ROMANCE SE AS AN ASPECTUAL ELEMENT

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0. Introduction

In ongoing research, I have been developing an analysis of the relationship between argument structure and aspectual structure in terms of the linking of arguments of a predicate to temporal subevents of the predicate, following closely work by Zagona (1999). This approach is based on a Pustejovskian view of event structure (Pustejovsky 1991), according to which a given predicate may have at most two subevents, which Zagona labels E1 (informally, ‘INITATE’) and E2 (approximately, ‘TRANSITION/RESULT’).1

In Kempchinsky (2000) I proposed that arguments link to temporal subevents in certain specified functional projections which I labeled Event Phrases, where the Event Phrase in which linking to E2 takes place is an aspectual phrase located between the two layers of the verb phrase, following Travis (2000), and the Event Phrase in which linking to E1 occurs is a functional projection just above vP, similar to the Event Phrase proposed in that position by Travis (2000). I will refer here to these projections as AspP and EP, respectively, but keeping in mind that they are both functional projections with aspectual content. Contra Travis, however, I assume that vP rather than AspP is the locus of object Case-checking—that is, the light v carries the relevant set of [phi-features,Case] to enter into a checking relation with an object DP (Raposo and Uriagereka 1996). In the spirit of minimalism, movement of a DP to Spec of the relevant aspectual head cannot be forced for interpretive reasons; however, the DP can move through Spec of the relevant Event Phrase on its way to its Case checking position. In (1) I illustrate how the overall system works with an accomplishment predicate:

\[
\begin{align*}
&1a. \quad La \, niña \, comió \, el \, helado. \\
&\text{‘The little girl ate the ice cream’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&1b. \quad [TP \, \text{la niña} \, \text{comió+T} \, [EP \, \text{la niña}] \, t_{v+V} \, \text{[vP el helado \, [vP \, \text{la niña}] \, t_{v+V} \, [AspP \, \text{el helado}] \, t_{v} \, [VP \, \text{el helado}] \, t_{v} \, ]]]]
\end{align*}
\]

(1b) assumes overt object Case-checking, but the results will be similar if there is covert checking. On the assumption that the temporal subevents of the V are part of its interpretative features, these features will become sublabels of T, along with the relevant uninterpretable features for Case-checking.

A logical testing ground for this framework is the analysis of sentences with the reflexive clitic SE (Spanish/French/Portuguese se, Italian si). There have been numerous attempts to provide a unified analysis of the various syntactic manifestations of SE. Many of these analyses converge on a view of SE as a valency-reducing morpheme,

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1 This division into at most two subevents differs from a view of event structure according to which accomplishment predicates, for example, are composed of three subevents, INITIATE (or CAUSE), PROCESS and CHANGE OF STATE, as in Folli (2002), among others; see section 3.1 below.
whereby it suspends or absorbs either a thematic argument of the verb and/or some structural Case (cf. Burzio 1986, Wehrli 1986, Manzini 1986, Cinque 1988, Grimshaw 1990, among others). In a more recent analysis, McGinnis (1998) analyzes SE as a non-DP external argument of the verb, i.e., with first merge in Spec,vP; while for Folli (2002) SE is a verbal operator in v (for SE as an operator also see Zubizarreta (1987)).

I propose that SE is primarily an aspectual element which either links to, introduces or absorbs a temporal subevent. In some constructions, this will be E2, so that SE may be interpreted as telic; however, to say that SE is an aspectual element is not to say that SE is necessarily always a marker of telicity. In some cases, the linking of SE to a temporal subevent will result in a reduction of valency because SE will thus deprive an argument of a temporal subevent to link to; in other cases, SE will actually add event structure. The specific ways in which SE interacts with event structure will yield as a consequence the variety of syntactic constructions in which it is found.

My goal here is to defend this analysis of SE in relative detail for two manifestations of SE: reflexive SE and ergative or inchoative SE. In other work (Kempchinsky 2003) I extend the analysis to middle SE and passive SE. The paper is organized as follows: In section 1 I present my working assumptions on the morphosyntactic nature of the morpheme SE and outline in greater detail the aspectual framework. In section 2 I present the analysis of reflexive SE, and in section 3 the analysis of ergative/inchoative SE, focusing in particular in section 3.2 on the nature of the upper Event Phrase. Finally, in section 4 I explore some implications of the analysis.

