Teasing Apart the Middle¹

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Abstract
Sentences with middle SE overlap with sentences with passive SE with respect to the presence of the reflexive clitic and agreement of the verb with the thematic object, but are clearly distinguishable from them on a number of syntactic and semantic tests, including aspectual properties and the surface structure position of the overt DP. I argue that these differences fall out from different derivational histories: SE in middle constructions merges as the head of light v while SE in passive constructions merges in the external argument position, Spec,v. I suggest that limitations on French se-moyen as an indefinite passive can be attributed to SE in that language bearing no phi-features at all, while in Spanish and Italian SE is phi-defective in bearing only [person].

0. Introduction
Among the many syntactic constructions with the reflexive clitic SE in Spanish are the middle SE construction and the passive SE construction, exemplified in (1) and (2) respectively. Both constructions are characterized by agreement of the verb with the thematic object, distinguishing them from impersonal SE (see (3)). Furthermore, in Spanish middle SE and passive SE are non-paradigmatic, that is, limited to the 3rd person, distinguishing them from another construction with SE in which the thematic object agrees with the verb, namely so-called inchoative or ergative SE, as in (4):

(1) Los pantalones de algodón no se planchan fácilmente.
‘Cotton pants don’t iron easily’
(2) Todavía no se han planchado los pantalones.
‘The pants have not been ironed yet’
(3) Aquí se plancha pantalones.
‘One irons pants here’
(4) a. Los cristales se rompieron (en la tormenta).
‘The windowpanes broke (in the storm)’
 b. (Yo) me desperté con el cantar de los pájaros.
‘I woke up with the singing of the birds’

The fact that the constructions exemplified in (1) through (4) overlap in some of their surface

¹ This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the 34th Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages (University of Utah, 2004), and portions of this analysis have also been presented at the University of Iowa Linguistics Colloquium. I owe thanks to comments and discussion from these audiences, as well as discussion with my colleagues Alice Davison and Roumyana Slabakova. As will become clear in the exposition, this article is quite comparativist in that it uses diagnostics from one language (English) to tease apart middle and passive SE constructions in two others (Spanish and French)—much in the spirit of Andolin Eguzkitza’s doctoral dissertation on Basque and Romance. Los compañeros de estudio te echamos mucho de menos.
properties leads to a great deal of confusion in the literature, both in traditional grammars and in generative analyses. In this article I will focus on examples such as (1) and (2) to argue that middle *SE* constructions have a very specific set of syntactic and structural diagnostics which distinguish them from passive *SE* constructions. The data is drawn primarily from Spanish; however, I also examine some examples of the *se-moyen* construction in French which do not appear to fall neatly in one or the other class. The paper is structured as follows. In section 1, I review the analytical framework within which the analysis of middle and passive constructions with *SE* to be proposed here is developed. In section 2 I review the empirical base of the paper, taking as my point of departure middle constructions in English. In section 3 the analysis for middle *SE* is presented, and finally in section 4 I contrast this analysis with the analysis of passive *SE*, and account for some of the particular properties of French *se-moyen*.

1. **SE as an aspectual element**

A well-known effect of the Romance reflexive clitic *SE* (Fr/Port/Sp *se*, It *si*) is its apparent reduction of the verb’s valency, even in sentences which are semantically reflexive, as in French/Italian *Marie se lave/Maria si lava*, generally glossed as ‘Maria washes herself’.\(^2\) Pre-Minimalist attempts at a unified analysis of *SE* attributed this either to *SE*’s absorbing some Case, usually accusative (Manzini 1986, Wehrli 1986, *inter alia*), or directly to *SE*’s absorbing some θ-role of the verb (Cinque 1988) or acting as an operator which binds argument variables (Zubizarreta 1987). More recent analyses have proposed that in such sentences the surface subject first merges into the canonical DO position, with *SE* either merged into subject position, Spec,vP (McGinnis 1998) or merged directly into the light v head itself (Folli 2002).

Another approach to capturing the syntactic effects of *SE* has been to focus on its effects not on argument structure per se but rather on event structure. For Folli (2002) *SE* as light v is aspectual in that light v introduces an aspectual role of DO or CAUSE, while Bruhn de Garavito (2002) proposes to derive the properties of passive and inchoative *SE* as a consequence of *SE* merging into an outer vs. an inner aspectual projection, respectively.

