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THREE TYPES OF PREPOSITIONS IN SPANISH *SE* SENTENCES. CONSEQUENCES FOR CROSS-DIALECTAL STUDIES

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Abstract

This paper discusses agreement patterns of SE sentences in different Spanish dialects. Special attention is paid to situations where the verb agrees with Case-marked internal arguments (cf. Torrego 1998, López 2012) bypassing the preposition (e.g., *Se ayudaron a los banqueros*, Eng. 'Bankers were helped'), and to a previously unnoticed case in which agreement occurs across a non-clitic related preposition (e.g., *Se saben de diversos factores*, Eng. 'Different factors are known'). A micro-parametric approach is put forward whereby two functional elements hold the key to accounting for the facts: on the one hand, the feature specification of v and T (the locus of structural Case) may vary, and, on the other, the precise nature of what we label "P" may range over three possible manifestations: (i) a *bona fide* preposition, (ii) an applicative element (potentially associated to a clitic), and (iii) the spell-out of a feature within a given functional category.

Keywords

Spanish, impersonal / passive se, syntax, agreement, prepositions

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TRES TIPOS DE PREPOSICIONES EN ORACIONES CON *SE* DEL ESPAÑOL.
CONSECUENCIAS PARA ESTUDIOS DIALECTALES

Resumen

Este artículo discute los patrones de concordancia de oraciones con SE en diferentes dialectos del español. Se presta especial atención a situaciones en las que el verbo concuerda con argumentos internos que han recibido caso (cf. Torrego 1998, López 2012), ignorando la preposición que los introduce (e.g., *Se ayudaron a los banqueros*), y a una variante no descrita previamente en la que la concordancia tiene lugar a través de una preposición no relacionada con clíticos (e.g., *Se saben de diversos factores*). El presente trabajo ofrece un planteamiento micro-paramétrico en el que dos elementos funcionales son clave para dar cuenta de los hechos: por un lado, la especificación morfológica de v y T (el *locus* del caso estructural) puede variar, y, por el otro, la naturaleza específica de lo que llamamos "P" puede adoptar tres manifestaciones: (i) una preposición *bona fide*, (ii) un elemento aplicativo (potencialmente asociado a un clítico), y (iii) la manifestación de un rasgo de una categoría funcional.

Palabras clave

español, impersonal / pasiva con SE, sintaxis, concordancia, preposiciones

1. Introduction

It is well-known that *preposition stranding* is a cross-linguistically restricted phenomenon (cf. Law 2006 and references therein for discussion). Thus, Romance languages such as Spanish prevent instances of A-bar movement stranding a preposition, as noted by Campos (1991):

(1) *Quién contaron todos con? (Spanish)
who counted all with
Who did everybody count on?

[from Campos 1991: 741]

Whatever the factor responsible for (1) (cf. Abels 2003, Hornstein & Weinberg 1981, Kayne 1984, and Truswell 2009 for different accounts), it plausibly holds in the case of pseudopassives, which are ruled out too:

(2) *José es contado con por todos (Spanish)
José be counted with by everybody
José is counted on by everybody
[from Campos 1991: 741]

The literature on these phenomena has emphasized the empirical observation that pseudopassivization is more restricted than P-stranding (cf. Abels 2003 and Truswell 2009). The goal of this short paper is to discuss previously unnoticed data from non-standard Spanish that indicate that this language can display a pseudopassive pattern in the context of "SE passives." Interestingly, pseudopassivization is barred with "BE (or periphrastic) passives," which we take to reinforce the structural and morphological differences of the vP of SE and BE passives (cf. Mendikoetxea 1992, 1999).

The paper is divided as follows. Section 2 provides overview of the agreement options of SE sentences. Sections 3 and 4 discuss the properties of what is called "hybrid pattern" and what I call "residual pseudopassives" respectively; section 3 further outlines an account of the facts that capitalizes on the properties of functional categories, thus adopting a micro-parametric approach. Section 5 summarizes the main conclusions.

