

NONCORE DATIVES IN BASQUE AND SPANISH IMPERSONAL, PASSIVE AND ANTICAUSATIVE SENTENCES¹

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ABSTRACT. This paper focuses on the Basque impersonal construction, i.e. a detransitivized configuration that can convey impersonal, passive and middle readings. Although these are agentive constructions (Fernández and Berro 2021), labile change-of-state predicates in these sentences allow for a causative and an anticausative reading, enhanced by the possibility of inserting a purpose clause or a by-itself PP, respectively (Ortiz de Urbina 2003). We suggest that two distinct underlying representations with identical exponents yield these readings: (i) a defective Voice head that encodes an implicit external argument in the causative variant (Schäfer 2008; Berro et al. 2022), and (ii) an anticausative counterpart, lacking Voice altogether. We support this claim by examining the distribution of noncore dative arguments in these contexts, whose possible interpretations are (i) affected by an intentionally or naturally caused change of state, or (ii) accidental causers of this event; this phenomenon is also attested in Spanish *se*-passives and *se*-anticausatives (Cuervo 2003; Suárez-Palma 2020). Assuming that a middle applicative head introduces these arguments (Cuervo 2020), the affected reading arises when the applicative merges below ν P, and the accidental causer one when it sits on top of it. Crucially, the latter is only possible in anticausative contexts, where that position is not filled by Voice; these observations from Basque mirror Suárez-Palma's (2020) findings for Spanish. Finally, if this proposal is on the right track, future typological studies should include Basque in the list of languages showing applicative constructions (Polinsky 2024).

Keywords: Basque, Spanish, impersonal construction, Voice, noncore datives, applicatives, passives, middle constructions, inchoative constructions, anticausative constructions.

RESUMEN. Este artículo se centra en la construcción impersonal del euskera, es decir, una configuración detransitivizada que puede denotar lecturas impersonales, pasivas y medias. Aunque se trata de construcciones agentivas (Fernández and Berro 2021), cuando estas oraciones contienen verbos lábiles, permiten una interpretación causativa y anticausativa, que se refuerza mediante la inserción de una cláusula de propósito o el SPrep *por sí mismo*, respectivamente (Ortiz de Urbina 2003). Proponemos que existen dos representaciones subyacentes diferentes que favorecen estas lecturas: (i) una configuración causativa, con un núcleo Voz defectivo que codifica un argumento externo implícito (Schäfer 2008; Berro et al. 2022), y (ii) una variante inchoativa/anticausativa, sin Voz. Apoyamos esta idea examinando la distribución de dativos adicionales en estos contextos, cuyas posibles interpretaciones son (i) afectados por un cambio de estado intencional o naturalmente causado, o (ii) como causantes accidentales del mismo; este fenómeno se observa también en las oraciones pasivas reflejas y anticausativas con *se* del español (Cuervo 2003). Asumiendo que un núcleo aplicativo medio introduce estos argumentos (Cuervo 2020), la interpretación de afectado surge cuando el aplicativo se ensambla por debajo de ν P, mientras que la de causante accidental cuando lo hace por encima. Crucialmente, esta última solo es posible en contextos anticausativos, cuando Voz no ocupa dicha posición; estas observaciones del euskera coinciden con los resultados de Suárez-Palma (2020) para el español. Finalmente, si esta propuesta no va desencaminada, el euskera deberá incluirse entre las demás lenguas que admiten construcciones aplicativas en futuros estudios tipológicos (Polinsky 2024).

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Palabras clave: euskera, español, construcción impersonal, Voz, dativos adicionales, aplicativos, pasivas, construcciones medias, construcciones incoativas, construcciones anticausativas.

1. Introduction²

This paper presents understudied data from Basque impersonal sentences and their interaction with noncore dative arguments. These constructions, also known in the literature as mediopassives (de Rijk 2008; Ortiz de Urbina 2006; Rezac 2009), or middles (Berro and Fernández 2019; Urrestarazu 2019), are detransitivized configurations, alternating with a transitive counterpart, and used to convey impersonal, passive and middle readings. In transitive contexts (1a), two arguments –namely, the agent and the theme– bear ergative and absolutive case, respectively, and both show agreement with the auxiliary **edun* (‘to have’). In the impersonal (1b), however, the verb’s internal argument retains its absolutive case, but surfaces as the grammatical subject, agreeing with the intransitive auxiliary *izan* (‘to be’) (Ortiz de Urbina 2003; Pineda and Berro 2020; Berro et al. 2022); the latter does not show any ergative marking whatsoever.

- (1) a. Eneko-k sintaxi liburua saldu zuen.
 Eneko.ERG syntax book.D.ABS sell .PFV have.3SG.ABS.3SG.ERG
 ‘Eneko sold the syntax book.’
 b. Sintaxi liburua saldu zen.
 syntax book.D.ABS sell.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The syntax book was sold.’

It is generally agreed that these sentences denote the participation of an implicit agent in the event (Berro et al. 2022) that is able to control into a purpose clause (Bhatt and Pancheva 2006), and therefore makes it ungrammatical to insert the equivalent of a *by-itself* PP, i.e. *berez* (‘naturally’), in these contexts (2b).

- (2) a. Sintaxi liburuak ikaskuntza erraz-teko idatzi ziren.
 syntax books.ABS learning.ABS ease-to write.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 ‘Syntax books were written in order to ease learning.’
 b. *Sintaxi liburuak berez idatzi ziren.
 syntax books.ABS naturally write.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 ‘Syntax books were written on their own.’

However, when a labile predicate denoting a change of state occurs in these contexts, ambiguity arises between an agentive and a non-agentive interpretation (3a), as evidenced by the fact that the insertion of a purpose clause (3b) or a *by-itself* expression (3c) is possible. This suggests that two different underlying representations yield the same exponent, namely a causative configuration and an anticausative one (Ortiz de Urbina 2003; Oyharçabal 2003; Ormazabal 2008; Berro 2015; Berro et al. 2018).

² List of abbreviations: 1= first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; ABS = absolutive; ACC = accusative; D = determiner; DAT = dative; DOM = differential object marking; ERG = ergative; F = feminine; IPFV = imperfective; INS = instrumental; LOC = locative; PFV = perfective; PL = plural; RFL = reflexive; SG = singular

- (3) a. Beira apurtu zen.
 glass.D.ABS break.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The glass was broken.’
 ‘The glass broke.’
- b. Beira birzikla-tzeko apurtu zen.
 glass.D.ABS recycle-to break.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The glass was broken in order to recycle it.’
- b. Beira berez apurtu zen.
 glass.D.ABS naturally break.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The glass broke on its own.’

Additionally, Basque impersonals containing change-of-state predicates allow the insertion of non-core dative arguments, which can have three possible interpretations: (i) affected by an intentionally caused change of state; (ii) affected by a naturally caused change of state; and (iii) accidental causer of the change of state.

- (4) Eneko-ri egur hau erre zaio.
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 i. This wood was burned and Eneko is affected by it.
 ii. This wood burned and Eneko is affected by it.
 iii. Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn.

The example in (4) can convey three different scenarios: the interpretation in (4i) would be felicitous if someone burned some wood and Eneko is impacted by it, possibly because he was the owner of the wood, or the wood was intended to be his; the reading in (4ii), on the other hand, also denotes Eneko being affected by the wood’s burning, but this time, the change of state is not intentionally but naturally caused, e.g. lightning might have struck on the pile of wood and started a fire; finally, (4iii) would be appropriate in a context where Eneko is partially responsible for the burning of the wood due to his negligence, for instance.

