unlike in CIMut, the agreement patterns in unpredictable ways. The same conclusion may be attained concerning PF: the source of the plural number exceeds by far the domain of regular phonological processes, as clearly shown by hyper-raising cases from section 2.1, repeated in (72):

- (72) Se consideran que hay personas con categorías superiores e inferiores  
SE consider.PL that there.are persons with category superior and inferior  
‘It is considered that there are people superior to others’

In (72), the nominal triggering plural marking in the matrix verb is an argument of the embedded sentence, far away from any conceivable prosodic unit with it.

As far as we can see, the only option in these contexts is that agreement patterns are determined by extra-grammatical factors. For speakers who invariably resort to number harmony with [-DOM] direct objects (P-SECs) and to a singular default in the rest of the cases (I-SECs), we must assume that this additional regularization process is a learned strategy imposed by means of socio-educative pressure.<sup>34</sup>

In the next section, we briefly review other instances of subjects lacking number specification in Spanish that follow a similar pattern. We show that in some cases, number agreement works essentially in the same way as in SECs, while in other cases it is fully determined, sometimes in completely unexpected ways.

### 5.2.2 Other Agreement Patterns that Grammar cannot Deal with

In addition to contexts of gender agreement that we cannot consider here (Demonte & Pé-

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34 That predicts that variation should be more visible in pre-school children even in highly educated environments, a prediction that we cannot test at this point.

rez Jiménez 2012; Benmamoun, Bhatia & Polinsky 2009), the same uncertainty also appears in other so-called impersonal contexts (see also Feliu 2022 for verbs taking an infinitive clause as subject).

5.2.2.1 *Existential haber and hacer* In Standard Spanish agreement between the verb and the nominal phrase is not recommended in these contexts (NGLE 41.6b), and for many speakers the only option is a default third person form. However, the use of plural agreement, where the verbal form reflects the number of its nominal argument, is increasing considerably, and in some areas it is becoming general.

- (73) Había /habían tres sillas en el porche  
 There.was/there.were three chairs in the porch  
 ‘There were three chairs in the porch’

Agreement is remarkably similar to SECs, including a high degree of dialect-internal and idiolectal variation. In the case of *haber*, while the impersonal present form, *hay*, is invariant; the past form is regular 3rd person with a corresponding plural form *habían*. Consequently, Number Harmony is obtained in the past but it almost never shows up in the present, reinforcing the conclusion that we are not dealing with syntactic or morphological agreement (DeMello 1991, Grácia & Roca 2017, O&R 2022).

Regarding *hacer*, when the complement includes a measure phrase, for some speakers it often triggers number agreement in the verb (74b):

- (74) a. Hace frío/treinta grados (fuera)/varios días  
 Make.SG cold/thirty degrees outside/several days  
 ‘It is cold’, ‘it is thirty degrees’, ‘it was several days ago’  
 b. Vivir sin calefacción cuando hacen 2 grados bajo cero es inaceptable  
 to.live without hitting when make.PL two degrees.PL below zero is unacceptable  
 ‘For people to leave without hitting when it is -2° Celsius is unacceptable’

NH with *haber/hacer*, as with SECs, is idiolectal, and arguably subject to cultural pressure.

5.2.2.2 *Neuter Subjects* The situation is different in copulative sentences whose subject is the neuter deictic pronoun *eso* or a propositional subject:

- (75) Luis dice que eso son tonterías pero para mí no lo son  
 Luis says that that.NEUT are nuts but for me not CLITIC are  
 ‘Luis says that those things are nuts, but they are not for me’

In (75) the pronoun in subject position does not encode number, and the predicate, *tonterías*, determines agreement. Agreement is obligatory; default singular is rejected. Similarly, with propositional subjects, it is determined by the predicate.

(76) que lleguen tarde o heridos son preocupaciones de padre (pero para mí no lo son)  
 that arrived late or hurt are worries of father (but for me not CLITIC are)  
 ‘That they arrive late or hurt are worries of a father (but they are not for me)’

Note that in these cases when the predicate is substituted by the invariant predicative clitic *lo*, plural agreement is still obligatory (*para mí lo son*).

5.2.2.3 *A-bar Movement* When the complement of V A-bar moves to a preposed position, clitic doubling is not possible (77).

