

**All that glitters is not syntax: agreement and the notion of default value**

Javier Ormazabal & Juan Romero

Basque Center for Theoretical Linguistics (HiTT)

The University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and University of Extremadura (UNEX)

**1. Introduction: Language is a great illusionist**

- Two types of contexts where overt morphological agreement in the verb cannot be a reflex of syntactic agreement:

i. Clitic mutation. No plural “subject agreement” in (1a); i.e. *los coches* (‘the cars’) is not the subject but the object of the construction:

- (1) a. Los coches se vendieron  
The cars SE sold.**pl**  
‘The cars, somebody or other sold them/they were sold ’
- b. Los coches se los vendió [Sp. dialects from Southern Cone to Ecuador]  
The cars SE Cl.masc.pl sold

ii. Number Harmony. Idem in (2a):

- (2) a. Se vendieron los coches  
SE sold.**pl** the cars  
‘Somebody or other sold the cars/the cars were sold ’
- b. \* Se los vendió los coches  
SE Cl.masc.pl sold the cars

- More general phenomena, language-internal and crosslinguistically:

- (3) a. Zuk bizitza maite **z-** enu -en (vs. \*u -**zu**.n) [Basque]  
You.erg life.abs love **2erg**-aux-past (aux-**2erg**-past)  
‘You loved life’
- b. Henni virðast myndirnar vera ljótar. [Icelandic]  
her.DAT seem.3PL paintings.the.NOM be ugly  
‘It seems to her that the paintings are ugly.’ [from Sigurdsson & Holmberg 2008]

- Some consequences for the organization of the grammar and the choice of default values.

**Structure of the presentation**

**I. Non-paradigmatic SE-constructions in Spanish:**

- A unified regular syntactic derivation of *SE*-passives and *SE*-impersonals [associated to the derivation of Differential Object Marking (DOM) and ditransitive constructions].

▶ These constructions are not "passive" or "impersonal", but *transitive se constructions*.

**II. Agreement in passive SE-constructions: why it cannot be syntactic and what it could be.**

**III. Agreement with preverbal arguments ≠ agreement with postverbal ones: different properties and different level of application; but they share the same structural input.**

- Analysis:
  - Conditions on Agreement and the (common) syntactic derivation
  - Post-syntactic effects on agreement: Clitic Mutation in the morphology and Number Harmony outside grammar.

**IV. Choosing the default value: syntax, morphology, and beyond.**



- Idiomatic lectures of fixed object idioms are not lost in passive *SE*-constructions, **showing that** → grammatical relations have not been altered (see O&R 2019a for details).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(10) a. Si metes la pata,...<br/>if put.2sg.in the leg..<br/>'When you put your foot on it...'</p> <p>b. * Si la pata es metida,...<br/>if the leg is put.in...</p> <p>c. Si se mete la pata,...<br/>If SE put.in.sg the leg..<br/>'When someone puts his/her foot on it...'</p> | <p>(11) a. Matamos dos pájaros de un tiro<br/>kill.1*pl two birds of a shot<br/>'We killed two birds with one stone'</p> <p>b. * Dos pájaros son matados de un tiro<br/>Two birds are killed of one stone</p> <p>c. Así se matan dos pájaros de un tiro<br/>that way se kill.pl two birds of a shot<br/>'That way, one kills two birds with one stone'</p> |
|---|--|

► The internal argument is the syntactic object of the sentence, despite number agreement.

## 2.2. Number agreement in *SE*-constructions is not syntactic

- Goals of this section:

- to show that number agreement cannot be used as a criterion to distinguish between passive *SE*-constructions and impersonal *SE*-constructions and, more generally, to determine subjecthood.
- to present a new asymmetry, formerly unnoticed in the literature, between postverbal objects and preverbal/null ones:

- (i) Agreement with preverbal/implicit objects alternates with object clitics, systematically occurs with [-DOM] objects, and never fails.
- (ii) Agreement with postverbal elements is asystematic and often occurs with unexpected elements other than [-DOM] objects: [+DOM] DOs, complements of Ps and adjuncts or long-distance (see Gallego 2016, Planells 2018, and Pujalte 2018 for some observations in the same direction).

A note on our methodology and sources: for each agreement-type discussed in this section, we have conducted an analysis of the data in the Real Academia Española's *Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI (CORPES)*, and added eventual searches in Google that corroborate our point. We have also included other sources that we specify in place; in particular, data from Rioplatense comes from the authors' fieldwork with Argentinian colleagues and friends (see O&R 2022: appendix, for details and discussion, additional examples, and complete source references)

### 2.2.1. Dysfunctional agreement with postverbal elements

- Traditional description: verbal number agreement only with canonical 3rd person objects not marked for DOM.

- |   |
|---|
| <p>(12) a. Se censuraron los documentos<br/><b>SE</b> censored.pl the documents.pl<br/>'The documents were censored'</p> <p>b. Se censuró a los oponentes políticos<br/><b>SE</b> censored.sg <b>DOM</b> the opponents political.pl<br/>'The political opponents were censored'</p> |
|---|

#### 2.2.1.1. (Lack of) agreement with [-DOM] objects

- In Central American and Northern South-American dialects, **it is** practically optional. [see Lemus 2014; Ordoñez & Treviño 2011, 2016; Pujalte 2018; and especially DeMello 1995, and O&R 2022]

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <p>(13) a. Se censuró los documentos<br/><b>SE</b> V.sg DP.pl<br/>'The documents were censored'</p> | <p>[cfr. (12a)]</p> |
|---|---------------------|

- (14) 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* [Venezuela].  
 ... where **SE established.sg** the basis.**pl** of the new government  
 ‘... where the foundations of the new government were established.’
- c. **Se señalaba** *los serios problemas...*  
**SE pointed.out.sg** the serious problems.**pl** [Cuba]  
 ‘The serious problems were signaled...’
- d. [...] que **se haga** *los procesos correspondientes* [Bolivia]  
 that **SE make.sg** the processes.**pl** corresponding.**pl**  
 ‘...[ be the corresponding processes made’

▪ It often fails in all dialects:

- Cooking actions in recipes (Google 28-6-2018):

- (15) a. *Without agreement:* se fríe (3.370) /cuece (3.000) los huevos  
 ‘you fry/boil the eggs’
- b. *With agreement:* se fríen (9.900)/cuecen (11.100)/ los huevos  
 ‘you fry/boil the eggs’

- Even within the same sentence

- (16) a. Luego **se esmerilaban las puntas** de los tubos y **se ponía los rodamientos** a los costados.  
 Next **SE polished.pl** the tips.**pl** of the tubes and **SE put.sg** the bearings to the sides  
 ‘Next, we would polish the tips of the tubes and put the bearings on the sides’ [Bolivia]
- b. Los empleados de las canteras piden que [...] **se garanticen sus puestos** de trabajo, se regule **las explotaciones** de áridos y se cumplan **las normas medioambientales**. [Spain]

► Dialectal trends (Central American and Northern South American dialects) + a more general sociolinguistic tendency in other areas (when the academicist pressure instilled by formal education diminishes, lack of agreement increases).