Interestingly, the dative’s last two possible readings in (4), namely affected by a naturally caused change of state, and accidental causer of the latter, are ruled out the moment a purpose clause is inserted, as shown in (5). In other words, Eneko can only be interpreted as affected by a change of state that was intentionally caused.

- (5) Eneko-ri egur hau erre zaio.
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 ikatza egiteko.
 coal.ABS make-to
 i. This wood was burned to make coal and Eneko is affected by it.
 ii. ~~*This wood burned to make coal and Eneko is affected by it.~~
 iii. ~~*Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn to make coal.~~

On the other hand, in the context of a *by-itself* phrase, the opposite is true, i.e. the dative’s first interpretation as affected by an intentionally caused change of state is not available; the dative can only be understood as affected by a naturally caused change of state or as its accidental causer (6).

- (6) Eneko-ri egur hau berez erre zaio.
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS naturally burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 i. ~~*This wood was burned by itself and Eneko is affected by it.~~
 ii. This wood burned by itself and Eneko is affected by it.
 iii. Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn by itself.

In this respect, Basque shows the same behavior observed in Spanish, where non-argumental datives are also possible in *se*-passive and *se*-anticausative sentences containing verbs denoting a change of state (Cuervo 2003). In this Romance language, the dative can only be understood as affected by an intentionally caused event in *se*-passive configurations (7), which contain an implicit intentional causer that is able to control into a purpose clause; however, this reading is not possible in *se*-anticausatives (8), which lack such implicit argument, and the dative must therefore be interpreted as affected by a naturally caused event, or as its unintentional causer (Suárez-Palma 2020).³

- (7) (A Sandra_i) se le_i quemó la madera de roble para hacer carbón.
 Sandra.DAT SE 3SG.DAT burned the wood of oak for make coal
 i. The oak wood was burned to make coal, and Sandra is affected by it.
 ii. ~~*The oak wood burned to make coal, and Sandra is affected by it.~~
 iii. ~~Sandra accidentally caused the oak wood to burn to make coal.~~
 (Adapted from Suárez-Palma 2020: 25)

- (8) (A Sandra_i) se le_i quemó la madera de roble por sí sola.
 Sandra.DAT SE 3SG.DAT burned the wood of oak by RFL alone
 i. ~~*The oak wood was burned by itself, and Sandra is affected by it.~~
 ii. The oak wood burned by itself, and Sandra is affected by it.
 iii. Sandra accidentally caused the oak wood to burn by itself.

Given the existing parallelisms between Basque and Spanish regarding the distribution and possible interpretations of noncore datives in these contexts, in this paper we offer an analysis of these phenomena that harkens back to existing proposals for Spanish (Cuervo 2003; Suárez-Palma 2020), and that is couched within syntactocentric approaches to argument structure. We propose that two different configurations with the same spell-out form are at play: on the one hand, a causative structure, containing a defective thematic Voice projection that lacks a [D] feature, as in Schäfer (2008) and Berro et al. (2022); in the specifier of Voice, sits an empty PERSON pronoun which interpreted as [+human]. On the other hand, an anticausative derivation, lacking Voice altogether. Additionally, we adopt the notion of middle applicative (Cuervo 2020), i.e. a functional head that introduces an additional argument in causative, anticausative and inchoative⁴

³ Suárez-Palma (2020) uses non-perfective tenses in his examples because his object of study are middle-passive sentences; here, we use perfective ones to trigger impersonal, passive and inchoative readings. Nonetheless, the impersonal construction in Basque is also able to denote middle-passive, generic readings when it contains non-perfective tenses as well; for a more in-depth discussion of this issue, we refer the reader to Fernández and Berro (2022). Additionally, Suárez-Palma's opts for the possessive *Sandra's oak wood* for the affected reading; while we acknowledge that is one possible interpretation of these sentences, we assume affectation does not necessarily involve possession, hence we did not include that in our own translations. Finally, these phenomena are also attested in other Ibero-Romance languages, like Asturian (cf. Suárez-Palma 2021).

⁴ Although these terms are sometimes used as synonymous in the literature, we will differentiate between anticausative constructions, i.e. non-agentive contexts containing a labile predicate (e.g. *the vase broke* vs.

configurations, and whose interpretation is derived from the position this head merges into. Thus, the dative's affected interpretation arises when the applicative head merges below vP , whereas the unintentional causer reading is only available when this functional head sits atop vP , i.e. in inchoative or anticausative contexts, which lack a Voice projection occupying that position. The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, we review the main properties of Basque impersonal sentences in contrast with those of Spanish *se*-passives and anticausatives, primarily, but also with impersonal-*se* and periphrastic passive sentences, tangentially; Section 3 is devoted to the analysis, and Section 4 includes the conclusions.

2. Basque impersonals in contrast with Spanish

Fernández and Berro (2021) present a thorough description of the main structural properties of Basque impersonals in contrast with those of middles and passives in other languages. In this section, we will summarize their findings paying special attention to those related to this construction's grammatical and notional subject, auxiliary and predicate selection, as well as an existing person restriction on its grammatical subject. Additionally, because there seems to be a structural and semantic overlap between Basque impersonals and Spanish *se*-passives and anticausatives regarding the distribution and possible interpretations of noncore dative arguments in them, we will provide a comparative crosslinguistic description of these contexts, while also discussing Spanish impersonal *se* and periphrastic passive sentences tangentially. To that end, we will begin explaining several diagnostics to tease apart these Spanish sentences before delving into their crosslinguistic comparison with Basque.

2.1. Teasing apart impersonal, passive and anticausative *se*-sentences in Spanish

In this section, we will briefly sketch the main diagnostics to differentiate impersonal *se*-, passive *se*- and anticausative *se*- sentences, which we hope will aid the reader when we present the structural similarities and differences between these sentences and Basque impersonals in the next section. Since our goal is not to develop a thorough description or analysis of these Spanish sentences, but to highlight their striking resemblance with Basque impersonals in order to motivate the analysis we will propose, this will not be an exhaustive section. The literature on Spanish *se* is incredibly vast; for a more comprehensive overview of the state of the matter, we refer readers to Mendikoetxea's (1999) seminal work, and to Sánchez López (2002), MacDonald (2017), Armstrong and MacDonald (2021), Fábregas (2021) or Ormazabal and Romero (2022) for more recent descriptions and analyses.

MacDonald (2017), and references therein, points out that the most salient difference between impersonal *se* constructions –in opposition to *se*-passives and anticausatives– is that the sole overt DP argument in the former is a grammatical object, which surfaces marked with accusative case. In passive and anticausative contexts, on the other hand, this argument is a grammatical subject, bearing nominative case, and triggering agreement with the verb. Evidence for this is that, when this argument is a full DP denoting a specific human entity, it shows differential object argument (DOM), which is only available for specific human direct objects (9a); alternatively, this argument can surface in the form of an accusative clitic (9b). All of this is uncommon in passive contexts (9c,d)⁵ and impossible in anticausative (9e,f) ones.

Larry broke the vase), and inchoative sentences, i.e. unaccusative configurations containing predicates lacking an agentive counterpart (e.g. *the flowers bloomed* vs. **Larry bloomed the flowers*).

