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**Pronominal passive constructions:
The clitic *se* and agreement in modern European Portuguese**

Abstract. Looking at Modern European Portuguese under a generative perspective, we will discuss the agreement pattern of *pronominal passive constructions*, i.e., transitive structures with the pronominal clitic *se* in which the logical object of the sentence agrees in number and person with the inflected verb of the clause. Following Martins (2005), we argue that the clitic pronoun *se* plays a role of mediator between the object and the verb in the process of agreement. Our proposal departs from Martins' analysis since we ascribe a different semantic interpretation to a particular kind of structure with the clitic *se*, which superficially differs from pronominal passives only by not showing agreement between the verb and the object. Unlike Martins, we argue that these two constructions do not reveal a mere optionality on how to express the same semantic content. In fact, they correspond to structures that can be analyzed as the syntactic implementation of two different semantic interpretations.

Key words: Modern European Portuguese; pronominal passive constructions; clitic *se*; agreement.

1. Introduction

Modern European Portuguese (henceforth EP), like other Romance languages, manifests what has traditionally been designated as *pronominal passive constructions*, i.e., transitive structures with the pronominal clitic *se* in which the logical object of the sentence agrees in number and person with the inflected verb of the clause. This is illustrated in the examples below, where the logical object appears in bold letters.

particularly in pronominal passive clauses, there is no relationship between the logical object and the subject position [Spec,IP]. Obviously, this idea contradicts a whole tradition in generative studies, which understands verbal agreement in Romance languages as derived of an operation involving the verb and some other constituent either placed in [Spec,IP] or bound to that position. If we accept the proposal of Raposo & Uriagereka, we face the challenge of explaining how the morphological agreement between the object and the verb takes place, without resorting, at first, to any mechanism that derives the agreement pattern in terms of a *Spec-Head* relationship in IP.

In view of the considerations presented above, our goal here is to develop an analysis that accounts for the agreement pattern in pronominal passive constructions without claiming that there is object movement to [Spec,IP] or any kind of co-indexing with a null element in that position. Following Martins (2005), we will argue that the clitic pronoun *se* plays a role of mediator between the object and the verb in the process of agreement. The main idea is that *se* enters into the derivation as an element that has variable underspecified features for person and number, as in the theory of underspecified features developed by Rooryck (1994). This means that the clitic *se* will have to have its person-number values filled by another element. In pronominal passives, this will occur by way of an agreement relation between *se* and the logical object. After this relationship is established, the clitic *se* itself, having incorporated the values for person and number from the object, will trigger the verbal agreement. Due to issues related to Abstract Case, this mediation, however, would not be like a chain relationship between an empty category in [Spec,IP] and its associate, as it might seem at first. Our analysis differs from what Martins proposes due to the different semantic interpretation that we will attribute to a particular kind of structure with the clitic *se*, which superficially differs from pronominal passives only by the fact that it does not show agreement between the verb and the object. Unlike Martins, we will argue that these two

constructions cannot be considered as a mere optionality on how to express the same semantic content. In fact, they correspond to structures that can be analyzed as the syntactic implementation of two different semantic interpretations.

This article is organized as follows. In section 2, we will discuss some of the evidence listed by Raposo and Uriagereka (1996) in favor of the hypothesis that the logical object in pronominal passive clauses is neither in [Spec,IP] nor linked to that position through a chain relationship. Section 3 is devoted to a discussion of how these authors explain the agreement pattern between the object and the finite verb, including aspects that are not satisfactorily solved by their analysis. Finally, in section 4 we will present our own analysis.

2. Pronominal Passive Clauses: the Agreeing Object is not in [Spec,IP] nor Linked to It

As already mentioned in the introduction, Raposo and Uriagereka (1996) (henceforth R & U) argue that the logical object of pronominal passive clauses is not moved to [Spec,IP] nor is it connected to an empty category in that position. Here we present three of the arguments put forth by them in favor of this idea.

First argument

In EP, inflected infinitive clauses with lexical subjects are licensed when they play the role of clausal subject in extraposed position. This is illustrated in sentence (4), where the constituent in brackets corresponds to the inflected infinitive clause.

