

Micro-parametric Syntax of Impersonal SE

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Microparameter

- What can a comparative microparametric view tell us about the syntax and semantics of impersonal SE across Romance languages?
- In particular I will focus on important differences in Romance with a focus on Catalan, Spanish and Italian and its implication to Syntactic Theory.

microparameters

- Microparameters. Take the notion of parameter at a higher level of magnification.
- We look at very localized differences with small but non trivial effects.
- There is a lot of variation in these constructions. We focus on what does not occur and what predictions we can make.

Microparameters of SE in Romance

- Disclaimer: For the purposes of this paper I make no distinction between Passive-Reflexive SE and Impersonal SE. These labels are just taxonomic devices with no *a priory* differences, unless we show there are.

Microparameters of SE in Romance

- Impersonal SE involves a construction with unspecified, arbitrary, generic existential subjects:
 - Se compraron los libros
Se buy-past-3ppl the books
One/someone bought the books
 - Se compró los libros
Se buy-3psg the books
One/someone bought the books

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- General requirements for Impersonal SE:
 - a) Requirement: Language must have clitic reflexive SE. Thus, its clitic character is crucial for these constructions.
 - Aquí habla mucho de sí mismo
*one-someone speaks about self
 - Aquí se habla mucho
Here one-someone SE speaks a lot.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- General requirements:
 - b) Requirement: Language must be pro-drop
 - *S'achète des livres (French)
SE buy books
 - On achète des livres (French)
ON buys books

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- SE is a head adjoined to an inflectional projection i.e., the element to which other verbal clitics adjoin:
 - Se me ve contento
 - Se la ve contenta

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- An empty pronominal must C-command it
(Mendikoetxea 2006, Cinque 1988, Chierchia 1996)
 - Pro_{arb} SE_i compran libros.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The empty pronominal must bear a theta-role:
 - *Pro_{expl} se hay naranjas
 - *Pro_{expl} se parece que va a llover
 - *Pro_{expl} se puede que no haya venido todavía.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The empty pronominal can have generic or existential interpretation. Generic interpretation is given in a generic context, and existential is given in episodic contexts, e.g., past tense (Chierchia 1996):
 - En Cataluña se bebe mucho vino. (Generic)
In Catalonia GEN se drinks a lot of wine
 - En Barcelona se jugó muy mal (Existencial)
In Barcelona Ext se played very badly

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Chierchia defines this pronominal as indefinite. It can be bound by a generic operator or existential operator that assigns its own index, different from the indexes of other pronouns.
- I will label the pronoun as Φ following Mendikoetxea (2008) after Holmberg .

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Binding properties of Φ :

- It cannot bind any pronoun. Compare it to generic

UNO:

- * Φ_i Se_i piensa que su_i familia es la mejor
- Uno_i piensa que su_i familia es la mejor
One thinks that pro_i is correct

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Properties of Φ :

- * Φ_i Se_i piensa que pro_i tiene razón.
 Φ_i Se thinks that pro_i is correct.
- Uno piensa que pro_i tiene razón.
One thinks that pro_i is correct

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Properties of Φ

Even with reflexives PP objects becomes difficult.

Contrary to Italian:

-??Aquí Φ se piensa en sí mismo.

-??Aquí Φ se está orgulloso de sí mismo

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Properties of Φ

Contrary to quantifier UNO, it cannot bind a reflexive.

-Aquí uno piensa en sí mismo.

-Aquí uno está orgulloso de sí mismo

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- We conclude SE does not enter into binding chains. Its arbitrary meaning must be established in a different fashion (also see Chierchia 1996).

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- One interesting consequence is that SE is just a bindee. Thus it can either be bound by a DP or by Φ .
 - Pedro_i se_i compró un libro.
 - Aquí Φ_i se_i compran libros.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- There is only one SE with different types of binder. Thus we do not run into the issue and problems associated with more than one SE with different binders (Sportiche forthcoming, Kayne 2003, Mendikoetxea, D' Alessandro 2004):
 - *Aqui Φ_i se_i se_j los compra <a ellos_i>
someone buys the books for them.
 - *Aqui Φ_i se_i se_j mira en el espejo