⁵ An anonymous reviewer notes that it is possible to find examples like (9c) in some texts in different Spanish dialects, and much more frequently in oral Spanish. In fact, Ormazabal & Romero (2022)

- (9) a. *Impersonal*
 Se arrestó a las sospechosas.
 SE arrested.3SG DOM the suspects.F.PL
 ‘The suspects were arrested.’
- b. *Impersonal*
 Se las arrestó.
 SE them.F.ACC arrested
 ‘They were arrested.’
- c. *Passive*
 Se arrestaron (*a) las sospechosas.
 SE arrested.3PL DOM the suspects.F.PL
 ‘The suspects were arrested.’
- d. *Passive*
 *Se las arrestaron.
 SE them.F.ACC arrested.3PL
 Intended: ‘They were arrested.’
- e. *Anticausative*
 Se durmieron (*a) las sospechosas.
 SE slept.3PL DOM the suspects.F.PL
 ‘The suspects fell asleep.’
- f. *Anticausative*
 *Se las durmieron.
 SE them.F.ACC slept.3PL
 Intended: ‘They fell asleep.’

Additionally, the data in (9) show that the DP in impersonal *se*-constructions does not trigger verbal agreement, while this is not the case in *se*-passive and *se*-anticausative sentences. This reinforces the idea that the former is a grammatical object, and the latter a grammatical subject. According to MacDonald, the argumental DP would check accusative case on Voice in impersonal *se*-sentences, but it would check nominative case on T in passive and anticausative *se*-sentences.

Regarding agency, only *se*-impersonal (10a), *se*-passive (10b) and periphrastic passive sentences (10c) license the insertion of purpose clauses and agent-oriented modifiers, which has been taken as evidence for the syntactic encoding of an agent argument (Bhatt & Pancheva 2006).

- (10) a. Se arrestó a las sospechosas {para enjuiciarlas/ adrede}.
 SE arrested.3SG DOM the suspects.F.PL for try-them.F.PL deliberately
 ‘The suspects were arrested to try them/on purpose.’
- b. Se cometieron los delitos {para desafiar al gobierno/ adrede}.
 SE committed.3PL the crimes for defy the government.ACC deliberately
 ‘The crimes were committed to defy the government/on purpose.’
- c. Los delitos fueron cometidos {para desafiar al gobierno/ adrede}.
 the crimes were committed for defy the government.ACC deliberately
 ‘The crimes were committed to defy the government/on purpose.’

understand impersonal and passive *se*-sentences are two realizations of same type of construction, whose different attested agreement patterns are the result of two post-syntactic processes, namely Mutation and Number Harmony.

Anticausative sentences (11), on the other hand, do not allow purpose clauses or agent-oriented adverbials; these sentences do, however, license *by-itself* PPs, which is indicative of the lack of an implicit agent in these configurations.

- (11) Se estropearon los coches por sí solos (*para cobrar el seguro/*adrede).
 SEbroke-down the cars by RFL alone for collect the insurance/deliberately
 ‘The cars broke down on their own (*to collect the insurance/*deliberately).

These data lead MacDonald (2017) to propose that *se*-impersonal, *se*-passive, and periphrastic passive sentences encode an implicit agent, whereas anticausatives do not. Next, we show the main structural properties of Basque impersonal sentences, in contrast with the Spanish structures described in this section.

2.2. Basque impersonal sentences

Basque impersonals (12a) are detransitivized constructions, whose grammatical subject is the verb’s internal argument, marked with absolutive case and agreeing with the auxiliary *izan* (‘to be’) (Ortiz de Urbina 2003); the latter is the auxiliary present in intransitive contexts, while in transitive ones Basque opts for *edun* (‘to have’) (12b). Basque impersonals pattern with unaccusatives and inchoatives, not with unergatives, regarding the auxiliary selection; in this regard, Basque impersonals resemble unaccusative constructions in Romance languages like French (12c) or Italian, which also select the *be* auxiliary (cf. Cinque 1988; Kayne 1993; D’Alessandro 2007)⁶.

- (12) a. Sintaxi liburua saldu zen.
 syntax book.D.ABS sold.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The syntax book was sold.’
 b. Eneko-k sintaxi liburua saldu zuen.
 Eneko.ERG syntax book.D.ABS sold.PFV have.3SG.ABS.3SG.ERG
 ‘Eneko sold the syntax book.’
 c. *French*
 La reine est venue.
 the.F.SG queen is come.F.SG
 ‘The queen has come.’

Basque impersonals contain an implicit agent which must necessarily be interpreted as an indefinite human; however, this argument is not even marked on the auxiliary, and it cannot be made explicit by means of an adjunct PP (13a). The agentive nature of these sentences makes them incompatible with *by-itself* PPs when they contain predicates that are necessarily agentive, like *to read* (13b).

- (13) a. Sintaxi liburuak irakurri ziren (*Jonez).
 syntax books.D.ABS read.PFV be.3PL.ABS by-Jon
 ‘The syntax books were read (*by Jon).’
 b. *Sintaxi liburuak berez irakurri ziren.
 syntax books.D.ABS naturally read.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 ‘Syntax books were read (*by themselves).’

⁶ As noted by Fernández and Berro (2021: 1056), Basque impersonals also depart from Dutch and German middles, which also select their *have* auxiliary counterpart.

In this respect, Basque impersonals resemble Spanish *se*-passives (14a), whose theme also surfaces as the grammatical subject, since they denote the participation of an implicit human agent in the event, but it cannot be realized in the form of a *by*-phrase. On the other hand, these sentences differ from Spanish periphrastic passives, which do license these adjuncts (14b).⁷

- (14) a. Se leyeron los libros de sintaxis (*por Luis).⁸
 SE read the books of syntax by Luis
 ‘The syntax books were read.’
 b. Los libros de sintaxis fueron leídos (por Luis).
 the books of syntax were read by Luis
 ‘The syntax books were read by Luis.’

Despite its lack of phonetic realization, the implicit agent in Basque impersonals appears to be syntactically active, since it allows control into purpose clauses (15a), agent-oriented modifiers (15b), or secondary predicates (15c); the latter, however, is only possible in generic/habitual contexts, and unavailable in episodic ones.

- (15) a. Itsasontzia hondoratu zen aseguria kobratzeko.
 ship.D.ABS sink.PFV be.3SG.ABS insurance.D.ABS collect.to
 ‘The ship was sunk to collect the insurance.’
 (*Fernández and Berro 2021: 1071*)
 b. Itsasontzia nahita hondoratu zen.
 ship.D.ABS deliberately sink.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The ship was sunk deliberately.’
 (*Fernández and Berro 2021: 1073*)
 c. Kanta hori mozkortuta kanta-tzen da.
 song that.ABS drunk sing.IPFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘That song is sung when drunk.’
 (*Fernández and Berro 2021: 1074*)
 d. *Kanta hori mozkortuta kanta zen.
 song that.ABS drunk sing.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 Intended: ‘That song was sung drunk.’

The implicit agent in Spanish *se*-passives is also able to control into purpose clauses (16a), and to license agent-oriented adverbs (16b). However, when it comes to licensing secondary predicates, *se*-passives, like Basque impersonals, are only able to do so in generic/habitual contexts (16c), but not in episodic ones (16d) (Miguel Aparicio 1992; MacDonald 2017).⁹

⁷ MacDonald (2017), among others, points out that non-referential *by*-phrases are sometimes accepted in Spanish *se*-passives:

(i) Este cuadro se pintó por un experto retratista.
 this painting SE painted by an expert portrait.painter
 ‘This painting was painted by an expert portrait painter.’
 (*MacDonald 2017: 371*)

⁸ In legal and political written texts, however, it is possible to find *se*-passive examples containing *by*-phrases: *la ley se aprobó por el parlamento* (‘the bill was passed by Congress’) (cf. Bosque & Gutiérrez-Rexach 2009; MacDonald 2017).

⁹ Landau (2010) reports similar facts for Italian.