2. SE sentences: basic properties

The literature on SE sentences has discussed the morphological and syntactic intricacies associated to this clitic (cf. Raposo & Uriagereka 1996; D'Alessandro 2007; Mendikoetxea 1992, 1999; and López 2007, among others). In the case of Spanish, it is known that SE can participate in both passive (agreeing) and impersonal (non-agreeing) sentences:

(3) a. Se vendieron los coches PASSIVE SE (Spanish)
SE sold-3.pl the cars
The cars were sold

b. Se ayudó a los estudiantes IMPERSONAL SE (Spanish)
SE helped-3.sg to the students
The students were helped

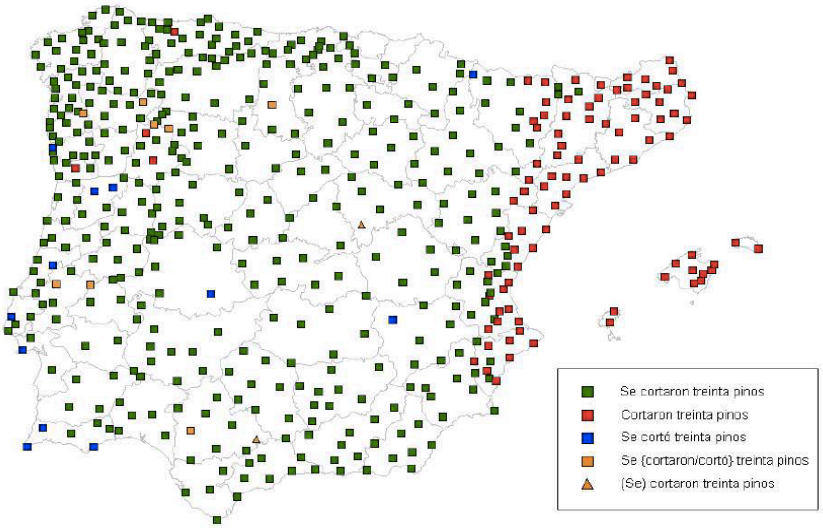
(3b) is a transivitive sentence, which in a system like Chomsky's (2001) means that v is ϕ-complete and assigns accusative Case to the DP object *los estudiantes*, SE plausibly occupying the position of the external argument (as argued by Raposo & Uriagereka 1996 and López 2007). (3a), on the other hand, is a passive structure, where v is ϕ-defective, and the internal argument receives nominative Case from T. Like in BE (or periphrastic) passives, the subject can remain in its base-generation position or move to [Spec, TP]:

(4) a. Se vendieron los coches (Spanish)
SE sold-3.pl the cars
The cars were sold

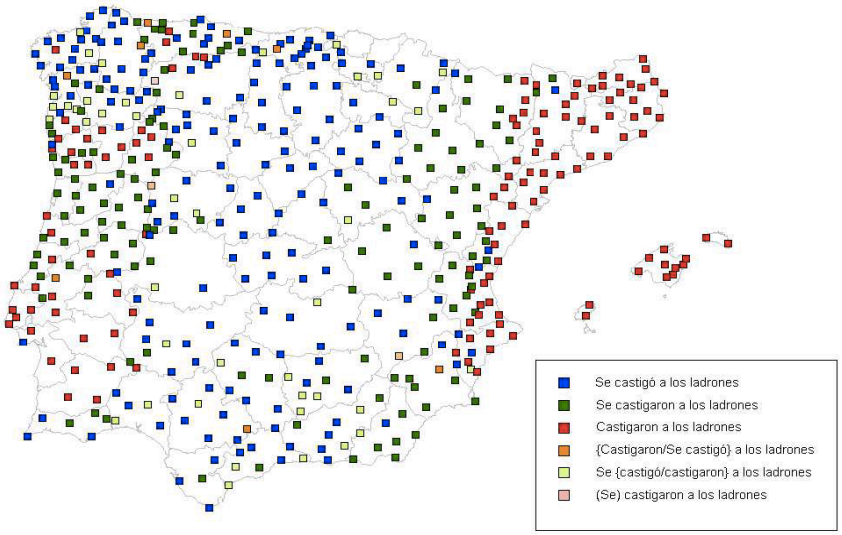
b. Los coches se vendieron (Spanish)
the cars SE sold-3.pl
The cars were sold

