

Agreement and D.O.M. with *se*: A comparative study of Mexican and Peninsular Spanish

Francisco Ordóñez, SUNY Stonybrook

Esthela Treviño, UAM, Iztapalapa

1. Introduction.

In this article we will discuss the intriguing agreement properties of the patient/theme argument in impersonal constructions with *se*, (impersonal-*se*), in transitive clauses. Due to the complex comparative nature of the phenomenon under consideration and to the facts, a detailed and careful description has been carried out over the two varieties we are more familiarized with: Mexican Spanish—Mexico City's dialect— and Peninsular Spanish—as spoken in Barcelona. Other varieties of Spanish will be also discussed more briefly for comparison to the previous ones.

Data have been gathered from spontaneous speech as well as from written sources. Some of the data has been validated against native speakers' judgments, and a questionnaire with elicited examples has been conducted.

The impersonal-*se* construction in all Spanish varieties is characterized by the following properties:

- a) The appearance of the pronominal clitic *se*, also used in reflexive and inchoative predicates.

b) A non-overt subject. The empty subject is interpreted as an indefinite, non-specific, human arbitrary or impersonal subject.

c) The clitic *se* can be merged with transitive, unaccusative, unergative, and passive predicates:¹

1. *Se ha estudiado mucho a Cervantes en esta Universidad.* (transitive)
pro_{arb} se studies a lot in this university
2. *Se llegó tarde al concierto* (unaccusative)
pro_{arb} Se arrived late to the concert
3. *Se trabajará en las vacaciones* (unergative)
pro_{arb} se works a lot during vacation
4. *Se nos fue permitido ingresar al Congreso.* (passive)
pro_{arb} se cl was permitted enter Congress.

Evidently, the agreement patterns we are interested in emerge with transitive verbs. It has been pointed out in the literature that Spanish allows the theme/patient of a transitive verb to trigger agreement on the verb. Thus, the following two possibilities obtain, with or without agreement:

5. *se recibió tarde las invitaciones para la ceremonia*
Se received-3psg many invitations for the ceremony
6. *se recibieron tarde las invitaciones para la ceremonia*
Se buy-3ppl many invitations for the ceremony

In colloquial and formal Spanish the regular, most common option is that with verbal agreement—6—; traditional grammar has analyzed them as a type of passive construction, (the so-called called *pasivo-refleja*). Sentences like 5, without agreement, are less common but possible. Traditional grammars treat this type impersonal, rather than a passive.

If agreement is taken to be a diagnostic for nominative case-marking (Chomsky 1981), then (6) clearly receives nominative case. Less clear is the status of (5). Nevertheless, the

interesting fact for us is that contrast between (5) and (6) is also found in sentences that apparently seem to have an independent source for case. Thus we find the same contrast with *se* constructions in the so-called prepositional personal *a* construction—more technically *Differential Object Marking* (D.O.M.) in varieties of Mexican Spanish in (8):²

7. *se* rescató a los alpinistas
Se rescue *a* the mountaineers.
The mountaneerings were rescued.
8. *se* rescataron a los alpinistas
Se rescue *a* the mountaineers.
The mountaneerings were rescued.

DOM in Spanish applies when objects are specific and/or animate. It is manifested by the insertion of the preposition *a* introducing the object, as in the following examples (9a-b). It is less common with non specific indefinites (López 2013) or determinerless DP's (9c).

9. a. Nosotros vimos *(a) los niños en el parque.
We saw *(a) the boys in the park.
- b. Nosotros vimos *(a) María en el parque.
We saw *(a) Maria in the park
- c. Nosotros vimos (*a) niños en el parque.
We saw *(a) boys in the park

Interestingly, the same contrasts are kept in the context of *se* constructions, as shown in 10:³

² Examples like (8) are found in other varieties of Spanish.

³ Determinerless DP's generally avoid the personal *a* altogether in most dialects. One conspicuous exception is found in journal headings in Latin America, where determinerless DPs are frequently used beyond the normal distribution in colloquial varieties. Also some

10. a. Se vio/ *(a) los niños
- b. Se vio *(a) Maria
- c. Se vio (*a) niños

This parallelism can be expressed in the following generalization:

- I. *Generalization on the distribution of D.O.M.:* Whenever D.O.M. is required for transitive verbs without *se*; it is also required for transitive verbs with *se* constructions.