- (16) a. Se hundió el barco para cobrar el seguro.
SE sunk the boat for collect the insurance
'The boat was sunk to collect the insurance.'
- b. Se hundió el barco deliberadamente.
SE sunk the boat deliberately
'The boat was sunk deliberately.'
- c. Esta canción se canta/ha de cantar borracho.
this song SE sings has of sing drunk
'This song is (to be) sung when drunk.'
- d. ?*Esta canción se cantó borracho.
this song SE sang drunk
'This song was sung drunk.'

As noted by Ortiz de Urbina (2003), it is the agent's lack of explicit realization in Basque impersonals that causes ambiguity between a causative and an anticausative reading when a labile verb, i.e. those entering the causative alternation (Schäfer 2008), occurs in these contexts (17a). Nonetheless, this structural ambiguity can be done away with by means of an adjunct phrase: specifically, with either an instrumental PP (17b) or a purpose clause (17c) for the causative counterpart, and with an expression denoting the natural spontaneity of an event (17d) for the anticausative one.

- (17) a. Atea bederatziatan ireki zen.
door.D.ABS nine.LOC open.PFV be.3SG.ABS
'The door (was) opened at nine.'
(Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 580)
- b. Atea bederatziatan ireki zen giltzarekin.
door.D.ABS nine.LOC open.PFV be.3SG.ABS key.D.INS
'The door *(was) opened at nine with the key.'
- c. Atea bederatziatan ireki zen publikoa
door.D.ABS nine.LOC open.PFV be.3.SG.ABS public.D.ABS
sartzeko.
admit-to
'The door *(was) opened at nine with to let the audience in.'
- d. Atea berez ireki zen bederatziatan.
door.D.ABS naturally open.PFV be.3SG.ABS nine.LOC
'The door (*was) opened at nine by itself.'

Coincidentally, when labile predicates occur in Spanish *se*-passives, ambiguity also arises between a causative and anticausative reading (18a); this is so because *se*-passives and *se*-anticausatives share identical exponents (Fernández Soriano 1999b; Cuervo 2003; Suárez-Palma 2019, 2020). In both structures, the only DP available, the verb's internal argument, surfaces as the grammatical subject, triggering agreement with the verb. One way of differentiating these two configurations is that, while *se*-passives can take both DPs and bare NPs as their theme (18b), in the case of anticausatives, only full DPs can be grammatical subjects (18a-b); this has been taken as evidence for these arguments' externalization from the VP (Suñer 1982;¹⁰ Fernández Soriano 1999a). As in Basque,

¹⁰ In order to account for the naked NPs' inability to surface as preverbal subjects in Spanish, Suñer (1982: 209) proposed the Naked Noun Phrase Constraint:

other ways to disambiguate these contexts is by inserting adjuncts: instrumental (18c) and purpose clauses (18d) are only compatible with passive (causative) contexts, whereas *by-itself* PPs are restricted to anticausative sentences (18e).

- (18) a. *Passive/Anticausative*
 Se abrieron las puertas.
 SE opened the doors
 ‘The doors were opened.’
 ‘The doors opened.’
- b. *Passive/*Anticausative*
 Se abrieron puertas.
 SE opened doors
 ‘Doors were opened.’
 ‘?Doors opened.’
- c. *Passive/*Anticausative*
 Se abrieron las puertas con la llave.
 SE opened the doors with the key
 ‘The doors were opened with the key.’
- d. *Passive/*Anticausative*
 Se abrieron las puertas para dejar entrar al público.
 SE opened the doors for allow enter the public
 ‘The doors were opened to allow the public to enter.’
- e. **Passive/Anticausative*
 Se abrieron las puertas por sí solas.¹¹
 SE opened the doors by RFL alone
 ‘The doors opened by themselves.’

Verbs denoting events requiring the participation of an agent, such as *irakurri* (‘to read’), cannot convey a non-agentive reading, and are therefore not compatible with *by-itself* expressions (19a); they do however allow adjuncts denoting volition (19b). This is also the case for Spanish (19c).

- (19) a. *Sintaxi liburuak berez irakurri ziren.
 syntax books.D.ABS naturally read.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 Intended: ‘The syntax books read by themselves.’
- b. Sintaxi liburuak nahita irakurri ziren.
 syntax books.D.ABS deliberately read.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 ‘The syntax books were read deliberately.’
- c. Se leyeron los libros de sintaxis {*por sí solos/deliberadamente}
 SE read the books of syntax by RFL alone deliberately
 ‘The syntax books {*read by themselves/were read deliberately}.’

i. The Naked Noun Phrase Constraint: ‘An unmodified common noun in preverbal position cannot be the surface subject of a sentence under conditions of normal stress and intonation.’

¹¹ An anonymous reviewer points out that, in the absence of a determiner, the ungrammaticality would persist, for it would trigger a passive reading (only *se*-passives allow bare NPs as themes) which would clash with the *by-itself* PP.

On the other hand, purely unaccusative predicates (e.g. ‘to wilt’), which lack a causative counterpart, can only be interpreted inchoatively, and are incompatible with an impersonal/passive reading, both in Basque (20a-b) and in Spanish (20c-d).

- (20) a. Arrosak berez ihartu ziren.
 roses.D.ABS naturally wither.PFV be.3PL.ABS
 ‘The roses withered by themselves.’
- b. *Arrosak ihartu ziren (*beste lore batzuk
 roses.D.ABS wither.PFV be.3PL.ABS other flower some.ABS
 landatzeko).
 plant-to
 Intended: ‘The roses withered to plant new flowers.’
- c. *Anticausative*
 Las rosas se marchitaron por sí solas.
 the roses SE withered by RFL alone
 ‘The roses withered by themselves.’
- d. *Passive*
 *Las rosas se marchitaron para plantar otras flores.
 the roses SE withered for plant other flowers
 Intended: ‘The roses withered to plant new flowers.’

Fernández and Berro (2021) highlight the fact that Basque impersonals allow for a wide variety of verb classes; thus, in addition to all transitive verbs, including those participating in the causative alternation, unergative predicates (21) are also possible in these contexts. Ortiz de Urbina (2003: 580) notes that when an unergative verb appears in these configurations, the demotion of the ergative external argument does not leave behind any other argument in the structure, and therefore the verb takes a third person singular unmarked form; moreover, auxiliary forms from intransitive *izan*/**edin* (‘to be’) are used.

- (21) a. Politikari batzu-ek ez dute inoiz dimiti-tzen.
 politician some.ERG not have.3.PL.ERG.3.SG.ABS ever resign.IPFV
 ‘Some politicians never resign.’
- b. Hemen inoiz ere ez da dimiti-tzen.
 here ever also not be.3SG.ABS resign.IPFV
 ‘Here no one ever resigns.’

In the case of Spanish, unergative predicates would not be possible in *se*-passive configurations, due to these verbs’ lacking an internal argument that could be promoted to grammatical subject. However, unergatives are grammatical in impersonal *se*-sentences; these are also detransitivized agentive constructions whose verbs invariably surface conjugated for third person singular. These sentences can take an internal argument which does not agree with the verb and is marked with accusative case – (22a), or no internal argument at all (22b). MacDonald (2017), for instance, also assumes that impersonal *se* sentences in Spanish, like *se*-passives, also project a null pronominal as their external argument, with which the verb agrees. Other authors, like Ormazabal and Romero (2022) argue that passive and impersonal *se*-sentences are in fact the same construction, in which *se* is the external argument with [person] but no number phi-features; the different morphological markings of the postverbal theme –nominative in

se-passives, and accusative in impersonals– and its agreement with the verb and lack thereof, respectively, would be due to a post-syntactic process called Number Harmony.