- (4) Vai ser difícil [os tribunais aceitarem os documentos]
will be difficult the courts to-accept-3pl the documents
 ‘It will be difficult for the courts to accept the documents’

R & U show that both periphrastic passive clauses and pronominal passive ones may occur with the logical object DP in post-verbal position, as shown in examples (5) and (6), respectively.

- (5) Vai ser difícil [serem aceites [os documentos]]
will be difficult to-be-3pl accepted the documents
 ‘It will be difficult for the documents to be accepted’

- (6) Vai ser difícil [aceitarem-se [os documentos]]
will be difficult to-accept-3pl-SE the documents
 ‘It will be difficult for someone or other to accept the documents’

On the other hand, if the subject of the inflected infinitive clause precedes the verb, a periphrastic passive is licensed, as in (7), but not a pronominal passive clause, as in (8).

- (7) Vai ser difícil [[os documentos]_i serem aceites t_i]
will be difficult the documents to-be-3pl accepted
 ‘It will be difficult for the documents to be accepted’
- (8) *Vai ser difícil [[os documentos]_i aceitarem-se t_i]
will be difficult the documents to-accept-3pl-SE
 ‘It will be difficult for someone or other to accept the documents’

Interesting enough is the fact that this asymmetry is not manifested in finite clauses.

This different paradigm is attested in (9) and (10) below, where we have a periphrastic passive clause and a pronominal passive clause, respectively.

- (9) Vai ser difícil [que [os documentos]_i sejam aceites t_i]
will be difficult that the documents be accepted
 ‘It will be difficult that the documents be accepted’
- (10) Vai ser difícil [que [os documentos]_i se aceitem t_i]
will be difficult that the documents SE accept-3pl
 ‘It will be difficult that someone or other accepts the documents’

One interesting point is that in EP topicalized constituents in embedded clauses show a pattern of distribution similar to that observed for the object DP of pronominal passive sentences. In other words, topicalized elements may occupy a position that precedes the verb in finite subordinate clauses (see the example (11)), while in inflected infinitive clauses no phrase may be topicalized to the left of the verb (see the example (12)).

- (11) Vai ser difícil [que [esses documentos], o tribunal (os) possa aceitar ec]
will be difficult that those documents, the court (them) may accept
 ‘It will be difficult that those documents, the court may accept them’
- (12) *Vai ser difícil [[esses documentos], os tribunais aceitarem(-nos) ec]
will be difficult those documents, the courts to-accept-3pl(-them)
 ‘It will be difficult those documents, for the courts to accept (them)’

In view of these facts, the conclusion one can draw is the following: in pre-verbal

position, the internal argument of pronominal passives does not behave like the internal argument of periphrastic passives, which is supposed to occupy [Spec,IP] or to be linked to that position; in fact, it behaves like a topic. That makes R & U assume that the internal argument of this kind of construction with the clitic *se*, when pre-verbal, occupies a topic position instead of the canonical position for subjects.

Second Argument

It is possible to observe in (13) to (15) below that bare NPs, i.e., nominal phrases that do not incorporate determiners, are licensed as direct objects, but not as subjects. This is true both for active clauses and for periphrastic passives. In the following examples the words in bold correspond to a bare NP.

- (13) O Nestor compra **salsichas** no talho Sanzot
the Nestor buys sausages at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Nestor buys sausages at the Sanzot butcher-shop’
- (14) ***Salsichas** costum caro no talho Sanzot
sausages cost expensive at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages are expensive at the S. butcher-shop’
- (15) ***Salsichas** são compradas \bar{t} no talho Sanzot
sausages are bought at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages are bought at the Sanzot butcher-shop’

On the other hand, bare NPs generated as direct objects can be topicalized, provided that this operation does not move them through the subject position [Spec,IP]. The sentences (16) to (18) illustrate exactly that.