- (77) a. ¿Qué documentos (\*los) censuraron?  
 which documents 3AC.PL censored.they  
 Which documents did they censor?
- b. Los documentos que (\*los) censuraron fueron publicados  
 The documents that 3AC.PL censored.they were published  
 ‘The documents they censored were published’

In SECs, these structures exhibit the lack of systematicity typical of NH (78). In fact, this is the only case where even speakers that otherwise always adhere to the norm show some degree of variation.

- (78) a. ¿Qué documentos se censuró/censuraron?  
 Which documents SE censored.SG/censored.PL  
 ‘Which documents were censored?’
- b. Los documentos que se censuró/censuraron fueron publicados  
 The documents that SE censored.SG/censored.PL were published  
 ‘The documents they censored were publish’

This exceptional behavior is expected in our analysis: while arguments in CLLD are base generated in the left periphery, the A’-chain tail in (78) includes a postverbal copy of the object in its VP-internal position. Clitic doubling is thus not possible and, consequently, CIMut lacks the structural conditions to apply (58). In contrast, this A’-chain configuration is a potential target for NH to apply, and the lack of systematicity reappears: (79a) illustrates the lack of number with plural objects, (79b) the case of plural agreement with DOM objects, and (79c) long distance number agreement.<sup>35</sup>

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35 Effects of this type have often been reported in research on agreement intervention in language processing (Zawiszewski et al. 2016, Villata 2017, Mancini et al. 2016). A general post-syntactic analysis of a larger variety of number agreement in other default agreement configurations seems to us worth pursuing. However a detailed analysis of Number Harmony exceeds our area of expertise

- (79) a. [...] *los servicios que se proporciona* a los alumnos  
the services.PL that SE provide.SG to the students  
‘The services that were provided to students’
- b. Selección de *las personas a las que se entrevistaron*...  
Selection of the people.PL DOM the that SE interviewed.PL.  
‘Selection of the people tha were interviewed’
- c. [...] *las comunicaciones realizadas o que se prevén* hacer  
the communications.PL realized or that SE expect.PL do  
‘The comunications realized or those that were expected to be realized’

In sum, different pieces of evidence converge and support our proposal that subject number agreement in SECs conceals two different phenomena with very distinctive properties, both occurring post-syntactically:

CIMut is a rather regular and systematic morphological process by means of which an argumental D-clitic shows up morphologically as number agreement. It coexists with a clitic strategy whose distribution is also systematic and predictable both dialectally and in terms of the configurations where they apply. The dialectal cut lies in its optionality in C-varieties, or obligatoriness in A-varieties.

*Number Harmony*, on the other hand, is a less systematic extra-grammatical phenomenon, with a very vague distribution. NH in SECs shares many properties with similar agreement “failures” sketched in 5.2.2. Moreover, its distribution seems to be largely determined by sociolinguistic and stylistic factors such as the acquisition of the Academies’ norm, social acceptability, etc. that escape the domain of grammar.

## 6 Final Conclusions

If the results in this paper are on the right track, they open new questions and research ways to deal with old issues on the syntax and morphology, as well as processing, of agreement. They also raise question about crosslinguistic variation and diachronic change.

### 6.1 On Cross-Linguistic Variation

An important issue that often arises concerning our proposal is how cross-Romance variation fits into the picture. Our analysis of Spanish *se* illustrates how such a task requires a fine-grained analysis before deciding the situation in each language and, consequently, our observations here must be by force considered highly speculative.

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and goes way beyond our goals in this paper.

An important contribution of Cinque's (1988) seminal proposal to the analysis of *se/si* is that it links the differences between P-SECs and I-SECs to the lexical properties of the different *se* items involved. From our point of view, his proposal putting the burden of the explanation on the lexical properties seems the right strategy to account for the behavior of non-paradigmatic SECs and other SE-constructions language-internally. As shown, the effects of a minimal lexical distinction may be considerable at different levels of the grammar and beyond. Similarly, divergences in the diachronic evolution may be responsible for important synchronic differences in the Romance family.