- (22) a. Se arrestó a los políticos corruptos. **Passive/Impersonal*
 SE arrested the politicians corrupt.ACC
 b. Aquí no se dimite nunca. **Passive/Impersonal*
 here not SE resigns never
 ‘Here no one ever resigns.’

Another characteristic of Basque impersonals is that a person restriction operates on their grammatical subject, namely, only third person subjects may occur in these sentences (23).

- (23) *Anticausative/*Impersonal*
 Ni hondoratu nintzen.
 1SG.ABS sink.PFV be.1SG.ABS
 ‘I sank.’

Interestingly, this person restriction is also present in Spanish *se*-passives (24a), but not in periphrastic passives (24b), or in *se*-anticausatives (24c).

- (24) a. **Te despediste (del trabajo).*
 you fired.2SG from-the work
 Intended: You were fired (from work).
 (MacDonald 2017: 368)
 b. (Tú) fuiste despedido (del trabajo).
 you were.2SG fired from-thework
 ‘You were fired (from work).’
 c. *Anticausative/*Passive*
 (Yo) me hundí.
 I me sank
 ‘I sank/*I was sunk.’

Additionally, it appears that impersonal *se*-sentences are also subjected to this person restriction, since the verb in these configurations must be invariably conjugated in the third person singular form.

- (25) a. Se detuvo a los culpables.
 SE arrested.3SG DOM the culprits.ACC
 ‘The culprits were arrested.’
 b. **Me detuve a los culpables.*
 SE.1SG arrested.1SG DOM the culprits.ACC
 Intended: ‘The culprits were arrested.’

MacDonald (2017) takes these data as evidence for the presence of a null external argument in Spanish passive and impersonal *se*-sentences, and lack thereof in anticausatives and periphrastic passives; according to this author, this empty pronominal would compete with the 1st or 2nd person theme for Agree with T⁰ for person. When the theme is 3rd person, however, this intervention effect does not arise because third person

DPs lack a person feature altogether, and therefore it does not need to person-Agree with T° for Case (see also D’Alessandro 2007 and Mendikoetxea 2008).

In this section we have outlined some of the most salient properties of Basque impersonal constructions in opposition with Spanish passive, impersonal and anticausative *se*-sentences. First, we have shown several parallelisms exist between Basque impersonals and impersonal and passive *se*-sentences regarding their agentive interpretation, the licensing of purpose clauses and agent-oriented modifiers, the person restriction operating on their grammatical subjects, and the impossibility of explicitly stating the implicit external argument. Second, we provided data showing that when labile predicates enter Basque impersonals, ambiguity arises between a causative and an anticausative reading; this phenomenon is also attested in Spanish: when passive and impersonal *se*-sentences contain a labile verb, an anticausative interpretation becomes available. Third, just as in the case of Spanish *se*-passive and anticausative structures, the verb’s internal argument in Basque impersonals appears to surface as the grammatical subject, being the sole DP in the derivation. Finally, when Basque impersonals contain a labile predicate denoting a change of state, ambiguity arises, since both a causative and an anticausative reading become available; this is also the case for Spanish, where *se*-passive and anticausative sentences share the same spell-out form. In the next section, we develop the analysis for these phenomena in which we will distinguish between the Basque impersonal configuration, containing a thematic defective Voice projection introducing an implicit external argument, and the Basque anticausative variant, lacking Voice altogether; we will support this proposal with evidence from noncore datives in these contexts.

3. The analysis

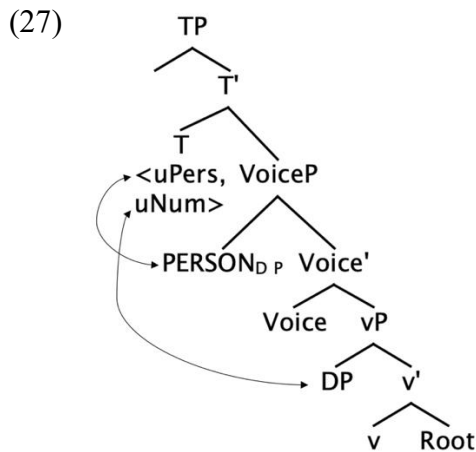
3.1. Voice in Basque impersonal constructions

We will assume the analysis put forth by Berro et al. (2022) for Basque impersonals, since it successfully accounts for the structural properties outlined in the previous section, including the licensing of purpose clauses by a syntactically active implicit agent, the impossibility of making the latter explicit by means of an adpositional phrase, and the third person restriction on the verb’s internal argument. These authors argue that Basque impersonal constructions host a defective thematic Voice projection lacking a [D] feature, in the fashion proposed by Schäfer (2008) for passives, and further developed by Alexiadou et al. (2015) for Greek passives: Voice_{λ,x,θ}. In the specifier of this functional projection sits an empty PERSON pronoun, which is interpreted as [+human], with no number features and an unspecified person feature; this pronoun would be similar to the reflexive in Spanish *se*-passives (Ormazabal & Romero 2022). According to Berro et al., this argument is of a DP category, not a φP, which not only allows it to control into purpose clauses, license agentive adverbial modifiers and secondary predicates, as seen above, but also to bind reciprocal and certain reflexive anaphors (26).¹² Landau (2010) argues that only DPs, not φPs, can license secondary depictive predicates and bind anaphors.

¹² One reviewer wonders how is it that an element lacking number features can bind a reciprocal anaphor, when reciprocals require a plural antecedent. While Berro et al. (2022) do not delve into this question, we would like to point out that this phenomenon is not exclusive of Basque; in French, the pronoun *on* triggers third person singular agreement with the verb, while it can also bind a reciprocal anaphor: *on se déteste l’un l’autre* (‘we detest each other’). We leave this question open for further inquiry.

- (26) Elkar engaina-tzen denean.
 each-other.ABS deceive.IPFV be.3ABS.when
 ‘When everyone deceives each other.’
 (*Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 588*)

Nevertheless, the unspecified person features of the null external argument are unable to license adpositional agents with specific first, second or third person features. The unspecified nature of PERSON, together with the type of Voice in these structures, account for the lack of phonological realization of the external argument, the selection of the intransitive auxiliary *izan* (‘to be’), as well as the lack of morphological agreement with it. The derivation proposed by Berro et al. (2022) for Basque impersonals is shown in (27)



Because Voice is defective in these structures, it cannot assign Case and does not have uninterpretable phi-features to value and delete. Berro et al. explain that this defective Voice is a weak phase, similar to that in unaccusative contexts, which allows for the internal argument to enter an agreement relation with higher functional heads, T° in this case. This situation, places both the null external argument and the internal argument in the same phasal domain, and therefore they must share the set of uninterpretable phi-features that T° inherits from C° (Chomsky 2000, 2001). Thus, T° probes the closest argument, i.e. PERSON; because this argument bears unspecified person features, uPers on T° is given a third person default value. However, the external argument, which lacks number features altogether, is unable to value T°’s number feature. Consequently, T° checks its uninterpretable number feature against the internal argument. At the same time, the fact that the internal argument does not get to value T°’s person feature explains why no first or second person internal arguments may appear in these configurations. Finally, the authors claim that third person arguments bear number but not person features, and relate this person restriction to the Person-Case constraint in ditransitive constructions (Rezac 2009b). Next, we move on to discussing labile change of state predicates in these configurations.