In recent work (Kempchinsky 2004) I have proposed an analysis of *SE* which attempts to capture the important insights of these previous approaches. The basic idea of this analysis is that

\(^2\) As shown by Kayne (1975) for French, these semantically reflexive predicates are syntactically intransitive, as evidenced by their behavior with causative *faire*. 
SE functions essentially as an aspectual element. In the pronoun inventory proposed by Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002), SE is a $\phi P$, and therefore may either be a predicate or an argument. Independently of this, it is syntactically a clitic, and as such is a minimal/maximal projection. When it merges as a maximal projection, it does so into Spec of an aspectual projection, where it may link to a temporal subevent of the main predicate. If instead it merges as a minimal projection, it merges as the head of an aspectual projection, where it may either introduce or suspend a temporal subevent. This approach is summarized in (5), yielding the overall schema shown in (6):

(5) **SE as aspectual element** (Kempchinsky 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SE as $X^{\text{max}}$</th>
<th>SE as argument = temporal argument of an aspectual head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE as $X^{\text{min}}$</td>
<td>SE as predicate = head of an aspectual projection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6)  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Spec} \\
\text{passive} \rightarrow SE \\
\text{middle} \rightarrow SE \\
\text{reflexive} \rightarrow SE \\
\text{inchoative} \rightarrow SE \\
\text{doubled reflexive} \rightarrow SE
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
vP \\
v' \\
v \\
AspP \\
Asp \\
VP \\
V \\
\ldots
\end{array}
\]

There are two important observations to make about the schema in (6). First of all, I do not mean to claim that there is some lexical element—SE—which is ambiguous, or, to put it in other terms, that there is one element called “passive SE” which is simply homophonous with another element “inchoative SE”, and so on. Rather, labels like “passive SE”, “inchoative SE” and the rest are simply a convenient way of referring to a particular syntactic configuration in which SE appears, the properties of which will fall out from the interaction of the structure with general principles of syntactic derivations. Secondly, instances of doubled SE in Spanish (*María se vio a*
si misma ‘Maria saw herself’) are, following Torrego (1995), structurally distinct from the other manifestations of SE in that they are DPs, headed by SE and including the double, and as such merge not into an aspectual projection but into a true argument position within VP.3

The analysis of SE sketched above is couched within a particular approach to the syntax of lexical aspect according to which the relationship between argument structure and aspectual structure is expressed via the linking of arguments of a predicate to temporal subevents of the predicate (Zagona 1999; Kempchinsky 2000). Concretely, on a Pustejovsian view of event structure, according to which a given predicate may have at most two subevents (Pustejovsky 1991), an internal argument DP will link to the final subevent (informally, TRANSITION) in Aspect Phrase, sandwiched between the two layers of the verbal phrase, while an external argument will link directly to the initiating subevent (informally, INITIATE) in Spec,vP (Kempchinsky 2004; Travis 2005).4 Predicates fall into one of the traditional aspectual classes (states, activities, accomplishments, achievements) according to the subevents contained in their lexical templates (cf. Rothstein 2004), but aspectual interpretation—in particular, telicity—is syntactically derived via the argument to temporal role linking. This aspectual framework is summarized in (7) and illustrated in (8) for a typical accomplishment predicate:5


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subevent</th>
<th>aspectual head</th>
<th>argument linking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1 = INITIATE</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>external argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2 = TRANSITION</td>
<td>Asp</td>
<td>internal argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Aspectual classes of verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>no subevents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>E1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHIEVEMENTS</td>
<td>E2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOMPLISHMENTS</td>
<td>E1, E2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Concretely, I assume that doubled SE constructions have the following structure, following proposals for clitic doubling structures in Uriagereka (1997):

(i) [XP (a) si [ se [ArgP [mismo[pro]] Agr [SCL tu [mismo[pro]]]]]]

There is more detailed discussion of how this manifestation of SE differs from the others in Kempchinsky (2004).

4 Travis labels light v a functor rather than functional category; it is a restricted but not closed class. Folli & Harley (2005) propose that light v is limited to three “flavors”: DO, BECOME or CAUSE; the aspectual characterization of a predicate is at least partially determined by the particular flavor of v.

5 Part of the derivation not shown in (8) is movement of the lexical V first to the Asp head and then to v, both as part of the usual step-by-step raising of V to T, and because the subevent is in fact an interpretable feature of the verb, to be checked against the corresponding feature in the aspectual heads Asp and v.
The partial schematic derivation in (8) shows the movement of the VP-internal object from Spec,VP to Spec,AspP, where it links to the <E2> subevent. In Kempchinsky (2004), I argued that reflexive SE (specifically, non-doubled reflexive SE, as in all cases in Italian and French and a certain subset of cases in Spanish) merges directly as Spec,Asp. The VP-internal object is therefore blocked both from linking to the subevent <E2> in AspP and from entering into an Agree relation with v for Case-checking. In contrast, inchoative SE merges as the head of Asp and introduces a temporal role of CHANGE OF STATE. The VP-internal argument then links to this change of state role via Spec-head agreement, thus accounting for the fact that constructions with inchoative SE are necessarily telic (cf. Folli 2002). However, the merging of SE into an aspectual head may also have the effect of suspending a temporal subevent, as we will see in section 3.

