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Henriques Pestana, Yoselin

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-225744>

Book Section

Published Version



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Originally published at:

Henriques Pestana, Yoselin (2022). Personal uses of impersonalizing strategies: Hybrid constructions with a gente and se in rural Madeiran Portuguese Varieties. In: Posio, Pekka; Herbeck, Peter. Referring to discourse participants in Ibero-Romance languages. Berlin: Language Science Press, 149-176.

Chapter 6

Personal uses of impersonalizing strategies: Hybrid constructions with *a gente* and *se* in rural Madeiran Portuguese varieties

Yoselin Henriques Pestana

Universität Zürich

The varieties of Portuguese spoken in Madeira present a predominant use of *a gente*, a grammaticalized first person plural pronoun, derived from the noun phrase ‘the people’, instead of the traditional pronoun *nós*. They also exhibit constructions where *a gente* cooccurs with the impersonal clitic *se*. In a pioneering study, Martins (2009) provides a detailed description of what she calls “double subject impersonal constructions” and proposes that *a gente* restricts the generic interpretation of the clitic *se*. Based on spoken data from semi-directed interviews and free-speech conversations with elderly speakers of rural Madeiran Portuguese, this chapter provides a quantitative and qualitative approach to the $[(a\ gente) + se]$ construction. The goal of this study is twofold. First, a depiction of the broad referential range of this hybrid structure is presented. Its possible interpretations cover a scope similar to that of first person plural pronouns reaching from indefinite readings to deictic ones (referring to participants of the speech act). Second, a description of the syntactic features of this innovative construction will show that the element *se* is being reanalyzed as a dependent person marker in rural Madeiran Portuguese varieties.

1 Introduction

In some Portuguese varieties, the traditional first person plural (henceforth 1PL) pronoun *nós*, illustrated in example (1), coexists with a newer 1PL pronoun *a gente*, as shown in example (2). The latter originates from a noun phrase consisting of



the definite feminine article *a* ('the') and the generic noun *gente* ('people'). By losing its nominal properties, this noun phrase gave rise to an indefinite pronoun *a gente* displaying generic readings (Lopes 2007, 2003, 1999, de Omena 2003, among others). This grammaticalization process first resulted in a referential shift from speaker-exclusive readings to speaker-inclusive ones. From the 19th century onward, *a gente* became a new 1PL pronoun with specific interpretation and has even replaced the pronoun *nós* in some Portuguese varieties. The nominal origin and gradual grammaticalization of *a gente* led to a mismatch between its semantic and syntactic properties resulting in mixed agreement patterns (cf. §3).¹

- (1) Nós, nessa altura, não tínhamos luz.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL in-that time NEG have-IPFV.1PL electricity
 'Back then, we did not have electricity.'
- (2) Sabe onde é que a gente vai dar com ele?
 know.PRS.3SG where is that PRON.SBJ.1PL go.PRS.3SG give-INF with him
 'Do you know where we find him?'

In rural Madeiran Portuguese (hereafter MP) varieties, the 1PL pronoun *a gente* seems to have largely replaced the canonical *nós*. However, there is another variant to these pronominal 1PL expressions illustrated in (3). In these constructions, the 1PL pronoun *a gente* cooccurs with what seems to be an impersonal *se* (henceforth *se-IMP*²), found in most Romance languages.

- (3) A gente contava-se os dias [...]
 PRON.SBJ.1PL count-IPFV.3SG=SE the days
 'We counted the days [...]

The element *se* appears cliticized to the verb, whereas *a gente* is identifiable as the subject. I will call it "hybrid construction" due to its nature of combining a personal pronoun with an impersonal marker. The qualitative analysis shows that these constructions present a referential scope reaching from indefinite to deictic readings which is thus congruous with the range of interpretations of the other 1PL pronouns *nós* and *a gente* available in the varieties under study.³

¹The glossing of the language examples follows the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

²The label *se-IMP* is used in this chapter as an umbrella term for impersonal and passive *se* constructions. Note that all examples found in the corpus are instances of non-agreeing and thus impersonal *se* constructions.

³The fact that the pronoun *a gente* is still frowned upon in the context of school education contributes to the existence of discrepancies on the stylistic level. Thus, the pronoun *nós* is

So far, very little attention has been paid to these constructions, except for the research by Martins (2003, 2005, 2009). Based on the assumption that the two elements share subject features, the author refers to them as “impersonal subject doubling constructions” (Martins 2009). However, the data analyzed in the present study bring to fore other aspects of the referential properties of these constructions. Thus, they provide evidence that these constructions may display interpretations that go far beyond the speaker-inclusive impersonality thoroughly described in Martins (2009), as illustrated in the example (4).

- (4) Amanhã a gente vai-se limpar o escritório.
 Tomorrow PRON.SBJ.1PL go-PRS.3SG=SE clean-INF the office
 ‘Tomorrow, we will clean the office.’

In light of these new insights, this chapter aims to review the referential and syntactic properties of the hybrid construction. Its particular properties are derived under the hypothesis that *se* might be reanalyzed as a person-marking item associated with the 1PL pronoun *a gente* in rural MP varieties.