1. Framework of the analysis

1.1. The nature of the morpheme SE

Of the major Romance languages, Spanish and Italian show the widest range of constructions with SE; an approximate classification with examples from Spanish appears in (2):2

(2) Instantiations of SE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>non-paradigmatic</th>
<th>(only 3rd person verbal forms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. impersonal:   | *Se trabaja duro en el mundo académico.*
|                  | ‘One works hard in the academic world’ |
| b. passive:      | *Se construyeron (varias) casas allí.*
|                  | ‘Various houses were constructed there’ |
| c. middle:       | *Las camisas de algodón se lavan fácilmente.*
|                  | ‘Cotton shirts wash easily’ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>paradigmatic</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| d. ergative      | *Las ventanas se rompieron durante la tormenta.*
|                  | ‘The windows broke during the storm’ |

2 In both the generative and the non-generative literature, there is wide divergence on the terminology and classification of constructions with SE. The labels in (2) are meaningful, in that they distinguish SE constructions with differing syntactic properties, but are not necessarily contentful in and of themselves. I do not include here the 3rd person indirect object use of *se* as in *Se lo di a Ana* ‘I gave it to Ana’; for arguments that this is an instantiation of SE and not merely a morphophonological variant of *le/les*, see Uriagereka (1997).
e. reflexive  
La niña se miraba (a sí misma) en el espejo.  
‘The little girl observed herself in the mirror’

f. causative  
Juan se afeita en la barbería (para impresionar a sus amigos).  
‘Juan gets shaved at the barbershop (in order to impress his friends)’

g. inherent  
Los estudiantes siempre se quejan de las clases.  
(antipassive) ‘The students always complain about their classes’

h. aspectual  
El niño se le comió toda la leche a su hermano.  
‘The little boy drank up all the milk on his brother’

It is usually assumed that French lacks passive SE, at least with perfective tenses (Ruwet 1972); it also appears to lack causative and aspectual SE. European Portuguese, according to informants that I have consulted, also lacks causative SE.

There is general agreement on the idea that SE is phi-defective; Burzio (1991) proposes that SE has no inherent features of its own. In contrast, Kayne (2000) proposes that SE—more specifically, the s- morpheme—is the 3rd person form, parallel with 1st person m- and 2nd person t-. He argues that SE is defective in lacking number. I adopt this view; thus the only phi-feature that SE bears is [person]. In this respect, it is similar to English expletive there, and we might speculate that the minimal set of phi-features is precisely [person]. Following Raposo and Uriagereka (1996), the fact that SE bears only [person] entails that it cannot check Case on v, because v when it bears a Case feature also has a full set of phi-features which must be checked and deleted.

I further assume that SE as a clitic is a minimal-maximal projection; however, it is not a DP but rather a ØP, in the inventory of pronoun-types proposed by Decháine and Wiltcheko (2002). They argue that first and second person clitics in French, for example, are ØPs, and as such allow for a bound variable reading under ellipsis:

(3) Je pense que la police m’a vu, et Marie le pense aussi.  
a. λx [x thinks that the police saw me] and λy [y thinks that the police saw me]  
b. λx [x thinks that the police saw me] and λy [y thinks that the police saw y]  
(Decháine and Wiltcheko 2002:431)

In contrast, English 1st and 2nd person pronouns, as DPs, do not allow the reading in (3b). Crucially, SE does allow a bound variable reading, as in (4):

(4) Ana piensa que se defiende bien en italiano, y Luis también lo piensa.  
‘Ana thinks that she gets by well in Italian, and Luis also thinks so’  
λx [x thinks that x gets by well in Italian] and λy [y thinks that y gets by well in Italian]

Decháine and Wiltcheko propose that ØPs may be either predicates or arguments, while DPs may only be arguments. Now as a clitic, SE may merge either into a head position or a Spec position. I propose that these two possibilities correspond to its dual nature as a ØP: when initial merge is in head position, SE is a predicate; when initial merge is in Spec position, SE functions as an argument.
1.2. The syntax of (lexical) aspect

Following Travis (2002), I assume that within vP there are three potential heads which enter into the determination of lexical aspect: the head X of XP (e.g., PP or AP) in VP, the head Asp of AspP between VP and vP, and the head v of vP, as in (5):

(5) L-syntax aspectual heads (Travis 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>v</th>
<th>Asp</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functor category</td>
<td>Functional category</td>
<td>Lexical category (AP/PP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restricted class</td>
<td>closed class</td>
<td>open class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beginning point</td>
<td>natural endpoint</td>
<td>natural endpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arbitrary point</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a lexical category, an aspectual head X will generally be realized overtly (cf. English *hammer the nail flat*), while the functional category Asp and the functor category v may or may not have overt morphology. In a language such as Spanish, these heads will have only abstract features to be checked by the verb as it raises to T, as we saw in (1b).