### 2.2.1.2. Agreement with [+DOM] objects

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

- Examples in written texts readily available in every Spanish dialect, and much more frequently in oral Spanish (DeMello 1995; Planells 2017; O&R 2022):

- (18) a. En 1996 se eligen a las primeras autoridades municipales [Nicaragua]  
 In 1996 **SE elect.pl** DOM the first authorities.**pl** municipal
- b. ... y se rastreaban a los miembros del Partido [Mexico]  
 and **SE track.pl** DOM the members.**pl** of the Party
- c. Al iniciarse la menstruación se aislaban a las jóvenes [Spain]  
 When beginning menstruation **SE isolated.pl** DOM the young.women.**pl**

► The distribution of agreement between [+DOM] and [-DOM] objects in Spanish hardly reflects anything more than a prescriptive choice.

### 2.2.1.3. Long-distance agreement

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

- *CORPES*: many results for all geographical areas (see observations in O&R 2022, appendix).

- Google search for *se requieren hacer* ('it is required to make') = 17.400 hits, not only long-distance agreement with [-DOM] objects (20a-b) (Gallego 2019) but, in combination with verbs as *nombrar* ('to appoint') also with [+DOM] ones (20c).

- (20) a. En esta profesión **se requieren hacer evaluaciones** [Spain]  
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 [Spain]  
**SE evaluate.pl to.reduce the superior to 1300 euros**  
'Reducing those (pensions) higher than 1300 euros will be considered'
- c. Se requieren nombrar a los responsables [Paraguay]  
**SE require.pl to.appoint DOM the leaders**  
'I is required to appoint the leaders'

- Irregular agreement in hyper-raising contexts.

- (21) a. Aquí se consideran que los hechos del 1 de octubre son hechos gravísimos  
Here SE consider.pl that the facts.pl of.the 1st of october are facts grave.superlat  
'Here it is considered that the October 1st facts are extremely serious facts'
- b. Se consideran que estamos frente a un renacimiento de la humanidad  
SE consider.pl that are. 1pl in.front of a renaissance of the humanity  
'It is considered that we are facing a renaissance of the humanity'
- c. 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'

- Hits in Google = 8.260.000 (30-6-2021), including cases of number agreement with embedded first and second person subjects.

### 2.2.1.4. Other dysfunctional agreement patterns: P-Complements and adjuncts

- Agreement with complements of lexical prepositions (Gallego 2016; all the examples come from peninsular Sp.).

- (22) Se hablaron [ de los documentos]  
SE V.pl [PP P DP.pl ]

- (23) 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. Se llegaron [pp a los 74,3 millones de operaciones]  
SE arrived-3.pl to the 74,3 million of operations  
'74,3 million of operations were reached'
- c. 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'

- Google search for “se hablaron de temas” (‘talk about issues’): 6.350 results in many cases from formal sources.

- (24) [...] aclaró que tampoco "se hablaron de temas de la farándula" [Argentina]  
 (he) explained that neither **SE** talk.**pl** about show business issues.**pl**  
 ‘He explained that show business issues were not mentioned either’

- *Se deben recurrir* (‘it must be resorted to’) = 26.900 Google hits.

- (25) Indicó que se deben recurrir a otras figuras [Paraguay]  
 He pointed out that **SE** must.**pl** resort to other criminal definitions.**pl**

- Agreement triggered by temporal DP-modifiers:

- (26) Se bailan [los lunes ]  
**SE** V.**pl** [ DP<sub>Adjunct</sub>.**pl** ]  
 ‘People dance on Mondays’

- (27) 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

► Present data do not fit with standard passive *SE*-constructions (verbs are not transitive), but their morphological behavior mimics it.

▪ Subject agreement is much more regular and predictable: neither it appears with unexpected elements nor it suddenly disappears with agreeing ones.

- bare plural subjects of unaccusative sentences cannot avoid agreement (28).

- (28) cayeron/\*cayó almohadillas  
 fell.**pl**/fell.**sg** small pillows  
 ‘Small pillows fell’

- In causative-inchoative alternation, agreement failure is unattested.

- (29) se durmieron/\*durmió los niños  
 SE<sub>AC</sub> slept.**pl**/slept.**sg** the children  
 ‘Children fell asleep’

- In analytic passive sentences, lack of agreement between the verb and the complement is clearly ungrammatical.

- (30) 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’

► Agreement with postverbal DPs in non paradigmatic *SE* constructions do not work as predicted by theories based on syntactic agreement.

### 2.2.2 Agreement and clitics with preverbal/null arguments

▪ Internal argument = null/preverbal → covariation with an object clitic in some cases and with a verbal plural agreement in others:

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

- Very different properties from plural agreement with postverbal arguments.
- Both structures in (31) exist in all dialects of Spanish, but with slightly different distribution:
  - i) Preverbal [+DOM] arguments, including first and second person ones, exhibit a completely uniform pattern cross-dialectally: always doubled by a pronominal clitic (31a) and never trigger subject agreement (31b).

- (32) a. Ayer (a las oponentes políticas) se \*(las) censuró  
 Yesterday **DOM** DPpl. **SE** Cl.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’

ii) Verbal agreement with null/preverbal DPs strictly circumscribed to [-DOM] arguments in all varieties.

- (33) a. Finalmente se censuraron/ \*censuró [referring to the documents]  
 Finally **SE** V.pl **V.sg**  
 ‘Finally, they were censored’
- b. Los documentos se censuraron/ \*censuró  
 DP.pl **SE** V.pl **V.sg**  
 ‘The documents were censored’

iii) Dialectal variation:

a) dialects that only allow obligatory agreement with null/preverbal [-DOM] arguments in (33);

b) dialects that also allow the clitic strategy with null/preverbal [-DOM] objects (Southern half of South America)→ agreement (33) and clitic (34) both possible with preverbal/null [-DOM] arguments [see pairs in (35)-(36), Argentina; see O&R 2022 for details].