The present study is structured as follows: §2 describes the data under survey. §3 presents a brief overview of the variation of 1PL pronominal subject expressions in Portuguese varieties. §4 describes the referential range of the construction under focus and its constituting elements in Portuguese. §5 analyzes some of the syntactic features the hybrid construction [(*a gente*)+*se*] displays. Lastly, §6 provides some conclusions along with observations for future research.

2 Data and methodology

Portuguese dialectology grapples with a scarcity of corpora and data that impedes a detailed and thorough analysis of the numerous morphosyntactic phenomena still little-known to linguists. So far, dialectal studies on Madeiran varieties have used either the dialectal corpus *CORDIAL-SIN* (e.g., Martins 2021, among others) or the *Corpus de Concordância* (e.g., Bazenga 2019, 2015) as their primary data sources. However, apart from presenting only few excerpts of spontaneous speech of the dialect under analysis, the *CORDIAL-SIN* raises other problems, such as the communicative asymmetry between interviewer – a speaker of the standard Portuguese variety – and a local informant, which results in

perceived as corresponding to more formal contexts by speakers with higher educational levels. A similar tendency is found in French in the use of *nous* as opposed to the newer 1PL pronoun *on* (Coveney 2000). Future research on MP based on corpora displaying different degrees of formality will allow to confirm or rule out this trend.

auto-correction and neutralization of certain phenomena. Furthermore, the thematic domains addressed in the spontaneous and semi-directed speech samples of the available corpora – i.e., local traditions and customs – do not enable a broad referential scope such as the one displayed by the hybrid construction under discussion. Therefore, we compiled a corpus composed of two sub-samples – semi-directed sociolinguistic interviews and free conversation samples – to tackle these shortcomings.⁴

The sociolinguistic profiles of the speakers chosen as informants roughly meet the standards introduced by Chambers & Trudgill (1980), also known by the acronym NORM (“non-mobile, older, rural, males”), except for their gender.⁵ The informants have a low level of education ranging from zero to four years of primary school and represent an age scale ranging from 54 to 84.

Part of the data stems from 13 semi-directed interviews in different rural sites across Madeira Island.⁶ To increase the occurrence of constructions displaying the broadest possible referential range, our data include classic dialectological interview questions and questions concerning the social environment and private lives of the informants. The latter category proved to be crucial for triggering more specific uses of the hybrid construction under analysis. Furthermore, although most of the interviews were conducted with one interviewer and one informant, the inclusion of several participants produced occurrences of completely deictic expressions, i.e., constructions that refer exclusively to the speech-act participants.

⁴The corpus analyzed in this study is, in comparison to the available corpora, in many respects broader in coverage. Firstly, it includes speech samples from different rural sites of Madeira Island, whereas the *Corpus the Concordância* focuses exclusively on the variety spoken in the capital city of the island, Funchal. The *CORDIAL-SIN* includes data from four localities, two of which are situated on the archipelago’s main island: Câmara de Lobos and Caniçal. Secondly, the sub-sample of semi-directed interviews contains, in addition to questions used in classic dialectological interviews, topics which allude to the personal and family lives of the informants. The inclusion of such topics enables the mention of more delimited groups. Thirdly, the sub-sample of free conversations between family members, neighbors or friends not only promotes the occurrence of 1PL expressions with deictic interpretations, but also presents a highly natural communicative environment. Moreover, the fact that the interviewer is perceived by the informants as a member of their speech community, also contributes to counteracting the asymmetrical situation of sociolinguistic interviews.

⁵Our corpus consists of language produced predominantly by female speakers. This is due to the extremely limited number of local male speakers of the target age group who have not emigrated for an extended period.

⁶The interviews were conducted in Estreito de Câmara de Lobos, Câmara de Lobos, Curral das Freiras, Maroços, Canhas, Santa, Tabúa, Campanário, Camacha (Santa Cruz), Santo António (Santana), and São Vicente.

In addition to the 13 semi-directed interviews, the second part of our corpus contains free conversation samples. These latter samples complement the above interviews in two different aspects. Although the interviewer was present during the recording, by taking place in a familial context, the free conversations yield “immediate” speech samples (following Koch & Oesterreicher 1990). These circumstances are invaluable for the study of morphosyntactic variation. Secondly, since the discourse participants are familiar with each other and therefore share social networks, the free conversation samples include several specific uses of the hybrid construction as the informants often produce utterances that refer to particular groups to which they belong. This type of use is less common in semi-directed interviews in which speech act participants do not know each other. Conversely, informants of semi-directed interviews provide more clues so that the addressee correctly infers the intended 1PL reference, which is a complex and challenging task for linguistic analysis.

In total, the data under survey contain 827 examples of 1PL subjects. For the analysis, all occurrences were coded manually for an array of grammatical and referential properties, including expression or omission of the subject pronoun, verbal agreement, coreference, and referential range.