- (16) **Salsichas**, o Nestor compra \bar{t} no talho Sanzot
sausages, the Nestor buys at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages, Nestor buys at the Sanzot butcher-shop’
- (17) ***Salsichas**, \bar{t} costum caro no talho Sanzot
sausages, cost expensive at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages, (they) are expensive at the S. butcher-shop’
- (18) ***Salsichas**, \bar{t} são compradas \bar{t} no talho Sanzot
sausages, are bought at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages, (they) are bought at the S. butcher-shop’

Quite interesting is the fact that bare NPs in pre-verbal position may occur in pronominal passive clauses, as is evidenced in (19).

- (19) **Salsichas**, vendem-se no talho Sanzot
sausages, sell-3pl-SE at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Sausages, someone or other sells at the S. butcher-shop’

Since bare NPs are not associated with the canonical position for subjects [Spec,IP], R & U argue that the internal argument in (19) neither occupies this position nor moves through it.

Third Argument

In EP, *wh*-phrases occur in the left periphery of the clause, just as topicalized elements do. In independent sentences, topics necessarily precede *wh*-phrases, as the example (20) illustrates, while the order “*wh*-phrase + topic” results in an ungrammatical sentence, as (21) shows.

- (20) [Esses livros]_i, [a quem]_k entregaste t_i t_k?
those books to whom gave-2sg
 ‘Those books to whom did you give?’
- (21) *[A quem]_k [esses livros]_i, entregaste t_i t_k?
to whom those books gave-2sg

On the other hand, constituents that actually occupy the position [Spec,IP] may occur to the right of *wh*-phrases. This is illustrated in sentence (22), where it is possible to see a *wh*-phrase preceding the subject of a periphrastic passive clause.

- (22) [Em que loja]_k [esses livros]_i foram comprados t_i t_k?
in what store those books were bought
 ‘In what store were those books bought?’

In view of these facts, saying that the pre-verbal logical object phrase of pronominal passives is a topic rather than a subject predicts that this constituent may not occur to the right of a *wh*-phrase, only to the left. The sentences (23) and (24) confirm exactly this prediction.

- (23) [Esses livros]_i [em que loja]_k se compraram t_i t_k?
those books in what store SE -bought-3pl
 ‘Those books in what store did someone or other buy (them)?’

- (24) * $[Em\ que\ loja]_k [esses\ livros]_i se\ compraram\ \underline{ec}_i\ \underline{ec}_k?$
in what store those books SE -bought-3pl

3. Raposo and Uriagereka's (1996) analysis

In this section, we will discuss how R & U explain the process of agreement between the logical object and the verb in pronominal passive sentences. The basic idea is that, in such constructions, the agreement relationship is triggered from a functional projection located between CP and IP. Empirical evidence for the existence of this intermediate projection can be obtained from the examples given below.

- (25) Dizem que muitos presentes o Luís deu à Maria
Say-3pl that many presents the Luís gave to Mary
 '(they) say that many presents (did) Luís give to Mary'

Admitting that in the example above the subject *o Luís* is in [Spec,IP] and the complementizer *que* is in C^0 , it is reasonable to assume that the affective operator *muitos presentes* "many presents" is located in the specifier of an intermediate projection between CP and IP, a projection that is called FP by R & U.¹ Regarding the idea that features for person and number (phi-features) can also be checked in FP, and not only in IP, empirical evidence is found looking at inflected infinitive clauses, for example. Consider the pair of sentences below:

- (26) Eu penso [_{XP} **terem** [_{IP} os soldados \bar{t} fuzilado os presos]]
I think to-have-3pl the soldiers shot the prisoners
 'I think that the soldiers shot the prisoners'
- (27) *Eu penso [_{XP} [_{IP} os soldados **terem** fuzilado os presos]]
I think the soldiers to-have-3pl shot the prisoners

As evidenced by the contrast between (26) and (27), when an epistemic verb is in the main clause, the infinitive verb with agreement marking must be raised to a position linearly to the left of the subject, otherwise the derivation does not converge. It is interesting to note, however, that if the subject itself is an affective phrase, i.e., a constituent in [Spec,FP], the

¹ The term *affective*, as employed by R & U, is taken from Klima (1964), who uses it to refer to expressions with a quantificational content. Under this label are included, among other things, negative phrases, emphatic elements or contrastively focused constituents.

inflected infinitive appears to the right of the subject, as in (28).

