

ANTICAUSATIVE *SE* IS AN EXPLETIVE:
evidence from stylistic applicatives in Chilean Spanish

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INTRODUCTION

Chilean Spanish has been scarcely studied from a generative perspective. This is odd, as the dialect exhibits many puzzling morphosyntactic patterns.

- ➡ The microparametric study of the Spanish dialects spoken in the Southern Cone of America is still very incipient.

In this talk, I will present data from a syntactic phenomenon that, as far as I know, is only attested in Chilean Spanish: *stylistic LE* (Muñoz Pérez 2020a).

I aim to show that *stylistic LE* supports a specific type of hypothesis on the nature of the *causative alternation*.

- ✓ In this construction, *anticausative SE* becomes optional, i.e., it may be absent from a construction with an anticausative interpretation.
- ✓ This optionality receives a straightforward account under the assumption that anticausative markers are *expletives* of sorts.
- ✓ If such analysis is on the right track, the pattern exemplifies a novel type of phenomenon in the realm of anticausativity.

AFFECTED DATIVE + ANTICAUSATIVE

The *stylistic LE* phenomenon arises in contexts of *affected datives*.

- (1) a. Cosmo abrió la puerta.
Cosmo opened.3SG the door
'Cosmo opened the door.'
- b. Cosmo *me* abrió la puerta.
Cosmo DAT.1SG opened.3SG the door
'Cosmo opened the door and I was affected by this.'

An *affected dative* can be combined with *anticausative SE* in a sentence.

➡ In the resulting construction, the dative phrase tends to be interpreted as an *unintentional causer* (Cuervo 2003, Kallulli 2006, Schäfer 2008, i.a.).

- (2) *Se me* cerró la puerta.
REFL DAT.1SG closed.3SG the door
'I unintentionally caused the door to be closed.'
- (3) *A los vecinos se les* rompió el televisor.
DAT the neighbours REFL DAT.3PL broke.3SG the television
'The neighbours unintentionally caused the TV to be broken.'

AFFECTED DATIVE + ANTICAUSATIVE

The same type of interpretation is attested in a variety of languages.

- (4) Joannie zbił się kubek.
Joanna.DAT broke REFL mug.NOM
'Joanna unintentionally broke the mug.'

Polish

- (5) Benit i-u thye dritarja.
Ben.DAT DAT.CL3S-NACT broke.AOR.3S window.NOM
'Ben unintentionally broke the window.'

Albanian (Kallulli 2006: 274)

- (6) Dem Peter zerbrach versehentlich die Vase.
the.DAT John broke accidentally the.NOM vase
'Peter accidentally broke the vase.'

German (Schäfer 2008: 81)

- (7) A Francesca si ruppe il vaso.
to.DAT Francesca REFL broke the.NOM vase
'Francesca unintentionally caused the vase to break.'

Italian (Alexiadou et al. 2015: 45)

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

Chilean Spanish displays the same pattern and interpretation.

- (8) Se **me** rompió la radio.
SE DAT.1SG broke.3SG the radio
'I unintentionally caused the radio to be broken'

But it also exhibits the option of introducing an invariable and non-referential dative clitic **LE**. As (9) and (10) show, **SE** becomes optional in this context.

- (9) **Me** le rompió la radio.
DAT.1SG LE broke.3SG the radio
- (10) Se **me** le rompió la radio.
SE DAT.1SG LE broke.3SG the radio

Previous mentions of these patterns can be found in Kany (1945: 139, 1969: 174), Oroz (1966: 174), Campos (1999: 1571) and Silva-Corvalán (2005).

I call this alternation **stylistic LE**. To my knowledge, no similar phenomenon has been reported for other languages exhibiting unintentional oblique causers.

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

Stylistic LE is possible with all verbs that participate in the *causative alternation*, e.g., *romper* 'to break', *hundir* 'to sink', *abrir* 'to open', etc.