3 First person plural (1PL) in Portuguese varieties

This section provides a brief overview of the 1PL pronominal subject expressions *a gente* and *nós* in Portuguese. It then describes the differences in the usage of *a gente* and *nós* in rural MP varieties.

Due to its nominal origins described in the introduction to this chapter, *a gente* presents discrepancies between its semantic and syntactic properties, leading to varying agreement patterns in terms of verbal inflection, as can be observed in the contrast between examples (5) and (6). Likewise, *a gente* triggers varying adjectival (or participial) agreement as shown in example (7) (cf. Pereira 2003, Costa & Pereira 2013, 2005).

- (5) A gente fizemos uma fogueira.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL make-PST.1PL a bonfire
 ‘We made a bonfire.’
- (6) A gente ia lavar a roupa aqui.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL go.IPFV.3SG wash-INF the clothes here
 ‘We came here to wash our clothes.’

- (7) A gente era pequenos.
PRON.SBJ.1PL be.IPFV.3SG small-MASC.PL
'We were little.'

A considerable number of studies show variation between *a gente* and *nós* in different varieties of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) (cf. Vianna 2011 for an overview). It is observable that the newer pronoun *a gente* "is the more productive of the forms" (Travis & Silveira 2009: 22) and thus, appears to replace *nós* progressively. This canonical pronoun and its associated 1PL verbal marking – the desinence *-mos* illustrated in example (8) – are subject to a restricted distribution. Travis & Silveira (2009) observe the retention of these morphological forms in high-frequency verbs such as *ter* ('to have') or *ser* ('to be') and in cohortative constructions⁷ illustrated in (9). According to the authors, these are some of the few domains to which *a gente* has not extended.

- (8) onde nós vivíamos
where PRON.SBJ.1PL live-IPFV.1PL
'where we lived'
- (9) Então, vamos à minha casa!
so go.PRS.1PL to-the my house
'So, let's go to my place!'

Limited studies have addressed the variation of 1PL expression in European Portuguese (EP) varieties. Contrary to the traditional belief that the newer form *a gente* is commonly found in central and southern EP varieties, recent studies have shown that this pronoun exhibits a high usage rate throughout continental EP varieties. For instance, while contrasting the use of the two 1PL pronominal variants in Brazilian and European varieties, de Paiva Sória (2013) found that the pronominal expression *a gente* is highly productive in most of the 31 local EP varieties accounted for. The author concludes that this pronoun is not only firmly established but also most commonly used throughout the observed EP varieties (de Paiva Sória 2013). Similarly, Posio (2012) observes a relatively high application rate of *a gente* in his contrastive study on 1PL subject expression in EP and Peninsular Spanish. Regarding the referential scope of *a gente*, the author acknowledges its speaker-inclusive impersonal traits attributing this fact to its impersonal origin.

⁷There are numerous denominations for these constructions. Travis & Silveira (2009), for instance, use the label "hortative constructions". Others use a more transparent terminology such as "inclusive imperative" (Dobrushina & Goussev 2005). Following Posio (2012) the term "cohortatives" will be used in this chapter to refer to these constructions.

While the construction with *a gente* was included in the current study as a way to create first person plural reference, examining the use of *a gente* in context reveals that in the EP data it is very seldom used in contexts where only a personal (i.e. inclusive or exclusive) reference is possible. In most cases, the referential range of *a gente* can be described as speaker-inclusive impersonal or allowing both impersonal and first person plural interpretations. (Posio 2012: 348)

As for the varieties under survey, the data suggest that the newer pronoun *a gente*, found in all but three examples, has largely replaced the canonical subject pronoun *nós*. Given this markedly high use rate of *a gente* in the data of rural MP varieties, it can be hypothesized that this newer 1PL pronoun is more grammaticalized in some EP varieties than previously believed (cf. Posio 2012) and thus may occur in less restricted referential contexts. As expected, the data show divergent agreement patterns triggered by *a gente*, with a clear predominance of 3SG verb forms. Table 1 summarizes the quantitative analysis concerning the subject-verb agreement involving 1PL subject pronoun variants.⁸

Table 1: Subject and verb agreement with 1PL pronouns (*a gente* and *nós*) in rural MP varieties

	3SG		1PL	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
∅	5	9.1	50	90.9
<i>a gente</i>	160	87.9	22	12.1
<i>nós</i>	0	0	3	100

As shown in Table 1, the data under survey contain 75 examples of 1PL verb forms, the majority of which are found in clauses lacking an overt subject. The low occurrence of 3SG verbs without an expressed subject is due to the ambiguity of this form, referring either to a 3SG or to a 1PL subject associated with the pronoun *a gente*. Therefore, ambiguous examples such as (10) were excluded from the analysis.

⁸Although the hybrid construction [*(a gente)+se*] is considered a variant of the subject pronouns *a gente* and *nós*, it was excluded from the quantitative analysis resumed in Table 1. Moreover, 21 tokens of non-finite verbs occurring with the pronoun *a gente* were excluded, due to their well-known distinctive person marking behavior.