- (28) Penso [só eles terem passado o exame]
think-1sg only they to-have-3pl passed the exam
 ‘I think that only they passed the exam’

When there is a non-subject affective phrase occupying [Spec,FP], the finite verb occurs between the subject and the affective phrase, as exemplified in (29).

- (29) Dizem [[muita cidade]_i terem os turistas visitado t_i]
say-3pl many city to-have-3pl the tourists visited
 ‘They say that the tourists visited many cities’

Considering such data, R & U argue that in infinitival clauses the inflected verb must be raised up to F⁰. In this particular context, this would come as a result of FP, rather than IP, being the relevant domain where the checking of phi-features between the verb and the subject phrase occurs. Thus, if the subject itself is an affective phrase, as in (28), such a constituent visibly raises up to Spec of FP, where the relevant features are checked against the infinite verb located in F⁰. If the subject is not an affective phrase, as in (26), only its formal features for person and number would be moved to FP, occurring then the necessary checking operation with the inflected infinitive verb.

Concerning pronominal passives, R & U assume that FP would also be the relevant level for phi-features checking. So the agreement between the verb and the internal argument would be derived through movement of the argument constituent to [Spec,FP], in the cases in which this element is an affective phrase, as in sentence (30).

- (30) [_{FP} Muitas salsichas] se compraram no talho Sanzot!
many sausages SE bought-3pl at-the butcher-shop S.
 ‘Someone or other bought many sausages at the Sanzot butcher-shop’

If the logical object phrase does not bear the affective feature and precedes the finite verb, R & U assume that, in this particular derivation, the DP establishing agreement with the verb is not positioned in [Spec,FP], since it is possible to find sequences with the linear order “object DP + affective phrase + verb”, as in (31).

- (31) *Esses filmes a pouca gente se mostraram!*
those movies to few people SE showed-3pl
 ‘Someone or other showed those movies to few people’

The authors propose, then, that the logical object phrase in those constructions is generated directly in the specifier of a topic projection above FP. In their analysis, the moved constituent to FP would be a null *pro* operator, as in Raposo (1986). The hypothesis is that the operator, through adjunction to F^0 , checks the relevant person-number features in the domain of FP. Next, an operation of combination between FP and the topic projection where the logical object was generated would take place, deriving the sentence (1b), repeated here as (32).

- (32) **Essas salsichas** compraram-se ontem no talho
 Sanzot
those sausages bought-3pl-SE yesterday at-the butcher-shop Sanzot
 ‘Yesterday someone or other bought those sausages at the Sanzot butcher shop’

As the logical object *in situ*, that is, in a post-verbal position, only its formal features would then be attracted to the area of FP, where the checking relationship of its phi-features with F^0 would then take place. With this, the attested agreement between the verb and the logical object would be obtained.

Although interesting, there are empirical counter-arguments that undermine R & U’s analysis. Here we will only focus on the idea that, when in a pre-verbal position, the internal argument is located in a topic position, from where it is connected to the field of FP, rather than to some element in the area of IP.

It is known that, in EP, the enclisis/proclisis variation (i.e., a clitic following the verb or a clitic preceding the verb, respectively) depends on what precedes the verb in overt syntax. In root affirmative clauses, enclisis is obligatory when a referential subject without explicit mark of focalization (see (33)) or a topic, doubled or not by a clitic (see (34)), occurs in pre-verbal position.

- (33) a. A Maria **deu-lhe** esse livro ontem
the Mary gave him/her this book yesterday
 ‘Yesterday, Mary gave him/her this book’
- b. *A Maria lhe **deu** esse livro ontem
the Mary him/her gave this book yesterday
- (34) a. Essa rapariga, **conheço-a** muito bem
this girl know-1sg-her very well
 ‘I know this girl very well’
- b. *Essa rapariga, a **conheço** muito bem
this girl her know-1sg very well

(Galves 2001, p. 214)

This pattern contrasts with what is attested in sentences in which the pre-verbal element is an affective phrase, which is assumed to be in [Spec,FP]. In such cases, proclisis is obligatory.