These two options for SE sentences have been documented in traditional atlases, like Tomás NavarroTomás' ill-fated ALPI (*Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica*):

(5) a. Se **cortaron treinta pinos** (Eng. 'Thirty pines were cut')



b. Se **castigó** a **los ladrones** (Eng. 'Thieves were punished')



[from de Benito 2010: 8, 14]

One other well-known fact is that SE passives align with BE passives in many respects. Interestingly enough, Mendikoetxea (1999: §26.3.2.2.) notes that SE passives can manifest either full (person, number) or partial (defective) agreement, a traditional observation that goes back to Bello (1847) (cf. Martín Zorraquino 1979 for additional discussion):

(6) a. Se venden botellas — PASSIVE 1 (full agreement) (Spanish)
SE sell-3.pl bottles
Bottles were sold

b. Se vende botellas — PASSIVE 2 (defective agreement) (Spanish)
SE sell-3.pl bottles
Bottles were sold

The second pattern of SE passives (non-agreeing passives, sometimes collapsed with impersonal passives) can be found already in Old Spanish, but it is also found in present-day non-European Spanish, as pointed out in Mendikoetxea (1999) and RAE-ASALE (2009). There are different factors that seem to conspire to yield the second pattern in (6) (cf. RAE-ASALE 2009). I list them below:

(7) a. The category of the internal argument (DP or NP)
b. The preverbal or postverbal position of the internal argument
c. The grammatical aspect of the verb (perfective vs. imperfective)
d. The presence of dative arguments
e. The specific proximity of the internal argument (locality conditions)

In the examples below, we can see how the just listed factors have an impact on agreement processes in SE passives (cf. RAE- ASALE 2009: §41.12c and ff.):

(8) a. Se necesita aprendices
SE need-3.sg learners
Learners are needed

a'. *?Se necesita los aprendices
SE need-3.sg the learners
Learners are needed

b. Aquí se necesita aprendices
here SE need-3.sg learners
Learners are needed here

b'. *?Aprendices se necesita aquí
learners SE need-3.sg here
Learners are needed here

c. Se vende libros
SE sell-3.sg books
Books are sold

c'. ?Se vendió libros
SE sell-3.sg books
Books were sold

d. Se les da caramelos a los niños
SE cl.dat give-3.sg candies to the children
Children are given candies

e. Se veía a un lado y a otro del camino las mansiones . . .
SE see-3.sg at one side and to other of-the track the mansions
Mansions were seen at one side and the other of the track

As for non-European varieties, RAE-ASALE (2009: 3094) notes that "The distribution is not perfect […] it has been observed that Andean, Chilean, and River Plate Spanish feature overlapping more clearly" (my translation). Some examples are given in (9), taken from RAE-ASALE (2009):

(9) a. En su partido se respeta las libertades . . . (Mexican Spanish)
in his party SE respect the freedoms
Freedoms are respected in his party

b. Se atendió once solicitudes . . . (Mexican Spanish)
SE attend eleven applications
Eleven applications were attended

To sum up so far, SE passive sentences display various agreement patterns in the different varieties of Spanish. For the most part, such patterns concern either the ϕ-complete / ϕ-defective status of T (the locus of nominative Case) or the possibility that the internal argument (the would-be subject) is within the search domain of T (cf. Chomsky 2001, Legate 2014). In any event, this variation concerns SE passives, which do not feature DOM. We would like to concentrate on SE sentences with DOM (so-called SE impersonals), for the same dichotomy is found there.