The diachronic diversification of Latin *SE*'s attributes and cliticization patterns is not uniform. In the case of Iberian languages, although some authors (e.g. Maddox 2021) present a unified approach to the evolution of all *se*-s, some facts suggest a split at least since the XVI century (Monge 1954 for Spanish, Martins 2005 for Portuguese). If that is correct, as the Latin reflexive *SE* evolved, a variety of lexical clitics with particular specifications emerged in Romance languages, resulting in different subsystems both language-internally and crosslinguistically. Taking Spanish as an arbitrary reference point, different possibilities arise for the evolution of non-paradigmatic *se*:

- (i) Some languages have taken a completely different path, most characteristically French and many dialects of Portuguese, which developed alternative impersonal structures with *on* (Wolfsgruber 2017), and *a gente* (Martins 2005 and references) respectively.
- (ii) Romanian might illustrate the case of a language that presents a more conservative evolution. Some of its properties suggest, following MacDonnald & Maddox (2018) and Maddox (2021), that diachronically *se* is in a different stage, a different lexical item in synchronic terms: while a clitic pronoun in Spanish or Italian, *se* is a voice marker in Romanian. Consequently, agreement facts must be derived very differently, which is consistent with the observation (Dobrovie Sorin 1998; Cornilescu 1998; Giurgea 2019) that Romanian does not show agreement mismatches of the kind exemplified in this paper.
- (iii) Other languages might have gone further in the division of lexical *se* items. Thus, for instance, Italian has developed a 1<sup>st</sup> person plural *se*—similar to French *on* or Portuguese *a gente*—that does not exist in Spanish and Catalan (Cinque 1988, Chierchia 1995, D'Alessandro 2007, Ordóñez 2021).

If lexical diversification constitutes an important source of crosslinguistic variation, *a priori* we will not expect to be able to determine the direction of the changes. Conse-

quently, we have no expectations about what the output will be in each system. However, what we could expect of such changes is for the resulting lexical item to present internal coherence relative to the general properties of syntactic derivations, as we argued for *se* in Spanish, with clear empirical predictions about its syntax and morphology.

## 6.2 *On Agreement in Syntax and Processing*

A different area where much work may be advanced is in making more precise the syntax and morphology of ‘defective agreement’ contexts and the limits of variation at the post-syntactic level. Once we reconsider number agreement facts in those new terms, the possible contexts of defectiveness and its potential to reanalyze many constructions (quirky subjects, long distance agreement, expletives, etc.) are quite broad. Our proposal also has consequences for the analysis of classical agreement restrictions and their extensions. In particular, if number agreement in many of these contexts is treated as a post-syntactic effect, what Baker (2008) calls the “two-and-a-half agreement” becomes an “at-most-two-agreement” factor, reducing the playing field of possible explanations for agreement restrictions considerably. That is particularly clear if, as argued here, syntactic agreement applies in a single cycle.

Related to the previous point, there is a question that arises on the organization of agreement among the different components in the faculty of language in the broad sense (FLB: Hauser et al. 2002, Fitch et al 2005). The issue is whether the syntactic as well as processing differences between person vs. number vs. gender, and similar cases in the feature system reported in the literature reflect a cartographic structure (Shlonsky 1989, Sigurdsson & Holmberg 2008, Mancini et al. 2016, among others) or rather an “all at once” checking syntactic agreement operation (Chomsky 1995, 2000, among others) together with some processes in other components. It is worth noting that the two approaches are not incompatible and, in fact, it might be the case that we are dealing with a non-uniform system (see Dillon et al. 2013, Zawiszewski et al. 2016, among others, for discussion). However, if the line of analysis we propose may be effectively extended, there is room to reinterpret the evidence for separated probes in a more compact syntactic system (Ackema & Neeleman 2019, O&R 2022, and references). Fine grained theoretical and experimental work on the syntax of agreement restrictions as well as on language processing would help to clarify some of these issues.

To finish, as mentioned in several places through the discussion, our results on SECs intermingle in a complex way with the analysis of DOM, clitic doubling, and the syntax and morphology of Romance clitics. As we suggested, most of the issues involved are independent of SECs, but these structures are a particularly well fitted tool to reveal new properties of the system of clitics and agreement.

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## Appendix: full examples and sources:

### ▪ Short notes on our searches in *CORPES XXI* and *Google*:

i. The main retrieval was conducted between February and July, 2018, and during an additional query in March 2020.

ii. It is not our goal to present a precise dialectal analysis of agreement patterns in non-paradigmatic SE-Constructions in Spanish but to introduce a broader picture of their (a)systematicity and the range of variation within each agreement pattern, independently of whether speakers allow various strategies or just one.