In contrast, the head of the upper Event Phrase in (1) is an S-syntax aspectual head, distinct from v (see section 3.2). Adopting this general syntactic approach to aspect, I propose that SE as a ᵇP may appear either in an aspectual head position or in the Spec of an aspectual position, yielding the following partial schema:

(6) A preliminary aspectual classification of SE

(i) SE as an aspectual head
   a. inchoative SE: head of AspP, introduces CHANGE OF STATE
   b. middle SE: head of vP, suspends INITIATE

(ii) SE as an element in Spec of an aspectual projection
   e. reflexive SE: in [Spec,Asp], links to E2 (TRANSITION/RESULT)
   f. passive SE: in [Spec,vP], links to E1 (INITIATE)

Under this analysis, then, reflexive SE and ergative/inchoative SE are instantiations of SE which are operative in the ‘lower’ aspectual level of AspP.

2. Reflexive SE

2.1. Properties of SE in reflexive constructions

There are two properties in particular of constructions with reflexive SE which need to be explained: first, although reflexive SE appears with verbs which are otherwise transitive, it is well-known that the reflexive clitic has an intransitivizing effect, as shown by Case alternations under causative *faire* in French (Kayne 1975). Secondly, reflexive SE in Spanish allows clitic-doubling, regardless of the lexical aspectual class:

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3 The l-syntax/s-syntax distinction originates with Hale and Keyser (1993), who assume that l-syntax is ‘syntax in the lexicon’. Travis (2000) argues that both ‘l-syntax’ and ‘s-syntax’ are in the syntactic component; what the l-syntax defines is something like ‘possible word’.
(7) a. *Ana se conoce bien (a sí misma) (stative)*
   ‘Ana knows herself well’

b. *Ana se observaba (a sí misma) en el espejo (activity)*
   ‘Ana observed herself in the mirror’

c. *Ana se transformó (a sí misma) de niña maleducada a mujer sofisticada (accomplishment)*
   ‘Ana transformed herself from an ill-behaved child to a sophisticated woman’

d. *Ana se reconoció (a sí misma) en la foto (achievement)*
   ‘Ana recognized herself in the photo’

However, doubling is not always acceptable with SE with “verbs of grooming”, and I shall return to this issue in section 2.2:

(8) a. *(??)* *El niño se viste a sí mismo.*
   ‘The child dresses himself’

b. *El niño ya se viste a sí mismo.*
   ‘The child already dresses himself’

c. *Juan se viste elegantemente (#a sí mismo)*
   ‘Juan dresses (#himself) elegantly’

d. *Juan se afeita con una maquinilla eléctrica (#a sí mismo)*
   ‘Juan shaves (#himself) with an electric razor’

(8c,d from Otero 1999)

The acceptability of doubling of *se* correlates negatively with the acceptability of omission of *se* in Spanish under causative *hacer*: such omission is optional in cases which resist doubling (with some variability across speakers, indicated with ‘%’ below), but impossible in cases which fully allow doubling4:

(9) a. *La madre hizo bañar(%se) al niño.*
   ‘The mother made the child bathe’

b. *Su novia hizo afeitar(%se) a Juan.*
   ‘His girlfriend made Juan shave’

c. *La profesora hizo criticarse a los estudiantes.*
   ‘The professor made the students criticize themselves’ (reciprocal interpretation also possible)

c.’ *La profesora hizo criticar a los estudiantes.*
   ‘The professor had (someone) criticize the students’
   *The professor made the students criticize themselves/each other’

d. *La madre le hizo mirarse/*mirar en el espejo.*
   ‘The mother made him look at himself in the mirror’

As noted in the introduction, sentences with reflexive SE are not automatically telic. In an object delimitation language such as Spanish, both the temporal structure of the