- (11) a. Se **me** hundió el bote.
SE DAT.1SG sank.3SG the boat
'I unintentionally caused the boat to sink.'
- b. **Me** le hundió el bote.
DAT.1SG LE sank.3SG the boat
- c. Se **me** le hundió el bote.
SE DAT.1SG LE sank.3SG the boat
- (12) a. Se **me** cerró la puerta.
SE DAT.1SG closed.3SG the door
'I unintentionally caused the door to be closed.'
- b. **Me** le cerró la puerta.
DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door
- c. Se **me** le cerró la puerta.
SE DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

The alternation is also attested with verbs of change that acquire an inchoative value when used with *SE*, e.g., *caer* 'to fall', *morir* 'to die'.

- (13) a. Se *me* cayeron las llaves.
SE DAT.1SG fell.3PL the keys
'I unintentionally caused the keys to fall.'
- b. *Me* *le* cayeron las llaves.
DAT.1SG LE fell.3PL the keys
- c. Se *me* *le* cayeron las llaves.
SE DAT.1SG LE fell.3PL the keys
- (14) a. Se *me* murió la planta.
SE DAT.1SG died.3SG the plant
'I unintentionally caused the plant to die.'
- b. *Me* *le* murió la planta.
DAT.1SG LE died.3SG the plant
- c. Se *me* *le* murió la planta.
SE DAT.1SG LE died.3SG the plant

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

Lastly, *stylistic LE* also appears with psych-verbs formed with *SE* that have a dative clitic as experiencer, e.g., *olvidarse* 'to forget', *ocurrirse* 'to occur'.

- (15) a. Se **me** olvidó eso.
SE DAT.1SG forgot.3SG that
'I forgot that.'
- b. **Me** **le** olvidó eso.
DAT.1SG LE forgot.3SG that
- c. Se **me** **le** olvidó eso.
SE DAT.1SG LE forgot.3SG that
- (16) a. Se **me** ocurrió eso.
SE DAT.1SG occurred.3SG that
'That occurred to me.'
- b. **Me** **le** ocurrió eso.
DAT.1SG LE occurred.3SG that
- c. Se **me** **le** ocurrió eso.
SE DAT.1SG LE occurred.3SG that

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

No other syntactic context licenses *stylistic LE*. Superficially similar sequences of *SE+CL_{dat}* make the alternation unacceptable.

- (17) a. Cosmo se me quejó (a mí).
Cosmo SE DAT.1SG complained.3SG to me
'Cosmo complained to me.'
- b. *Cosmo me le quejó (a mí).
Cosmo DAT.1SG LE complained.3SG to me
- c. *Cosmo se me le quejó (a mí).
Cosmo SE DAT.1SG LE complained.3SG to me

inherent SE

- (18) a. No se me dio ningún ejemplar.
not SE DAT.1SG gave.3SG no copy
'No copy was given to me.'
- b. *No me le dio ningún ejemplar.
not DAT.1SG LE gave.3SG no copy
- c. *No se me le dio ningún ejemplar.
not SE DAT.1SG LE gave.3SG no copy

impersonal SE + argumental dative

STYLISTIC APPLICATIVES

The alternation is only attested with 1SG and 2SG datives.

- (19) a. Se **me** quemó el pan → (Se) **me le** quemó el pan
'I unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'
- b. Se **te** quemó el pan → (Se) **te le** quemó el pan.
'You unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'
- c. Se **le** quemó el pan → *(Se) **le le** quemó el pan.
'He unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'
- d. Se **nos** quemó el pan → *(Se) **nos le** quemó el pan.
'We unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'
- e. Se **les** quemó el pan → *(Se) **les le** quemó el pan.
'You_{PL} unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'
'They unintentionally caused the bread to be burned.'

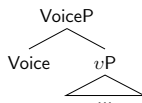
While **stylistic LE** can only surface in anticausative contexts, the restriction attested in (19) does not rely on the presence of the anticausative marker.

- ➡ The introduction of **LE** must be relatively independent from the mechanisms that enforce the presence of **SE** in standard anticausatives.