- (34) a. Los documentos se \*(los) censuró *Clitic-Varieties*  
 DP.pl **SE** Cl.m.pl **V.sg**  
 ‘The documents, they were censored’
- b. Se \*(los) censuró  
 SE Cl.m.pl **V.sg**  
 ‘They (the documents) were censored’

- (35) a. Se las puede sujetar en postes [las orquídeas]  
 SE 3Opl.fm can fasten to wooden poles [the orchids]
- b. Se pueden sujetar en postes [las orquídeas]  
 SE can.3pl fasten to wooden poles [the orchids]  
 ‘The orchids can be fastened to wooden poles’

- (36) a. estas ponderaciones se **las** realiza por sectores [Bolivia]  
 these considerations.pl.fm **SE** 3Opl.fm make.sg by sectors
- b. estas ponderaciones **se** realizan por sectores  
 these considerations.pl.fm **SE** make.pl by sectors  
 ‘Those considerations are made sector by sector’

- Clitic strategy impossible with [-DOM] postverbal objects, also in these varieties:

- (37) \*se las puede sujetar las orquídeas en postes de madera  
**SE** 3Opl.fm can fasten **the orchids** to wooden poles  
 ‘The orchids can be fastened to wooden poles’

► *SE* constructions may be agreementless with postverbal arguments but they show either obligatory agreement or obligatory clitic doubling with preverbal ones:

- (38) 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’

### 2.2.3. First and second person objects

- No dialectal or idiolectal variation: they never ever allow number or person subject agreement, and always manifest themselves through an obligatory object clitic, as in any transitive clause.

- (39) a. \* (nosotros) se censuramos /censuraron (nosotros)  
us SE censored.1pl/censored.pl us
- b. (A nosotros) se nos censuró  
'(Us), we were censored'

- Sharp contrast with analytical passives, where first and second person objects are legitimate candidates for passivization and, obviously, never surface as object clitics:

- (40) a. Nosotros fuimos censurados  
we were censored
- b. \* A nosotros nos fue censurados  
DOM us us was censored  
'We were censored'

### 2.3. Summary

- The overt, agreeing, argument of passive *SE*-constructions behaves in all respects as the syntactic object of the sentence.
- The behavior of number agreement in *SECs* is completely exceptional among Spanish subject agreement relations 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 3rd person [+DOM] objects, no agreement is possible; they are uniformly represented as object clitics.
  - (iii) With postverbal elements agreement is often erratic; it frequently fails with [-DOM] objects and unexpectedly occurs with other DPs : [+DOM] DOs, long distance [±DOM] items--even hyper-raising--or complements of Ps and adjuncts. It never occurs with 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person arguments.
- This distribution sharply contrasts with analytical passives, where subject agreement is robust and systematic.

### 3. The syntax of non-paradigmatic *SE*-constructions.

- O&R (2019a), following a proposal by Oca (1914) [also see, Otero 1972; 1974; Raposo & Uriagereka 1994 for some suggestions in the same direction]:
  - Passive and impersonal *SE*-constructions are active transitive sentences where the internal argument of V is a regular direct object and **the subject is the clitic *se***.
  - Agreement patters apply on the output of the syntactic derivation, where the agreeing subject *se*--by virtue of being 'defective' in its  $\phi$ -specifications--contributes to create **the appropriate input for further post-syntactic operations**.

#### 3.1. The subject of the sentence is the clitic *se*.

A. There is an active subject:

- it hosts secondary predication (Demonte 1986; Rivero 2001; Martins & Nunes 2016; O&R 2013b and references; also see Collins 2017 for a related discussion with respect to short passives in English).
- it shows the same obligatory control/disjoint reference distribution in infinitive/subjunctive alternations as any other active sentence.



B. The clitic *se* shares syntactic and semantic properties with other overt pronominal subjects (see (Cinque 1988, Mendikoetxea 1999, D'Alessandro 2007, and references for impersonal *SE*-constructions; O&R 2019a for a unified proposal):

- the structure is only possible when the subject is argumental;
- it is disallowed by verbs that do not select animate subjects;
- *Se* must appear in a Case position →
  - i) incompatible with infinitives that do not license nominative subjects
  - ii) allowed in tensed clauses in general
  - iii) allowed in infinitival constructions where overt pronominal subjects are licensed (Cinque 1988; Mendikoetxea 1999; O&R 2019a).
  - iv) it raises in raising-to-subject contexts, as required by case considerations (Mendikoetxea 1999, Martins & Nunes 2016 and O&R 2019a, section 3.2 for extensive discussion).

### 3.2 Interpretable $\phi$ -features in *se*

#### 3.2.1. *Se* has a person feature, but no specific person feature.

- Pronominal binding in *SE*-constructions: *se* does not allow binding of genitive 3rd person pronoun *se* (42a), but it may bind the less specified determiner variable (42b) [See Burzio 1986; Otero 1986; and, especially, Pujalte & Saab 2013; Saab 2014; MacDonald 2017; and O&R 2022, for extensive discussion].

- (41) a. Nora levanta su mano en el turno de preguntas  
 Nora raises his/her hand in the turn of questions  
 'Nora raises her hand in the question session'
- b. Nora levanta la mano en el turno de preguntas  
 Nora raises the hand in the turn of questions  
 'Nora raises her hand in the question session'
- (42) a. \*Se levanta su mano en el turno de preguntas  
 SE raises her hand in the turn of questions
- b. Se levanta la mano en el turno de preguntas  
 SE raises the hand in the turn of questions  
 'Someone's hand is/must be raised in the question session'

- Unlike bound pronouns (*mi/tu/su*) the bound determiner is not specified for person, and gets its person interpretation from the binder:

- (43) a. Tú levantas/\*Yo levanto tu mano en el turno de preguntas  
 You raise I raise your hand in the turn of questions  
 'You raise your hand in the question session'
- b. Tú levantas/Yo levanto la mano en el turno de preguntas  
 You raise /I raise the hand in the turn of questions  
 'You raise your hand/I raise my hand in the question session'

► Two consequences:

- a) *SE* is a syntactically active subject that may bind anaphora (contra Pujalte & Saab 2013)
- b) *SE* has animacy but no person specifications → it may bind minimally specified determiners, but not fully specified person pronouns.