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4 This contrasts both with Italian, which systematically disallows the clitic *si* under *fare* (Burzio 1986), and with French, where *se* is obligatory under *faire* as a reflexive, but optional in the ergative construction (Ruwet 1972). See section 4 below.
verb—its subevents—and the syntactic and semantic characterization of the object enter into the aspectual calculus. Thus stative and activity predicates, lacking the subevent E2 (TRANSITION/RESULT), will remain atelic in the presence of reflexive SE. SE does, however, fulfill the role of a quantized/specific object in the determination of telicity with accomplishment and transitive achievement predicates, as shown in (10):

(10) a. Ana describió problemas generales #en diez minutos.
   ‘Ana described general problems #in ten minutes’

b. Ana describió los problemas fundamentales en diez minutos.
   ‘Ana described the fundamental problems in ten minutes’

c. Ana se describió al psiquiatra en diez minutos.
   ‘Ana described herself to the psychiatrist in ten minutes’

Because the temporal structure of the verb is crucial for the determination of telicity, part of the computation of aspectual meaning must involve movement of the V through the head of Asp. I assume that Asp, as a functional category, has an uninterpretable temporal feature; in contrast, as mentioned in the introduction, the temporal subevents of a predicate are interpretable features on the verb. Thus, movement of the V through Asp checks and deletes the uninterpretable features on the functional head.

Consider then the derivation of a sentence with reflexive SE in French or Italian, languages in which doubling of the reflexive clitic is not possible. SE is merged directly into Spec,Asp; thus the V may move through the head of Asp as necessary. In fact, it must do so. The structure by the time that the subject is merged into Spec, v is shown in the Italian example of (11b):

(11) a. Gianni si guarda nell specchio.
   ‘Gianni looks at himself in the mirror’

b. [vP Gianni guarda [AspP si tV [VP tV nell specchio]]]

SE (SE) in Spec,Asp receives a temporal role directly in that position, following Ritter and Rosen (1998). They propose that an argument may be directly inserted into Spec,FP (where FP is the functional projection for delimiting events, equivalent to our AspP), and its interpretation is thus determined by its event role. But recall that SE, because it is phi-defective, cannot check Case on v. At the same time, another DP potentially merged in the lower VP would be blocked from checking its Case by the presence of SE in Spec,Asp—hence, the intranstitivizing effect of SE. The only way for the derivation to converge is for v to not enter the numeration with uninterpretable features which need to be checked and deleted.

Now reflexive SE is paradigmatic, and so the account must extend to first and second person reflexives. But of course SE is also a clitic, and as such will need to cliticize to T. It is the cliticization of SE that will eventually allow it to inherit specific person and
number features from its antecedent, at the end of the derivation when SE is cliticized to T and the subject DP is in Spec,T, as in Raposo and Uriagereka (1996).5

2.2 Doubling of SE in Spanish and verbs of personal grooming

The examples of reflexive SE given in the literature are often constructions with what Saltarelli (1994) has termed “verbs of personal grooming”, such as vestirse ‘to get dressed/to dress oneself’ and afeitarse ‘to shave (oneself)’ in (8) above. Doubling of se with these verbs varies in acceptability from speaker to speaker, and as we saw in (8), this variation is influenced by the presence of adverbial elements in the sentence.

Torrego (1995) argues that the SE of doubled constructions is distinct from other instances of SE, and is actually the head of a DP projection. She dubs this instance of SE ‘expletive’ SE, and shows, on the basis of raising out of conjuncts, that SE and sí mismo must start as a syntactic unit. Following the general template for doubled clitics in Spanish proposed by Uriagereka (1997), I assume the following structure for doubled SE:

(12) a. [XP DOUBLE [ CLITIC [AgrP pro Agr [SC tDOUBLE tpro ]]]]
   b. [XP (a) sí [ se [AgrP [mismo[pro]] Agr [SC tsí t[mismo[pro] ]]]]]

This DP, as a normal DP argument, initially merges into canonical direct object position, and like any other direct object DP, may move to Spec,Asp to link to the appropriate temporal role. That is to say, these are full transitive structures; hence, the impossibility of omission of se under hacer. Given the correlation noted above between the possibility of doubling and the ungrammaticality of omission of se, it must be the case, then, that se with a transitive verb in Spanish always merges as a DP in canonical object position, with either overt doubled a sí mismo or non-overt [pro].