2. The properties of middles

As is well-known, middles in English have a number of distinguishing properties; these are listed in (9) and illustrated in (10) through (14):

(9) Properties of English middles
    (i) they are limited to accomplishment and activity predicates (10)
    (ii) the external argument is syntactically inactive (11)
    (iii) there generally must be an adverbial phrase or PP present which describes some property of the internal argument (12)
    (iv) they are semantically generic statives, expressing a generalization over some property of the DP, which is either definite or a kind-denoting indefinite (13)
    (v) they must appear with imperfective sentential aspect and as statives disallow the progressive (14)
(10) a. This shirt washes well. \textit{ACCOMPLISHMENT}
b. This car drives comfortably. \textit{ACTIVITY} (with potential endpoint)
   cf. Ann drove the car for three hours.
   Ann drove the car to Chicago in three hours.
c. * These reflectors see/notice easily. \textit{*ACCOMPLISHMENT}

(11) a. This shirt washes well (*to save hassles on laundry day)
b. This car drives smoothly (*with pleasure)

(12) a. * This shirt washes.
b. The shelf mounts on the wall.
c. The dress buttons (in front). \textit{(12b-c) from Fagan 1992}

(13) a. * A shelf mounts on the wall.
b. A shirt buttons easily/in front.

(14) a. Cotton shirts wash/used to wash/*washed easily.
b. * Cotton shirts are washing easily.

Now, clearly there are sentences in Romance with \textit{SE} which have all these properties.
Mendikoetxea (1999) gives the following as properties of middle \textit{SE} constructions in Spanish, illustrated with examples (16) through (20):\textsuperscript{6}

(15) \textbf{Properties of middle \textit{SE} constructions in Spanish (Mendikoetxea 1999)}
   (i) they are (primarily) accomplishment and activity predicates (16)
   (ii) the external argument is syntactically inactive (17)
   (iii) they are semantically generic statives with a topic-comment structure; the predicate expresses an inherent property of the DP (18)
   (iv) the DP is necessarily definite and preverbal, or if indefinite is interpreted as “representative of its class” (19)
   (vi) they must appear with imperfective sentential aspect (20)

(16) a. Esta camisa se lava muy bien con lejía. \textit{ACCOMPLISHMENT}
   ‘This shirt washes well with bleach’ \textsuperscript{(M p. 1641)}
b. Este coche se conduce con facilidad. \textit{ACTIVITY}
   ‘This car drives easily’
c. Las luces reflectantes se ven fácilmente. \textit{ACHIEVEMENT (?)}
   ‘Reflecting lights see easily’ \textsuperscript{(M p. 1641)}
d. La línea de meta se cruza fácilmente. \textit{ACHIEVEMENT}
   ‘The finish line is easily crossed’/* ‘The finish line crosses easily’

\textsuperscript{6} The examples in (16) through (20) which are directly taken from Mendikoetxea (op. cit.) are indicated with M and the page number.
e. La historia de España se sabe de memoria. (*middle) stative
   ‘The history of Spain is known by heart’
   *‘The history of Spain knows by heart’ (M p. 1656)

(17) a. Este libro se lee fácilmente (*para ayudar a los estudiantes)
   ‘This book reads easily (*in order to help the students)
   b. Este libro tiene que leerse fácilmente.
   ‘This book has to read easily’ (epistemic reading only)\(^7\)

(18) a. Este libro se vende bien (porque el tema es de gran interés, porque tiene una
tapa llamativa, etc.)
   ‘This book sells well (because the topic is very interesting, because it has an
attractive cover, etc.)’ (M p. 1641)
   b. Este libro se vende en todas las esquinas. (*middle)
   ‘This book is sold all over’ (M p. 1641)

(19) a. Los pantalones de algodón no se planchan fácilmente.
   ‘Cotton pants don’t iron easily’
   b. No se planchan (los) pantalones de algodón fácilmente. (*middle)
   ‘Cotton pants are not easily ironed’/*‘Cotton pants don’t iron easily’
   c. Una repisa se monta en la pared.
   ‘A (particular) shelf is (to be) mounted on the wall’
   *‘A shelf (in general) mounts on the wall’
   d. Una camisa se abotona por delante.
   ‘A shirt buttons in front’