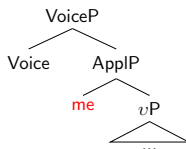
SPLITTING THE APPLICATIVE

I follow Cuervo (2003) and Schäfer (2008) in assuming that *affected datives* are Appl⁰ heads selecting a *v*P that denotes a resulting state, e.g., (20b).

(20) a.



b.



I take that the relevant parameter of variation distinguishing General and Chilean Spanish in these constructions is the possibility of “*splitting*” Appl⁰ in two.

- ➡ The cluster *me le* is the surface representation of grammatical information typically encoded in a single head, i.e., *me* in (20b).
- ➡ This “*splitting*” only happens in anticausative constructions.
- ➡ It only happens when Appl⁰ has the features [+PARTICIPANT,-GROUP].

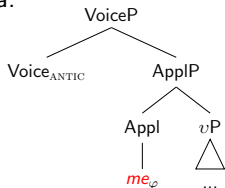
SPLITTING THE APPLICATIVE

For the purposes of this presentation, I will adopt a straightforward implementation of this intuition.

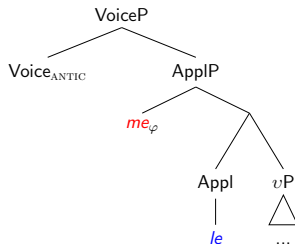
- ✓ In General Spanish, the dative clitic (i) introduces a set of φ -features that are interpreted referentially, and (ii) is the exponent of Appl⁰.
- ✓ In Chilean Spanish, the φ -features can surface as a clitic in [Spec,AppIP] and receive dative case from an applicative marker **LE**.

(21)

a.



b.



There are a number of alternative ways to “split” Appl⁰, e.g., by moving the φ -features to a higher specifier position (Cheng 2000, Sabel 2000).

ANTICAUSATIVE *SE* AS AN EXPLETIVE

My main goal today is accounting for the optionality of *anticausative SE* in the construction, as omitting this element is impossible in other contexts.

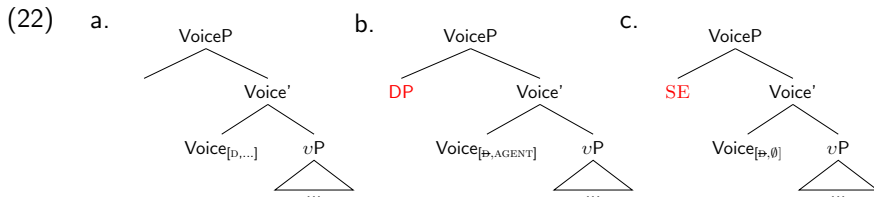
I will adopt the approach to anticausative markers advanced in Schäfer (2008), Pujalte & Saab (2012), Alexiadou et al. (2015), among others.

The proposal in Schäfer (2008) goes more or less as follows.

- ✓ The external argument is introduced as the specifier of a *Voice* projection (e.g., Kratzer 1996).
- ✓ Merging a DP in this position satisfies a D-feature on *Voice*.
- ✓ There is a semantically vacuous variant of *Voice* that assigns no θ -role to its specifier.
- ✓ However, this elements still requires merging an element of type D in the specifier position of VoiceP.
- ✓ In Spanish, this constituent is the reflexive element *SE*.
- ✓ Since *SE* carries no θ -role, the anticausative interpretation is captured.

ANTICAUSATIVE *SE* AS AN EXPLETIVE

The representations in (22) illustrate this analysis.



This account captures the *causative alternation* in a transparent way.

- (23) a. **Cosmo** abrió la puerta.
Cosmo opened.3SG the door
'Cosmo opened the door.'
- b. La puerta **se** abrió.
The door REFL opened
'The door opened.'

cf. (22b)

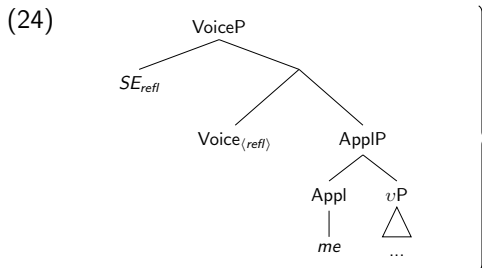
cf. (22c)

THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

The main ingredients of my analysis have been already introduced.