Moreover, the searches have not been designed to have any statistical relevance (see Feliu (2022) for a detailed statistical analysis of number agreement with infinitival subjects). In the vast majority of the cases, the size of the samples is irrelevant, since the overall numbers depend on the frequency of other, more common, structures that coincide superficially with the sequence we targeted, and do not say much about the real frequency of the structure we are analyzing. For instance, a great number of “se V+pl + *a* (prep.)” cases are inchoative/ unaccusative examples of the form *se acercan a* (‘they approach’) or “inherently reflexive” verbs like *se dedican a* (‘they occupy themselves with’). The search itself was a tool to find instances of a particular frame, and we generally had to delve into the sets of examples to find a relatively small number of relevant ones. But we think that the mere existence/lack of a pertinent number of cases having a direct bearing on the issue under discussion is enough to support our goals.

iii. Yet, when relevant, we tried to obtain as much information as possible about the geographical distribution of the different constructions. In all cases we performed a pre-search where data was organized following the zonal parameter to see whether it revealed some possible dialectal cut. In those cases where either the bibliography on the topic or our pre-search indicated some possible dialectal effect, we included areal and country parameters, to have the information more organized for that purpose, and selected the same number of hits for each country we analyzed.

iv. In the cases in which no worth mentioning results emerged in the pre-search, we decided to run our search with no organizing criterion. By default, *Corpes XXI* organizes the sample chronologically beginning from the earliest instances (2002-2016). That guarantees that the sub-corpus analyzed is as random and hypothesis-neutral as possible concerning all parameters, also including a variety of geographic areas.

v. Given the size of the corpus, we restricted our search to the “non-fiction” subcorpus, where non-paradigmatic *se*-constructions are much more common than in fiction, and in a few cases to present tense, where *se*-constructions are also more present, to diminish the proportion of other interfering structures.



[...] si hay irregularidades, que **se haga** *los procesos correspondientes*

‘If there are irregularities, the corresponding legal proceedings must be opened’

We have conducted a search on cooking actions in recipes, a context where SE constructions are commonly used for describing cooking actions. Although recipes are a clear instance of highly conventionalized written texts, around 25% of the examples do not exhibit the expected agreement pattern.

**GOOGLE SEARCH** of recipes (28-6-2018):

- a. se cuece las patatas (2.780) - se cuecen las patatas (11.500)  
potatoes is/are boiled
- a’. se fríe las patatas (1.660) - se fríen las patatas (9.820)  
potatoes is/are fried
- b. se fríe los huevos (3.370) - se fríen los huevos (9.920)  
eggs is/are fried
- b’. se cuece los huevos (3.000) - se cuecen los huevos (11.100)  
eggs is/are boiled

## 2. Agreement with plural [+DOM] objects

**CORPES SEARCH:**

**Lema: SE:** pronombre personal, 3ª persona, Caso inespecífico + **proximidad** + **subcorpus:**

<b>Proximidad:</b>	1. verbo	3ª persona plural	[distancia=1derecha]
	2. lema: <i>a</i>	preposición	[distancia=2derecha]
	3. artículo	plural	[distancia=3derecha]
<b>Subcorpus:</b>	“no ficción”		

▪ Examples in the text:

(11a): Instit. de Estudios de Promoción de la Autonomía: *Cultura política en el Atlántico Norte*. Managua, 2001

En 1996 se eligen a las primeras autoridades municipales de las regiones autónoma  
‘In 1996 the first municipal authorities of the autonomous regions were elected’

(11b): *Arqueoweb*. Madrid [España]: ucm.es/arqueoweb, 2001-12-03

Al iniciarse la menstruación se aislaban a las jóvenes en un refugio donde cumplían con varios tabúes de comida y aprendían normas de conducta apropiada.

‘When the menstruation begins, young women were isolated in a refuge where they keep to several food tabus and learn the rules of proper behavior’

(11+): Guzmán, Humberto: *Los extraños*. México D. F.: Tusquets Editores, 2001

De esta manera mantenían controladas las principales instalaciones civiles y militares, habían ametrallado la fachada del Museo Nacional y se rastreaban a los miembros del Partido Comunista Checoslovaco.