2. Case on the patient in *se* constructions: nominative, accusative or other?

The fact that D.O.M is manifested in *se* constructions seems to indicate that accusative case remains active.⁴ Of course, this conclusion is correct if one assumes that D.O.M. objects are another simple manifestation of accusative case. In this respect, it is interesting to compare *se* constructions with the periphrastic passive constructions. Periphrastic passives, contrary to *se*

speakers allow them more easily. As we will discuss below, it comes as no surprise that some of these dialects allow agreement with *a* in *se constructions*. These are the dialects we will discuss below. This fact further supports the generalization on the distribution of D.O.M:

- i) Contrataron a profesores (some varieties)
They hired a professors
- ii) Se contrataron a profesores
They hired a professors.

⁴This is for instance the position adopted by Dobrovie-Sorin (1998). The fact that Spanish keeps D.O.M. indicates that accusative case is assigned in these constructions. Contrary to Spanish, Romanian forbids D.O.M. objects in *se*-constructions. Dobrovie-Sorin makes a parallel between assignment of D.O.M. and accusative case

constructions do not allow the manifestation of D.O.M Agreement. Agreement of T with the DP subject is the only option available:

11. a. Se vio *(a) los niños (impersonal *se*)
Se saw *(a) the boys
- b. Fueron vistos (*a) los niños (Periphrastic passive)
Were seen *(a) the boys

However, the idea that accusative case is manifested in D.O.M. with *se*-constructions is problematic once we look at the distribution and manifestation of the so-called accusative clitics in a language like Spanish.

2.1 Object Clitics and *se*.

Usually, the clitic paradigm that shows gender distinction *lo(s)* for masculine, *la(s)* for feminine, encodes both D.O.M. and non-D.O.M. Direct Objects in Mexican Spanish—as well as in most Peninsular varieties of Spanish, excluding *leísta* dialects (Fernández-Ordóñez 1997). However, in Mexican Spanish the expected clitic pattern appears to be unavailable in the context of *se* constructions; rather, the clitic that stands for D.O.M. objects surfaces as the otherwise dative *le(s)*, which shows no gender distinctions. This is clearly seen when the D.O.M. object appears left dislocated, as in the following contrasts,:

12. a. **A** Juan **lo** vieron contento. (Mexican Spanish, transitive)
A+Juan Cl-ACC-see-3ppl happy
- b. **A** Juan **se le** vio contento. (Mexican Spanish, *se* impersonal, transitive)
a+Juan se cl-DAT see happy

Moreover, D.O.M. and non-D.O.M. objects show asymmetry with respect to clitic availability in the two dialects in *se* constructions. Thus, in Mexican Spanish and in Peninsular Spanish, left-

dislocated non-DOM objects, cannot be cliticized (with any clitic) in impersonal *se* constructions as shown in (13a) vs (13b).

13. a. Estos terrenos **los** vendieron a un buen precio.

These lots pl **CL** sold at a good price.

They sold these lots at a good price.

b. *Estos terrenos *se* **los/les** vendió a un buen precio. (with *se* impersonal)⁵

These lots-pl *se* CL sold at a good price.

In order to trigger an impersonal interpretation in Mexican Spanish, the object needs to be turned into a D.O.M. object and the clitic must be again dative.

14. a. **A** estos terrenos *se* **les** vendió a un buen precio

These lots *se* CL- sold at a good price.

Thus there are two facts that clearly indicate that accusative case is not assigned in impersonal *se* constructions:

a) There is no clitic counterpart for non-DOM objects in these two varieties.

b) The dative clitic appears with D.O.M. objects, as opposed to the common accusative clitic in Mexican Spanish.

While a) extends to other varieties of Latin-American Spanish and Peninsular Spanish, b) needs to be qualified. For instance, Peruvian and Colombian Spanish seem to show the same pattern. However, this is not the case for the Rioplatense dialect. Thus, in Rioplatense Spanish the set of clitics that are available in *se* constructions with D.O.M. are the same as those non-impersonal *se* contexts. Apparently no asymmetry is found. However, upon closer examination, we observe that the status of clitics in this Rioplatense dialect is special. First, Rioplatense Spanish allows

⁵ The Spurious or Reflexive SE interpretation is not relevant here.

overt clitic doubling with any D.O.M. objects (clitic doubling), unlike Mexican, Peninsular, or any other Spanish dialect.