- ✓ *Affected datives* are introduced through an Applicative head “sandwiched” between VoiceP and *v*P.
- ✓ Anticausative markers such as Spanish *SE* are expletives of a semantically null *Voice* projection.

Combining these assumptions yields the representation in (24) for anticausative structures with affected datives in General Spanish.



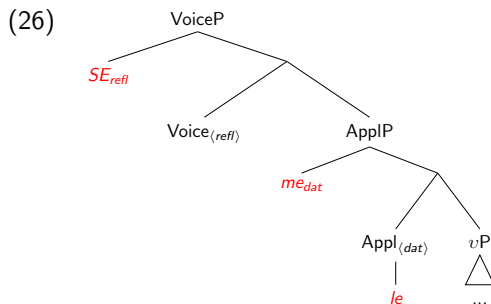
I assume that semantically vacuous *Voice* requires a reflexive element [+REFL] as an expletive instead of a constituent carrying a D-feature.

See Rivero (2010) on how this structure accounts for psych-verbs of the *olvidar* ‘to forget’ class.

THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

This offers an immediate analysis for cases such as (25), in which the sequence of clitics *SE*+*CL*_{dat}+*LE* surfaces.

- (25) *Se me le* cerró la puerta.
SE DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door
'I unintentionally caused the door to be closed.'

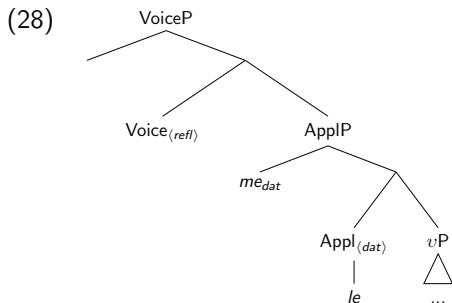


THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

Consider now the case in which there is no anticausative *SE* in the construction, and the sentence surfaces with a sequence of clitics *CL_{dat}+LE*.

- (27) **Me** **le** cerró la puerta.
 DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door
 'I unintentionally caused the door to be closed.'

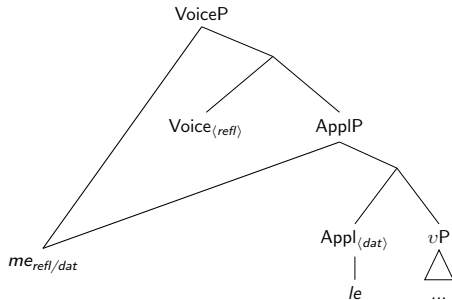
This seems to entail that there is no element in (27) able to fill [Spec, VoiceP], i.e., no reflexives. If this position is not filled, the sentence should be ungrammatical.



THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

I contend that the dative clitic in [Spec,AppIP] is able to fill [Spec,VoiceP] via *syncretism*; 1SG.DAT and 2SG.DAT are syncretic with reflexives.

(29)



The multidominant representation in (29) attempts to show that *me* (or *me*) serves two “functions” in these structures.

- ✓ It provides the φ -features identifying the affected entity.
- ✓ It functions as a reflexive element that checks the features of Voice.

THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

Syncretism is known to repair selectional mismatches in a number of contexts.

- ☞ Zaenen & Karttunen (1984), Pullum & Zwicky (1986), Dalrymple & Kaplan (2000), Himmelreich (2017), Bergsma (2019), Muñoz Pérez (2020b).

Consider the following German data from Himmelreich (2017).

