

ABSTRACT

MOVING PLURAL INFLECTIONS IN SPANISH  
 Jim Harris

Morphological plurality in Spanish is regularly expressed by the three phonological exponents shown in (1):

- (1) a. -∅ se  
 b. -s N, A, Det, etc. (default)  
 c. -n finite V

Examples are shown in (2):<sup>1</sup>

- (2)  
 a. *se* -∅  
 (i) La ensalada<sub>i</sub>, *sírve*+*se*<sub>j</sub>+*la*<sub>i</sub> a los niños<sub>j</sub> `The salad<sub>i</sub>, serve it<sub>i</sub> to  
 (ii) La ensalada<sub>i</sub>, *sírve*+*se*<sub>j</sub>+*la*s<sub>i</sub> a los niños<sub>j</sub> the kids<sub>j</sub>'  
 b. *pronominal clitic* -s  
 (i) *Sírve*+*nos*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*<sub>j</sub> `Serve it<sub>j</sub> to us<sub>i</sub>'  
 (ii) *Sírve*+*no*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*s<sub>j</sub> "  
 c. *verb* -n  
 (i) *Dén*+*me*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*<sub>j</sub> `Give it<sub>j</sub> to me<sub>i</sub>'  
 (ii) *Dé*∅+*men*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*<sub>j</sub> "  
 (iii) *Dén*+*men*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*<sub>j</sub> "  
       *Dén*+*me*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*n<sub>j</sub> "  
       *Dén*+*men*<sub>i</sub>+*lo*n<sub>j</sub> "

In all the (i) cases, the plural inflections appear where expected: zero on the semantically plural clitic *se*, -s on its plural clitic host *nos* 'us' (dative), and -n on its plural verb host *dén*. In the (ii) cases these inflections appear instead on the following clitics *las*, *los*, *men*, and *lon*, all of which are semantically and syntactically singular. *Men* and *lon* are additionally anomalous in that their inflection is verbal-n rather than the default -s expected on pronominal clitics.<sup>2</sup>

A good bit of this material has been studied before (e.g. Bonet 1991; Harris 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998a; Minkoff 1994). I am returning to it because I have new data and new descriptive and theoretical proposals.

Embick & Noyer's 2001 article "Movement Operations after Syntax" in *Linguistic Inquiry* (E&N), which investigates morphological movement, explains interesting properties of the (ii) cases but has nothing to say about the (iii) cases, which involve some kind of copying rather than movement. The latter cases are especially interesting in that (a) some dialects allow both (ii) and (iii) while other dialects allow either one but not both, (b) some dialects allow all of the configurations in (iii) while others allow only particular subsets, and (c) some subsets of the forms in (iii) are unattested in any dialect. I propose simple copying and rebracketing operations that generate all

---

<sup>1</sup>The little + symbols, not used in real spelling, indicate cliticization.

<sup>2</sup>The (i) cases are used by most speakers of prestige dialects. The (ii) cases, however, are well documented in both Spain and Latin America, not to mention dialects of contemporary Ladino (diaspora Judeo-Spanish).

and only the attested forms and all and only the attested dialects.

There are additional data, however, which I can (and do) identify but have not elicited and which might require reconsideration of the data presently at hand and also revision or outright rejection of the proposals advanced so far. The question of how to reconcile analyses of the (ii) and (iii) sets of forms, which some speakers use as seemingly random options, is especially compelling.

In short, this talk constitutes an emphatic invitation for others to continue the work for which this presentation provides what I hope is a tantalizing introduction.