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- It is only associated with a theta-role. Φ cannot be reflexive object and subject:
 - *Aqui Φ_i se_i ve
someone sees himself
 - Aqui uno_i se_i mira.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The licensing of Φ with SE occurs in languages with strong T, contrary to languages with Weak T (partial pro-drop languages like Brazilian Portuguese), probably because agreement is pronominal in Spanish and Italian but not in BP :
 - *Aqui Φ_i arregla zapatos
 - Aqui Φ_i conserta sapatos. (Brazilian Portuguese)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Φ Properties:
 - It is licensed by SE.
 - Languages must have strong agreement to be licensed by SE
 - It can only be associated with one theta-role.
 - It has to be associated with the highest theta-role in v .
- First microparamter: related to whether Φ is plural or not. Italian has Φ plural, Spanish and Catalan have Singular Φ .

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This can be shown in adjectival agreement:

- Si è soddisfat-**i** (It)
SE is satisfied-3plural
- Se está satisfech-o-(***s**) (SP)
- S'està satisfet-(***s**) (Cat)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Claim: Plural Φ is responsible for the “we” interpretations unavailable in Spanish or Catalan.
- SI in Tuscan Italian and many Italian dialects can be doubled by NOI, which can be associated with Plural Φ (D’Alessandro 2004) .

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Hai l'aria di credere che **noialtri** Φ **si** voglia diventare dei dirigenti (Italiano).

Ernesto Ferrero

- *Tienes el aire de creer que nosotros Φ se quiera volver dirigentes.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Φ si parte! (Italian)
Let's leave (inclusive *we*, D'alessandro 2004)
- Φ Si va a New York! (Italian)
Let's go to New York (inclusive, D'alessandro)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- * Φ se sale! (SP)
Let's leave
- Salimos!
- *Se va a New York! (SP)
Let's go to New York
- Vamos a New York! (SP)
Let's go to New York

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Italian Φ licenses floating quantifiers. Spanish and Catalan Φ do not:
 - Φ Si è stati invitati tutti (It)
SE has been invited all
 - *Aqui Φ se invitó todos (Sp)
 - Si Φ e arrivati tutti
 - * Aquí Φ se llegó todos

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Equally, Italian Φ licenses reciprocals, but Spanish and Catalan do not:
 - Φ si era parlato l'un con l'altro
 - * Φ se habló el uno con el otro.
 - * Φ es va parlar l' un amb l' altre.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- In conclusion the character of Φ makes a difference. If Φ contains plural features, it is compatible with 1pp pronouns and can license floating quantifiers and reciprocals. Italian contains plural Φ ; Spanish and Catalan contains singular Φ .

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The second microparameter in transitive verb contexts:
- SE V DO. There are two options: (1) agreeing and (2) not agreeing when the DO is to the right. Catalan, Italian and Spanish all present those options. However, there is always preference for the agreeing option.
 - SE compran los libros
 - Se compra los libros

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- However when the DO is to the left, it also presents two options. Italian is a clear example of this double possibility.

A) the T agreeing option

- I libri si comprano.
The books si compra-3ppl

B) The clitic option

- I libri li si compra.
The books cl si buy-3psg
- Questo, lo si dice
this, cl si say-s

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Catalan, Spanish (at least Mexican Spanish and Barcelona Spanish) these options are more restricted.
- A) the T agreeing option
 - Φ_i Los libros se_i compran
The books si compra-3ppl
- B) The clitic option
 - $*\Phi_i$ Los libros se_i los compra
The books cl si buy-3psg

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- A) the T agreeing option
 - Φ_i Esto se_i dice con cautela
 - Φ this se say-3ps with caution
- B) The clitic option
 - * Φ_i Esto se_i lo dice con cautela

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The clitic option is favored/obligatory with D.O.M. in Spanish:
 - A María se la/le ve contenta.
 - A mis profesoras se las/les premió.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Moreover, the agreeing option is clearly disfavored with objects that typically would have D.O.M:
 - ?? Φ Mis profesoras se premiaron.
 - Φ **A** mis profesoras se las/les premió.

 - ?? Φ ellas se premiaron.
 - Φ **A** ellas se las/les premió.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The null argument of SE requires the clitic associated with the D.O.M, contrary to periphrastic passives:
- (Talking about a lost child)

Aquí fue encontrado (periphrastic passive)

Here was found.