- (35) a. A todos o **leram**.
to everyone it read-3pl
 ‘They read it to everyone’
- b. * A todos **leram-no**.
to everyone read-3pl-it

(Galves *op. cit.*, p. 215)

The similar behavior between referential subjects and topicalized phrases in relation to the linear order of clitics is one of the typical arguments used to support the hypothesis that the subject in EP is in a topic position rather than in [Spec,IP] (see, for instance, Barbosa 1995, 2000). However, this hypothesis is challenged by the asymmetry observed in embedded clauses. As shown below, enclisis is categorical in embedded contexts when a topic precedes the verb (see the example (36)). In contrast if the pre-verbal constituent is a referential subject, without a topic preceding it, proclisis is triggered (see the example (37)).

- (36) a. Sabes que, [a Maria], **vi-a** ontem
Know-2sg that the Mary saw-1sg-her yesterday
 ‘You know that yesterday I saw Mary’
- b. *Sabes que, [a Maria], a **vi** ontem
Know-2sg that the Mary her saw-1sg yesterday

- c. Eu sei que, [a Maria], o João **viu-a** ontem
I know that the Mary the John saw-her yesterday
 ‘I know that yesterday John saw Mary’
- d. *Eu sei que, [a Maria], o João **a viu** ontem
I know that the Mary the John her saw yesterday
- (37) a. Sei que [a Maria] **lhe deu** esse livro ontem
know-1sg that the Mary him/her gave this book yesterday
 ‘I know that yesterday Mary gave him/her this book’
- b. *Sei que a [Maria] **deu-lhe** esse livro ontem
know-1sg that the Mary gave him/her this book yesterday
 (Galves *op. cit.*, pp. 214-215)

The asymmetry above in subordinate clauses regarding clitic placement could be interpreted in terms of different positions occupied by topics and subjects, considering that, if they occupied the same position, there would be no reason for the contrasting pattern. Taking this interpretation as plausible, now observe the paradigm of clitic placement in pronominal passive sentences with the internal argument in pre-verbal position. In matrix affirmative clauses, enclisis is categorical, just like in active clauses with a referential subject or a topic preceding the finite verb.

- (38) [Essas salsichas] **compraram-se** ontem no talho
 Sanzot
those sausages bought-3pl-SE yesterday at-the butcher-shop Sanzot
 ‘Yesterday someone or other bought those sausages at the Sanzot butcher shop’

R & U’s analysis predicts that, in dependent clauses, the pattern of clitic placement in pronominal passive structures with a pre-verbal logical object is similar to active structures with a topic in pre-verbal position, given the hypothesis that the object of pronominal passives occupies a specific position for topics without being linked to the canonical position for subjects. But that is not confirmed, as the proclitic pattern in the following sentence shows.

- (39) Vai ser difícil que [os documentos] **se aceitem**
will be difficult that the documents SE accept-3pl
 ‘It will be difficult that someone or other accepts the documents’

In fact, what we can observe is that, concerning clitic placement, the internal argument of pronominal passives behaves like the subject of active structures, not only in root clauses, but also in embedded structures. This is not expected under the hypothesis that the internal argument has no relationship with the position specified for subjects, that is, [Spec,IP]. In the next section, we will show that, even though the logical object of pronominal passives occupies a topic position, it displays some connection with the IP domain, as the data related to the ordering of clitics seem to indicate.

4. An Alternative Analysis for Pronominal Passives

In this section, we present an alternative analysis to the puzzling fact involving pronominal passives, i.e., the agreement between the object and the verb, even if the object is neither moved to [Spec,IP] or connected to that position through a chain dependency with a null expletive *pro*, as argued by most studies addressing this topic.