- (10) A gente_i vê ele_j quando passa_{i,j} por ali.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL see.PRS.3SG to my pass-PRS.3SG through there
 ‘We see him when (he/we) pass(es) by.’

The only occurrences of verb agreement in 3SG lacking an overt subject considered in the analysis are those displaying coreference with a preceding 1PL pronoun.⁹ Example (11) illustrates the coreference between a 3SG verb form and *a gente*.

- (11) Mas a gente não deitava aquela [carne] fora;
 But PRON.SBJ.1PL NEG throw-IPFV.3SG that [meat] away
 ‘But we did not throw that meat away;’
 tirava um bocadinho e cozia.
 take-IPFV.3SG a bit and cook-IPFV.3SG
 ‘(we) took out a little bit and (we) cooked (it).’
 Depois partia um bocadinho a cada um.
 Afterwards cut-IPFV.3SG a bit for each one
 ‘Afterwards (we) cut a little bit for each one.’

Interestingly, despite not displaying an overt subject pronoun *a gente* in the immediate co-text, example (12) is not ambiguous. What establishes the 1PL reference of the second verb form *tinha* is its coreferentiality with the element *se* cliticized to the first 3SG verb *tinha-se*. Furthermore, the coordination with the 1PL form *temos* also indicates coreference between the two preceding null subject verb forms. Based on their coreference, these three verb forms, including the first verbal form bearing the element *se* (*tinha-se*) in example (12) are variants of 1PL expression lacking an overt subject.

- (12) Tinha-se uma fonte; tinha e temos.
 have-IPFV.3SG=SE a fountain have-IPFV.3.SG and have-PRS.1PL
 ‘(We) used to have a fountain, (we) still have (one).’

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, MP varieties display – in addition to *a gente* and *nós* – what we call a hybrid construction. This 1PL expression

⁹There is an ongoing discussion on the existence of a null subject associated with *a gente*. For instance, Pereira (2003) and Martins & Nunes (2021) state that its mixed verbal agreement patterns hinder the existence of a null subject associated with this pronoun. De Paiva Sória (2013), in the same vein, argues that the omissions of *a gente* cannot be considered proper cases of null subjects due to the fact that it is only permissible in restricted syntactic contexts in which there is an overt *a gente* in the immediate discourse.

consists of the newer pronoun *a gente* and the originally impersonal marker *se*. In this paper, we argue that *a gente* takes the role of a 1PL subject, which is omissible in these Portuguese varieties.¹⁰ The clitic *se* associated with this pronoun is reanalyzed as a dependent person form encoding 1PL marking. As a result, the omission of *a gente* is more permissible in the varieties under focus than in continental Portuguese varieties (cf. Pereira 2003, Posio 2012), for the clitic *se* manages to disambiguate 3SG verb forms and establish 1PL specific reference, as illustrated in example (12) above and in (13).

- (13) A: As mulheres trabalhavam na fazenda ou bordavam?
 the women work-IPFV.3.PL in-the field or sew-IPFV.3PL
 ‘Did the women work in the fields or sew?’
- B: Bordava-se.
 sew-IPFV.3SG=SE
 ‘(We) sewed.’

In terms of frequency, the data indicate that within the different forms of 1PL expression – e.g., pronominal forms *a gente* and *nós* as opposed to the hybrid construction [(*a gente*) + *se*] – the latter is far more frequent than the former, as the results in Table 2 show.

Table 2: First person plural expression in rural MP varieties

	3SG		1PL	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
[(<i>a gente</i>) + <i>se</i>]	566	98.95	6	1.05
<i>a gente</i> / <i>nós</i> ^a	160	86.49	25	13.51

^aThe pronoun *nós* only appears three times in the data under study. All of these occurrences occur with 1PL verb forms.

Furthermore, the low rate of 1PL verbal forms and the virtual substitution of the canonical pronoun form *nós* are likely to be symptomatic of a possible ongoing realignment of the pronominal and verbal paradigm in the insular Portuguese variety under focus.

¹⁰Due to the possible omission of *a gente* the hybrid construction under analysis will be represented as “[(*a gente*) + *se*]” in this chapter.

Although these hybrid constructions have received little attention in research on morphosyntactic variation so far, Martins (2009) provided a seminal study in this area. Following a generative framework, Martins (2009: 179) argues that these structures fall under the denomination of “double subject impersonal *se* construction”, as a strong subject pronoun or determinant phrase (DP) appears with what the author considers to be an “impersonal subject” (*se*). According to Martins, this construction is present in both insular and continental Portuguese dialects, particularly in the center-south region of continental Portugal (Martins 2009: 180, fn. 2). In the Portuguese varieties taken into account by the author, *se* can cooccur not only with 1PL pronouns (*nós* and *a gente*) but also with 3PL pronouns and “less commonly with full determinant phrases” (Martins 2009: 179). The interpretation of these constructions depends on the semantics of the subject expression, in the sense that the “doubling strong pronoun” semantically restricts the denotative scope of *se*. Thus, an inclusive interpretation – including the speaker in a non-specific group of humans – arises when the strong pronoun or DP is 1PL. In contrast, 3PL strong pronouns in combination with *se* usually trigger an exclusive interpretation, excluding the speaker from the referent group.