3. SE passives (1): the hybrid pattern

As noted at the outset of this paper, the clitic SE can participate in passive and impersonal structures. The relevant minimal pair was given in (3), and is repeated here as (10) for convenience:

(10) a. Se vendieron los coches — PASSIVE SE — (Spanish)
SE sold-3.pl the cars
The cars were sold

b. Se ayudó a los estudiantes — IMPERSONAL SE — (Spanish)
SE helped-3.sg to the students
The students were helped

Although the verb typically fails to agree with the internal argument in (10b), agreement does occur in some instances of Case-marked internal arguments. Abstractly, this pattern, which is dubbed "hybrid" by RAE-ASALE (2009), can be depicted as in (11):

(11) [SE **T** [$_{VP}$ V . . . [*a* **XP**]]]
│_____↑

Again, we see that agreement may or may not occur already in previous stages and in non-European varieties of Spanish:

(12) a. A **estos** no se **pueden** premiar (*Quijote*)
to these not SE can-3.pl award
These cannot be awarded

b. Se **premiaron** a **los mejores jinetes** (*Salvador Hoy*)
SE award-3.pl to the best riders
The best riders were awarded

[from RAE-ASALE 2009]

If we consider impersonal SE more closely, notice that the v of this structure should be v*, thus capable of assigning accusative. However, it seems that this Case is restricted to animate internal arguments:

(13) a. *El arroz, se **lo** come cada domingo (Spanish)
the rice SE it eat-3.sg every Sunday
The rice, it is eaten every Sunday [from Ordóñez 2004: 6]

b. A un hombre, no se **lo** juzga sin pruebas (Spanish)
to a man not SE him judge without proof
A man is not judged without evidence

This pattern seems pretty robust. So one could assume the generalization in (14):

(14) If the internal argument is Case-marked (*a*-XP), then SE v is v* (ϕ-complete)

This said, there are some exceptions. The example in (15) indicates that, in certain circumstances, v can assign accusative even with inanimate (non Case-marked) internal arguments (the sentence is adapted from Marías 2008):

(15) Cuando se reproduce lo acontecido, sin querer se **lo** deforma (Spanish)
when SE reproduce it happened without want SE it distort-3.sg
When one reproduces what has happened, one distorts it involuntarily

It seems that this pattern is highly restricted in the case of European Spanish. It is more active in non-European varieties. In particular, RAE-ASALE (2009: §41.12m) argues that accusative assigning v* with inanimate internal arguments is licensed in the Andean, Chilean, and River Plate areas.

(16) a. Se planifican los escapes, se **los** tecnologiza (Spanish)
SE plan-3.pl the escapes SE CL technologize
Escapes are planned, they are technologized

b. Fracasan solo cuando se **las** usa mal (Spanish)
fail-3.pl just when SE CL use-3.sg bad
They fail only when they are used in a wrong way

c. Se **los** entiende sin que hayan sido explicados (Spanish)
SE CL understand-3.sg without that have been explained
They are understood without having been explained

[from RAE-ASALE 2009:3098]

One more examples of this exotic pattern is (17), this time from European Spanish (cf. Martín Zorraquino 1979, Fernández-Ordóñez 1999):

(17) a. Este último [avión] ya está listo y debe ser retirado, pues por cada día que pasa y no **se lo** utiliza se pierde dinero y además hay que pagar multa
(*La Nación*, 7-IX-1975, pág. 20, c-7, apud Martín Zorraquino 1979
This last plane is ready and must be taken away, since every day that goes on and it is not used we lose money and we have to pay

b. El lomo **se lo** da una vuelta en la sartén, **se lo** mete a la olla, **se lo** cubre con aceite de oliva
The meat has to be turned upside down in the pan, you put it into the pot, you cover it with olive oil
(Campo de San Pedro, Segovia, COSER 3702, apud Fernández-Ordóñez 1999)

[from de Benito 2013: 147]