%Aquí se encontró (Impersonal SE)

Here pro se found

Aquí se lo/le encontró. (D.O.M)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The Null argument of SE requires the clitic associated with D.O.M, contrary to passives:
- Por fortuna, fue rescatado del incendio.
(el niño, el cuadro)
- Por fortuna, se rescató del incendio.
(*el niño, el cuadro)
- Por fortuna, se **le/lo** rescató del incendio

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- The same pattern occurs in Catalan. The clitic option is disfavored to the left of SE:
 - A) Agreeing option.
 - Els llibres es compren
The books Se buy-3ppl
 - B) The clitic option in Catalan:
 - * Φ el llibre se'l compra
 Φ this book se buys
 - * Φ Això s'ho diu a poc a poc
 Φ this book se says

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Clitic option is favored with D.O.M to the left in Catalan:
 - A un gos no se'l desterra
A a dog no se'l kik out (from Verdaguer).
 - A la teva noia, se l'ha de dotar amb cent mil duros
(Narcís Oller, Pilar Prim).
A your girlfriend, SE cl-has to give some money
 - A la Maria se la veu contenta
A the Maria SE cl looks happy
Maria looks happy

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Catalan does not allow D.O.M of these same objects to the right, unlike Spanish:
 - No es desterra (*??a) un gos.
No es expel (*??a) a dog.
 - S'ha de dotar ((*??a) la teva noia amb cent mil duros (Narcís Oller, Pilar Prim).

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Why is there an asymmetry between the clitic option and non clitic option in Spanish and Catalan?
- Why is the clitic option sensitive to D.O.M?
- Why is the agreeing option disfavored with D.O.M objects to the left (at least in Spanish)?

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Spanish is not uniform in the clitic solution permitted for D.O.M objects to the left of SE.
- In Catalanian Spanish (a partial *leísta* dialect). use of L-E is sensitive to gender. Only permitted with masculine.
- Recall L-E is the only *L* clitic not specified for gender features, as opposed to */-o*, */-a*, usually used for accusative.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Partial Leísta dialect:

- A Juan Le vi ayer. (masc, +animate)
 Juan L-e saw
- Ese cuadro (*l-e)/l-o vi ayer (masc,-animate)
 This portray saw yesterday.
- A María/ la casa (*l-e)L-a vi ayer (fem +animate)
 A María, cl saw (yesterday)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Partial Leísta dialects L-E works only with Masculine +D.O.M:

Contrast with impersonal SE contexts. L-E gets extended to feminine only in this context:

Al niño/a la niña sí se le escuchó_(masc-fem)
A the boy/ a la niña SE I-E listen (masc, fem)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This process of *L-E shifting* with SE can be seen even by speakers that are not *leístas* with masculine in regular transitive sentences.

Si hay que fusilar-*lo*, SE *l-E* fusila
Si must shoot-*l-o*, SE *l-E* shoot
(from P. Preston, *Franco*)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Mexican Spanish shows no L-E with transitive verbs . All D.O, masculine or feminine, show masculine/femine distinction: L-O, L-A.

- **A** Juan **lo** vieron contento. (Mex.)
A+Juan Cl-see-3ppl happy
- **A** María **la** vieron contenta. (Mex.)
A+Juan Cl- -see-3ppl happy

Microparameters for SE in Romance

In the context of SE Mexican Spanish obligatorily shifts to : L-E.

- **A** Juan SE *le* vio contento. (Mex.)
a+Juan SE cl-DAt see happy
- **A** María SE *le* vio contenta. (Mex.)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This shifting to L-E extends to inanimates with D.O.M to the left:

- Estos terrenos **los** vendieron a un buen precio.
These lands **CL** sold at a good price.
They sold this land at a good price.
- A estos terrenos **SE les** vendió a un buen precio. (with Impersonal Interpretation)
these lands SE CL sold at a good price.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This shifting to L-E does not occur in Rio Plata Spanish:

Río Plata Spanish, contrary to Mexican Spanish or Catalanian Spanish has doubling with D.O.M beyond strong pronouns:

- (lo) vi a Juan (+ DOM)
- (*la) vi la libreta

Microparameters for SE in Romance

With these dialects no L-E shifting occurs with DO either to the left or to the right:

- Se (lo) escuchó[al niño]
- Se (la) escuchó[a la niña]
(Río Plata Spanish)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

With these dialects no L-E shifting occurs with DO either:

- [al niño] Se lo escuchó
to the boy SE cl listen
- [a la niña] Se la escuchó
a+the girl Se cl listen

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Observation: Languages that allow clitic doubling with DOM, do not shift to LE in impersonal SE constructions.