‘This way civil and military installations were under control, and they machine-gun the Museum National facade, the members of the Czechoslovakian Party Communist were tracked down’

### 3. “Long distance” plural agreement

We designed a narrow search, where we analyzed the entire corpus alphabetically organized by main verb. Out of the 7160 items, more than three quarters were modals or causatives [*deber, poder, querer, soler; hacer, mandar*] and perception verbs [*oir, escuchar, sentir, ver*]. See results below.

Search:

**Lema:** SE pronombre personal, 3ª Caso inespecífico + **proximidad** + **subcorpus:**

<b>Proximidad:</b>	1. verbo	3ª persona plural	[distancia=1derecha]
	2. verbo	infinitivo	[distancia=2derecha]
	3. artículo	plural	[intervalo=4derecha]

**Subcorpus:** “no ficción”

**Organizado por:** lema primero derecha

Analyzed: **entire corpus** (7160 items)

Results: the vast majority of the cases are bridge verbs or verbs in the edge of becoming so [*intentar, buscar, pretender, desear, necesitar, pensar, lograr, conseguir*], but there are clear cases with other verbs [e.g. *osar; requerir, valorar*].

▪ Examples in the text:

(13a): <http://universidadydiscapacidadeniberoamerica.fundacionuniversia.net/profesiones-nunca-podra-sustituir-robot/1>

En esta profesión **se requieren hacer evaluaciones** tanto objetivas como subjetivas de los casos, [...].

‘In this job, evaluations, both objective and subjective for each situation, are required’

- (13b) Amanda Mars: “Grecia da por cerrados los recortes y confía en lograr el rescate”, *El País* 2012-02-18. [Spain]  
 El Gobierno [...] acabó de pactar una rebaja de las pensiones [...] que, según el Ejecutivo, está aún por concretar, aunque **se valoran reducir las superiores a 1300 euros**.  
 ‘The Government concluded an agreement on a reduction of pensions [...] which, according to the executive, is yet to be decided, although reducing those higher than 1300 euros will be considered.’
- (13+): <https://www.ultimahora.com/esperan-que-cargo-ipta-sea-meritocracia-n333587.html>  
 Se requieren nombrar a los responsables de la Dirección Nacional  
 ‘It is necessary to appoint National Directorate leaders’
- (15) <https://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/medusa/ecoblog/msuaump/sociales/tema-2-las-sociedades-actuales/>  
 “En ellas se consideran que hay personas con categorías superiores e inferiores”  
 SE consider.pl that there are persons with category superior and inferior  
 ‘In [those societies] it is considered that there are people superior to others’
- (15+) *Europa Press*: <https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-asens-dice-colon-fue-fracaso-rey-debe-firmar-indultos-si-no-hace-deberia-abdicar-20210614090243.html>  
 2021-06-14 [Spain]  
 Aquí se consideran que los hechos del 1 de octubre son hechos gravísimos  
 ‘Here it is considered that the October 1st facts are extremely serious facts’

#### 4. Plural agreement with non-arguments

There are intrinsic difficulties to design a search that would give us a general result: a) the cases of agreement with non-arguments is low, and they do not follow a specific pattern, at least not one that might be identified as easily as in the previous cases. For both pseudo-arguments and adjunct-cases we based our results on Google searches, and targeted the ones in Gallego’s and our original example on adjuncts as well as some additional ones, so the search is lexically restricted in this case. In response to an anonymous reviewer’s inquiry, in March 2020 we extended our search to other temporal NP-modifiers.

- (18): <http://www.ambito.com/886018-macri-se-reunio-con-periodistas-de-espectaculos-y-deslizo-que-podria-ir-por-la-reeleccion>  
 Brey [...] aclaró que tampoco "se hablaron de temas de la farándula  
 ‘Brey explained that there was no talk about showbusiness issues’

(29): *ABC Digital*. Asunción [Paraguay], 2004-03-06

Indicó que se deben recurrir a otras figuras para penalizar el hecho punible

(21a): Attributed to Juanxu López (LAB) in an interview; *El Correo*, Bilbao 2009/01/18.

¿hay alguna diferencia de ventas entre el País Vasco, donde no se abren los domingos, y el Estado español, donde sí se trabaja?