15. Personal transitive verbs: Clitic-doubling with DOM objects in Río Plata Spanish:

- a. (lo) vi a Juan (+ D.O.M.)
cl saw a+Juan
- b. (*La) vi la libreta/una niña
cl saw the notebook

16. Impersonal *se* with transitive verbs: Clitic-doubling with DOM objects.

Se (lo) escuchó [al niño]
se cl listen a+boy

Se (la) escuchó [a la niña]
Se cl listen a+the girl

Similar behavior is observed in what we call partial *leísta* dialects. These are dialects in which D.O.M objects manifest the dative clitic *le* in the masculine (+animate) whereas feminine (+animate) objects are realized with the accusative clitic *la*. This is the case of some Peninsular Spanish dialects, such as the one spoken in Barcelona. There are also more extensive *leísta* dialects in which the distinction with the *le* has been extended to the feminine as well (17c). The important fact about this dialects is that the feminine Acc turns dative in the context of D.O.M in *se* constructions⁶

a) Personal transitive verbs: L-E (masc.), L-A (fem) with D.O.M. objects.

17. a. A Juan le vi ayer.
Juan DAT saw

b. Ese cuadro (*le)/lo vi ayer
This portray (*DAT) ACC saw yesterday.

⁶ See Fernández Ordóñez (1997) for an extensive survey of these dialects.

c. A María/la escultura La vi ayer
 A María, the sculpture ACC saw

b) Impersonal *se* with transitive verbs: Impoverished gender system L-E, L-A

18. a. al niño sí se le escuchó

 a+boy *se* DAT listen

 b. a la niña Se le escuchó

 the girl Se LE listen

One might conclude from these facts that there is no homogenous solution for the assignment of case in the diverse dialects of Spanish in impersonal *se* constructions. However, the common denominator in all of them is the fact that cliticization is restricted to D.O.M. in the context of *se* constructions. In All Spanish dialects, including Rioplatense and Peninsular Spanish, the cliticization of non-D.O.M. objects is impossible in impersonal-*se* constructions, in contrast to non *se* constructions. Thus, cliticization correlates with the possibility or not of having D.O.M in the structure in *se*.

19. a. *Esos libros *se los/les* prohibió en el franquismo (*Clitic with non-DOM object)

 These books *se* ACC/DAT prohibited in the Franco years

 b. Esos libros los prohibieron en el franquismo (Clitic with non-DOM object)

 These book ACC prohibited during the Franco years

The typological pattern that emerges from the expression of clitics in Spanish impersonal *se* constructions is shown in Table 1. In this column we take the clitic LE to be the underspecification of gender in Spanish, since –e does not indicate gender (Harris1991).

Table 1: Typology for DOM clitics Impersonal *se* contexts:

| D.O.M objects | Fully specified for gender | Partially specified for gender (leista dialects) | Radically underspecified for gender |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Ríoplatense Spanish | Se lo ve/ Se la ve | | |
| Peninsular Spanish | | Se le ve/ Se la ve | |
| Mexican Spanish | | | Se le ve |

What Table 1 shows, is that the clitic may or may not exhibit gender distinctions in the *se* contexts; that, along with the fact that clitics are restricted to encode D.O.M. leads us to claim that accusative case is not assigned in impersonal *se* constructions. On the other hand, the fact that a clitic is available with prepositional objects seems to indicate that these arguments are, indeed, treated like objects. In Mexican Spanish (and other Latin American dialects), the clitic chosen is the dative.

The question, then, is whether the object argument becomes a dative in the context of impersonal *se* in a fashion parallel to dativization found in causative constructions in French or Italian (Kayne 1975). As it will be seen, there is evidence to suggest that dative case is not assigned:

First, the clitic *le* in Mexican Spanish impersonal *se* contexts cannot double a negative quantifier, contrary to the true dative *le*, as shown in the following contrasts. Example (19a) is \ with a dative negative quantifier whereas (19b) is a similar but in the context of *se* construction:

19. a. No se le dio el libro a nadie (MxSp)
 Not *se le* gave the book a nobody.
 One did not gave a book to anybody
- b. No se (*le) arrestó a ninguno (MxSp)

Not *se le* arrested a nobody
One did not see anybody

Second, *le* seems to disallow the doubling of a *wh*-word, although not that of a relativized pronoun or an indirect *wh*:⁷

20. a. A qué *se le* dio una barnizada?
To what *se le* gave a varnishing
- b. *A qué *se le* analizó?
To what *se le* analyzed?