(20) a. El Quijote se lee/leía fácilmente.
   ‘The Quijote reads/read (IMP) easily’
   b. El Quijote se leyó fácilmente. (*middle)
   ‘The Quijote was read easily/*read (PRET) easily’

Nevertheless, it is often the case in the literature on Romance middle constructions that
sentences without all of the characteristics listed in (15) are also grouped with middles,
particularly if they appear with imperfective sentential aspect. In part this is a matter of
overlapping terminology, as for example in discussions of se-moyen in French which, as noted
by Zubizarreta (1987), can denote an inherent property of the DP—i.e., are middles according to
the diagnostics of (15)—or can denote an event, as in the examples in (21) (op. cit., p. 150):

(21) a. Cette racine se mange pour maigrir.
   ‘This root is eaten in order to lose weight’

\(^7\) Not all speakers of Spanish accept the tener que + infinitive construction with an epistemic reading; for those speakers, a
sentence such as (17b) is ungrammatical.
Despite the eventive rather than property interpretation of examples such as (21), it is still the case that for most varieties of French *se-moyen* sentences cannot appear with perfective sentential aspect:

(22) a. Ces lunettes se nettoient facilement.  
   *These glasses clean easily/are easily cleaned*’

b. *Ces lunettes se sont nettoyées hier.  
   *These glasses were cleaned yesterday’  (Ruwet 1972)

Similarly, even those authors who are relatively strict in their characterization of middles argue that at least some achievement predicates in Romance (see (16c) above, from Mendikoetxea (1999)) can appear as middles.8 I will return to the analysis of French examples such as (21) and (22)—and also discuss briefly there the apparent “achievement middles”—in the last section of the paper. For now, I take the properties in (15) as diagnostics for middles, and on this basis will sketch out the analysis in the next section.

3. The analysis of middle SE

My point of departure for the analysis will be the aspectual properties of middles: their limitation to accomplishment/activity predicates, and their interpretation as statives. As noted above, accomplishments are characterized as having two subevents in their temporal structure, and activities which can appear as middles are those which may be type-shifted into accomplishments with the appropriate syntactic material, e.g. a goal PP. I will start with the second temporal role, the TRANSITION subevent.

As is well-known, in the Romance languages and in English, among many others, the DP which links to the TRANSITION subevent in Aspect Phrase must be of some definite quantity (e.g.,

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8 Mendikoetxea is somewhat inconsistent on this point. On the one hand, she explicitly gives (16c) as an example of a middle; on the other, she insists that middles are limited to predicates with agentive subjects, which is clearly not the case of *ver*, which has an experiencer subject. She also emphasizes property (15iii) as essential for identifying middles, and thus argues that while example (16c) is a middle, the very similar sentence *Las montañas se ven fácilmente* ‘The mountains see/are seen easily’ is a passive, because there is no predication of some inherent property of the DP *the mountains.*
Verkuyl’s (1972) notion of [+SQA], and many subsequent refinements). Since the internal DP argument of middles is always definite, then it should be possible for that DP to move through Spec, Asp on its way to Spec,T, and a telic reading should be obtained, as in the partial analysis sketched in (23):

\[
(23) \left[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} & \text{DP} & V+T & \cdots & \left[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{AspP} & \text{DP} & (V) & \cdots \\
\end{array} \right]
\end{array} \right]
\]

(23) corresponds, for example, to the derivation of a passivized accomplishment predicate (without all the relevant functional projections explicitly represented), e.g. *The pants were ironed in ten minutes*. In middles, however, the derivation in (23) must be blocked, and this, I claim, is the role played by the manner adverbial.

It has been independently claimed for constructions other than middles that manner adverbials have the effect of suspending the telicity of a telic predicate. Consider the example in (24) from Wickboldt (2000, p. 365)

\[
(24) \begin{align*}
\text{a. John died slowly. For hours he struggled for breath. } \\
\text{b. John died slowly. At the reading of the will, his children were furious. }
\end{align*}
\]

Because manner adverbials have scope over the process, not the transition or the culmination of the event (Pustejovsky 1991), the effect of the adverbial *slowly* in these examples is to focus on the process; hence the continuation in (24b) is infelicitous.\(^{10}\)

The question then becomes how exactly the manner adverbial achieves this effect, and here I draw on the analysis by Borer (2005) of the syntactic mechanisms at work in cases where the object DP is crucial for the aspectual calculus. Borer proposes that telicity results from the checking of a [quantity] feature in AspP. She gives various arguments to show that what makes an event telic—what endows an event with some endpoint—is that it can be quantified, and when a certain quantity is reached, the event is considered to be telic—even if, in fact, the event

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\(^{9}\) Note that this is true even when it is a goal PP which actually makes the predicate telic, as in *The children pushed carts to the store for hours/* in one hour.