We start our analysis assuming, as in R & U, that the constituent playing the role of internal argument, at least when surfacing to the left of the verb, is in fact generated directly in a topic position above IP, that is, with no movement through [Spec,IP]. It seems to us that the arguments listed by these authors in favor of this hypothesis are empirically justified. However, we disagree with the idea that the object (the internal argument) establishes a connection with the FP projection, from where the verbal agreement would be triggered, in view of the hypothesis that F^0 may also be a head specified for the phi-features checking. Although we also do not assume that the internal argument is linked to [Spec,IP] by means of a chain relation with a null expletive *pro*, we will argue, however, that the agreement between the object and the verb is triggered from the domain of IP rather than that of FP. Here we will follow some of the ideas developed by Martins (2005), who proposes that the morphological agreement triggered by the logical object is mediated by the clitic *se*, which would be located in the IP-system, the relevant functional category for the phi-features checking. We can see

that the final position for the clitic *se* is in the IP area by looking at affirmative sentences with auxiliary verbs that select participial or gerundive forms. In such clauses, the clitic pronoun is necessarily enclitic to the auxiliary verb, as demonstrated by the contrast between (40) and (41). This fact suggests that the final position for clitics in EP is in I^0 , where it is reasonable to assume that the auxiliary verb is located.²

(40) O João **ia-se** esquecendo do convite
the John went-SE forgetting of-the invitation
 ‘John was forgetting the invitation’

(41) *O João **ia** esquecendo-se do convite
the John went forgetting-SE of-the invitation

(Mateus et al. 2004, pp. 857-858)

As for the idea that the clitic *se* can be an intermediate element in the process of agreement between the verb and the logical object, we assume along with Martins that *se* can be a constituent that displays variable underspecified features for person and number, according to the theory of underspecified features developed by Rooryck (1994). For Rooryck, the notion of underspecification should be understood as an independent module of feature representation in the language faculty, accessible to both syntax and phonology. Concerning the phi-features, it is assumed the existence of at least two types of underspecified features: variable underspecified features (α -features) and nonvariable underspecified features (0-features). The first type, whose nature is “transparent”, has its value specified not in itself, but in some other constituent around it, responsible for filling the relevant values for the necessary checking operations. Regarding the feature values for

² It could be argued that, in an example like (40), the clitic is adjoined to the lexical verb, rather than to the auxiliary one. This hypothesis could be put forth since, in terms of linear order, the clitic is also adjoined to the lower verb. This alternative interpretation seems suspicious, though, especially since we can find an adverb intervening between the clitic and the lower verb, as (i) exemplifies, suggesting that the clitic is not adjoined to the lexical verb.

(i) O convite foi-lhe **finalmente** enviado.
the invitation went to him/her finally sent
 ‘Finally the invitation was sent to him/her’

For a detailed discussion about the idea that, in EP, the clitic is enclitic to the auxiliary verb instead of being proclitic to the lexical one, see Vigário (2003).

person and number, an element bearing variable underspecified features shows the values [α -person; α -number], which are sensitive to any value of person and number. As for the nonvariable underspecified features (0-features), Rooryck gives them an “opaque” characteristic. In his view, these features must be understood as not having in themselves a positive or negative value assigned for a given feature, that is, they simply indicate that the specification of a certain attribute has no value.

One of the facts that led Rooryck to develop his theory of features as presented in the previous paragraph is related to the phenomenon of transmission of phi-features by the complementizer *qui* in French. It is known that, in that language, *qui* is involved in the operation of transmitting features from a NP to the finite verb of a relative clause. Thus, in standard French, we find the following paradigm, exemplified by sentences (42) and (43).

(42) vous-2PL qui êtes-2PL venus
you who are come
 ‘You who have come’

(43) nous-1PL qui sommes-1PL là
we who are there
 ‘We who are there’

(Rooryck 1994, p. 212)

In standard French, as can be observed above, the complementizer *qui* transmits the values for person and number of a NP to the verb of the relative clause. The author shows, however, that in other linguistic varieties of French the transmission of phi-features is not complete at all. In one of these varieties, for example, there is no feature value transmitted to the verb of the relative clause. In such cases, the verb form is invariably third-person singular, i.e., the default agreement form in French. The sentence (44) illustrates just that.