- [al niño] Se lo escuchó
to the boy SE cl listen a
- [a la niña] Se la escuchó
a+the girl Se cl listen
- *[a la niña] Se le escuchó
a+the girl Se cl listen

Microparameters for SE in Romance

-Why is L-E shifting happening in some dialects and not other?
Why is it occurring in some languages but not others?

-Claim: L-E is a clitic with no specific dative morphological specification. It is an I- cl. E is not a marker of dative in Spanish. This distinguishes it from gl-i in Italian or I-i in catalan (Bonet 1995, Martín 2011).

-Clitics with dative specification (gl-i or I-i) cannot be bound or doubled by D.O.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Towards a micro-parametric analysis.

- Why is there an asymmetry between the clitic option and non clitic option in Spanish and Catalan and not Italian?
- Why is the clitic option sensitive to D.O.M?
- Why is the agreeing option disfavored with D.O.M objects to the left (at least in Spanish)?

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Analysis: SE is a clitic and it has 0 person feature.

I will follow Collins (1993) and his analysis of passive. I take SE to sit in a voice projection. I will label this SE voice as opposed to passive voice Collins.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Context of transitive structures with no D.O.M

From that position

- T SE-Cl-voice [_{vp} Φ [_{VP} DP]]

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Context of transitive structures with no D.O.M. I will follow Torrego and assume that SE makes this a Weak phase for vp. So T can probe the DP.

Se compraron varios libros

- **SE** Φ $T_{\langle \text{probe} \rangle}$ [SE-voice [_v [_{VP} DP _{$\langle \text{goal} \rangle$}]]]
- This probe-goal relation can long distance:
- Parecen haberse podido lograr comprar muchos regalos.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

SE moves to a final clitic position in which all object clitics end up. Fundamentally SE is not a subject clitic.

So it must have an object feature to end up with other object clitics.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- Φ ends up in Spec TP or in a Spec position where it C-commands SE during the derivation. T checks its person feature with Φ . (d' Alessandro 2004).

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Torrego (1998) assumes that DOM is lexical or inherent case in all varieties of Spanish and that impersonal SE constructions are a unique context where this can be shown.

Rodríguez-Mondoñedo (2006), López (2012), Gallego (2012) assume that D.O.M involves movement to a projection above *vp*, Collins and Thraxisson (1993) and Kayne(2006) .

Se vio a varios estudiantes
*Se vieron a varios estudiantes

- T [SE-Cl-voice [_{AGR} DOM [_{vp} Φ [_{VP} <DOM>_i]]]

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Presumably T is unable to probe D.O.M being a PP. However, Ordóñez and Treviño (2012) show that there are dialects where this is not the case. Another micro-parameter.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

The interesting fact is that no dialect has agreement T to the left. A clitic is required:

Se vieron a varios estudiantes

*A varios estudiantes se vieron

A varios estudiantes se les/los vio.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Generalization: SE can combine with clitics that double a D.O.M object or dative (oblique in the terminology of Bonet)

Lets take impersonal SE+CL as instantiation of clitic doubling structures in Voice SE as follows:

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Claim: D.O.M to the left of SE are not left dislocated but are in a inner projection:

A María se la ve contenta

T [A Maria_i SE-**la**_i-voice [_{vp} Φ [_{VP} <DP>_i]]]

*El libro se lo compra

T [El libro_i SE-**lo**_i-voice [_{vp} Φ [_{VP} <DP>_i]]]

Microparameters for SE in Romance

The restriction is very similar to the found Rio Plata Spanish. Doubling is permitted with D.O.M, but impossible with non D.O.M objects. The difference is that there is combinatorial problem with SE and CL.

*lo compra el libro

la ve a Mafalda

Microparameters for SE in Romance

The difference is that this restriction on doubling only occurs when the DP object moves overtly to Spec Voice P with SE and it is more general in Rio Plata Spanish.

T [Voice P A Maria_i SE-**la**-voice [vp Φ [vp <DP>_i]]]

*T [voice P El libro_i SE-**lo**-voice [vp Φ [vp <DP>_i]]]

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Impersonal SE can only combine with a clitic that doubles D.O.M. in voice P. (tentatively this would be a universal morphological restriction).