- Interpretation of *SE* constructions not confined to third person, but it may refer to any animate argument, including first (44a) and second person (44b) (examples from Oca 1914; also see Cinque 1988, Menuzzi 1999, Mendikoetxea 1999; D'Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003, O&R 2019a, 2022, among others).

- (44) a. ¿se puede? [knocking on the door]  
 SE can.3s  
 'May I?'

- b. aquí no se habla [a father looking at his son]  
 here no SE speak.3s  
 'You cannot speak here'

- The specific interpretation *se* adopts is mostly determined on pragmatic grounds.

- First and second person subjects in the next clause may corefer with the subject of the impersonal construction in these contexts:

- (45) a. ¿se puede?... Si te viene mejor, vengo en otro momento...  
 SE can.3s If O2sg come better, come.1sg in other moment  
 'May I?... If it suits you better, I 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, cl2sg go.2sg to live by your own  
 'Here you must comply with the rules! Otherwise, you (addressee) better go live on your own'

► *Se* = always animate, but no specific person.

### 3.2.2. The representation of $\phi$ -features: reinterpreting 'default' value for features

#### • $\Phi$ -features in *se*.

- Animacy in pronouns → encoded as a person feature (Richards 14, O&R 22, and references)
- No specific person → person feature truly underspecified for its value.

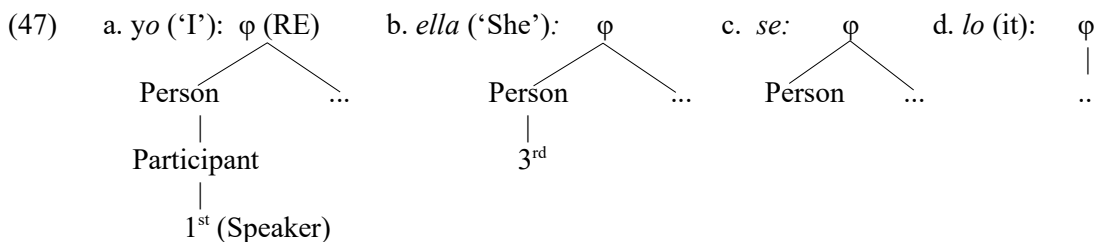
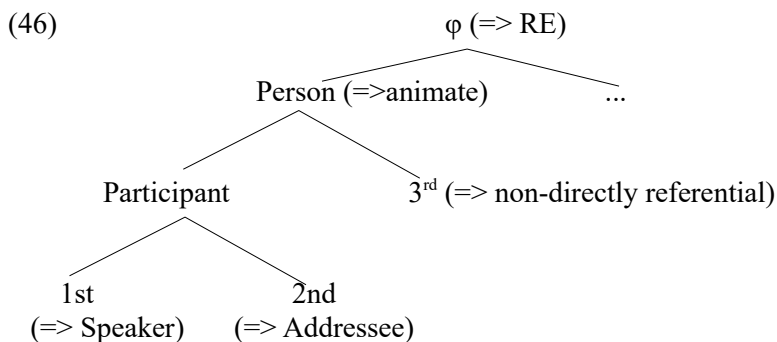
#### • The role of $\phi$ -features at the different levels and their interfaces (also see Ackema & Neeleman 2018 and references for extensive, though slightly different, discussion):

A) Syntax: interpretable features determine the syntactic behavior of lexical items and the corresponding feature values of the functional projections they agree with.

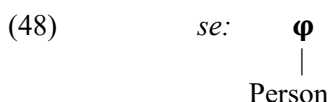
B) Semantics: feature structure of the pronoun must be interpreted.

C) Morphology operates on the features of the pronoun + on the non-interpretable features valued in the agreeing functional heads through the derivation.

- Person feature in *se* = interpretable but unspecified for its value ⇒ underspecified ≠ 3<sup>rd</sup> person (also see Trommer 2008 for morphological arguments)



- No number features in *se* (Mendikoetxea 2012; Harris & Halle 2005 and references; see discussion on Italian *si*).



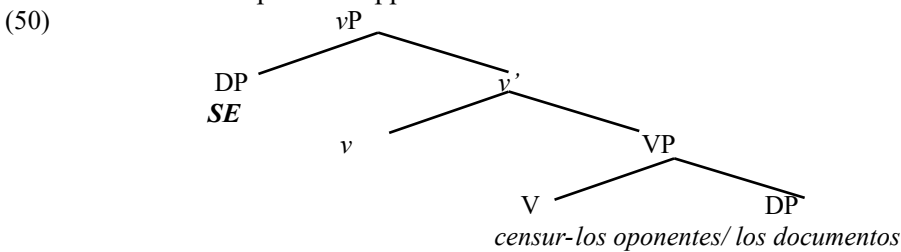
### 3.3. The syntactic derivation

#### 3.3.1. The mechanics of the derivation step by step

- Passive and impersonal *SE*-constructions are normal syntactic structures with no exotic properties:
  - no selective Case-absorption or argument suppression operation in passive *SE*-constructions
  - the two constructions follow the same derivation.

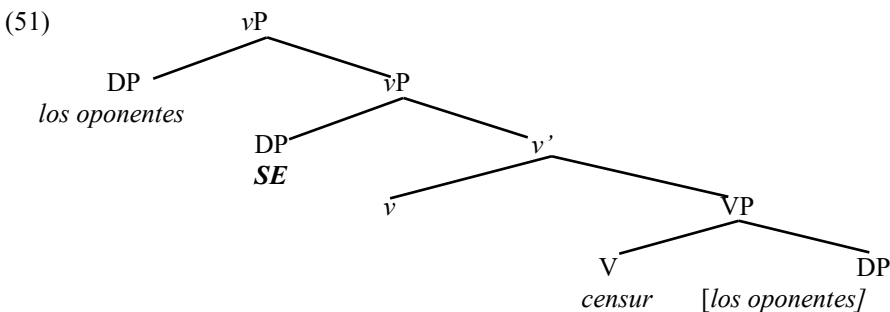
- *se* introduced by external merge in the argument position determined by the predicate:

- (49) 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 opponent political.**pl**  
 ‘The political opponents were censored’