Finally, Hernanz and Brucart (1988) note that datives fail to agree in number with the clitic they double, contrary to DO. This is the case with quantifiers like *todos*, which permit doubling with DO as well as IO. Interestingly, the clitic in impersonal *se* constructions must necessarily agree with the quantifier object, patterning like a DO and not IO. However the clitic surfaces as a dative. Thus the contrast between (21b) and (22b):

21. a) Este año el FCE *le(s)* publicó un artículo a todos (IO)
This year the FCE *le(s)* published an article
- b) Este año *se le(s)* publicó un artículo a todos los profesores (IO)
This year the FCE *le(s)* published an article
22. a) Los/(**lo*) condenaron a todos a trabajos forzados (DO)
*Los/*lo* condemned all to forced labor.
- b) *se les/(**le*)* condenó a todos a trabajos forzados.
*Se les/*le* condemned all to forced labor.

From the analysis presented, we conclude that accusative case is not assigned in impersonal *se* constructions;⁸ the contrasts shown above concerning doubling and agreement from Mexican

⁷ There is some variation among speakers consulted. Doubling seems permitted in some cases with relative clauses and with certain *wh*-words like *a quién*. For reasons of space we leave this interesting contrast for further research.

⁸ For reason of space we do not go into the details of why accusative is not available. Here we simply follow Collins (1993) analysis on passives that SE moves through a Voice projection that selects a *vp* which is devoid of ACC formal feature. The same way that passives VP's are devoid of that feature.

Spanish show that they are not dative either. We propose instead, that inherent case is assigned to DOM in impersonal *se* constructions, in all Spanish varieties. We follow the idea put forward by Torrego (1998) that DOM is lexical inherent case in all varieties of Spanish and that impersonal *se* construction are a unique context where this can be shown. Thus, impersonal *se* constructions, like periphrastic passives, do not assign accusative case. However, unlike periphrastic passives, they do allow inherent case for D.O.M. to be assigned. In our view, inherent case is commonly shown by the appearance of the preposition *a* in all varieties. However, different dialects use different clitics to represent this D.O.M.

There are two possibilities as to what the source of this inherent case could be. Either *v* is responsible for such case (as argued, e.g. in Woolford 2006), or there is a different specific AGR projection following Collins and Thraisson (1993) and Kayne (2006), who propose similar analyses with double object constructions or causative constructions. We will assume the second alternative and therefore that an AGR projection between *v*P and VP is responsible for the licensing of D.O.M.⁹

23. [*v*P [AGR[+D.O.M] [VP [DP [+D.O.M]]]]

From this perspective the agreement responsible for D.O.M. triggers different morphological clitic possibilities on the object. According to the morphological features of the language, AGR attracts a clitic underspecified for gender—features—Mexican Spanish—partially specified—Peninsular Spanish—or fully specified—Rioplatense Spanish.

⁹ As we will see below not all D.O.M. object must move to the Spec of this AGR projection in some cases. In other words, note ll AGR for D.O.M. are strong.

Further evidence in favor of a distinctive projection responsible for D.O.M. in *se* constructions comes from the restriction we find with the distribution of null arguments. The comparison between these constructions and the periphrastic passives is quite revealing. While the theme/patient can freely become a null argument in periphrastic passives, in impersonal *se* constructions such an argument is barred from being dropped when it is an object that is generally marked with D.O.M. This is particularly clear, as stated before, with animate specific DPs; thus in (24a) the null argument of the periphrastic passive can either refer to an animate or inanimate null argument. However, in (24b) the null argument can only be interpreted as inanimate. Similar contrast are shown in (25):

- 24 a. Aquí fue encontrado (null argument = ±animate)
 Here was found.
- b. Aquí se encontró (null argument = —animate or —specific)
 Here pro se found
25. a. Por fortuna, fue rescatado del incendio. (el niño, el cuadro)
 Luckily, was rescued from the fire
- b. Por fortuna, se rescató del incendio. (*el niño, el cuadro)
 Luckily, se rescued from the fire

There is an asymmetry with respect to pro-drop in impersonal *se* contexts: they usually trigger agreement, which can be dropped when the theme/patient is an inanimate argument not introduced by the DOM preposition; in this sense, it behaves like a passive subject in periphrastic passives. However, when the theme/patient is +animate, it must be introduced by the preposition. Why should this contrast exist only for impersonal *se*?

