

On (un)grammatical clitic sequences in Spanish impersonal *se* constructions

Introduction: In this talk, we discuss the (un)grammatical sequence of clitics in impersonal *se* (Imp_{se}) constructions in Spanish, illustrated in (1a) from Honduran Spanish.

- (1) a. Se {le/*lo} ve por aquí mucho. b. {Lo/*le} veo por aquí mucho.
Imp_{se} him sees by here much Him see by here much
“He is seen around here a lot.” “I see him around here a lot.”

Restricting the discussion to masculine animate direct objects, this pattern is particularly striking since in all other environments, *lo* is used in this dialect while *le* is not available, as illustrated in (1b), Honduran Spanish not being a leísta dialect. We offer an account in terms of syntactic domains and intervention, where *lo*, specified as definite (i.e. $lo_{[+D]}$), moves into the domain of the verb made impersonal by *se*, and blocks Agree with T by the implicit *indefinite* argument $pro_{[-D]}$ in Spec,Voice introduced in these impersonal *se* constructions.

Novel data: Consider impersonal *se* constructions in clitic climbing environments in (4), data which have not been previously discussed, but which are telling. Assume *lo* = Santa Claus.

- (4) a. En Navidad, se suele poder abrazar {lo/*le}.
In Christmas, Imp_{se} tends can hug him
“In Christmas, one tends to be able to hug him.”
b. En Navidad, se suele poder {lo/*le} abrazar.
c. En Navidad, se {*lo/le} suele poder abrazar



(4a) illustrates that accusative case is available thanks to *abrazar* “hug” indicated by the appearance of enclitic *lo*. Moreover, on standard assumptions, neither *soler* “tend” nor *poder* “can” have accusative case to value a DP. Thus, the clitic carries accusative case with it when it moves, since when enclitic on *poder*, *lo* surfaces (4b). As (4c) illustrates, it is only when the clitic is within the domain of the matrix verb made impersonal by *se* that *lo* no longer surfaces; *le* must. These data are key: only when *lo* is in the domain with impersonal *se* is *lo* ungrammatical.

Previous accounts: As far as we know, there are only two other generative accounts of the patterns in (1). Mendikoetxea & Battye (1990) argue that the order of clitics is relevant in understanding the (un)grammatical sequences in impersonal *se* constructions; As (1) illustrates, however, this cannot be the case, since both ungrammatical *se lo* and grammatical *se le* have the same clitic orders. A more recent account (Ordóñez & Treviño to appear) claims that accusative case with verbs made impersonal by *se* is not available, thus ruling out accusative *lo*; *le* surfaces, they claim, because only inherent case is available. As the patterns in (4) illustrate, *lo* gets accusative from *abrazar* “hug”, thus the lack of accusative from *soler* “used to” cannot explain why *lo* is ungrammatical, since accusative is still available with *abrazar* “hug”.

The specific proposal: Following previous authors (see Mendikoetxea 2008, Ordóñez & Treviño 2011) we assume that an important ingredient of the non-referential *indefinite* interpretation of the implicit external argument in these *se* constructions results from the presence of an indefinite $pro_{[-D]}$ in Spec,Voice. We also assume *se* itself heads Voice (see Folli & Harely 2005, Armstrong 2011, Ordóñez & Treviño 2011 for related proposals). Adopting the analysis of Holmberg (2005, 2010) (see also Roberts 2010) for consistent null subject languages, we assume that T has an uninterpretable D feature (i.e. $T_{[uD]}$), which is typically valued definite by definite referential *pro* in Spec,Voice, unless special morphology arises, such as impersonal *se*. Specifically, we claim that $pro_{[-D]}$ in Spec,Voice in impersonal *se* constructions values $T_{[uD]}$ as indefinite, which is critical for the non-referential *indefinite* interpretation of the implicit external argument. As we argue below, we claim that *lo* is specified as definite (i.e. $lo_{[+D]}$) and intervenes between indefinite $pro_{[-D]}$ in Spec,Voice and $T_{[uD]}$. The result is that $pro_{[-D]}$ cannot value $T_{[uD]}$, and an indefinite interpretation does not arise. *Le* in contrast, although in the same

On (un)grammatical clitic sequences in Spanish impersonal *se* constructions

structural configuration does not block valuation of $T_{[uD]}$ by indefinite $pro_{[-D]}$, because *le* is underspecified for definiteness, as argued below; it lacks a definiteness feature altogether (i.e. *le*). We assume that the clitic, whether it moves as a head (Matushansky 2006) or a phrase moves through Spec, Voice, to escape the phase. In Spec, Voice *lo* intervenes, as in (5a) which illustrates a non-clitic climbing context. This contrasts with grammatical *se le* in (5b); angled brackets indicate copies and two-way arrows indicate Agree.

- (5) a. [TP $T_{[uD]}$ [VoiceP *lo*_[+D] [VoiceP *pro*_[-D] Voice [VP V <*lo*_[+D]>]]]]

 b. [TP $T_{[uD]}$ [VoiceP *le* [VoiceP *pro*_[-D] Voice [VP V <*le*>]]]]


This also explains the clitic climbing patterns in (4), since the clitic only intervenes once it moves into the matrix Spec, Voice, into the domain of impersonal *se*.

(In)definiteness: We take the available semantic class of doubles of a clitic as an indication of the features that the clitic itself bears, following Suñer (1988), Ormazabal & Romero (2013) among others. As in (6), indirect object *le* in all varieties can double a definite or an indefinite.

- (6) Le mandamos un regalo a la/una niña pobre.
 Him send a gift to the/a girl poor
 “We sent the/a poor girl a gift.”

We assume that the ability to double both definite and indefinite DPs entails that the dative is underspecified for definiteness, and therefore lacks a definite feature altogether (see Nevins 2007 for animacy). As expected, indirect object *le* is grammatical in impersonal *se* constructions, as illustrated in (7) in a clitic climbing environment, where *le* = Santa Claus.

- (7) En Navidad, se le suele mandar una carta
 In Christmas, Imp_{se} him tends send a letter
 “In Christmas, one tends to send him a letter.”

In contrast, in Honduran Spanish (and many dialects), direct object clitic doubling is limited to strong pronouns, which are definite, as in (8); indefinites cannot be clitic doubled, as in (9).

- (8) a. Lo vi a él. (9) a. *Lo vi a un niño.
 him saw to him him saw to a boy
 “I saw him.” “I saw a boy.”
 b. La vi a ella. b. *La vi a una niña.
 Her saw to girl her saw to a girl
 “I saw her.” “I saw a girl.”

Interestingly, in contrast to Honduran Spanish, as reported in Suñer (1988), in Rioplatense Spanish, both a definite and an indefinite direct object can be doubled, as in (10), which entails that *lo* in Rioplatense Spanish is underspecified for definiteness.

- (10) a. La oían a la niña. b. Diariamente, la escuchaba a una mujer que cantaba tangos.
 Her heard to the girl Daily, her listened to a women that sang tangos
 “They heard the girl.” “Daily, I listened to a woman that sang tangos.”

This, we claim, explains why *lo* is ungrammatical in impersonal *se* constructions, as in (11).

- (11) Se lo escuchó (al niño) [Ordóñez & Treviño to appear]
 Imp_{se} him listened (to.the boy)
 “One listened to him (the boy).”

Conclusion: In this talk, we argue that ungrammatical clitic sequences in impersonal *se* constructions arises when a clitic specified as definite enters the domain of impersonal *se*, thereby giving rise an intervention effect.