\(^{10}\) Caudal (2005) notes of this example that while the adverb does indeed focus on the process rather than the result, the endpoint is in fact not defeasible, since the continuation *in fact, he didn’t die* is infelicitous. Significantly, *die* is an achievement, not an accomplishment, and thus lacks internal subparts (i.e., process). Caudal argues that the manner adverb here essentially has an aspectual coercion effect, turning a punctual event into a non-punctual one. Note, however, that with an accomplishment, the presence of a manner adverbial does make the endpoint defeasible:

\[(i) \text{ John wrote his dissertation slowly. In fact, he never finished it.}\]

continues. In languages in which the object must have quantity for a telic interpretation to be possible, it is the object itself which provides the quantity feature to Asp. Within the DP, quantity is represented by a Quantity Phrase, distinct from Classifier Phrase, which is where plurality is checked. Thus the object DPs in (25a) all have a quantity interpretation, while the bare plural in (25b) does not; the relevant structures are given in (26) and (27) (where \#P = Quantity Phrase and ClP = Classifier Phrase):

(26) a. El niño comió una manzana/dos manzanas/la mitad de una manzana en diez minutos.
   ‘The child ate an apple/two apples/half of an apple in ten minutes’

   b. El niño comió manzanas \#en diez minutos.
   ‘The child ate apples \#in ten minutes’

(27) a. [DP [\#P una [ClP manzana [NP manzana]]]]
   b. [DP [\#P dos [ClP manzanas [NP manzanas]]]]

(28) [DP [ClP manzanas [NP manzanas]]]

(29) shows how telicity is computed: The head Asp is interpreted as [+telic] because the \#P in the DP which moves to Spec,Asp endows Asp with a [quantity] feature:

(29) .... [vP v [AspP AdvP/PP [Asp′ Asp [VP DP V ...]]]]

What I propose for middles is that the manner adverbial rather than the DP is the category that raises to Spec,Asp. I assume that the manner adverbial merges as the lowest complement in VP (cf. Larson 1988, Stroik 1992), making it equidistant from Spec,Asp with the DP argument. It may then move to Spec,Asp, yielding the structure in (30):


An AdvP/PP does not bear a [quantity] feature, hence no telic reading results. The DP has no reason to move through Spec,Asp on its way to Spec,T, since there is no Case feature to check in Asp, and so can move legitimately past the AdvP or PP sitting there.

Now if the story were to end here, then middles should have an activity, not a stative reading. To turn an accomplishment into a stative, it is not sufficient to suspend the endpoint; the beginning point must also be suspended, and in Romance middle constructions this is the role of \$E. As can be seen in (30), \$E merges as the head of vP; that is, it takes the place of what
otherwise would be a light v DO or CAUSE. Thus no INITIATE subevent is introduced into the structure. In addition, there is no accusative Case feature to be checked, since this feature, I assume, is checked by the light v. Thus no external argument can merge with v and hence there is no Spec,v position. If there were an external argument, it would raise to Spec,T to check T’s uninterpretable phi-features and nominative Case, leaving the internal DP with no way to check and delete its uninterpretable Case feature.

By the logic of this account, there is a clear aspectual reason for the lack of middles based on achievement predicates. Even transitive achievements (discover a penny, recognize her face), which presumably appear in a structure with light v for syntactic reasons, lack an INITIATE subevent. A stative predicate, although it lacks subevents, does have duration. In contrast, an achievement predicate, inherently specified for only the TRANSITION subevent, is punctual.\(^{11}\) If this subevent is not legitimately linked to an argument, then there is no event structure at all.

The fact that only one argument of the predicate can be syntactically projected in middle constructions has direct consequences for their semantic interpretation. As we have noted, middles are generic characterizing sentences. As such, they require the presence of a Gen (generic) operator in their semantic representation. Gen is a dyadic operator which relates the semantic constituents of a characterizing sentence to each other (Krifka et al. 1995). Although middles are semantically two-place predicates, the syntactically suppressed external argument is in fact not accessible to the generic operator. Thus the relation between the overt DP and the implicit argument is constant. Of the two potential interpretations of (31), only (31a) is possible:

(31) Este libro se lee fácilmente.
   a.  Gn [x:] (x=this book; \(\exists y \ [y = \text{human} \& y \text{ read} x \text{ easily}])
       = For this book it holds: Anyone can read it easily.
   b.  *Gn [y:] (y = arb; \(\exists x \ [x = \text{this book} \& y \text{ read} x \text{ easily}])
       = For anyone it holds: S/he reads this book easily.