Now this in principle means that verbs of grooming with se in Spanish have two possible derivations, one with SE as O in Spec,Asp and the other with SE as DP in canonical object position, with individual variation across speakers with respect to which verbs they allow with what we might informally term a ‘double subcategorization’. In the derivation with SE in Spec,Asp, as in the derivation of Italian examples such as (11), the v must enter the numeration without uninterpretable features to check, since SE is defective. Conversely, when SE merges as part of a complex DP, v will enter into a checking relation with the double ([pro] or sí mismo). Such ‘double subcategorization’ is exactly parallel to the situation which Saltarelli (1994) outlines for Latin. The chart in (13) is adapted from his work, with the last column, for Spanish, being my addition:7

5 Alternatively, SE as a maximal projection may move to an outer Spec position of vP, a move which may be motivated by the need for SE to get to the edge of the phase. In the last section, I will suggest a different intermediary move, with SE in the head of the upper Event Phrase.
6 Torrego (1998) proposes that the presence of the prepositional dative a is related to overt movement of the double (in this case, sí mismo) to the outer Spec of v. She revises this in Torrego (2002), where she claims that the a-phrase moves overtly to Spec,Asp sandwiched between the two verbal layers. Either account is compatible with the analysis here.
7 A reviewer asks whether the possibility of two structures has any aspectual consequences, noting that undoubled Juan se viste elegantemente ‘J. dresses elegantly’ seems to focus on the result rather than the process. I agree with the observation, but I am not sure that it is a result of the structure, compare Juan se viste rápidamente ‘J. dresses rapidly’. As far as I have been able to determine thus far, doubled and non-
What the chart in (13) shows is that the “de-transitivizing” use of SE in Romance corresponds to the synthetic passive voice in Latin, as Saltarelli pointed out. I will return to this point below in section 3.2.

3. Ergative/Inchoative SE

3.1 Ergative/inchoative SE as a marker of telicity

The SE of ergative pairs such as those of (14) has been extensively studied since Burzio (1986):

(14) a. El viento rompió los cristales.
    ‘The wind broke the glass panes’

    b. Los cristales se rompieron (por sí solos)/por el viento/para quitarlos del marco más fácilmente.
    ‘The glass panes broke (by themselves)/by the wind/in order to remove them from the frame more easily’

    c. El ruido de la calle me despertó.
    ‘The noise from the street woke me’

    d. (Yo) me desperté.
    ‘I awoke’

In Spanish, ergative SE may not be doubled, and it may (preferentially, for some speakers) be omitted under hacer:

(15) a. Los cristales se rompieron (*a sí mismos)
    ‘The glass panes broke’

    b. Yo me desperté a mí misma
    ‘I woke myself’ /*I awoke

(16) a. El viento hizo romper(se) los cristales.
    ‘The wind made the glass panes break’

    b. El ruido hizo despertar(se) al niño.
    ‘The noise made the child awaken’

The prevailing view of ergative SE in syntactic theory has been that in these constructions the reflexive clitic absorbs (or, for Cinque 1988, ‘suspends’) the external 0-role and the internal accusative Case. However, as pointed out by Folli (2002), the
doubled verbs of grooming have the same range of possible aspectual interpretations, although the non-doubled structure strongly favors the result reading (and similarly for the English non-reflexive counterpart).
suppression of the external θ-role is independent of the presence of SE, since there are transitive/inchoative alternations without SE, as in the Italian examples of (17):

(17) a.  
*Gianni ha affondato la barca.*

‘Gianni has sunk the ship’

b.  
*La barca è affondata.*

‘The ship has sunk’

Folli encodes the possibility for a verb to appear in a transitive or an inchoative structure in terms of verbal features, whereby an alternating verb such as, e.g. *affondare,* will bear the features [(+v), ]\(+V\)]. What SE expresses in the inchoative construction is completion of the action, i.e. telicity. Thus, verbs which are necessarily telic obligatorily appear with *si* in the inchoative, verbs which are necessarily atelic may not appear with *si,* and verbs which may or may not be telic appear optionally with *si:*\(^{8}\)

(18) a.  
*La finestra *(si) è rotta.*

‘The window broke’

b.  
*La temperatura (*si) è cambiata.*

‘The temperatura changed’

c.  
*le patate (si) sono cotte.*

‘The potatoes cooked’  

(Folli 2002:92)