In contrast to these findings, our corpus shows a significant number of other uses that are not included in Martins (2009), i.e., denoting specific sets of referents. In a footnote, the author states that only two cases of a specific reading were attested and that it “appears to be infrequent” (Martins 2009: 186, fn. 10). The lack of such data in Martins (2009) is likely to be a corpus effect. The *CORDIAL-SIN* includes classic dialectological interviews and short free speech samples. The topics addressed therein cover a thematic range of aspects of the language community’s cultural life (e.g., traditions, customs, fishing and farming practices, etc.), thus favoring the mention of unspecific groups. The fact that our semi-directed interviews also include questions on the informant’s personal life contributes to the allusion to specific referents and specific groups. Our data thus suggest that the analyzed construction manifests a broader referential scope than previously assumed. This wide scope of possible interpretations ranging from impersonal to personal can be observed in examples (14) and (15) respectively:

(14) A gente diz-se assim: uma traçada.

PRON.SBJ.1PL say-PRES.3SG=SE so: a bundle

‘We say it like this: a bundle.’

(15) Mãe, o que é que a gente vai-se fazer?

mother what PRON.SBJ.1PL go-PRS.3SG=SE do-INF

‘Mom, what are we going to do?’

While (14) is consistent with the impersonal and speaker-inclusive interpretative effects described by Martins (2009: 186–188), (15) illustrates a personal interpretation of the construction due to its use in a directive speech act addressed to the interlocutor. The readings conveyed by [(*a gente*)+*se*] are further discussed in the following section.

4 Referential scope

This section provides an overview of the referential scope of the hybrid construction and its constituents, namely the pronoun *a gente* and the clitic *se*. This detailed description highlights the possible reference overlaps of both elements, which have made possible the conjoint construction found in rural MP varieties. As mentioned, I consider [(*a gente*)+*se*] to be a variant of pronominal 1PL expressions in the varieties under focus. As such, it shows a complex reference, which Posio considers as being able to “include any human beings from the addressee to a third person or persons, an institution, or even the whole humankind” (2012: 342).

The first part of this section will deal with the referential range of *se*-IMP constructions in Portuguese varieties. The second part is dedicated to the referential aspects of *a gente*. Finally, the last section uses the observations of the first two sections to phrase possible interpretations of the hybrid construction under analysis.

4.1 *se*-IMP and its referential properties

In most Romance languages, *se*-IMP constructions are a common agent-defocusing strategy in which the reference of the agent is interpreted as unspecific and human. Due to its properties of conveying a reduction in referentiality regarding the intended subject, recent studies on impersonalizing strategies have referred to these as “R-impersonals” (Siewierska 2011). In terms of its formal characteristics, the clitic *se* attaches to a verb in third person, singular or plural. With transitive verbs, a plural NP bearing the semantic role of patient can trigger plural agreement with the verb, thus manifesting both object and subject properties.¹¹

¹¹The patient NP is typically placed after the verb. Preverbal patient NPs, display topic status, and thus appear in canonical subject position. However, both preverbal as well as postverbal plural patient NPs may trigger agreement on the verb. Posio & Vilkuina (2013: 187) state that the postverbal position is most commonly found in their dialectal data.

Following this possible agreement, traditional Portuguese grammars usually distinguish between two formally different *se* constructions: an agreeing construction often referred to as “passive”, and a non-agreeing one often referred to as “impersonal” (Naro 1976). Cinque (1988), who provides a detailed seminal description for *si* constructions in Italian, proposes that depending on its agreement, the intended subjects have different interpretations: “quasi-existential” in agreeing constructions and “quasi-universal” in non-agreeing structures. While observing the same types of constructions in Portuguese, Raposo & Uriagereka (1996: 750) adopt the labels “indefinite SE construction” and “generic SE construction” respectively.

The grammatical status of *se-IMP* has been prone to polemic in linguistic studies. Some authors have considered *se* to display subject properties (cf. Martins 2009, 2005, 2003, Raposo & Uriagereka 1996). Others have highlighted its functionality in discourse and considered it a grammaticalized impersonality marker (Posio & Vilkkuna 2013).

As far as the referential properties of impersonal *se* are concerned, few studies on Portuguese have dealt with it extensively. For instance, Naro (1976) observes that in standard EP, *se* might incidentally include the speaker in its referential scope. Regarding dialectal Portuguese varieties, Posio & Vilkkuna (2013) find that the default readings of *se-IMP* tend to be speaker-inclusive impersonal. They might even alternate with the 1PL pronouns *a gente* and *nós* in impersonal contexts¹², according to the speaker-inclusive semantic properties they share. A description that ascribes a more specific reference property to the element *se* can be found in Casteleiro (1975). Considering 1PL expression items in nonstandard varieties of continental Portuguese, the author acknowledges that, apart from *a gente*, *se* frequently alludes to 1PL referents (Casteleiro 1975: 65). However, the examples proposed to support this idea do not present enough context to univocally infer a specific referent. Hence, according to these observations on the semantic properties of the element *se*, there seems to be a consensus that – per its agent demotion properties – *se* manifests an overall indefinite interpretation that incidentally may include the speaker in its scope.