- Regular derivation of [+DOM] and [-DOM] objects:

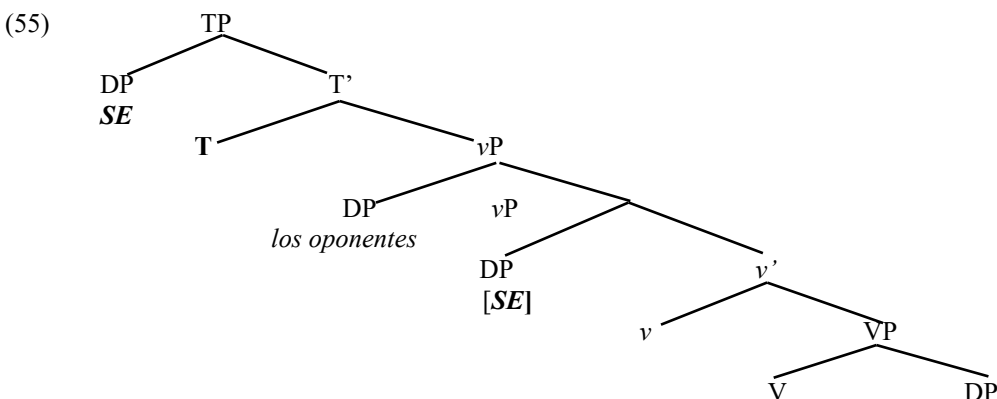
- [-DOM] direct object DPs (*los documentos* (‘the documents’) in (49a)) lack person features and do not agree with *v*.
- [+DOM] DPs (50b) agree with *v* and move to (Spec, vP) [Torrego 1998; López 2012; O&R 2007, 2013a,b, 2016, 2019b, and references]



- First and second person object clitics = agreement markers with person and number  $\phi$  features.

- (52) Se os /nos castiga (a los mismos de siempre) sin razón  
 se 2Opl/1Opl punish.sg (DOM the same of always) without reason  
 ‘You/We, the usual suspects, are punished without a reason’

- Merging of T and Agree relation with subject, *se*, as with any other regular subject.



### 3.3.2. Reinterpreting the matching condition on Agree.

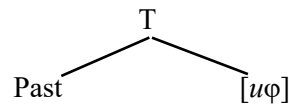
- Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001): *completeness* condition on *Match*, applied under feature identity.
- *Se* is not fully specified for person and/or number features → goal is not  $\phi$ -complete and yet the derivation converges ⇒ completeness too strong (O&R 2022, in progress, for general discussion of other contexts).

- (56) a. Se corre mejor en pista  
SE run.sg best on track  
'One runs best on track'
- b. Se censuraron los documentos  
SE censored.pl the documents.pl  
'The documents were censored'

- Number features do not need to be valued by Agree
- No second cycle necessary for the derivation to converge, not even a possibility.

- *Match* lacks explanatory power, too morphology-oriented, highly redundant, stipulative, and look-ahead from the lexicon into the computation.

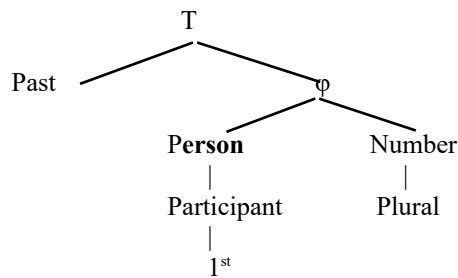
(57) *T* as a syntactic probe [before Agree]:



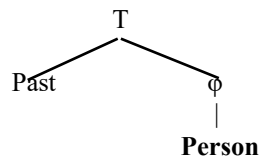
- The Agree relation copies the entire hierarchical structure of the goal (“controller”) into the probe (“target”).

(68) Result after application of Agree:

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

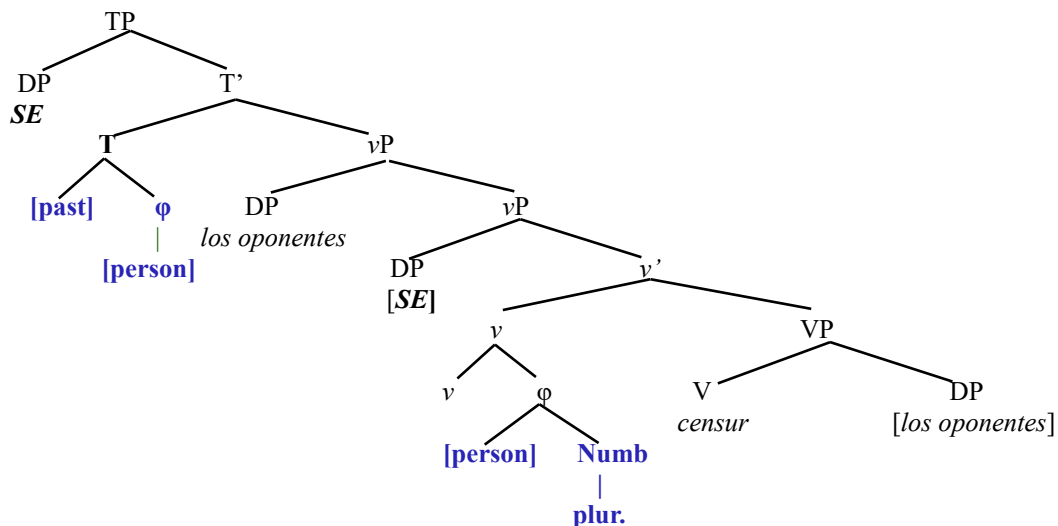


b. with *se*:



- Final derivation as the result of the Agree operation between *T* and *se* and between *v* and *los oponentes*:

(59)



- Consequences:
  - No *ad hoc* mechanism postulated: syntactic distribution of non-paradigmatic *SE* constructions correctly predicted to be the same as that of regular sentences where the subject has a more articulated  $\phi$ -feature structure.
  - General structural restrictions common to all derivations.
  - Characteristic features determined exclusively by the specific properties of the lexical elements.
  - Final result:
    - a) Syntax: T's [ $u\phi$ ] completely valued.
    - b) Morphology: resulting matrix of features in T  $\rightarrow$  *number* slot empty ( $\leftarrow$  lack of number features in the subject, *se*, to be copied under Agree)
      - ▶ i) the agreement problem is not syntactic, but morphological
      - ▶ ii) the notion of 'default value' must be reconsidered