Tellingly, with the verbs in the optional *si* class, when *si* appears, the only interpretation of the sentence is telic, as shown below in (19) (Folli 2002:128); similar examples in Spanish are given by Bruhn de Garavito (2002), in (20):

(19) a.  
*Il cioccolato è fuso per pochi secondi/in pochi secondi*

‘The chocolate melted for a few seconds/in a few seconds’

b.  
*Il cioccolato si è fuso *per pochi secondi/in pochi secondi*

‘The chocolate SI melted *for a few seconds/in a few seconds’

c.  
*La casa è bruciata (per un’ora), ma non è bruciata.*

‘The house burned (for an tour), but it isn’t burnt’

d.  
*La casa si è bruciata, *ma non è bruciata.*

‘The house SI burned, *but it isn’t burnt’

(20) a.  
*El agua hirvió.*

‘The water boiled’

b.  
*El agua se hirvió toda.*

‘The water all boiled’

c.  
*Esa madera (*se) quemó durante más de una hora.*

‘That wood burned for more than an hour’

d.  
*Esa madera *(se) quemó en menos de una hora.*

‘That wood burned in less than an hour’

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\(^{8}\) Folli notes that within Italian there are dialectal differences with respect to which verbs fall into which class; this is also true across languages, cf. Spanish *Las patatas *(se) cocieron* ‘The potatoes cooked’.
Aspectually, predicates with ergative SE are intransitivized forms of transitive accomplishments. In Folli’s analysis, a full transitive accomplishment has three verbal layers: vP, VP, and RvP, where the head Rv is the predicate encoding CHANGE OF STATE. In contrast, sentences with ergative si lack the vP layer, and si itself is analyzed as a verbal element in the head of VP. The actual lexical verb merges as the head of RvP and raises to adjoin to si. This is partially motivated by the idea that si as a +V element is semantically highly underspecified, so it must have a full lexical verb adjoin to it:

\[(21) \quad [vP \text{ la finestra } [v \text{ si }] [RvP (\text{la finestra}) [Rv' chiudere ... ]]]\]

Si as a reflexive operator triggers identification of the two Spec positions; hence the DP la finestra raises from [Spec,Rv] to [Spec,V].

What Folli’s analysis fails to capture, it seems to me, is precisely the correlation between the presence of SE and a result state, since si merges as the head of the process verbal layer. I propose that SE in these sentences, rather than being an argumental element merged into Spec,Asp, is merged directly as the head of Asp, as in (22):

\[(22) \quad ... [AspP \text{ la finestra } [Asp' si ] [vP (\text{la finestra}) chiudere ... ]]]\]

As a head, SE does not cause a Minimal Link Condition problem for the DP internal argument of the V to raise to Spec,T to check T’s feature set of [phi-features/Case], passing through Spec,Asp on the way. Now recall that Asp is the locus of linking E2—TRANSITION/RESULT—to the DP argument. I propose that what happens is that SE, as a predicate, introduces the temporal role (subevent) CHANGE OF STATE. The internal argument DP which moves through Spec,Asp thus links specifically to that type of E2 via Spec-head agreement.

Thus, the structure of an inchoative sentence lacking SE such as (20a) will be like the structure of an inchoative sentence with SE such as (20b) in having only one verbal layer, VP; they will differ by the absence vs. presence of AspP, with SE as the head. As noted briefly above, it is often argued that ergatives involve a suppression of the external causer, as evidenced by the ungrammaticality of adjunct purposes clauses and agent-oriented adverbs, and this would appear to follow straightforwardly from the lack of vP.

Nevertheless, Higginbotham (1997) observes that inchoative events have a cause, in that there can be a causal explanation of why the event happened; but there is no argument in the semantic representation of the sentence to be taken as the “individuation of the cause”. Hence, causal-type adjuncts such as por sí solo in Spanish or da sé in Italian (‘by itself’) are possible. Folli (2002) in fact shows that da sé is licit in an inchoative sentence only if si is also present.

\[(23) \quad \text{a. La porta si è aperta da sé} \quad \text{‘The door closed by itself’} \]
\[
\text{b. *La temperatura è cambiata da sé} \quad \text{‘The temperature changed by itself’} \]
A parallel phenomenon to the ergative use of an otherwise reflexive pronominal form is found in Kannada, as analyzed by Lidz (2001). This language has a verbal reflexive morpheme which must be present on the verb when the anaphor tanu ‘self’ co-occurs as a coargument of its antecedent. In ergative structures, this morpheme is optionally present:

(24) a. Hari tann-annu hogal-i-koND-a
    Hari self-ACC praise-PP-REFL-PAST-3SM
    ‘Hari praised himself’
    b. *Hari tann-annu-hogal-id-a

(25) a. baagil-u muchi-tu
    door-NOM close-PST-3SM
    ‘The door closed’
    b. baagil-u muchi-koND-itu

However, if causal adjuncts are present in such structures, for example, the dative gaalL-ige ‘the wind’ in (26) below, then the verbal reflexive morpheme is obligatory:

(26) a. gaalL-ige baagil-u much-i-koND-itu
    wind-DAT door-NOM close-PP-REFL-PST-3SM
    ‘The door closed because of the wind’
    b. *gaalL-ige baagil-u much-i-tu

The licitness of causal adjuncts is somewhat of a mystery if the external θ-role is not syntactically projected in the construction. In Lidz’s account, the presence of the verbal reflexive morpheme is evidence of a mismatch between the verb’s thematic and aspectual roles. Thus, in (26), the thematic argument baagil-u ‘the door’ is linked to the complex aspectual role [cause [change]], leaving the aspectual role [act-on] unlinked. This forces us to examine further the aspectual contribution of the higher Event Phrase assumed in the structure given in (1b), and in particular how the temporal subevent of INITIATE is linked in the absence of an external argument. This is the focus of the next section.

3.2. vP, Event Phrase and Voice Phrase

Kratzer (1996) argues that the external argument of a verb is not introduced by a lexical element—including here a phonologically null light verb v—but rather by a functional head, which in addition checks structural Case on the object (thus preserving, although this is not her intention, Burzio’s generalization). She identifies this functional head as Voice, which she locates just above VP.9 She further proposes that there is a limited set of (active) Voice heads, one of which adds an agent argument to an action verb, and the other of which adds a ‘holder’ argument to a stative verb. For Kratzer, there

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9 In fact, she does not take a strong position on this matter, noting that in principle Voice can appear anywhere in the hierarchy of inflectional projections as long as it is below Tense, one of whose functions, for her, is to existentially quantify the event argument. In contrast, Saltarelli (1994) proposes that VoiceP is above TP, based on the order of morphemes in Latin synthetic passives.
is a tight connection between the thematic role of the external argument and the lexical aspectual class of the verb, mediated by the semantic function of Event Identification.

Thus, this conceptualization of Voice overlaps in many ways with the way in which Travis (2002) views the aspectual properties of the (light verb) v head, which she terms a ‘functor’ rather than functional category, following the terminology of Ritter and Rosen (1993). A functor category lacks semantic content and has a closed set of meanings, but potentially more than two, while a functional category can be viewed as having exactly two meanings, expressed in terms of a binary feature. Thus Asp, a functional category, is limited to [±telic], while the meanings of v could be limited to DO, BECOME and CAUSE, as proposed by Folli and Harley (2002).

Nevertheless, Travis also assumes the existence of a functional category external to vP, Event Phrase, presumably also coterminous with the upper aspectual Functional Category in Ritter and Rosen (1998). In a similar vein, Zagona (1999) proposes that the syntactic locus of the linking of the subject DP to the relevant temporal role (generally E1, INITIATE) is AgrSP, assumed to be the functional category directly dominating vP, an analysis which I explicitly adopted in my earlier analysis (Kempchinsky, 2000). The main thrust of the analysis of Zagona (1999) was precisely to link the licensing of DPs as temporal arguments to voice alternations.

The question then is whether the aspectual calculus for the initiate subevent involves two separate projections—vP and VoiceP/Event Phrase—or only one. I believe that the constructions with ergative SE—and their counterpart with the verbal reflexive morpheme in Kannada—give us evidence in favor of the former position. Recall that si in Italian and the verbal reflexive morpheme in Kannada are obligatory in ergative sentences if a causal adjunct is present, as we saw in (23) and (26) above. Suppose that the “limited repertoire” of Voice, to use Kratzer’s turn of phrase, is precisely INITIATE (Ritter and Rosen 1998), whereas v, following Folli and Harley (2002), assigns the roles of DO, AGENT OR CAUSE. Following the essence of the analysis of Ritter and Rosen (1998), VoiceP—their upper aspectual functional category—is “activated” only if the lower aspectual functional category—here, AspP—is active. What does it mean for AspP to be active? It means that its uninterpretable temporal feature must be valued as +telic, a function fulfilled in these constructions by SE or by the Kannada verbal reflexive morpheme. What the causal adjuncts modify is the subevent of INITIATE; hence these adjuncts are only licit when the relevant telicity-checking morpheme is present in the structure. However, v is never present in these ergative sentences, and so strictly agent-oriented adverbials will never be licensed.