These results regarding the predominance of speaker-inclusive readings of impersonal *se* are consistent with the data under survey in this study. All of the 258 *se-IMP* constructions found in the corpus have speaker-inclusive readings. Furthermore, the impersonal interpretation is blocked in episodic clauses (e.g., fea-

¹²Given the fact that the examples used by Posio & Vilkkuna (2013: 211–213) to illustrate this alternation stem exclusively from Madeiran informants, one might be tempted to hypothesize that this alternation is a possible hybrid construction used in coreferential contexts, without the expressed subject pronoun *a gente*.

turing predicates anchored in time). The fact that the only verbs found in *se-IMP* constructions are imperfect or present tense underlines this aspect. The cooccurrence with perfective predicates would trigger a specific reading anaphorically associated to a 1PL referent, as illustrates the difference between examples (16) and (17).

- (16) Deita-se sal na carne.
 put-PRES.3SG=SE salt in-the meat
 ‘One puts salt on the meat.’
- (17) Teve-se uma viagem maravilhosa.
 have-PST.3SG=SE a trip wonderful
 ‘(We) had a wonderful trip.’

The preferably speaker-inclusive interpretations of *se-IMP* found in previous studies, in addition to the rural MP data analyzed in this study, might facilitate the specific, and even deictic, readings displayed by the hybrid construction under focus.

4.2 The pronoun *a gente* and 1PL reference

The nominal origin of *a gente* (Lopes 2003, 1999) has resulted in a mismatch between semantic and syntactic properties, a phenomenon well studied in previous research (cf. for EP, Costa & Pereira 2013, 2005). Thus, the deviation between notional person (1PL) and the grammatical person (3SG) often incentivizes debates about the pronominal status of *a gente* (e.g., Taylor 2009). While its pronominal properties are still subject to ongoing discussion, there seems to be consensus on its referential properties ranging from impersonal readings to personal ones. As mentioned in §3, previous studies show that the variation between *nós* and *a gente* is present in both BP and EP varieties. However, it has been shown that EP varieties display lower usage rates of *a gente* than BP varieties, where there is a notorious expansion of *a gente* into more formal discursive contexts (Callou & Lopes 2004). Along these lines, the research on *a gente* indicates that increasing application rates correlate with increasing grammaticalization (cf. de Omena 2003). These empirical studies show that *a gente* can be used as a subject pronoun with speaker-inclusive impersonal reference and specific reference alike, despite the generic origins of *a gente* (cf. de Omena 2003, Travis & Silveira 2009).

The data under analysis here suggest a high usage rate of the pronoun *a gente* (cf. Table 1), which seems to have almost entirely replaced the canonical pronoun

nós in rural MP varieties. These findings might indicate a grammaticalized pronoun state comparable to the one found in BP varieties. Moreover, its referential scope is compatible with other 1PL pronominal expressions, ranging from an unspecified group of persons (or people in general) including the speaker, to purely deictic uses, referring to speech-act participants.¹³

Considering that the speaker-inclusive impersonal reference constitutes the common denominator of both 1PL pronouns and *se*-IMP, this intersection may have been the basis of the junction of *a gente* and *se* in the varieties under focus.

4.3 The referential scope of the hybrid construction [(*a gente*) + *se*]

The reference of the hybrid constructions are generally consistent with the range of possible references displayed by 1PL pronouns. Not only does [(*a gente*)+*se*] display the impersonal speaker-inclusive references described by Martins (2009: 186–188), it also shows purely deictic interpretations referring to speech-act participants. The contrast between examples (18) and (19) spans the wide variety of possible interpretations.

- (18) Pega-me às costas! A gente chega-se
pick-IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG to-the back PRON.SBJ.1PL arrive-PRES.3SG=SE
lá num instante.
there in-an instant
'Pick me up on your back! We'll get there in no time.'
- (19) A gente aqui chama-se abóbora moira.
PRON.SBJ.1PL here call-PRES.3SG=SE pumpkin <word>
'We call it moira-pumpkin here.'

The deictic reading of the hybrid construction in (18) is connected with the imperative – which refers to the addressee – and the accusative clitic (*-me*) in the first sentence. The group referred to (i.e., 2SG imperative *pega* and 1SG clitic *-me*) is construed simultaneously as the sentence is uttered, which leads to the deictic interpretation of [(*a gente*)+*se*] in the following sentence. Contrary to that, (19) shows an impersonal interpretation, referring to the speaker community in general.

¹³Following Posio (2012: 342), this flexibility of reference “is what makes possible also the use of first person plural as an impersonalizing strategy”.