### 3.3.3. Clitic Left Dislocation and dialectal variation

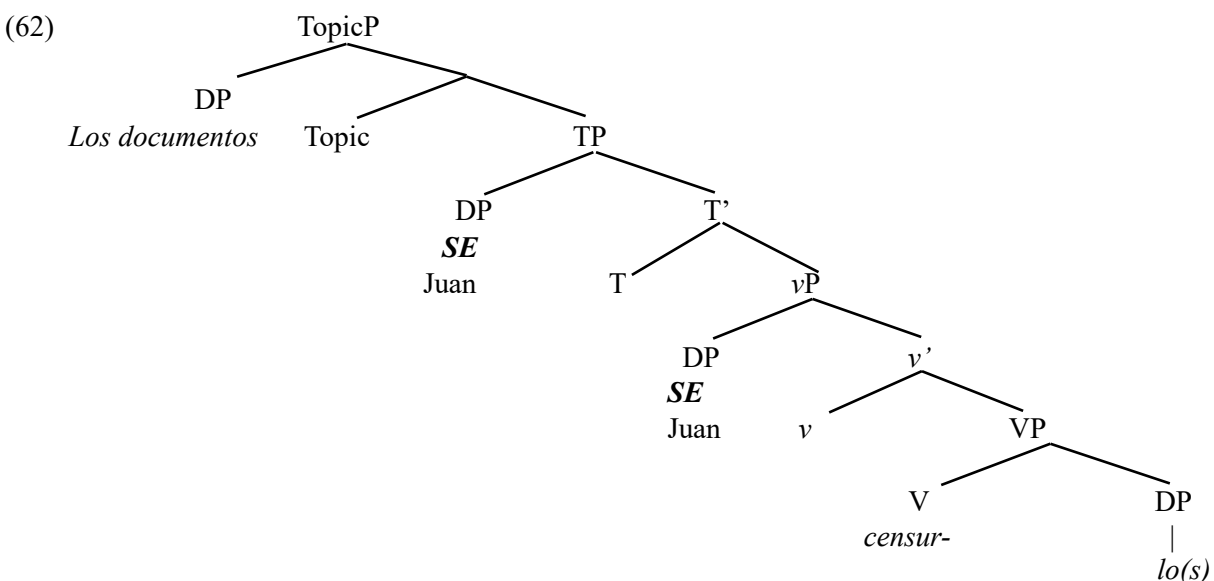
- (60) a. (Los documentos) se censuraron  
(The documents.pl) SE censored.pl.
- b. (Los documentos) se los censuró  
(The documents.pl) SE Cl.masc.pl. censored.sg.  
'The documents, they were censored'

- The preverbal argument is left dislocated [Raposo & Uriagereka 1996; Martins & Nunes 2016]  $\rightarrow$  Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) structure in Romance (common to (60a) and (60b); see section 4, below):

- Object DP base-generated in non-argumental position (van Riemsdijk 1997, etc.)

- D-clitics *lo(s)/la(s)* merged in the internal argument position from where they cliticize to the verb (Uriagereka 1997, Roca 1996, O&R 2013a, a.o.)

- (61) a. Los documentos (Juan) los censuró \_\_\_\_  
The documents Juan Cl.masc.pl censored.sg  
'The documents, John censored them'
- b. Los documentos se los censuró \_\_\_\_ [syntactic schema for (60a and (60b)]  
The documents SE Cl.masc.pl censored.sg  
'The documents somebody censored them'



Note: 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.

- Same CLLC structure for 1st and 2nd person objects, and [+DOM] animate ones:

- (63) a. A vosotros (Juan) os censuró  
**DOM** you (Juan) Cl.2.pl. censored.sg  
 ‘As for you, John censored you’
- b. A vosotros se os censuró  
**DOM** you SE Cl.2.pl. censored.sg  
 ‘As for you, you were censored’
- c. \*A vosotros se censurasteis  
**DOM** you SE censored.2pl

- Difference with respect to (60): no dialectal variation in (63) → all dialects and speakers follow the object clitic strategy:

- 1st/2nd person pronouns fully specified for person and number,

- clitic *lo(s)* has no person features (Roca 1996; O&R 2013a,b; Alcaraz 2021, and references):

- (64) a. *nos* (‘us’):  $\phi$
- ```

  graph TD
    phi[φ] --- Person[Person]
    phi --- Number[Number]
    Person --- Participant[Participant]
    Number --- Plural[Plural]
    Participant --- I[1st]
  
```
- b. *las* (‘them’ (fem)):
- ```

  graph TD
    phi[φ] --- Number[Number]
    phi --- Gender[Gender]
    Number --- Plural[Plural]
    Gender --- Feminine[Feminine]
  
```

#### 4. A morphological effect: Clitic Mutation

##### 4.1. Number agreement is the morphological reanalysis of the clitic

■ **Evidence 2:** Idiomatic expressions containing a non referential clitic

- Clitic present under all circumstances (García-Page 2010 and references)

- (65) a. En esos pueblos, siempre \*(la) liamos parda.  
 In those villages, always Clfm.sg mishandle.we brown.sg  
 ‘In those villages we always make a complete mess.’
- b. En la guerra, siempre \*(las) pasamos canutas.  
 During the war, always Clfm.pl pass.we canutas  
 ‘During the war we always have a rough time.’

- If it disappears, including passives, the result is ungrammatical:

- (66) a. \* En esos pueblos, siempre es liada parda (por nosotros)  
 In those villages, always is mishandled.fm.sg brown.sg (by us)  
 ‘In those villages we always make a complete mess.’
- b. \* En la guerra, siempre son pasadas canutas (por nosotros).  
 During the war, always Clfm.pl pass.we canutas  
 ‘During the war we always have a rough time.’

- **Absolute exception:** non-paradigmatic SECs → no clitic + number agreement: if the clitic of the idiom is singular, the verbal form shows up in singular (67a), and if plural, it is obligatorily plural (67b).

- (67) a. En esas fiestas, siempre se *lia* parda  
 In those villages, always SE mishandle.sg brown.sg  
 ‘In those villages people always make a complete mess’
- b. En la guerra, siempre se *pasan* canutas  
 During the war, always SE pass.pl canutas.pl  
 ‘During the war people always have a rough time’

► The number agreement exponent is the morphological manifestation of the idiomatic clitic

■ **Evidence 2:** behavior of clitics in **Clitic Climbing** contexts.