3.2. Change of state predicates in Basque impersonals

As we mentioned above, there are very few restrictions as to what types of predicates can appear in Basque impersonals; labile verbs denoting a change of state (e.g. *hautsi*, ‘to break,’ or *erre*, ‘to burn’) can appear in these contexts. Interestingly, when these verbs select a third person internal argument in Basque impersonals, both an agentive (causative) and a non-agentive (anticausative) reading become available. In other words,

Basque impersonals and anticausative/inchoative structures share the same exponent, as shown in (28).

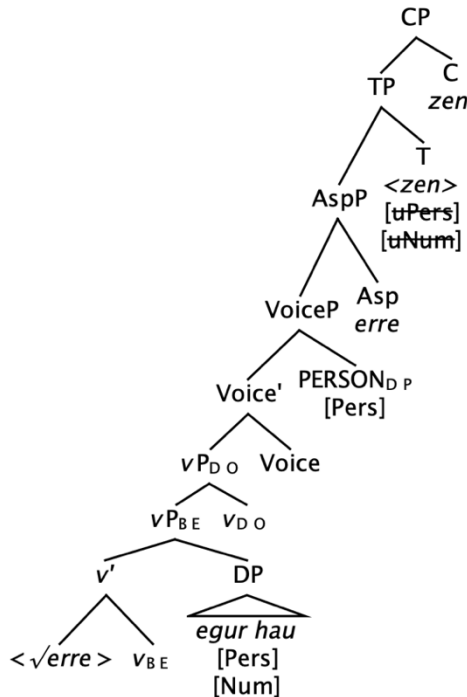
- (28) *Impersonal/Anticausative*
 Egur hau erre zen.
 wood this.ABS burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘This wood was burned.’
 ‘This wood burned.’

We assume that change-of-state predicates project bieventive structures, comprising an activity subevent (v_{DO} , in Cuervo’s 2003 terms) and a stative one (v_{BE}) in the causative counterpart, or a subevent of change (v_{GO}) and a stative one in the anticausative variant. Evidence for the bieventuality of these sentences comes from the fact that the modifier *ia* (‘almost’) can have scope over the whole event ($v_{P_{DO/GO}}$) or only over the stative projection ($v_{P_{BE}}$) (Cuervo 2014).

- (29) Edalontzia ia apurtu zen.
 glass.D.ABS almost break.PFV be.3SG.ABS
 ‘The glass almost started to break, but it did not.’
Scope = $v_{DO/GO}$
 ‘The glass started to break, but it did not break completely.’
Scope = v_{BE}

Therefore, the derivation for the impersonal (causative) configuration in (28) is shown in (30).

- (30) a. Egur hau erre zen.
 ‘This wood was burned.’
 b.



The bieventive construction in (30) comprises an activity subevent (v_{DO}) and a stative one (v_{BE}), in whose specifier merges the internal argument *egur hau*, and whose

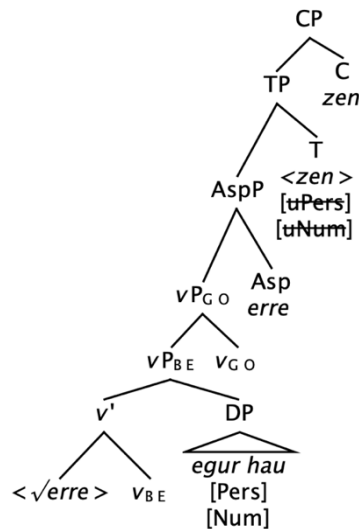
complement is the root *erre*. A defective thematic Voice head introduces the silent external argument PERSON with an unspecified person feature; this argument receives a causer theta role from Voice. The root undergoes head movement to Asp, where it acquires its aspectual morphology. The auxiliary *zen* in T° checks its uninterpretable person feature against the external argument and its number feature against the internal argument, with which it shows absolutive agreement; finally, the auxiliary moves to C° (Arregi & Nevins 2008).

Although Basque impersonals and anticausatives share identical exponents when they contain a labile predicate and a third person internal argument, their underlying representations differ significantly. For instance, no person restriction operates on the internal argument in the anticausative, which can license first and second person internal arguments, as shown in (23) above, repeated below as (31).

- (31) *Anticausative/*Impersonal*
 Ni hondora-tu nintzen.
 1.ABS sink.PFV be.1SG.ABS
 ‘I sank.’

We take the lack of person restrictions in Basque anticausatives as evidence for the lack of a Voice projection introducing an implicit external argument with unspecified person features in the derivation.¹³ The derivation of the anticausative variant of (28) is given in (32).

- (32) a. Egur hau erre zen.
 ‘Thus wood burned.’
 b.



The tree in (32) also contains a bieventive structure, but this time a verbalizing head of change (v_{GO})—which, in Cuervo’s (2003) account, is incompatible with Voice—embeds the stative one (v_{BE}). The derivation proceeds in the same way as in (31), with the exception that this configuration does not have a Voice head introducing an implicit external argument, and it is therefore understood as anticausative/non-agentive. In the next section, we discuss the presence of noncore dative arguments in these structures.

¹³ Alternatively, under Schäfer (2008a) and Alexiadou et al.’s (2015) approach, this phenomenon could be accounted for through the projection of a non-thematic expletive passive Voice (Voice_{0}) that is unable to introduce an external argument. Here, we will stick to Cuervo’s (2003) account.

3.3. *Noncore datives in Basque impersonal and anticausative contexts*

As pointed out above, Basque impersonals containing labile predicates denoting a change of state allow the insertion of noncore dative arguments, which can be interpreted as (i) affected by an intentionally provoked change of state, (ii) affected by a naturally caused change of state, or (iii) as the unintentional causer of such event.

- (33) Enekori egur hau erre zaio.
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 i. This wood was burned and Eneko is affected by it.
 ii. This wood burned and Eneko is affected by it.
 iii. Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn.

However, the last two interpretations in (33) are automatically ruled out in the context of a purpose clause controlled by the implicit causer in the impersonal; in other words, the dative in (34) can only be understood as affected by someone's intentional burning of the wood.

- (34) Enekori egur hau erre zaio
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS burn.PFV be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 ikatza egiteko.
 coal.ABS make-to
 i. This wood was burned to make coal and Eneko is affected by it.
 ii. ~~*This wood burned to make coal and Eneko is affected by it.~~
 iii. ~~*Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn to make coal.~~

On the other hand, if the purpose clause is replaced with a *by-itself* expression (*berez*, 'naturally'), the dative's two possible interpretations are affected by the natural burning of the wood, and accidental causer its burning, but loses that of affected by someone else's burning it.

- (35) Enekori egur hau berez erre zaio.
 Eneko.DAT wood this.ABS naturally burned be.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 i. ~~*This wood was burned by itself and Eneko is affected by it.~~
 ii. This wood burned by itself and Eneko is affected by it.
 iii. Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn by itself.

Fernández (2010, 2019) refers to these Basque datives as affected datives and classifies them as Class II ethical datives following Franco & Huidobro (2008), suggesting that they merge high in the structure. Interestingly, the same phenomenon is attested in Spanish *se*-constructions when they contain a purpose clause (36) or a *by-itself* PP (37).