This distinction can be understood simply assuming that the agreement projection responsible for D.O.M must be deployed whenever animacy is present in the ν P. However in general, AGR is not deployed with inanimate DP's and they must have a different way in

which they can be licensed. As we will see below, they are licensed via the probe in Tense. The point at hand is that this intermediate AGR projection is only licensing D.O.M. objects, which explains the asymmetry on null availability. In conclusion, the facts show that an independent projection AGR is responsible for D.O.M and it must be deployed.

To recapitulate, we have shown that neither accusative case nor dative case is available in the context of *se* construction in any variety of Spanish. This was shown particularly by the behavior of non-D.O.M objects such as inanimates and non-specifics. If accusative case were available we might expect them to be cliticized and behave like a DOM object. Moreover, we found morphological differences between dialects with respect to the manifestation of the DOM objects shown in Table 1 above.

However, how are non DOM objects licensed under this analysis? Recall that accusative case is not an option in these structures. Also we have proposed that AGR is just restricted to DOM. We conclude therefore that non D.O.M objects get nominative case via a probe in tense. On the other hand, D.O.M objects receive inherent case through AGR in the VP.¹⁰

One immediate consequence of this conclusion is found in the distribution of nominative pronouns. It has long been noticed that nominative pronouns are not permitted in impersonal *se* constructions in Spanish. The unavailability of nominative pronouns is rather unexpected under the logic that nominative case is available to the object in many accounts of impersonal *se* constructions (See Cinque 1988, Dobrovie-Sorin 1998). However, from our perspective the reasoning is very straightforward: Personal pronouns require

¹⁰ We will have to qualify this point later in our analysis.

D.O.M. in all dialects of Spanish in *se* constructions. Therefore AGR is necessarily deployed and nominative case is completely unavailable for them.¹¹

26. a * *Se ven ellos*

se sees they

b. * *Se ve él*

se sees He

3. *Se* and probe by Tense.

We have proposed that D.O.M. objects receive inherent case and that non-DOM objects receive nominative case through tense. In this section we will show how these two mechanisms interact.

Previous proposals assume that *se* is ambiguous regarding its argumental and case properties. Thus, Cinque (1988) argues for an argumental and a non-argumental *se*, while Dobrovie-Sorin (1998) contends that *se* can be accusative or nominative. These claims, besides being theoretically awkward, are problematic for the facts discussed above for Spanish. Indeed, we—as well as other researchers—have argued that *se* is unspecified for (any) features, and also that it does not check case (see Ordóñez and Treviño 2007, 2011, and, e.g. Sportiche 2013 for another recent proposal). Much in the spirit of Sportiche’s idea, we also maintain that *se* is radically underspecified for nominal features; *se* never assumes an argumental status (Mendikoetxea 2008, Torrego 2008). According to Sportiche, *se* is

¹¹ This conclusion is relevant for third person nominative pronouns. As we will see below other person pronouns are not available because SE checks person and the person probe is not available.

attracted to a functional projection above *vp* or *VP*, depending on the argument structure of the verb with which it co-occurs. On the other hand, Ordóñez and Treviño 2011 have made a somewhat comparable claim: we suggest that *se* heads (is merged in) a Voice projection, dominating *vP* (Mendikoetxea 2008).