In between these two poles of the referential continuum – speaker-inclusive impersonality and hearer-inclusive reference¹⁴ – there are several intermediate interpretations, highly dependent on various co-textual aspects, to which I will return later on in this chapter.

The results of the quantitative analysis (cf. §5.1) show that the majority of the constructions being analyzed lack an overt subject. Interestingly, the omission of *a gente* materializes in a construction in which *se* can establish personal interpretation, as illustrated in the affirmative verbal response¹⁵ to the question in (20).

- (20) A: Vocês já estão em casa?
 PRON.SBJ.2PL already be-PRES.3PL at home?
 ‘Are you already home?’
 B: Está-se.
 be-PRES.3SG=SE
 ‘Yes, we are.’

The specific interpretation in (20) is based on the contrast between the 2PL pronoun *vocês* and the verb *estar* bearing the element *se*. The speaker’s utilization of this construction as an affirmative verbal answer (Martins 2013, 2016b) further supports the hypothesis of *se* functioning as a 1PL person marker.

In direct comparison, these *se* interpretations differ strikingly from those of *se-IMPS* described in §4.1. The fact that an impersonal interpretation of *se* is impossible in contexts where it refers to speech-act participants seems to confirm the hypothesis regarding the reanalysis of *se*. This reanalysis becomes even more evident in cases like (21) below, where *se*, controlled by another subject NP with 1PL reference rather than *a gente*, seems to add number- and person-marking to the 3SG verb form.¹⁶

- (21) Eu mais meus primos ia-se buscar lenha.
 PRON.SBJ.1SG with my cousins go.IPFV.3SG=SE get-INF firewood
 ‘Me and my cousins used to go get firewood.’

¹⁴Posio (2012: 342) utilizes clusivity as the differentiating factor between “hearer-inclusive” and “impersonal (speaker-inclusive)” readings. The two extremes of the continuum proposed here are defined following Posio’s categorization.

¹⁵In Portuguese, there are several strategies to respond affirmatively to a polar question. One of these strategies consists of repeating the finite verb by adapting person and number features (cf. Martins 2013, 2016b)

¹⁶Note that there are no occurrences of lack of agreement between a coordinate preverbal subject and the verb in the data under analysis.

There are at least two possible analyses for examples like (21). One analysis would consider the preverbal coordinate NP (*Eu mais meus primos*) to be a topic, which precedes the sentence displaying a null subject *a gente* (*Eu mais meus primos, Ø ia-se buscar lenha*). A second possibility is to assume the preverbal NP (*Eu mais meus primos*) to be the subject. In light of the second analysis, example (21) could illustrate a further step in the grammaticalization path of *se* as a 1PL person marker.

There are several possible intermediate interpretations of the hybrid construction located between the impersonal and deictic poles of the proposed referential scale. These specific interpretations of $[(a\ gente)+se]$ are determined by a vast array of co-textual factors.

(22) *Ia-se* *as duas*.
 go.3SG=SE the two
 ‘The two of us used to go.’

(23) *Ia-se* *todos para lá*.
 go.3SG=SE all to there
 ‘All of us went there.’

Examples (22) and (23) illustrate the graduality of possible specific interpretations of *se*. For instance, the specific reading of (22) relies on the cooccurrence with numerals, thus on the cardinality of the group. The interpretation of (23) is slightly less specific than the one triggered by (22). The cooccurrence of *todos* (‘all’) implies that there is a specific number of members in the set of referents which consequently evokes a specific rather than an impersonal reference.

The examples clearly illustrate the broad scope of references covered by the hybrid construction under analysis. It appears in contexts where possible references of *a gente* and *se-IMP* converge. This suggests that the speaker-inclusive impersonality shared by both constituents is the common denominator and may be where this hybrid construction originated. The fact that this originally *se-IMP* occurs in specific or even deictic contexts shows that it no longer requires *a gente* to establish personal reference, which could be a symptom of the reanalysis of *se* as a person marker. A possible syntactic catalyst for this reanalysis is described by Posio & Vilkuna (2013). The authors observe that, while in EP varieties, the patient NP can be reanalyzed as the subject of *se-IMP* constructions, “in Madeira and Porto Santo dialects the Patient has been reanalyzed as a direct object” (2013: 213). This reanalysis of the patient NP as a direct object can be observed in ex-

amples of *se*-IMP constructions featuring accusative clitics,¹⁷ the combination of which is considered ungrammatical in standard EP (Naro 1976: 786). The reanalysis of the patient NP as a direct object and thus eliminating it from the list of possible clausal subjects, might have served as a catalyst for the latter reanalysis of *se* as a person marker.

5 Syntactic features of [(*a gente*) + *se*]

The new insights into the referential scope of the hybrid construction, briefly introduced in the previous section, have substantial repercussions on the analysis of the syntactic properties of this particular phenomenon. Given that the hybrid construction [(*a gente*)+*se*] not only exhibits impersonal readings, in which they partially overlap with the semantics of canonical *se*-IMP constructions, but also allows for specific and even deictic readings (e.g., the reference to speech act participants), it is necessary to reconsider the syntactic and semantic properties of the formerly impersonal marker *se* in the studied variety.