‘Is there any difference in sales between the Basque Country, where shops are closed on Sunday, and the Spanish State, where they do open?’

(21b) Job offer by Atperson empleo: agencia de colocación,

<https://www.atpersonempleo.com/oferta/ayudante-de-cafeteria-1>

Se descansa entre semana en días alternos cada semana, y se trabajan los fines de semana y festivos.

“ Day of leave is within weekdays on alternate days, and our working week extends to weekends and national holidays.”

## 5. Clitic strategy

### Search:

**Lema:** SE pronombre personal, 3ª Caso inespecífico + **proximidad** + **subcorpus**:

**Proximidad:** 1. pronombre personal 3ª persona plural, acusativo [distancia=1derecha]  
2. verbo 3ª persona singular [distancia=2derecha]

**Subcorpus:** “no ficción”

**Organizado por:** area lingüística > país

### Results:

i) In Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia and, very especially, Paraguay and Ecuador there are plenty of examples both with inanimate objects and with animate ones.

ii) In Venezuela there a few ones, but not many (the entire corpus revised), and in Colombia numbers are very low.

iii) In Central America there are very few cases (e.g. in the entire corpus for El Salvador we found just one example).

▪ The corpus is full of coordinated sentences where a new expression is first introduced and agrees with the verb in a postverbal fashion (*se sacan tres cuadros; se compraban huevos*; see section 2.1) and then are referred anaphorically by means of a clitic (*se los coloca; se los vendía*) or agreement (*se guardaban*). In fact, example (B) combines both possibilities in the same sentence.

(A): «Apicultura» abc.com.py, Asunción (Paraguay), 2003-02-12

Seguidamente **se sacan tres cuadros con crías operculadas**, con todas las abejas adheridas

y **se los** coloca en cada uno de los cajones que sirven de núcleo.

‘Next, three frames with opercular breeding are extracted with all the bees sticked on, and they are set in each of the boxes serving as nucleae’

(B): «El industrial que la tiene clara» Montevideo (Uruguay), [diarioelpais.com](http://diarioelpais.com), 2001-11-08

[...] hace unos 14 o 15 años **se compraban huevos** en época de producción alta, **se guardaban** en cámaras frigoríficas y **se los vendía** cuando faltaba en plaza,

‘14 or 15 years ago, eggs were bought in high production seasons, they were stored in walk-in freezers and sold when there was need’

### **GOOGLE SEARCH:**

▪ In a search restricted to Peninsular Spain, the sequence *se los mire* is found in different types of journals and publications:

(C) [www.revistaceramica.com/detalle2.aspx?id=1486](http://www.revistaceramica.com/detalle2.aspx?id=1486)

... sabemos de la propiedad de dos colores que tienen *algunos cuerpos* de presentar dos coloraciones diferentes según la dirección en que **se los mire**

‘We know the two-color property by which some bodies present two different colorings according to the direction they are looked at’

(D): [abcblogs.abc.es/.../demuestran-la-existencia-de-los-cristales-del-tiempo-17128.asp](http://abcblogs.abc.es/.../demuestran-la-existencia-de-los-cristales-del-tiempo-17128.asp)

... *los cristales* rompen espontáneamente esas simetrías espaciales, ya que cambian según el ángulo desde el que **se los mire**

‘The crystals break spontaneously those spatial simmetries because they change according to the angle they are looked at’

(E): [www.tindas.es/decoracion-de-balcones/](http://www.tindas.es/decoracion-de-balcones/)

Son *balcones* cargados de belleza que, **se los mire** como se los mire, son únicos.

‘Those are balcon full of beauty, unique no matter how you look at them’

▪ Examples in the text:

(31a): Direcc. Gral. de Planif y Ordenam. Territ, *Guía Metodológica para la formulación de los Planes Departamentales* [La Paz (Bolivia), Unidad de Ordenam. Territorial, 2001]

Para efectos operativos *estas ponderaciones se las realiza* por sectores

‘For operational reasons these weightings are made by areas’

▪ Some examples found outside the C-variety area (see footnote 12 in the text)

(i): H. ARIDJIS, *La zona del silencio*. México D. F., Punto de Lectura, 2005

Cuando **se la** desencaja, *la luz de la lámpara* ilumina unas facciones ocreas, [...]