Impersonal-*se* constructions—unlike reflexive/inchoative-*se* constructions—lack a referential subject. Following Malchukov (2008), they belong to the R-impersonal type: these do not lack a subject altogether, but the subject is limited to human, indefinite, non-referential types, regardless of the morphological means a language may use to build an R-impersonal clause. The question arises regarding the morphosyntactic nature of the understood (impersonal) non-referential subjects. In Ordóñez and Treviño (2011) we suggested that an indefinite subject *pro* appears in VoiceP (much in the spirit of Kratzer’s 1996 proposal), or, equivalently, in Spec of *vP* or whatever the projection is where external arguments get merged in syntax.¹²

One of the restrictions of *se* it is that it has to be bound by some human argument. *Se* is bound by an arbitrary impersonal pronoun. This impersonal pronoun corresponds to the subject theta role (See Mendikoetxea for similar views)

27. [_{pro_{arb}}]_i *se* [_{t_i} *ve* [D.O.M a los niños]_j]

This pronominal element is defective and only checks the 3rd person feature on Tense. Being defective it cannot check number and it cannot receive case.

¹² See also Mendikoetxea (2008) D’Alessandro (2007).

In a way the context of impersonal *se* constructions is reminiscent of the case of quirky subject constructions in Icelandic. The quirky subject can check person features, but number features are not available.

28. [pro_{arb}]_i T[3 rd person] *se* [t_i Ve [D.O.M a los niños]j]

This property of these pronouns explain why first and second person inflection is unavailable in these constructions:

29. **Se veo*

Se see-1psg

**Se ves*

Se see-2psg

Since the defective arbitrary pronoun can only be third person, we explain why the inflexion on the verb has to be 3rd person. DOM objects are probed by the proposed AGR projection as follows:

30. [pro_{arb}]_i *se* veT[3rd] [vP [AGR_[+D.O.M] [VP [DP_{DOM} a los niños]]]

se see-3rd

a the boys

However, non-DOM receives case in other ways. The number feature on Tense is made available and it probes the DP in the vP . *Se* does not interfere with the number probe in T and moreover vP in impersonal *se* constructions does not contain the formal feature ACC. Movement of the verb to T and further movement of *se* to a higher clitic head yields the expected result:

31. [pro_{arb}]_i *se* ven T[_{3 plural}] [vP [[VP [_{plural}DP los libros]]]]
se see-3pplu the books

Observe that this probing by T can occur long distance as in modal or the agreement relation can occur in raising predicates as in (32):

32. a. Se pudieron comprar muchos regalos.

Se be able-pl to buy many books

b. Se pudieron lograr comprar muchos regalos

Se be able-pl to manage to buy many books.

Even in raising contexts, T can probe across a lower *se*:

33. Parecen haberse podido lograr comprar muchos regalos.

Seem-3ppl to have been able to manage to buy many books.

4. Agreement with D.O.M object in Mexican and Peninsular Spanish.

We have proposed that *se* merges to a vP , which does not contain the formal ACC feature. DOM objects receive inherent case through a special agreement projection. All pronominal elements, being specific and animate require D.O.M and therefore require this agreement. Nominative is radically impossible for the pronominal system. *Se* is bound by a defective pronoun responsible for the probing of the person on T and ultimately responsible for the impersonal interpretation of these constructions. Thus we have seen that T cannot agree in any person but third person. However, number on T is liberated and therefore it can license nominative case to the non DOM object. That explains in a very clear way why non-D.O.M objects are available for number

agreement in these examples. The prediction therefore, is that D.O.M. objects will never be able to show number agreement with T, which is exactly what is found as shown in (34). Observe the contrast between (34a) and (34c). The T probe cannot agree with D.O.M. in the domain of a lower probe responsible for the case licensing of DOM. A closer probe creates a minimality barrier for locality:

34. a. Se rescató a los alpinistas

Se rescue-3psg/P +the mountaineers

b. *se* rescató T [vP v [[Agr[+D.O.M] [a los alpinistas VP]]]

c. * *se* rescataron T [vP v [[Agr[+D.O.M] [a los alpinistas VP]]]

Se rescue-3ppl +the mountaneers

However, surprisingly Mexican Spanish in some of its varieties, mostly spoken in central Mexico, do permit agreement with DOM as below:

35. Se rescataron a los alpinistas (Mexican Spanish, Central Mexico)

Se rescue-/3ppl a + the mountaneers

There are many interesting restrictions on this phenomenon. First, this occurs with lexical DPs and not pronouns

36. *Se rescataron a ellos (D.F. Mexican Spanish)

Se rescue-/3ppl P+ they

This agreement does not extend to IO datives DP's:

37. *Se hablaron [a los alumnos] sobre aquello
se spoke-3pl to the students about that