- All dialects uniformly show enclisis to the infinitive when the clitic appears downstairs (68a)-(69a).
- In regular transitive sentences the clitic may appear with the matrix verb (68b)
- In *SEC*-s, when the climbing clitic reaches the sentence where *se* is the subject, there is a split:
  - in C-varieties the clitic is maintained (69b),
  - in A-varieties the clitic reappears as subject agreement (69c).

- (68) a. Ella intentó vender**las**  
She tried.sg to.sell.**Clfem.pl.**
- b. Ella **las** intentó vender *Clitic dialects*  
She **Clfem.pl** tried.sg to.sell  
'She tried to sell them'
- (69) a. se intentó vender**las** *All dialects*  
SE tried.sg to.sell.**Clfem.pl.**
- b. se **las** intentó vender *Clitic varieties*  
SE **Clfem.pl** tried.sg to.sell
- c. se intentaron vender *Agreement varieties*  
SE tried.**pl** to.sell  
'Somebody or other tried to sell them'

- Parallelism maintained across all Clitic Climbing contexts: long distance Clitic Climbing, the agreement dialects maintain the clitic across all the intermediate positions (70a-c), and mutate it into agreement when it reaches the *se* clause (70d):

- (70) a. Se tiene que empezar a poder entender **.los**  
SE must.**sg** that begin.infin to can.infin understand.infin.**Clmasc.pl**
- b. se tiene que empezar a poder. **.los** entender  
SE must.**sg** that start.infin to can.infin.**Clmasc.pl** understand.infin
- c. ??se tiene que empezar. **.los** a poder entender  
SE must.**sg** that start.infin.**Clmasc.pl** to can.infin understand.infin
- d. se tienen que empezar a poder entender  
SE must.**pl** that start.infin to can.infin understand.infin

Note: Example (70c) sounds a bit odd to us and our informants. However, the corresponding sentence with a subject fully specified for person sounds as marginal [??*Tenemos que empezar.los a poder entender*].

- Clitic mutation shows the same island effects as ClClimb: e.g. adjunct wh-island (71), intervention effect with a negative head (72).

- (71) a. No se sabe cómo leer.**las** [=no sabemos cómo leer**las**]  
not SE know.**sg** how to.read.**Clfem.pl**
- b. \* No se saben cómo leer [= \*no **las** sabemos cómo leer]  
not SE know.**pl** how to.read  
'People don't know how to read them'
- (72) a. Se intentó (no) hacer**los** [= intentamos (no) hacer**los**]  
SE tried.**sg** not to.do.**Clmasc.pl**  
'People tried (not) to do them'
- b. se intentaron (?\*no) hacer [= **los** intentamos (?\*no) hacer]  
SE tried.**pl** not to.do

- Clitic mutation also shows the same clitic clustering effects as ClClimb:

- (73) a. Se intentó censurar.**te.las** [= *Intentamos censurar.te.las*]  
SE tried.sg to.censor.Cl2sg.Clfm.pl
- b. \* Se intentaron censurarte [= \* *Las intentamos censurar.te*]  
SE tried.pl to.censor.Cl2sg
- c. \* Se te intentó censurar.las [= \* *Te intentamos censurar.las*]  
SE Cl2sg tried.sg to.censor.Clfm.pl
- d. Se te intentaron censurar [= *Te las intentamos censurar*]  
SE Cl2sg tried.pl to.censor  
'Someone tried to censor them to you.'

► The number agreement exponent is the morphological manifestation of the climbed clitic

#### 4.2. The domain of application

i.- **Se** is a clitic: it “attaches” to the verbal inflection on the left (proclitic), either in syntax or post-syntactically [see French *je, tu, il* ('I, you, he') or impersonal *on* ('somebody'/'you' indefinite)]:

ii. The determiner head *lo(s)/la(s)* [pronominal clitic = 'the'] in object position cliticizes into the verbal complex.

► **Result:** a prosodic unit including the clitics, verbal root and the morphological realization of T.

- (74) a. **se + los** + vend + **ió**  
SE + Cl.masc.pl + sell + **simple past.ind. [person]**  
'They were sold/somebody (indefinite) sold them'
- b. **los** + vend + **iste**  
Cl.masc.pl + sell + **simple past.ind. [2<sup>nd</sup> person, +plur]**  
'You sold them'

· Clitic dialects: no additional changes.

- (75) Los coches se \*(**los**) vendió  
The cars SE 3Opl.msc sold.sg  
'The cars were sold'

· Agreement dialects: agreement = a different morpho-phonological manifestation of the underlying object clitic; this is the process we have termed *clitic mutation*.

- (76) Los coches se vendieron  
The cars SE sold.pl  
'The cars were sold'

(77) **Morphological process:**

**se + los** + vend + **ió**  
SE + Cl.[masc\*, +pl] + sell + **simple past.ind. [person]**

==>

**se los** + vend + **ieron**  
SE + Cl.[masc\*, +pl] + sell + **simple past.ind. [person, +pl]**

\*Notes:

a) gender in inanimates is not an interpretable  $\phi$ -feature in Spanish. We also assume that inanimate *lo(s)/la(s)*, unlike 1st/2nd person and animate clitics lack person  $\phi$ -features (see O&R 2013, 2019b).

b) this process happens in the morphological component and has no effect on the syntactic and semantic derivation.



■ **Generalization: Morpho-syntactic conditions on the application of Clitic Mutation.**

(78) The domain of application of Clitic Mutation is restricted to contexts where the  $\phi$ -feature specifications in the clitic and in the agreement exponent in Tense do not create a feature conflict.

- impossibility of the agreement strategy with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person → clitic in all dialects.

(79) a. A vosotros se **os** reconoc.**ía**  
**DOM** you SE **Cl.[2.pl.]** recognized.**sg** [=person]  
 ‘You were recognized’

b. \* A vosotros se reconoc.**isteis**  
**DOM** you SE recognized.**2.pl**

- impossibility of agreement strategy with animate ([+DOM]) object clitics → clitic in all dialects.

(80) a. A los niños se **los/les** reconoc.**ía**  
**DOM** the children SE **Cl.[anim.]** recognized.**sg** [=person]  
 ‘The children, they were recognized’

c. \* A los niños se reconoc.**ían**  
**DOM** the children SE recognized.**pl**

- impossibility agreement strategies with subject agreement fully specified for number → clitic in all dialects even with inanimate clitics *lo(s)/la(s)*.