In sum, pronominalization of Case-marked internal arguments, like *a Pedro* (Eng. 'to Pedro') in (18), as in (19):

(18) Se critica **a Pedro** (Spanish)
SE criticize to Pedro
Pedro is criticized

(19) Pronominalization of (18) (# indicates that the form is not preferred)

a. Se **lo** critica (non-leísta / American Spanish)

b. Se **{#lo/le}** critica (leísta / European Spanish)

This raises the question whether Case-marked internal arguments receive true accusative. If they do not, then that would explain the restricted availability of *lo*/*la* (only with animates), and the preference for *le* in European Spanish. This process of *lo* > *le* shift with SE can be seen even by speakers that are not *leístas* with masculine in regular transitive sentences, as noted by Ordóñez (2004).

(20) Si hay que fusilar-**lo**, SE **le** fusila (European Spanish)
if there-be-3.sg that shoot-CL SE CL shoot-3.sg
If he must be shot, he is shot
[from P. Preston, *Franco*, cited by Ordóñez 2004]

Unlike European Spanish, Mexican Spanish shows no *le* clitic with standard transitive sentences — it is a non-leísta dialect. All direct objects, masculine or feminine, deploy the standard masculine vs. feminine distinction: *lo* / *la*. This can be seen in (21):

(21) a. **A** Juan **lo** vieron contento (Mexican Spanish)
to Juan CL see-3.pl happy
Juan, he was seen happy

b. **A** María **la** vieron contenta (Mexican Spanish)
to María CL see-3.pl happy
María, she was seen happy

However, in the presence of SE, Mexican Spanish obligatorily shifts to *le*.

(22) a. A Juan SE **le** vio contento (Mexican Spanish)
to Juan SE CL see happy
Juan, he was seen happy

b. A María SE **le** vio contenta (Mexican Spanish)
to María SE CL see happy
María, she was seen happy

This shift to *le* does not occur in Río de la Plata Spanish. This south-American dialect, contrary to Mexican Spanish or European Spanish, has doubling with Case-marked internal arguments beyond strong pronouns:

(23) a. (**lo**) vi a Juan (River Plate Spanish)
CL saw-1.sg to Juan
I saw Juan

b. *(**la**) vi a la libreta (River Plate Spanish)
CL saw-2.sg to the notebook
I saw the notebook

In this dialect no *le* shift occurs with direct objects:

(24) a. Se **(lo)** escuchó [al niño] (River Plate Spanish)
SE CL heard-3.sg to-the boy
The boy was heard

b. Se **(la)** escuchó [a la niña] (River Plate Spanish)
SE CL heard-3.sg to-the boy
The girl was heard

Descriptively, Spanish dialects that allow clitic doubling with Case-marked direct objects do not shift to *le* in impersonal SE constructions (cf. Ordóñez & Treviño 2007 for an account).

From all the discussion above, one can plausibly conclude that impersonal sentences with SE are divided into two dialects in Spanish:

(25) a. Dialect A: v is ϕ-defective (accusative unavailable)

b. Dialect B: v is ϕ-complete (accusative available)

Technically, this amounts to (26):

(26) a. Dialect A: $[_{vP}$ v $[_{VP}$ V $[_{PP}$ *a* [$DP_{OBLIQUE}$]] (leísta Spanish)

$\vert$___↑

b. Dialect B: i. $[_{vP}$ vϕ $[_{VP}$ V $[_{KP}$ *a* DP_{ACC}]]] (non-leísta Spanish)

$\vert$_____↑

ii. [. . . Tϕ . . . $[_{vP}$ v $[_{VP}$ V $[_{KP}$ *a* DP_{NOM}]]] (hybrid pattern)

$\vert$_____↑

As reported by Ordóñez & Treviño (2007), Mexican and Argentinian varieties of Spanish, which belong to dialect B, may show agreement with an internal argument preceded by accusative *a* (the aforementioned "hybrid pattern").