When it is disarranged, the light of the lamp illuminates his ochre features

- (ii): P. RAMIS, *Esencia prejurídica del derecho*. Mérida, Ed. Venezolana C.A., 2002  
 En cuanto a *las incorpóreas*, no **se las** veía como cosas, sino como derechos puros.  
 With respect to the incorporeal ones, they were not seen as things, but as pure rights’
- (iii): F. Henriquez Gratereaux 2002, *Disparatario*. Sto. Domingo (Rep. Domin.), Alfa y Omega  
 Al tratar de actualizar y hacer comprensibles *las palabras del bautizo*, **se las** degrada.  
 ‘When trying to update and make understandable baptism words, they are degraded’
- (iv): «Francisco Rodríguez Cascante», [itcr.ac.cr/revistacomunicacion](http://itcr.ac.cr/revistacomunicacion), Cartago (C. Rica), 2002-01-03  
 Por el contrario, si **se los** considera variables, [...]’  
 ‘On the contrary, if they are considered variables’
- (v): G. Morales-Luna. 2009. Las Matemáticas y su aplicación en las Comunicaciones Digitales.  
*Revista.unam.mx.*, México D. F., 2009-01  
 Sus funciones primitivas entrañan una complejidad exponencial cuando se las quiere simular por esquemas clásicos  
 ‘Their primitive functions result in an exponential complexity when someone wants to simulate them by classical schemes’

## 6. Clitic climbing with clitics

### Search:

**Lema:** SE pronombre personal, 3ª Caso inespecífico + **proximidad** + **subcorpus**:

**Proximidad:** 1. pronombre personal 3ª persona plural, acusativo [distancia=1 derecha]

2. verbo 3ª persona singular [distancia=2 derecha]

3. verbo infinitivo [distancia=3 derecha]

**Subcorpus:** “no ficción”

**Organizado por:** area lingüística > país

Results: plenty of examples from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia. Examples are attested in all linguistic areas, although much less prominently.

### GOOGLE SEARCH: “hacen dos”

Vivir en una carpa o una casucha sin calefacción cuando hacen dos grados bajo cero es inaceptable

<https://www.mendozapost.com/nota/141825-una-villa-de-emergencia-poblada-de-refugiados-y-adictos-se-instalo-en-paris/>

## 7. Number harmony vs. clitic mutation: relative clauses

### Search:

LEMA: **SE** pronombre personal, 3ª Caso inespecífico + **proximidad** + **subcorpus**:

**Proximidad:** 1. **que** [distancia=1 izquierda]

2. verbo 3ª persona singular [distancia=1 derecha]

**Subcorpus:** “no ficción”

### ▪ Examples in the text:

(79a): «EL NORTE VALLADOLID» (El Norte de Castilla) [España]

se valora muy positivamente [...] así como la participación en programas europeos, **los servicios que se proporciona** a los alumnos y la preparación de idiomas.

‘It is highly valued [...] as well as involvement in European programs, the services provided to the students and language learning’

(79b): M. Tello & E. Basqueto. 2006. *II Seminario de Formación Profesional*. Córdoba (Argentina), Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto

Selección de **las personas a las que se entrevistaron** para obtener más datos

‘Selection of the people interviewed to obtain more data’

(79c) "Privacidad y protección de datos: un análisis de legislación comparada", Diálogos. Revista electrónica de historia vol.11 n.1, 2010

[https://www.scielo.sa.cr/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1409-469X2010000100004](https://www.scielo.sa.cr/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1409-469X2010000100004)

Derecho de acceso: las personas tendrán derecho a solicitar y obtener gratuitamente información de sus datos de carácter personal sometidos a tratamiento, el origen de dichos datos, así como las comunicaciones realizadas o que se prevén hacer de los mismos.

“Right of access: people have the right to ask for and receive information about their own personal data under treatment, the source of those data, as well as about the communications made or expected to be made with those data, at no expenses,”

### **GOOGLE SEARCH** “se vende” vs. “se venden”

(79): <https://www.silicon.es/submit-la-herramienta-de-comixology-que-permite-a-los-autores-publicar-online-sus-propios-comics-111091>

Algo similar a lo que sucede [...] con los libros que **se vende** a través de las plataformas en Internet.

‘Something similar to what happens with the books sold through the Internet’

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