(81) a. Los coches Juan **los** reconoc.**ía**  
 The cars Juan **Cl.masc.pl.** recognized.**3<sup>rd</sup>sg**  
 ‘The cars, Juan recognized them’

b. \* Los coches Juan reconoc.**ieron**  
 The cars Juan recognized.**pl**

**5. An extragrammatical phenomenon: Number Harmony in SE-constructions**

■ Clitic Mutation will not work in *SECs* where the clitic is not available in active sentences.

- [-DOM] DPs may not be doubled by the clitics *lo(s)/la(s)* except CLLD.

(82) a. \* Juan los reconoc.**ía** los coches  
 Juan **Cl.masc.pl** recognized the cars  
 ‘Juan recognized them the cars’

b. \* Se los reconoc.**ía** los coches  
 SE **Cl.masc.pl** recognized the cars  
 ‘People recognized them the cars’

- South-American clitic dialects: either subject number Agr or no agreement at all.

(83) Para realizar este procedimiento **se colocan** / **coloca las piezas** unas sobre otras [...]  
 To realize this procedure **SE locate.pl** / **locate.sg** the pieces one on other  
 ‘To carry this procedure out the pieces are placed one on top of another,...

[vs. \**se las coloca/colocan las piezas*]

■ **Reminder:**

Morphological condition: T’s morphological exponent lacks number (← agreement with *se*).

■ Two types of speakers:

- a) A group of speakers that present an extraordinarily uniform behavior with postverbal arguments:

- "Passive *SE* constructions" (i.e. transitive clauses with a [-DOM] internal argument) systematically show plural agreement;
- "Impersonal *SE* constructions" (i.e., all other combinations) always show singular agreement

b) A large group of speakers, determined partially on dialectal criteria but mostly on sociocultural grounds, with more random agreement patterns:

- In the case of Clitic Mutation number was unambiguously determined in Morphology by the accusative clitic features. But in this case almost any DP can trigger agreement, including complements of lexical Ps, adjuncts...:

- (84) a. ¿Cómo se acceden a esos senderos?  
How SE access.**pl** to those trails?  
'How can we access those trails?'
- b. Aquí se bailan los lunes
- (85) a. En 1996 se eligen a las primeras autoridades municipales [Nicaragua]  
In 1996 SE elect.**pl** DOM the first authorities.**pl** municipal
- b. ... y se rastreaban a los miembros del Partido [Mexico]  
and SE track.**pl** DOM the members.**pl** of the Party
- c. Al iniciarse la menstruación se aislaban a las jóvenes [Spain]  
When beginning the menstruation SE isolated.**pl** DOM the young.women.**pl**

-... or fail to do so with argumental [-DOM] DPs:

- (86) 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* [Venezuela].  
... where SE established.**sg** the basis.**pl** of the new government  
'... where the foundations of the new government were established.'
- c. Se señalaba *los serios problemas...*  
SE pointed.out.**sg** the serious problems.**pl** [Cuba]  
'The serious problems were signaled...'
- d. [...] que se haga *los procesos correspondientes* [Bolivia]  
that SE make.**sg** the processes.**pl** corresponding.**pl**  
'[...] be the corresponding processes made'

- Descriptive Generalization: the potential trigger of plural agreement **in contexts where Mutation has not applied**, is the **linearly closest nominal phrase** in the sentence, no matter what its syntactic relation is with the verbal complex.

#### ■ Number Harmony in SEC Relative Clauses: preposed via A'-movement

- No CLLD available → no Clitic Mutation possible
- The entire range of Number Harmony sources available: lack of number agreement with plural objects (87a); plural agreement with DOM objects (87b); long distance number agreement; ((87c); agreement with adjunct DPs (87d):.

- (87) a. [...] *los servicios que se proporciona* a los alumnos [Spain]  
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...* [Argentina]  
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 [Cost Rica]  
the communications.**pl** realized or that SE expect.**pl**. do  
'The communications realized or those that were expected to be realized'
- d. ... las veces que se dicen EBAU  
... the times that se say.**pl** EBAU  
'... the times EBAU is said'

## 5. The sequence of events and the choice of default value

- Standard assumptions on the default value for agreement: Matching of uninterpretable features in the probe with those of the goal under completeness → all morphemes that are manifested in the morphology must be uniformly solved in the syntax; otherwise the derivation crashes.

### ➤ Questions:

- i) What happens when the goal cannot provide all the features?
- ii) Why should syntax be tied/constrained by the morphological representation in such a tight way?

- Non-paradigmatic *SE* constructions analyzed in this paper and other constructions suggest otherwise:

- Syntactic representations where agreeing probes end up underspecified for part or the whole set of  $\phi$ -features often converge;

- Morphology may contribute to the final product with its own strategies, but a morphological output where not all the features have been dealt with does not necessarily collapse either.

- Post-grammar (probably processing) processes like *Number harmony* have their role in the system as well.

- Those agreement processes:

- a) do not correspond to any variation in the interpretative component.

- b) they do not fulfill a syntactic condition either

- c) they do not correspond to a clear morphological or phonological

- Not only that: they require that syntactic **and** morphological *completeness* "fail", for them to apply.

- Extralinguistic processes, including sociolinguistic factors like the attachment to/disregard from a written standard, etc.

- The syntactic configuration **does** determine the domain of application of non-syntactic processes like *number harmony* or *clitic mutation*: it creates the conditions where formal dependencies (or the lack of them) yield 'defective'/'incomplete' syntactic/morphological exponents, subject to further non-syntactic manipulation (or not).

- But we think there are reasons to make its internal design more coherent and, in a sense, more "minimalist" if we consider the notion of "default value" as something that goes beyond the domain of grammar, and a problem most eventually tangential to its main concerns.

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### Javier Ormazabal

University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)  
 Department of Linguistics and Basque Studies (HEIS)  
 Unibertsitateen Ibilbidea 5  
 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

[javier.ormazabal@ehu.es](mailto:javier.ormazabal@ehu.es)

### Juan Romero

University of Extremadura (UNEX)  
 Department of Hispanic Philology  
 Avenida de la Universidad s/n  
 10071 Cáceres, Spain

[juantxoromero@gmail.com](mailto:juantxoromero@gmail.com)