In other words, SE voice is incompatible with a doubled DP.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This doubles can be overt or covert:

A Barcelona s'hi va sovint
To Barcelona loc goes often

De llibres s'en compren
of books part-buy

A Juan se le ve contento
To Juan se cl-sees happy

A Juan se le dio estos libros
To Juan se cl-gave some books

**El libro se lo compra*

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This restriction has various consequences:

- a) We expect more D.O.M in the context of SE than in other contexts, since SE only combines with clitics that double D.O.M or are oblique.
- b) If a language allows object clitics to end in a different projection from the clitic projection where SE ends up (split clitics) in the inflectional projection the restriction should not apply.
- c) Languages with no D.O.M and with no split clitics do not allow impersonal SE with object clitics.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- a) We expect more D.O.M in the context of SE than in other contexts. Consequence a) is born out. D.O.M is more pervasive in impersonal SE.

Observe the following contrasts:

- a) Al arroz se lo/le hierve
Rice Se cl boils
- b) ?? Al arroz lo hirvieron
Rice cl-boiled

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- a) We expect more D.O.M in the context of SE than in other contexts. Consequence a) is born out. Catalan already showed that that is the case:

A la Maria, se la veu des d'aquí.
To Maria, Se cl see-s from here

??A la Maria la veus des d'aquí
To Maria, cl see-2psg from here

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- a) If a language allows object clitics to end up in a different projection from the clitic projection where SE ends up, then the restriction does not show up:

There are good reasons to think that object clitics in Italian do not form a cluster with impersonal SE .

Microparameters for SE in Romance

- a) Li si vede
cl Imp-SE see-3psg
- b) Lo si fa
Cl se makes

However, with reflexive interpretations of SE object clitics follow. The change in order with respect to SE can be explained if clitics are split in Italian impersonal SE but not in reflexive SE.

- c) SE lo compra(italian)
SE-refl lo buys

Microparameters for SE in Romance

One plausible way to look at this contrast in Italian is to assume that object clitics in impersonal SE contexts are in a higher inflectional projection than SE (split clitic configuration). The availability of this extra clitic projection makes it possible for Italian to escape the restriction against DP object without D.O.M:

Impersonals in Italian

Lo-X SI+Y compra.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

This extra clitic position might come for free in languages that have a position for subject clitics for instance in Northern Italian dialects. The prediction is born out at least for Venetian, Dialect of Cornigliano as reported by Mendikoetxea and Battye (1989).

Se lo vede. (Conigliano Variety of Veneto)

SE it see

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Finally, the difference in the clitic forms in different Spanish dialects must be a consequence of the feature specification requirements of this Voice P that hosts SE and attracts the clitic associated with D.O.M.

- a) Mexican Spanish has a radically unspecified voice head for gender. L-E is the underspecified form and we expect LE in all context with SE

.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Voice is only compatible with D.O.M clitics with no gender specification.

- **A** Juan SE *le* vio contento. (Mex.)
a+Juan SE cl-DAt see happy
- **A** María SE *le* vio contenta. (Mex.)

Microparameters for SE in Romance

c) Rio Plata Spanish has a fully specified head for gender, as it does in doubling structures and we expect the specification to remain the same in SE constructions:

- [al niño] Se lo escuchó
to the boy SE cl listen a
- [a la niña] Se la escuchó
a+the girl Se cl listen
- *[a la niña] Se le escuchó
a+the girl Se cl listen

Microparameters for SE in Romance

Conclusion: Exercise in microparametric syntax with impersonal SE.

a) Pro-drop distinguishes French from the rest of Romance

b) Character of Φ . This distinguishes Italian and Italian dialects for Western Romance and its possibilities of distribution and coreference and interpretation

Microparameters for SE in Romance

c) Doubling clitic with impersonal SE is possible with D.O.M object and other PP; non-D.O.M objects disallow this possibility.

d) Italian permits this possibility of non-D.O.M objects to appear in SE construction because object clitics do not cluster with SE and are not in the same projection as SE. They are in different inflectional projections, split clitic configurations. That predicts that dialects with subject clitics with SE is permitted with clitic objects.

Microparameters for SE in Romance

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