38. *Se compraron el libro [a los alumnos]
Se bought-3ppl the book to the students

Moreover, the agreement does not occur with the D.O.M. object in preverbal position (40b). This is crucial, since non DOM objects do not have such restriction. The probing of T with non D.O.M. object can occur preverbally or postverbally as in (39):

39. a. Los libros se vendieron (non D.O.M.).
The books se sell-pst-3pl.

b. Se vendieron los libros.
se sell-pst-3pl the books

40. a. Se rescataron a los alpinistas
Se rescue-3ppl [_{DOM} the mountaineers]

b. *A los alpinistas se rescataron (D.O.M)
[_{DOM} the mountaineers] Se rescue-3ppl

In this dialect the sentence in (40b) can be rendered grammatical when the D.O.M object is doubled by a clitic counterpart and no plural agreement on tense:

41. A los alpinistas se les rescató ayer.
[_{DOM} the mountaineers] Se CL rescue-3psg

This brings up an important property shared with all the dialects. Namely, whenever the clitic counterpart of D.O.M is realized, there is no possibility of having T probing D.O.M. We propose the following generalization:

Generalization 2: Whenever clitic (doubling) is realized, tense cannot probe the DOM object.

This is shown across dialects. In Mexican Spanish the obligatory doubling occurs to the left. In Rioplatense Spanish it occurs to the right or to the left. In all dialects the clitic itself blocks probing by T:

43. a. * A (los) dos alpinistas se les rescatar-on (Mexican Spanish)

[_{D.O.M.} the mountaineers] Se CL-pl rescue-3ppl

b. *Se los rescataron a (los) dos alpinistas (Rioplatense Spanish)

Se CL-pl rescue-3ppl [_{DOM} the mountaineers]

c. * A (los) dos alpinistas se los rescataron (Rioplatense Spanish)

[_{D.O.M.} the mountaineers] Se CL-pl rescue-3ppl

d. *Se los rescataron (All dialects of Spanish).

Se Cl-pl rescue-pl

The next question to answer is why the overt appearance of the clitic blocks the ability of tense to agree with D.O.M. Since all D.O.M's are probed by the lower AGR in νP , the blocking should be general, no matter where the D.O.M. argument is (to the right or to the left). Therefore, we have to assume that it crucially depends on the feature composition of this AGR whether probing of D.O.M. objects by number in tense is available.

What is blocking probing of tense to D.O.M. is the clitic itself. We take the presence of the clitic as diagnostic for movement of the D.O.M. argument to the Spec of AGR. This is clearly the case when D.O.M. is to the left of the verb, and we will extend this conclusion even when D.O.M. is to the right of the verb. For that, we follow a proposal from Sportiche (1993) and assume that doubled D.O.M.'s. are moved further to the left of D.O.M. which are not doubled. The difference lies on how far the D.O.M. has moved with respect to the verb. In theoretical terms we propose that AGR contains an optional EPP feature that triggers this movement of D.O.M. and creates the configuration of clitic doubling (see also Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1997).

This brings us to the important details of: the configuration of that clitic doubling. The consensus in the literature is that doubling involves a complex structure or Big DP composed of the clitic and the doubled DP. In our hypothesis, this means that the initial structure must involve a clitic and D.O.M. DP as follows:

44. *se* rescató [a los alpinistas CL]

Se rescue [D.O.M the mountaineers]

The mountaineers were rescued

The relation between the DP and the clitic is internal. The plural DP agrees in number and gender with the clitic. The D.O.M. DP moves to the specifier of this AGR responsible for D.O.M. The clitic must be checked against this AGR. Clitic and D.O.M. DP are split at this point as follows:

45. *se* CL_i rescató T [vP v [a los alpinistas]_i [CL_i+AGR[+D.O.M] [t VP]]]

Se rescued

This movement of CL to AGR will be followed by movement of the CL above T. We assume that this head is the ultimate site for cliticization in Spanish as represented below:

46. *se* [CL]+X rescató T [_vP a los alpinistas t v [AGR[+D.O.M] [t_i VP]]]