The unavailability of (31b) shows that the implicit external argument of the predicate cannot be in the restrictor of the Gen operator. This follows from the fact that the external argument is not syntactically present; at the CI interface it is only available as part of the predicate, and hence as part of the matrix of the semantic representation, as in (31a). Since only the overt DP is available

\(^{11}\) Hence, the incompatibility of achievement predicates in the simple present, ruled out by Giorgi & Pianesi’s (1997) Punctuality Constraint.
to be in the restrictor of the Gen operator, it is necessarily interpreted as a topic. Thus the fact that this DP must be preverbal in Spanish, as noted above, follows straightforwardly, on the assumption that [+Topic] is a syncretic feature with T in Spanish (Zubizarreta 1998, inter alia). As a preverbal DP, it cannot be a bare N; as a DP in the scope of the Gen operator, it cannot be indefinite unless the sentence states a property which is true of all of the objects denoted by the noun.

(32) shows the full derivation of a sentence with middle SE in Spanish. Presumably in languages in which T is not syncretic with a Topic head, the DP will continue to raise out of TP to Spec of a Topic Phrase in the left periphery.

(32) \[
[TP] \quad \text{DP} \quad [T \quad \text{SE} + V] \quad [S_{\text{Asp}} \quad [S_{\text{Asp}} \quad \text{V}]] \quad [vP] \quad \text{DP} \quad \text{SE} \quad [[\text{AspP} \quad \text{AdvP/PP} \quad \text{Asp} \quad [\text{Asp} \quad \text{V}]]]]
\]

Because Asp is not a Case-checking head, the movement of the AdvP/PP to Spec,Asp does not block the internal argument DP within the VP from moving to Spec of a higher Case-checking head, i.e. T in (33), for Case checking purposes. Movement of the DP to Spec,v for purposes of getting to the edge of the phase will also not be blocked.

Let us turn now briefly to the characterization of passive SE sentences, and in particular to the analysis of ‘eventive’ se-moyen in French.

4. Passive SE and the internal structure of SE

As can be observed in the schema in (6), I assume that SE in passive SE sentences—for example, all of the examples in (16) through (20) which are not middles—merges as the external argument in Spec, v. Here I am essentially adopting the analysis of Raposo & Uriagereka (1996). They argue that SE carries a defective set of $\phi$-features—an issue to which I will return directly—and a null Case feature. Consider the partial derivation in (33), with the internal argument DP having moved to Spec,Asp to link to the subevent there and the lexical verb having raised to v; in conjunction with their working assumptions on Case checking, given in (34):

(33) \[
[TP] \quad \text{T} \quad [vP] \quad \text{SE} \quad [V + V] \quad [\text{AspP} \quad \text{DP} \quad [\text{Asp} \quad \text{V}]] \quad [\text{VP} \quad \text{DP} \quad \text{V}]]]]
\]

[u$\phi$] \quad [\phi_{\text{def,Case}}] \quad [\phi_{\text{Case}}]
(34) **Assumptions on Case-checking** (Raposo & Uriagereka 1996)

(i) Uninterpretable $\phi$-features and Case features are a set and must be checked in a single checking relation: the feature set of \(v\) is \([\phi\text{-features, assign-acc-Case}]\); the feature set of \(T\) is \([\phi\text{-features, assign-nom-Case}]\).

(ii) In a nominative-accusative language, the Case feature which must be assigned (checked) is [nom].

In (33) \(T\) must value and delete its set of uninterpretable $\phi$-features, and \(SE\) cannot perform this function, because its set of $\phi$-features is defective. However, although defective, \(SE\) blocks the internal argument DP from entering into an Agree relationship with \(T\).

To solve this impasse, Raposo & Uriagereka propose that \(T\) may optionally enter the numeration with a null rather than nominative Case feature; this null Case may be checked against an element with a defective set of $\phi$-features. But by assumption (34(ii)), nominative Case must be checked somewhere. They propose that in the Romance languages with fully productive indefinite \(SE\), the feature set of \([u\phi\text{-features, Nom}]\) is optionally realized on a functional projection FP above \(T\), as shown in (35):

(35) \[
[FP\quad F\quad [TP\quad T\quad \{v_P\quad SE\quad [v\quad V+V\quad [Asp_P\quad DP\quad [Asp\quad \ldots]\}]]]
\]

\[
[u\phi,\text{ NOM}]\quad \{\text{NULL}\}\quad [\phi_{\text{def,Case}}]\quad [\phi,\text{Case}]
\]

The only way for a derivation with indefinite \(SE\) in Spec, \(v\) to converge is for the language to have the option of optionally realizing the set \([\phi\text{-features, nom Case}]\) on the upper F head. The $\phi$-defective \(SE\) checks null Case against \(T\) and is then inactive, allowing the DP within VP to enter into an Agree relation with the upper F head.