(27) a. Finalmente, se **castigaron** a **los culpables** (Mexican Spanish)
finally SE punished-3.pl to the culprits
Finally, the culprits were punished

b. Se **evacuaron** a más de **120.000 damnificados** (Argentinian Spanish)
SE evacuated-3.pl to more of 12.000 damaged
More than 120.000 damaged people were evacuated

[from Ordóñez & Treviño 2007: 12]

The data in (27) pose a puzzle. They clearly indicate that the ϕ-Probe in T can agree with the internal argument, but this is unexpected, given that the latter has already been Case marked (by v), and is thus "inactive" in Chomsky's (2001) terms. It is nonetheless possible — and it is what we would like to propose here — that dialect B divides further into a subdialect that fails to Case mark the internal argument.

A way to go about this subtler micro-parametric distinction is to take Spanish *a* to vary within the relevant varieties. Building on much literature on this topic (cf. López

2012, Torrego 1998, and references therein), we assume that the vocabulary item *a* corresponds to three different elements in Spanish:

(28) A three-way analysis for *a* in Spanish
a. A spell-out of a true preposition
b. The spell-out of a Case/clitic-related projection (cf. López 2012, Torrego 1998)
c. The spell-out of a feature of a Case/clitic-related projection

Clearly, in the varieties of Spanish that license (28b), *a* is not a preposition, and it is not the standard Case-marking morpheme of DOM — for otherwise agreement would fail —, so we are left with option (28c): *a* is the spell-out of a feature, not even a projecting category. Given that the v of dialect Bii is ϕ-defective and that *a* is not a preposition, it follows that the internal argument can long-distance agree with T.

Having considered the basic Case-agreement configurations where SE is involved, we would like to briefly consider a pattern that seems to be intimately related to the one in (28c), and which quickly evokes the profile of pseudopassive structures.

4. SE passives (2): residual pseudopassives

As just noted, the examples in (27) show that the ϕ-Probe on T can long-distance agree with the internal argument, ignoring the would-be preposition — actually a feature, under the present account — *a*. This is somewhat surprising, as it resembles a pseudopassive.

Yet much more surprisingly, other variants (mainly American) of Spanish dialect A manifest agreement with DPs contained in lexical PPs. The following data are from different on-line sources:

(29) a. Dijo que se **hablaron** con **las autoridades** (American Spanish)
say that SE talked-3.pl with the authorities
He said that the authorities were talked to
[http://www.santiagodigital.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13837&Itemid=17]

b. En Santiago anoche se **informaron** de **cuatro homicidios** (American Spanish)
in Santiago last night SE informed-3.pl of four homicides
Four homicides were reported last night in Santiago
[http://www.periodismoglobal.cl/2006/08/la-democracia-de-la-udi.html]

c. El comercio online sumó [...] 100 millones de transacciones (American Spanish)
the trade online added-3.sg 100 millions of transactions
[...] cuando se **llegaron** a **los 74,3 millones de operaciones**
when SE arrived-3.pl to the 74,3 millions of operations
The online trading added 100 million transactions when 74,3 million operations were reached
[http://www.elpais.com/articulo/economia/comercio/electronico/volvio/batir/record/2010/elpepueco/20110506elpepueco_7/Tes]

d. En realidad se **dependen** de **tantos factores** (American Spanish)
in reality SE depend-3.pl of so-many factors
que esto provoca una extrema dificultad
that this provokes a extreme difficulty
Actually, one depends on so many factors that it makes things extremely difficult
[http://diegotenis9.wordpress.com/]

More data can be obtained from the CREA database, and from Google:

(30) a. Sólo se **disponen** de **datos de matrículas** . . . (El Salvador)
just SE dispose-3.pl of data of registration
We just have data on registration

b. Aunque no se **disponen** de **cifras exactas** . . . (Costa Rica)
although not SE dispose-3.pl of numbers exact
Although we don't have exact numbers

c. Sí se **saben** de **diversos factores** que influyen... (Spain)
yes SE know-3.pl of diverse factors that influence
We do know factors that influence
[from CREA: http://corpus.rae.es/creanet.html]