Now if the upper Event Phrase is Voice Phrase, and if this projection is activated in telic ergative constructions, then presumably the temporal feature in this projection must also be checked. Hence it must be the case that the next step of the derivation of sentences with ergative SE, following (21), is (27):

\[
(27) \quad [\text{vecP} \quad \text{si} \quad [\text{aspP} \quad \text{la finestra} \quad [\text{asp'} \quad (\text{si}) \quad [\text{vp} \quad (\text{la finestra}) \quad \text{chudere} \ldots ]]]]
\]

Saltarelli (1994) shows that the synthetic passive in Latin, like SE, also appeared in ergative structures; thus in Latin the passive affix, as part of the verbal head, checks the temporal features in Asp and Voice.
The obvious question then is why the reflexive clitic SE, the verbal reflexive morpheme in Kannada, and the synthetic passive verbal affix in Latin should all be able to ‘ergativize’ a transitive accomplishment. I offer some speculations on this question in the last section.

4. Summary and ideas to explore

In (28) I summarize the essential points of the analysis offered here:

(28) a. Reflexive SE
- merges as Spec,Asp
- blocks a potential VP-internal object from agreeing with v
- receives temporal role directly in Spec,Asp
- agrees with antecedent DP in TP

b. Ergative/Inchoative SE
- merges as head of Asp
- introduces temporal role of CHANGE OF STATE
- VP-internal object links to CHANGE OF STATE in Spec-head relation in AspP
- in absence of vP and hence absence of external argument, SE licenses INITIATE temporal role in head of EP

As noted in footnote 4, si in Italian is systematically absent in complements to causative fare. For Folli (2002), this follows from her proposal that si is in v, on the assumption that fare when present is in v, taking a VP complement. This account, however, does not straightforwardly extend to either Spanish or French. There does seem to be some convergence on the idea that causative complements in Italian are essentially monoclausal, while they are either mono- or biclausal in, e.g., Spanish and French (see, for example, Zubizarreta, 1987).

I want to sketch briefly here one possible account of the presence vs. absence of SE in causative complements. Suppose that in Italian causative fare takes a complement which projects only as high as AspP, while in the other languages under consideration the causative complement may project at least as high as VoiceP. Now if SE remains as low as Asp, it can appear under a causative verb—but that is precisely what doesn’t occur, at least in Italian. If it is the case, however, that SE must raise to the head of VoiceP, as in the structure in (27), then SE (i.e., si) will not surface in Italian causative complements, but will surface, at least optionally, in the other languages, on the assumption that in these languages the complement is either AspP (i.e., the ‘monoclausal’ structure), or VoiceP.

This is related to the question raised at the end of the previous section, which might be couched as, Why SE? Note that the three cases that we have touched on—SE, the Kannada verbal reflexive morpheme, and the Latin synthetic passive—have two

10 Davies (1995) argues, based in part on the omission vs. appearance of se, that causative complements in Spanish and in Portuguese evolved from monoclausal to biclausal structures. However, even as early as the 13th century there are examples of overt se in causal complements in Spanish (Davies 2002).
properties in common: they attach (sooner or later in the derivation) to the verb, and they enter into an agreement relation with the surface subject. Now the subject (or its formal features) is ultimately in a checking relationship with Tense, which in turn is in some kind of relationship with the subevents of the verb—either as an existential quantifier or as a temporal anchor, depending on the particular analysis of Tense which one wishes to adopt. If we assume that all temporal roles (subevents) of a predicate must be linked to an argument (an idea already put forth in Pustejovsky, 1991), then these morphemes allow one DP argument to be linked to two subevents, while simultaneously linking them to the temporal anchor of the sentence. This role cannot be played by a complex anaphor such as English himself, because it is not a verbal affix, and because as a complex DP, it must have an independent thematic role as well as a temporal role. That, at any rate, is my speculation at this point. Exactly how to formalize this intuition remains a topic of this research project.

References


