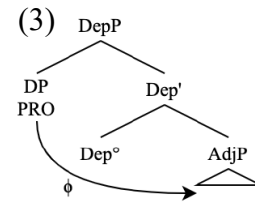


## Two Is Better Than One: A Number Mismatch with Deficient Implicit Arguments

**1. Introduction:** Spanish has a third person plural arbitrary subject with an arbitrary/existential interpretation, which is always null (2). The referent of arbitrary *pro* here must be animate and human, but not plural (Jaeggli 1986). (1) and (2) have the same interpretation, except the implicit agent in (1) can be inanimate, and *pro* in (2) excludes the speaker and the addressee as the agent.

- (1) La ciudad fue destruida  
the city was destroyed  
'The city was destroyed'
- (2) *pro* destruyeron la ciudad  
*pro* destroyed-3.pl the city  
'The city was destroyed'

This *pro* can be modified by a secondary depictive predicate adjective, which is merged as an adjunct in Spec,vP. The agreement on the adjective comes from an OC PRO in the specifier of the depictive phrase (Pylkkänen 2008), whose structure is shown in (3).



**2. Multiple Subject Positions:** When a secondary predicate appears in a sentence with 3<sup>rd</sup> plural arbitrary *pro*, a number mismatch occurs with the verb and secondary predicate.

- (4) (No sé quien es el autor, pero) *pro* escribieron la carta borracho  
(no know-1.sg who is the author, but) *pro* wrote-3.pl the letter drunk-m.sg  
'(I don't know who the author is, but) They wrote the letter drunk'

Data from native speakers and from Google show that this mismatched agreement pattern – singular secondary predicate morphology and plural verbal morphology – is obligatory with this arbitrary subject. Conversely, a sentence whose verb cannot license the plural arbitrary subject, such as unaccusatives (Jaeggli 1986), must show matched number agreement.

- (5) *pro* llegan cansado\*(s) después de un viaje tan largo  
*pro* arrive-3.pl tired-m.pl after of a trip so long  
'They arrive tired after such a long trip'

The two different agreement patterns in (4) is evidence that distinct elements are agreeing in their phi-features with the verb and the secondary predicate. I propose that a feature-deficient implicit argument is externally merged in Spec,vP, which gives the secondary predicate masculine singular phi-features. The number mismatch in (4) is not the only reason to posit multiple subjects, however. I discuss the EPP, the nature of implicit arguments, and the Case assignment as further evidence for multiple subjects in this construction.

**3. The EPP:** Much has been written about the status of the EPP in Spanish (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, Goodall 2001, Kučerová 2014). Sufficient evidence suggests that Spanish has an active EPP feature. As evidence I give the contrast in (6) and (7) that exists in some varieties of Spanish. I claim that the optionality of singular vs. plural agreement follows from the existence of a null expletive in Spec,TP, so the verb can show singular agreement with the expletive or plural agreement with the postverbal subject. I compare this to the same optionality of agreement in many varieties of English (8-9), which always involve an overt expletive. Note that, with preverbal plural subjects, the agreement in both languages must be plural (10-11).

- (6) *pro<sub>expl</sub>* llegaron las niñas  
*pro<sub>expl</sub>* arrived-3.pl the girls  
'There arrived the girls'
- (7) *pro<sub>expl</sub>* llegó las niñas  
*pro<sub>expl</sub>* arrived-3.sg the girls  
'There arrived the girls'
- (8) There were no problems here
- (9) There was no problems here
- (10) Las niñas (llegaron/ \*llegó)  
the girls (arrived-3.pl/\*arrived-3.sg)  
'The girls arrived'
- (11) a. Problems are (uncommon) here  
b. \*Problems is (uncommon) here

These data show that Spec,TP is an available landing site for external and internal merge in Spanish, which is relevant as I analyze this construction as having a null DP in this position.

**4. Implicit Arguments:** Subject-oriented secondary depictive predicates are externally merged as adjuncts within vP and controlled by the nearest c-commanding DP, so the element from which the depictive predicate gets singular number would have to be in Spec,vP. If this DP was specified for phi-features, however, nothing would stop it from entering into an Agree relation with the verb. For this reason, and for the reason that masculine singular inflection is the morphological default, it makes sense to reason that the DP in Spec,vP is deficient for all phi-features, which causes masculine singular inflection on the secondary predicate. Collins (2021) describes an existential implicit argument UN (12) which matches the description of the element in Spec,vP of this construction. For Collins, UN appears as the external argument of short passives like (1), which has a similar interpretation to this construction (see (1) and (2)).

(12) Existential Implicit Argument UN:

- a. UN is a DP
- b. Phi-features: none

Since UN cannot enter into an Agree relation with the verb, the derivation would fail if it moved into Spec,TP to satisfy the EPP. Instead, a DP that is specified for phi-features is externally merged in Spec,TP to satisfy the EPP and in this case to agree with the verb. This has plural phi-features. I call this *pro<sub>arb</sub>*. The following table gives the properties of these two subjects *pro<sub>arb</sub>* and UN in this construction.

(13)

	Merged in	Phi-features	Inflection	Theta role	Case
<i>pro<sub>arb</sub></i>	Spec,TP	3 <sup>rd</sup> , plural	Verb	None	Nom
UN	Spec,vP	None	2ndary pred	Agent	None

**5. Case:** Collins (2021) states that UN does not receive Case. The Inverse Case Filter states that every head that is able to assign Case must do so. If UN doesn't receive Case, a second DP must be inserted in Spec,TP since T needs to assign Case. I claim that UN's feature deficiency is what makes it unable to receive Case and to enter in an Agree relation with the verb.

**6. Derivation:** I now return in (14) to the full derivation of the sentence in (4), in which UN is externally merged in Spec,vP which controls PRO of the DepP and causes it to show masculine singular default inflection. The deficiency of this DP makes it unable to enter in an Agree relation with the verb and to receive Case. To satisfy the EPP feature on T, *pro<sub>arb</sub>* with plural phi-features is merged in Spec,TP. This DP is specified for phi-features, so it enters into an Agree relation with the verb and received nominative Case.

**7. Conclusion:** The derivation of this

construction has very interesting implications for the nature of the EPP in null subject languages like Spanish. This data can only be made sense of if there is a *pro* with plural phi-features that checks an EPP feature on T. Additionally, it sheds light on the distribution of implicit arguments cross-linguistically, as this mismatch is notably not observed in other varieties of Romance.

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