(44) Il n’y a que vous-2sg qui peut-3sg le faire; C’est pas nous-1pl qui peut-3sg y aller
 ‘Only you can do that. We can not go there’

Rooryck argues that the difference between these two varieties of French can be explained in terms of the theory of feature underspecification. For him, the complementizer

qui in the linguistic variety exemplified in (42) and (43) carries variable underspecified features for person and number, that is, [α -person; α -number]. Thus, the values for person and number of a particular NP would be absorbed by *qui*, which, in turn, would transmit them to the verb of the relative clause. The agreement between the NP and the verb seems to corroborate this hypothesis. As for the variety exemplified in (44), it is necessary only to assume that the complementizer *qui* is composed of nonvariable underspecified features for person and number, corresponding to the following specification: [0-person; 0-number]. Since *qui* is a neutral element in this linguistic variety, the values for person and number are not transmitted to the verb of the relative clause, triggering third-person singular agreement, the default mark of agreement.

Considering such evidence for the viability of the concept of feature underspecification in the syntactic component, it is then possible to view the clitic *se* as an element bearing underspecified phi-features. As Martins claims, *se* in pronominal passives could be analyzed as a constituent displaying variable underspecified features for person and number. These values would be filled by means of an agreement relation between the clitic *se* and another constituent. More concretely, this constituent would be the logical object, regardless of being in a topic position (pre-verbal) or *in situ* (post-verbal). Once the person-number features of *se* are filled, the clitic itself would be capable of checking the phi-features of I^0 , since it would be located in the domain of this functional projection, thus triggering the verbal agreement.

At first, this analysis could be seen as a mere variant of the traditional proposals which derive the verbal agreement in pronominal passives, at least when the internal argument remains *in situ*, as the result of a chain dependency between a null expletive *pro* and the logical object. Martins argues against this idea by assuming the hypothesis that, although *se* and the logical object share the same set of phi-features, they are specified with

different Abstract Cases: *se* is assigned Nominative Case, while the object is assigned Accusative Case. In that sense, the relationship between the clitic *se* and the internal argument in pronominal passive clauses would be less rigid than the relation established between a null expletive and its associate, given that, in the first type of relationship, just the phi-features are shared, while in the second one, beyond the phi-features, the same Abstract Case is also shared, keeping in mind that the expletive would transmit the Case received in [Spec,IP] to its pair, which remains *in situ*. Evidence that there is case-asymmetry between *se* and its associate in pronominal passive clauses can be found in dialect varieties of Portuguese, in which a third-person accusative clitic displaying the role of internal argument can co-occur with *se*, as evidenced in the following example.

- (45) *Tinha-se um burrinho, ia-se buscar e levar a farinha.*
had-SE a small-donkey, went-3SG-SE fetch and take the flour
Trazia-se-o [o trigo] em grão e levava-se
em farinha.
would-bring-3SG-SE-it [the wheat] in grain and would-take-3SG-SE in flour
 ‘We had a small donkey and we went to and fro with the flour. We used to
 bring the wheat grains (to the windmill) and go back with the flour’
 (Porto Santo, Madeira. CORDIAL-SIN, PST 24)

Considering that in EP the clitic *se* is adjoined to the verb in the head I^0 , it is plausible to think that, if *se* receives a Case in the example (45), such a Case can only be the Nominative Case, given that, under minimalist assumptions (Chomsky 1995), this is exactly the case checked in the field of IP. Thus, if the clitic pronoun *se* really shared the same Case with the logical object *o* “it”, just like in chain dependencies between an expletive and its associated, we would expect the clitic functioning as the logical argument to appear in the Nominative form. However, what we have is an Accusative third singular clitic, supporting then the view that *se* and the logical object do not share the same Abstract Case.