Now, Raposo & Uriagereka suggest that it is the presence of a syntactically active F projection that makes null subjects possible; correspondingly, they argue that French lacks passive (in their terms, indefinite) \(SE\) precisely because it lacks this F projection. Nevertheless, as we saw briefly in section 2, there are examples of French *se-moyen* sentences which do not show the core characteristics of true middles; the relevant examples are repeated in (36):

(36) a. Cette racine se mange pour maigrir.
   *This root is eaten in order to lose weight*

b. Ce roman se lira bientôt à Moscu.
   *This novel will be read soon in Moscow*
c. La question est en train de se discuter dans la salle du conseil.

‘The issue is being discussed at the council hall’

Authier and Reed (1996) argue that in Canadian French there are examples of *se-moyen* which even allow phrases with *par*; in addition, there are sentences with *se-moyen* in this variety which are fully possible in the perfective, as long as the *par* phrase is also present:

(37) a. Ce costume traditionnel se porte surtout par les femmes.

‘That traditional dress is worn especially by women’

b. Hier, des rubans noirs se sont portés *(par les étudiants).*

‘Yesterday, black ribbons were worn by the students’ (Authier & Reed 1996, p. 4)

Let us look more closely at the nature of *SE*. Although everyone agrees that this element is phi-defective in some way, there is disagreement on the nature of the defect. I have argued (Kempchinsky 2004), following Kayne (2000), that *SE* bears only a [person] feature—specifically, 3rd person, and I have speculated that this may be the universal characterization of phi-defective elements. Now when *SE* merges as a head, it necessarily cannot have any internal structure, while *SE* as an argument and hence a maximal projection can have internal structure. This will yield the two structures in (38):

(38) a. *SE* as head

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[φ \textit{SE}]} \\
\text{[3person]}
\end{array}
\]

b. *SE* as maximal projection

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{φP} \\
\text{φ} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{SE} \\
\text{[3person]} \\
\text{[pro]}
\end{array}
\]

(38a) is the structure of *SE* in the head of vP in, for example, a middle *SE* sentence in Spanish, while (38b) is the structure of *SE* in Spec,v in an indefinite or passive *SE* sentence.

However, I want to suggest that the structure of *SE* in French *se-moyen* is slightly different, in that this manifestation of *SE* is completely φ-defective, lacking even a value for [person]. Note that in Spanish and Italian, for example, middle *SE* sentences are non-paradigmatic—they may only be in the third person. In French, strikingly, this is not the case, according to data presented by Authier & Reed, among others:
(39) a. On dit que je me lis bien.  (example attributed to R. Kayne)
   ‘They say that I read well’
   = They say that I am easy to read
b. * Dicen que me leo bien.
c. * Dicono che mi leggo bene.

(40) a. Tu te pilotes bien, ma vielle.
   ‘You drive well, my dear’  (said in speaking to a car)
b. * Tú te conduces bien, cariño.
c. * Tu ti guidi bene, vecchia mia.

Let us suppose that SE in French se-moyen has thus become completely stripped of person features. In the middle sentences above, it acquires a person value via agreement with the DP, once the DP has raised to Spec,T and SE has cliticized on to the verb.¹²

Consider then the derivation of an eventive se-moyen sentence such as (36a). There is no manner adverbial, and the DP cette racine contains a #P, which therefore endows the head of Asp with the necessary quantity feature for a telic reading (the sentence is in the present, and therefore not bounded, but we must distinguish boundedness from telicity). The endpoint of the accomplishment predicate is thus linked to an argument of the predicate. Because the predicate is eventive, the initial subevent must also be linked—manger is an accomplishment, not an achievement—so SE cannot suspend E₁ in the head of v. Thus, the structure of (36a) will look something like (41):

12 Note that by the logic of this account, if the presence of a [3person] feature in SE for, e.g., Spanish middle and passive se, is what entails that in such constructions SE is not paradigmatic, then in constructions in which SE is fully paradigmatic, as is the case for inchoative and reflexive SE, the reflexive clitic must merge with an unspecified person feature which then acquires a value via agreement with the DP. Alternatively, only SE which merges as the head of v—i.e., middle SE—has its person feature fully specified.
In contrast with $SE$ in (38b), $SE$ in (41) lacks $\phi$-features entirely. I assume that it therefore also lacks a Case feature, even null Case. Hence it does not block the internal DP from entering into an Agree relationship with T, and from raising to Spec,T to satisfy the EPP feature of T.