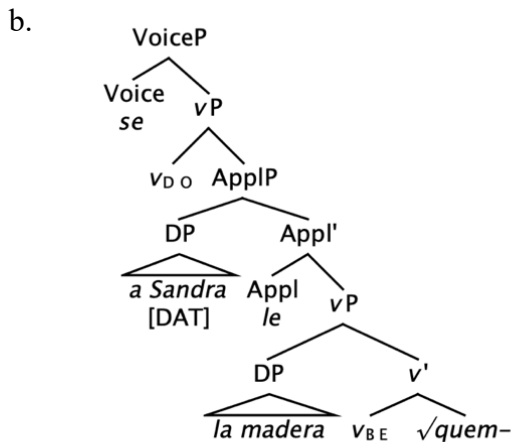
- (36) (A Sandra_i) se le_i quemó la madera de roble para hacer carbón.
 Sandra.DAT SE 3SG.DAT burned the wood of oak for make coal
 i. The oak wood was burned to make coal, and Sandra is affected by it.
 ii. ~~*The oak wood burned to make coal, and Sandra is affected by it.~~
 iii. ~~Sandra accidentally caused the oak wood to burn to make coal.~~

Adapted from Suárez-Palma (2020: 25)

- (37) (A Sandra)_i se le_i quemó la madera de roble por sí sola.
 Sandra.DAT SE 3SG.DAT burned the wood of oak by RFL alone
 i. *The oak wood was burned by itself, and Sandra is affected by it.
 ii. The oak wood burned by itself, and Sandra is affected by it.
 iii. Sandra accidentally caused the oak wood to burn by itself.

Suárez-Palma (2019, 2020), based on Cuervo (2003), proposes that dative arguments in these contexts are introduced in the specifier of a middle (affected) applicative, an argument-introducing functional head. The different interpretations of the dative argument would be contingent on the position the applicative head occupies. Therefore, the dative receives an affected interpretation if it merges below vP_{DO} or vP_{GO} in passive and anticausative contexts, respectively. In the former, the affectation is understood to be produced by an intentionally provoked event, whereas in the latter it would be the result of a naturally caused change of state. On the other hand, the dative is understood as the accidental causer of the event when it merges on top of vP ; according to Suárez-Palma, this is only possible in anticausative configurations, which lack a Voice projection atop vP that introduces an implicit external argument. In other words, there seems to be a structural competition between the applicative and Voice to sit above vP . Thus, the example in (36) is the spell out form of a causative *se*-passive sentence, while the one in (37) is the phonetic realization of an anticausative structure, both of which share identical exponents. The trees for (36) and (37) are given in (38) and (39), respectively.

- (38) a. *Dative DP = Affected by an intentionally caused change of state*
 A Sandra se le quemó la madera para hacer carbón.
 ‘The wood was burned to make coal and this Sandra is affected by it.’



The tree in (38) shows a *se*-passive configuration containing a passive Voice head, spelled out by the reflexive clitic *se*; this projection is unable to introduce an explicit external argument, although it denotes its participation in the event. Sandwiched between an activity subevent (v_{DO}) and a stative one (v_{BE}), we find an applicative projection, in whose specifier the dative DP *a Sandra* is merged; the applicative head is spelled out as the third person dative clitic *le*. Finally, the internal argument *la madera* sits in the specifier of the stative v_{BE} . Suárez-Palma (2020) proposes that the root \sqrt{quem} undergoes head movement to T° , incorporating the dative and the reflexive clitic on its way there. The dative DP *a Sandra*, being the closer DP to T° is probed to its specifier to cancel its EPP feature; because this DP is already case-marked, nominative case is checked against the theme *la madera*, which remains in its base position, via Agree. In (38), $Appl^{\circ}$ applies the dative DP *a Sandra* to the stative v_{BE} , i.e. to the theme’s resulting

state, hence the affected derivation. Because this is a causative configuration containing an implicit causer, this argument's affectation is therefore understood as externally/intentionally provoked.

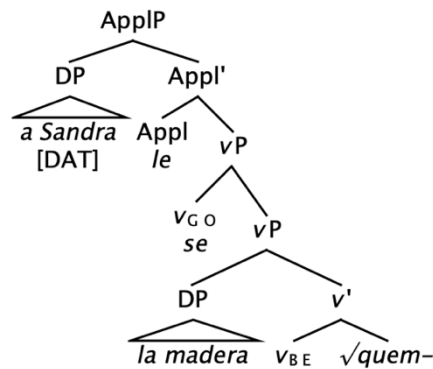
On the other hand, the dative's accidental causer interpretation arises in the anticausative configuration alone, i.e. when no Voice head sits on top of the outermost ν P (39); the latter is a subevent of change (ν GO) in these contexts, spelled out by the reflexive clitic *se*.

(39) a. *Dative DP = accidental causer*

A Sandra se le quemó la madera por sí sola.

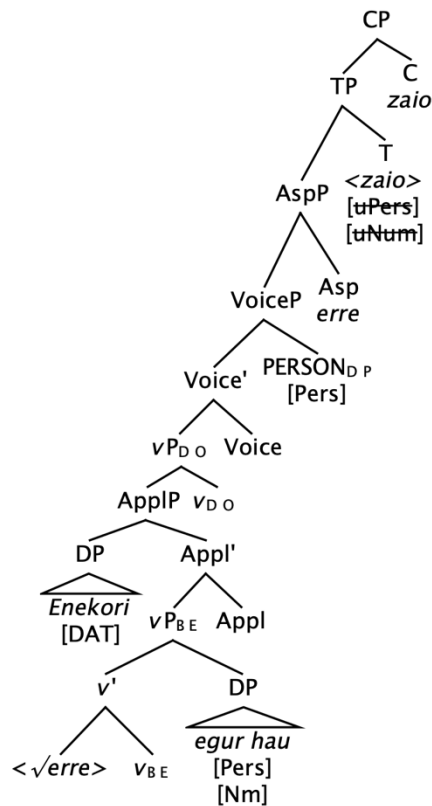
'The wood burned by itself, and Sandra was affected by it.'

b.



Finally, the dative's interpretation as being affected by a naturally caused change of state would also arise in an anticausative derivation like (39), the only difference being that ApplP would merge between ν GO and ν P_{BE}. We propose the same type of analysis to derive the contrasts found in Basque; thus, a causative impersonal construction like the one in (34), would show the derivation in (40).

- (40) a. *Dative DP = Affected by an intentionally caused change of state*
 Enekeri egur hau erre zaio.
 ‘The wood was burned, and Eneko is affected by it.’
 b.



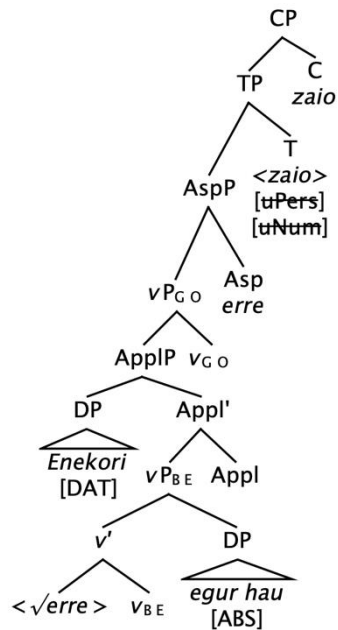
In (40b), an applicative head merges below the activity subevent v_{DO} and takes the stative v_{BE} as its complement. The dative DP *Enekeri* is merged in Spec,ApplP, and marked with inherent dative case. A defective thematic Voice head sits on top of v_{DO} and introduces the null external argument PERSON, thus encoding the causative reading. The dative argument is therefore applied to the theme’s resulting state, which came about by someone else’s intervention. The derivation proceeds in the same fashion as the one in (32) above: the root $\sqrt{\text{erre}}$ undergoes local head movement until it reaches Asp^0 ; the intransitive auxiliary *zaio*, which shows absolutive and dative marking, agrees checks its uninterpretable person feature against the external argument, and its uninterpretable number feature against the theme DP *egur hau*, before raising to C^0 . The tree in (41) captures the interpretation where the dative is affected by a naturally caused change of state.