According to this analysis the AGR responsible for D.O.M. is strong and contains an EPP feature responsible for the checking of the head clitic and D.O.M. When AGR of the D.O.M. is strong tense cannot probe the D.O.M. DP. One way to capture this intuition is to assume that the strong AGR for D.O.M. creates a phase to which external probe of T cannot penetrate. In other words a _vP dominated by *se* in which clitic doubling occurs is a phase, while a _vP in which the EPP feature for AGR does not attract the clitic is not, and thus allows probing of tense in T. The effects of clitic doubling on phasehood are represented in (47)):

47. **se* rescataron [CL]_i+Y **T**_[plural] [_vP_{phase} **a los alpinistas** v [t_i+Agr[+D.O.M] [t_i VP]]]

The analysis can be extended to the other varieties that do not have overt clitic doubling if one assumes that there is a covert counterpart of the clitic in the other varieties. The idea that there are silent clitics has been proven to be fruitful by Kayne's (2006) analyses. Here we extend the idea to doubling. We propose that the double empty clitic counterpart is checked against strong AGR for D.O.M. and it blocks probing of T inside _vP. This _vP qualifies as a phase and agreement with D.O.M. is impossible. The covert counterpart is written in bold:

48. **se* **CL** +X rescataron]_i T[plural] [[_vP_{phase} a los alpinistas t v [t_i+Agr [+D.O.M] [t_i VP]]]

Finally, we must get back to the unexpected behavior of Mexican Spanish. This variety allows agreement with D.O.M. as long as D.O.M. is to the right of the verb.

49. *Se rescataron a los alpinistas*

Se rescued-3ppl the mountaneers

Our proposal can capture this variety if one assumes that D.O.M. AGR does not contain the EPP feature that triggers clitic movement to AGR. Then the D.O.M. objects in this variety are not moved outside the vP , but are in situ. Since no clitic head is involved, similar to the examples with—D.O.M. objects, T can probe into $t vP$ and agree with D.O.M. as represented below:¹³

50. *se rescataron*T[plural] Y [vP $t v$ [AGR [-EPP[[D.O.M.a los alpinistas] VP]]]

This leads to a modification of the theory of how intervention should be thought of in these dialects. We believe that the AGR head with an EPP feature is capable of blocking tense to D.O.M. (the one that triggers Clitic movement). Thus contrary to the vP found in Rioplatense Spanish and other varieties, the vP in Mexican Spanish above does not constitute a phase and it is transparent to the probing by tense. Further evidence that vP for this analysis in this variety is given by the fact that *wh*-movement of D.O.M. to Spec CP can occur and probing of tense is possible as far as **no** clitic (doubling) intervenes on the way. That analysis is presented in (51). Observe that when the clitic is present, then AGR is strong and vP is a phase and no probing of tense is permitted as in (51b) and (52b). We are assuming that the *wh*-word copy is the one that triggers agreement. When no clitic is present the agreement can occur:

51. a. *A quiénes se rescataron?*

To whom *se* rescue-3ppl ?

¹³ This assumes that structural case given by T and D.O.M. are both compatible. This has been shown to be the case by Woolford (2006)

b. * A quiénes se les rescataron?

To whom *se* CL rescue-3ppl

52. a. A quiénes [*se* rescataron T] Y [ν P t ν [AGR[[D.O.M. a **quíenes**] VP]]]

b. *A quiénes [*se* rescataron T] les +Y [ν P *phase* t ν [D.O.M. a **quíenes**] AGR[[VP]]]

Observe that when non agreement occurs, clitics can appear. This is predicted since Tense is not probing the ν P phase in that case¹⁴:

53. A quiénes se les rescató?

To whom *se* CL rescue-3psg

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have provided new evidence that accusative case is not deployed in the ν P in any variety of Spanish. We have shown how different varieties manifest microparametric variation with respect to the morphological manifestation of the clitic in this construction with *se*. The close comparison of Peninsular and Mexican Spanish with respect to the agreeing possibilities of the Verb in *se* with D.O.M., has shown that Tense can probe to D.O.M. into ν P as far as that ν P is not a phase. The diagnostic of whether ν P is a phase or not is given by clitic doubling. The clitic blocks probing of T into ν P.

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¹⁴ Under our theory, the non agreeing option simply indicates that there is no probing of tense to the object. Thus we assume that tense might probe in ν P optionally. However when it does, it can only do it when there is no strong AGR for D.O.M..

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