(31) a. Todavía se **confían** en los milagros (México)
yet SE trust-3.pl in the miracles
They still believe in miracles
[http://www.sinembargo.mx/30-03-2014/947521]

b. Cuando se **hablan** de **las supuestas desigualdades** (Chile)
when SE talk-3.pl of the alleged asymmetries
When they talk about the alleged asymmetries
[http://blog.lanacion.cl/2014/03/11/desigualdades-de-genero-en-el-emprendimiento/]

These data are rather restricted due to normative pressures, but they are not isolated on-line hits. The main conclusion to be drawn from (29) is that certain dialects of Spanish display, contrary to what is typically assumed, pseudopassives.

This raises at least two questions. The first one is whether, apart from "SE pseudopassives", Spanish can also display "BE pseudopassives". The answer is negative, as sentences like those in (32) are ruled out by American Spanish speakers, who find a sharp asymmetry with respect to the examples in (30-31):

(32) a. ***Fueron habladas** con **las autoridades** (American Spanish)
be-3.pl talked-3.fem.pl with the authorities
Authorites were spoken to

b. ***Fueron informados** de **cuatro homicidios** (American Spanish)
be-3.pl informed-3.masc.pl of four homicides
Four homicides were reported

The asymmetry between (30-31) and (32) provides support for the idea that SE and BE passives are morphologically and syntactically different, as has been argued in the literature (cf. Mendikoetxea 1999).

The second question is a parametric one: How does agreement take place in such varieties of Spanish? At first glance, the dialects allowing (30-31) must be able to license a 'reanalysis' process (however it must be implemented, an issue we cannot investigate here; cf. Hornstein & Weinberg 1981, Kayne 1975, 2004, among many others) whereby T can long-distance agree with the complements of P.

It is important to point out, to conclude, that even though pseudopassivization seems to be an option in Spanish, preposition stranding is still impossible. That is to say, sentences like those in (30-31) with the agreeing DP in [Spec, TP] (after A-movement) or [Spec, CP] (after A-bar movement) are impossible. What is truly surprising, and has gone unnoticed in the literature, is the very existence of the examples in (30-31). This not only suggests that Spanish does have a residual type of pseudopassives, it also seems to threaten the empirical generalization that pseudopassives are cross-linguistically more restricted than preposition stranding.

5. Conclusions

This paper has made two interesting points. On the empirical side, we have shown that, along with the hybrid pattern of SE sentences, some dialects of Spanish feature what appear to be some form of pseudopassive construction (see data in 30 and 31). Of course, a more careful study is needed, and the factors to control for are (at least) the following: (i) the type of verb (non-pronominal, agentive) that allows pseudopassives, (ii) the type of preposition that can become inert for agreement processes, (iii) the category of the agreeing element (DP or NP), and (iv) the relevant source of data (journal, newspaper, forum, CREA, Google, etc.). Quite possibly, these could just be typos or the result of oral speech, but the fact that this 'extended' hybrid (pseudopassive, if we are correct) pattern is not found with adjuncts. In other words, examples like those in (33) are unattested.

(33) a. *Se **hablaron** en **las aulas** (Spanish)
SE talk-3.pl in the class
People talk in the class

b. *Se **aspiraron** al puesto por **muchos motivos** (Spanish)
SE aspire-3.pl to-the position for many reasons
People aspire to the position for many reasons

On the theoretical side, this paper has argued that the nature of prepositions must be divided into three types. The distinction between lexical and functional (or fake) prepositions is not new in the field (cf. Abels 2003, Cuervo 2003, Demonte 1987, 1991, 1995, Pesetsky & Torrego 2004, Romero 2011), but we have tried to sharpen it in order to account for the (28b) / (28c) distinction. Much work is required in the study of functional categories, especially in the context of dialectal variation, and this paper is nothing but a small contribution to this goal.

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