However, lacking any features, $SE$ also cannot identify [pro] within the $\phi$P in any way. I propose that in French, the empty element within the complement of the $SE$ $\phi$P is akin to an open variable with a human feature, following Rivero & Sheppard (2003). In their analysis of $SE$ in Slavic, they propose that $SE$ semantically is composed of an existential quantifier and a human variable. Now recall that for most varieties of French eventive sentences with $SE$ are not possible in perfective tenses, as shown in (22). Bonomi (1997) proposes that in imperfective sentences, there is a covert operator, which may be interpreted as either habitual or generic. Thus we can suppose that the open variable in $SE$ is identified by virtue of being in the scope of this covert operator. In a perfective sentence, however, this operator will be absent, and hence French lacks what we could call ‘truly passive’ $SE$ constructions. In Canadian French, the actual external argument is the par-phrase itself which must be present when se-moyen sentences appear in the perfective in this dialect.

Finally, note that indefinite (i.e., passive) $SE$ in Spanish, in the scope of a covert generic operator, can also have an interpretation which will be truth-conditionally indistinguishable from a true arbitrary interpretation (and see Rivero & Sheppard (2003) for extensive discussion of related facts in Slavic). Thus, I would argue that apparent “achievement middles” such as example (16c) in section 2 are really instances of passive $SE$ (and somewhat similarly, following the discussion immediately above, for such examples in French). As Mendikoetxea (1999) notes, when sentences with passive $SE$ appear with imperfective sentential aspect, the middle reading and the passive reading are easily confused (“el significado medio y el pasivo a menudo se confunden”, op. cit. p. 1655). It is telling that not only are such middles impossible in English, a language in which middle formation has no overt morphological marking, but also in German, where middle formation requires the presence of the simplex reflexive sich:

(42) *Diese Krankheit erkennt sich nicht leicht.
    ‘This disease doesn’t recognize easily’ (Fagan 1992, p. 85)

Because there is no construction in German akin to the Romance passive $SE$ which is based on
the simplex reflexive *sich* (to my knowledge), the only way to analyze a sentence such as (42) is with *sich* as the head of vP. However, since achievement predicates lack an initiating subevent, there is in essence no temporal role absorbed or suspended by *sich* in this example, and thus *sich* is an uninterpretable element in the sentence, which ultimately violates Full Interpretation.

I will conclude by briefly comparing the analysis presented here with another recent analysis of middle and passive *SE* constructions, that of Dobrovie-Sorin (2005). She argues that the middle vs. passive interpretation is a function of the spell-out position of the internal argument DP: If it is in the preverbal subject position, then it is interpreted as a topic and the middle interpretation is obtained. If, on the other hand, it is found in postverbal position, then an eventive reading is yielded and *SE* is thus interpreted as passive. In this case, preverbal position, that is, Spec,T, is assumed to be occupied by an expletive, which will necessarily be overt in French and covert in the Romance null-subject languages. The correlation between the surface position of the DP argument and the eventive interpretation is derived from a proposed condition on interpretation according to which a syntactically active implicit agent can be present at LF only if clausal subject position (Spec,T) is semantically empty, where by “semantically empty” she means not filled by a referential DP. Since in middle *SE* sentences the subject is in clausal subject position, there is no possibility of a syntactically active implicit agent at LF, and only the property but not the eventive reading will be possible. This entails, of course, that in an eventive passive *SE* sentence with a preverbal DP argument, that DP must be in a topic or focus position, as originally argued by Raposo & Uriagerea (1996).

In this respect, Dobrovie-Sorin’s analysis reaches the same conclusions as the analysis presented here, at least with respect to the structural position of the internal argument DP and the interpretive differences between middle *SE* and passive *SE* sentences. What is not clear from her analysis is exactly what role the element *SE* plays itself in deriving these different structures. Dobrovie-Sorin argues against accounts of *SE* which must attribute some “lexical ambiguity” to this element. I have argued that the differing constructions in which *SE* appears are to be seen more properly as an effect of the different aspeсtual positions into which it may merge, in its syntactic guise as a minimal/maximal projection and its semantic guise, as a φP, as both a predicate and an argument. Sentences with middle *SE* and passive *SE* are alike in that *SE* has some relation to the external argument of the verb. For the middle *SE* construction, *SE* merges as
the head of v, absorbing the temporal role assigned by that head, and thus, effectively, suspends—in the terminology, for example, of Cinque (1988)—the external argument. In the passive construction, SE is the external argument, linking directly to the relevant subevent in its initial merge position in Spec,v. The distinguishing semantic and syntactic properties of the two constructions fall out from this basic difference in where SE merges in the derivation.

References