- (30) Hans mag_{<ACC>} [wen_{ACC} Maria hasst_{<ACC>}].
Hans likes who Maria hates
'Hans likes whoever Maria hates.'
- (31) Hans vertraut_{<DAT>} [*wem_{DAT} / *wen_{ACC} Maria mag_{<ACC>}].
Hans trusts who Maria likes
'Hans trusts whoever Maria likes.'
- (32) Hans mag_{<ACC>} [was_{ACC/NOM} Maria zur Weißglut treibt_{<NOM>}].
Hans likes what Maria to rage drives
'Hans likes whatever infuriates Maria.'

THE OPTIONALITY OF *SE*

We can summarize the analysis as follows.

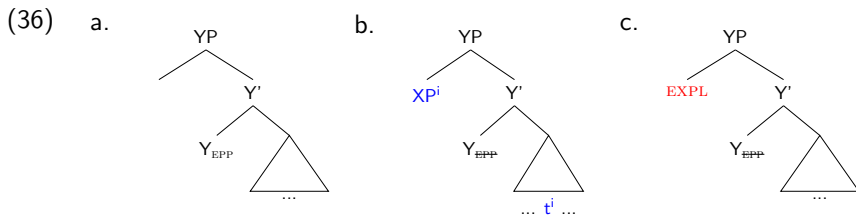
- (33) a. **Se me** cerró la puerta.
SE DAT.1SG closed.3SG the door
'I unintentionally caused the door to be closed.'
- b. [VoiceP **SE** [Voice' Voice_{<REFL>} [AppIP **me** [_vP ...]]]]
- (34) a. **Me le** cerró la puerta.
DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door
- b. [VoiceP **Me** [Voice' Voice_{<REFL>} [AppIP **tⁱ** [AppI' **LE** [_vP ...]]]]]]
- (35) a. **Se me le** cerró la puerta.
SE DAT.1SG LE closed.3SG the door
- b. [VoiceP **SE** [Voice' Voice_{<REFL>} [AppIP **me** [AppI' **LE** [_vP ...]]]]]]

A KEY DATA POINT?

Before discussing the functioning of *stylistic LE*, one could have argued that *anticausative markers* do not exhibit the typical behavior of pure expletives.

➡ In these, the formal feature on the relevant head can be satisfied through syntactic movement.

Consider the representations in (36).



The EPP -feature on Y could be checked alternatively through expletive insertion in $[Spec, YP]$ or movement of XP to $[Spec, YP]$.

A KEY DATA POINT?

Many languages display these alternations in contexts that allow for *expletive insertion*. Take the this pattern from Finnish (Holmberg & Nikanne 2002: 71).

(37) a. [TP [T' leikkii **lapsia** kadulla]]
play children in.street

b. [TP **Lapsia**ⁱ [T' leikkii **t**ⁱ kadulla]]
children play in.street

DP movement

c. [TP **Sitä** [T' leikkii **lapsia** kadulla]]
EXPL play children in.street

expletive insertion

As is well-known, similar patterns can be found in English.

(38) a. [TP [T' is **a man** in the garden]]

b. [TP **A man**ⁱ [TP is **t**ⁱ in the garden]]

DP movement

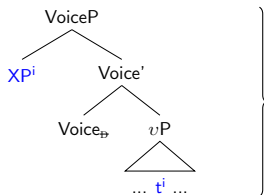
c. [TP **There** [TP is **a man** in the garden]]

expletive insertion

A KEY DATA POINT?

The question is why similar patterns do not arise with Spanish anticausatives, i.e., why is that movement of a constituent cannot satisfy the D-feature on *Voice*.

(39)



This predicts that the anticausative marker *SE* could be absent from the construction, which is strongly disallowed in Spanish

If my analysis of *stylistic LE* is on the right track, we can argue that the pattern in (39) actually exists.

IN THIS PRESENTATION...

- I presented the phenomenon of stylistic *LE*, an alternation that arises in Chilean Spanish in context of affected datives and anticausative *SE*.
- I provided an analysis for this construction assuming that Spanish *SE* is an expletive whose position can be filled by other elements in the phrase marker.
- I have suggested that stylistic *LE* provides a missing piece of evidence for the hypothesis that anticausative markers are expletives.

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THANKS!