So far, we have presented the essential points of Martins’ analysis we agree with. In a significant aspect, however, we take a different path. It is known that in EP there is a type of construction involving the clitic *se* which is very similar to pronominal passive clauses. These

similar structures are usually called impersonal *se* constructions. Indeed, in descriptive terms, the significant difference between these two constructions is that in pronominal passives the internal argument manifests agreement with the verb, while in impersonal constructions there is no agreement between the logical object and the verb. Thus it is possible to find both (46) and (47), exemplifying, respectively, a pronominal passive clause and an impersonal *se* construction, respectively.

(46) Vendem-se batatas
sell-3PL-SE potatoes
 ‘We sell potatoes (here)’

(47) Vende-se batatas
sell-3SG-SE potatoes
 ‘We sell potatoes (here)’

(Martins 2005, p. 414)

Martins argues that to the pair of sentences above is assigned the same meaning. Having this as basis, she says that the construction showing agreement and the construction with no agreement are minimally distinct from each other in EP. In her analysis, while in pronominal passive constructions the clitic *se* enters into the derivation with variable underspecified features for person and number, in structures in which there is no agreement the pronoun *se* has non-variable underspecified features for person and number (that is, 0-features). Thus, in the first structure the agreement between the verb and the logical object would be triggered, but in the second structure the agreement would fail.

Within a formal perspective, the type of optionality developed by Martins is problematic, since there would not be any motivation for its occurrence, considering that, in her argumentation, both constructions would have the same semantic interpretation. Here we will argue in favor of a different analysis, showing evidence that the use of pronominal passive constructions or impersonal *se* structures is not the result of a simple matter of optionality, but is based on different interpretations that can be assigned to each one of these constructions. Raposo & Uriagereka (1996), for instance, argue that the clitic pronoun in a

sentence like (46) corresponds to the indefinite *se*, while the clitic in a sentence like (47) corresponds to the impersonal *se*. The motivation for this differentiation is based on the fact that constructions showing agreement accept as implicit subject one individual, while constructions displaying no agreement do not accept that possibility. So a sentence like (46) can be normally continued by a phrase like *deve ser o Nestor* “it must be Nestor”, but (47) does not accept a similar strategy. This leads Raposo & Uriagereka to assume that the impersonal clitic *se* has always a generic interpretation, different from *se* in pronominal passives, which leaves implicit a subject with a more specific reading.

Accepting the distinction proposed by these authors, we disagree with Martins’ analysis by not accepting the idea that impersonal *se* is simply a variant of indefinite *se* in pronominal passive clauses. We adopt the hypothesis that, by displaying different semantic properties, indefinite *se* and impersonal *se* may be viewed as distinct lexical entries, the first one carrying variable underspecified features for person and number, and the second one carrying non-variable underspecified features for person and number. In that sense, the absence (or not) of agreement in *se* constructions would be independent of any optionality concerning feature underspecification for phi-features of *se*. In fact, the manifestation (or not) of agreement would be understood as the result of a choice between lexical items of a different nature, deriving, as a result, different syntactic outputs.

5. Final Considerations

In this paper, we have looked at what has been called pronominal passive constructions, particularly for their pattern of verbal agreement. Following some of the empirical arguments listed in Raposo & Uriagereka (1996), we saw that the verbal agreement triggered by the logical object cannot be treated as the result of movement of the object to [Spec,IP] or as the establishment of a chain relationship between a null expletive in [Spec,IP] and its associate. In view of these facts, our goal was to develop an explanatory analysis for the agreement

pattern attested in pronominal passives, one that would be compatible with the empirical evidence discussed in Raposo & Uriagereka's work. Our proposal follows the basic ideas of Martins (2005), who argues that the agreement between the verb and the object is mediated by the clitic *se*, an operation that would not, however, be assimilated to a chain relation between a *pro* and its associate, since the clitic *se* and the internal argument would not share the same abstract Case. We depart from Martins when we propose an explanation for the apparent optionality between pronominal passive constructions and impersonal *se* constructions, arguing, contrary to her analysis, that the two structures present distinct semantic interpretations, each one depending on the different lexical entries associated with the clitic pronoun *se*.

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