(41) a. *Dative DP = Affected by a naturally caused change of state*

Enekeri egur hau erre zaio.

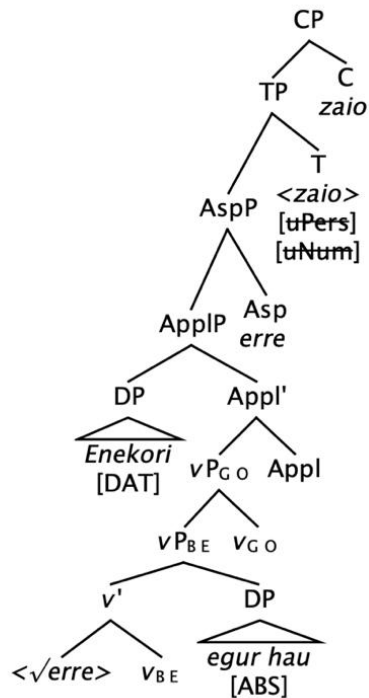
‘This wood burned, and Eneko is affected by it.’

b.



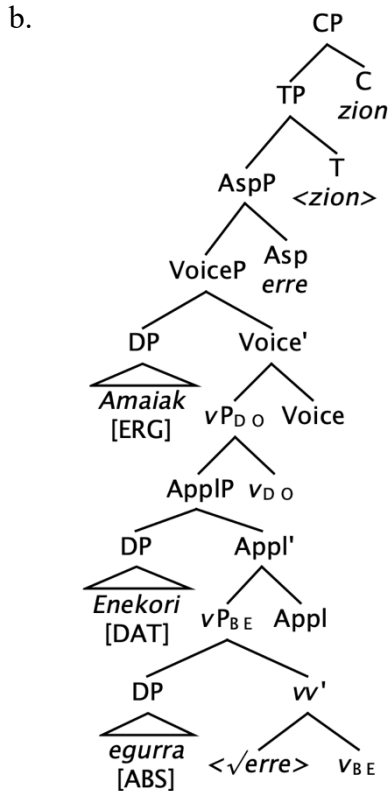
The main difference between the trees in (40) and (41) is the presence of a defective Voice projection in the former, and lack thereof in the latter. This is due to the incompatibility of dynamic subevents (v_{GO}) with Voice (Cuervo 2003, Suárez-Palma 2019, 2020). The dative DP introduced in Spec,ApplP is still applied to the theme’s resulting state, but the change of state is interpreted as being triggered by natural circumstances (e.g. lightning). Finally, the accidental causer interpretation is derived from the tree in (43).

- (43) a. *Dative = Accidental causer*
 Enekeri egur hau erre zaio.
 ‘Eneko accidentally caused this wood to burn.’
 b.



The structure in (43b) is an anticausative one, and therefore lacks a VoiceP on top of the first subevent (v_{GO}); that position is then available for the applicative head to merge into. Thus, the dative DP in its specifier is applied to the entire change of state process (v_{PGO}), hence this argument's being understood as its unintentional causer. Suárez-Palma (2020) speculates that the apparent competition between Voice and Appl for such position appears to support Wood and Marantz's (2017) proposal for a single argument-introducing functional head, i^* , whose realization varies depending on its surrounding structural environment. Cuervo (2003) distinguishes between three flavors of v , namely activities (v_{DO} ; 'John reads a novel'), dynamic events of change or happening (v_{GO} ; 'a wonderful thing happened'), and stative or existential events (v_{BE} ; 'John is happy'); moreover, these events can combine with each other, thus giving rise to bieventive configurations, including causatives, through the combination of v_{DO} and v_{BE} ('Jake broke the window'), or anticausatives, which would arise when a subevent of change embeds a stative one ($v_{GO} + v_{BE}$; 'the window broke'). Considering this paradigm, i^* would surface as Voice when taking an activity subevent as its complement (v_{PDO}), and the argument it introduces would then be understood as an agent or causer; alternatively, i^* becomes Appl if it takes a subevent of change (v_{PGO}) as its complement, in which case the DP in its specifier is interpreted as an accidental causer. Finally, i^* would also materialize as Appl when it merges between two subevents, independently of the semantics of the most external one ($v_{DO/GO} + v_{BE}$); in that scenario, the reading of the DP it introduces is that of affected by the theme's resulting state. This would explain why the only possible interpretation for a noncore dative in personal transitive contexts with an explicit external argument and a change of state predicate is that of affected by an intentionally caused change of state, as in (44).

- (44) a. Amaia-k Eneko-ri egurra erre
 Amaia.ERG Eneko.DAT wood.D.ABS burn.PFV
 zion.
 have.3SG.ERG.3SG.ABS.3SG.DAT
 ‘Amaia burned the wood and Eneko was affected by it.’



When it comes to building the derivation in (40), the Numeration would contain two *i** heads. As the syntax builds the tree bottom-up, the first *i** would merge with the vP_{BE} containing the root and the internal argument *egurra*; *i** would then be realized as a middle applicative, in whose specifier sits the DP *Eneko-ri*, marked with dative case. vP_{DO} would merge on top of ApplP, conferring the argument in its specifier, i.e. *Eneko-ri*, the affected interpretation. Next, the second *i** head would merge with vP_{DO} ; because this is an activity subevent, *i** would surface as Voice, in whose specifier merges the DP *Amaiak*, marked with ergative case and interpreted as the volitional causer of the event. Because the external argument is a full DP with person and number features, the Voice head in this transitive configuration cannot be a defective one, like in impersonals; this time, Voice must be thematic and able to check case. Finally, the presence of the three DPs in the derivation, one of which bears ergative case, favors the selection of the transitive **edun* auxiliary (‘have’) (Albizu 2001; Arregi 2004).

In this section, we have provided an applicative analysis that accounts for the three different interpretations of noncore datives in Basque impersonal and anticausative contexts containing change of state predicates; moreover, we have also stressed the structural similarities between Basque and Spanish, which shows the same phenomena.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed data from Basque impersonals containing predicates denoting changes of state; these configurations allow the insertion of non-selected arguments marked with dative case which can have three possible interpretations: (i) affected by an intentionally caused change of state; (ii) affected by a naturally caused

change of state; or (iii) accidental causer of the change of state. We show that only the first interpretation is compatible with a purpose clause that is controlled by the implicit external argument PERSON in Spec,VoiceP (Berro et al. 2022), while the other two are ruled out in such context. On the other hand, the dative's second and third interpretations can be accessed together with a *by-itself* adjunct, but the first one is not. These contrasts emphasize the existing structural ambiguity between Basque impersonals and inchoative configurations when the verb takes a third person internal argument: both bieventive structures share identical exponents.

We have proposed an applicative analysis of these noncore datives in Basque, based on Cuervo's (2003, 2020) proposal of affected/middle applicatives, i.e. an argument introducing functional head that applies an additional argument to an event. The advantage of this proposal is that it derives the three possible interpretations of the dative from the position the applicative head occupies in the structure. Thus, the dative will be interpreted as affected if it merges below the first vP, or as accidental causer if it merges on top of it; however, we showed that this option is only possible in the inchoative configuration, where Voice does not occupy this position. Finally, we also discussed how Basque and Spanish pattern together regarding these phenomena; Spanish also shows structural ambiguity between anticausative and passive *se*-constructions, all of which allow dative arguments with the three possible interpretations when a labile change of state verb occurs in them.

Lastly, if this proposal is on the right track and noncore datives in Basque are indeed introduced by applicative heads, future typological studies should include this language in the list of those others showing applicative constructions (Polinsky 2024).

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