This section describes and discusses different syntactic properties displayed by the construction under study here in contrast with the findings of previous studies. §5.1 deals with variable subject expression of *a gente* in these contexts. §5.2 describes verbal agreement patterns in clauses where [(*a gente*)+*se*] accounts for subject person marking. §5.3 provides evidence for the ability of *se* in these contexts to trigger adjectival agreement. §5.4 connects with the former two and adds a descriptive insight into the construction's behavior in coreferential contexts.

5.1 Variable subject expression

As it has already been stated in §3, the construction under analysis can occur with the subject pronoun *a gente* (24), with subject NPs as its antecedents (25), or in clauses without an overt subject or antecedent (26).

- (24) Mas *a gente* não *se* fazia bacalhau.
 But PRON.SBJ.1PL NEG SE=make-IPFV.3SG codfish
 'But we didn't make codfish.'

¹⁷Following Posio & Vilkuna (2013: 214) the reanalysis of the patient NP as a direct object can be observed in their example (24) partially reproduced here as (i).

- (i) Em sendo para a latada, deixa-se-a crescer [...]
 in be-GER for the trellis leve-3SG=SE=ACC.3SG grow INF
 'Being for the trellis, you let them grow [...].'

- (25) Eu e Alicinha, cada uma fazia a sua
 PRON.SBJ.1SG and Alicinha each one make-IPFV.3SG the POSS.F-SG
 semana. Cosia-se uma semana inteira o almoço.
 week cook-IPFV.3SG=SE one week whole the lunch
 ‘Alicinha and I each made her own week. (We) cooked lunch for a whole
 week.’
- (26) Se ele fosse preciso ser operado,
 If PRON.SBJ.3SG be.SBJV.IPFV.3SG necessary be.INF operated
 ficava-se lá.
 stay-IPFV.3SG=SE there
 ‘If it would be necessary for him to get surgery, (we) would stay there.’

The high frequency of hybrid constructions without an expressed subject, in which the clitic *se* is the primary element encoding 1PL reference on the verb, indicates the degree of grammaticalization of this expression in rural MP varieties. Indeed, the vast majority of the analyzed clauses in the data do not occur with the subject pronoun *a gente*.

Out of the 566 clauses containing [(*a gente*)+*se*], 177 occur with the overt subject pronoun. The remaining 389 cases are occurrences of 3SG verbal forms with the clitic *se* displaying personal (i.e. specific or deictic) interpretations.

Table 3: First person plural pronominal expression in rural MP varieties

	overt		null	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
[<i>a gente</i> + <i>se</i>]	177	31.3	389	68.7
<i>a gente/nós</i>	208	79.1	55	20.9

Contrary to these findings, Posio states for peninsular EP varieties that *a gente* “is usually expressed even in contexts that strongly favor the omission,” such as coreferential contexts within coordinated clauses (2012: 345). This is a straightforward consequence of the ambiguity conveyed by the omission of *a gente* with 3SG verb forms. Thus, as illustrated below, the presence of *se* results in higher permissibility of the 1PL subject omission. Example (27), for instance, illustrates an occurrence of *se* lacking an overt subject pronoun. Its specific interpretation is, again, determined by co-textual factors.

- (27) A: *Quantos filhos é que a sua mãe teve?*
 ‘How many children did your mother have?’
 B: *Era-se dez.*
be.IPFV.3SG=SE ten
 ‘(We) were ten.’ (=‘There were ten of us.’)

The fact that null pronominal subjects are so common in these contexts is relevant in two different respects. First, it shows that *se* is able to disambiguate 3SG verb forms while establishing 1PL reference. Second, it suggests that the element *se* is being reanalyzed as a 1PL person marker.

5.2 Variable verbal agreement patterns

In her analysis of the verbal agreement in constructions comprising a strong pronoun and the clitic *se*, Martins (2009: 185) found that it is the former that triggers agreement on the verb due to the presumably person-less nature of *se*. She draws this conclusion from the fact that the same variable agreement patterns – namely 3SG, 1PL, and 3PL – induced by the pronoun *a gente* can also be found encoded in the verbal forms associated with these “double subject impersonal *se* constructions” (Martins 2009: 185–186). In our data, as shown in Table 2, 13.5% of the clauses in which *a gente* or *nós* assumes the role of pronominal subject have the verb in 1PL. However, in regard to verbal agreement induced by the hybrid construction $[(a\ gente)+se]$, the data display a clear predominance of 3SG verb forms and only six cases of verbal agreement with 1PL verb forms (1.05%). It is worth noting that in all these cases *se* appears in the proclitic position, thus occurring in finite subordinate clauses (28), and in principal clauses featuring negative polarity items (29) or other proclisis-inducing elements such as focalizing *já* (30).¹⁸

- (28) *porque se fomos as mais velhas*
 because SE=be.PST.1PL the more old
 ‘because (we) were the eldest’
 (29) *Não se morremos de fome.*
 NEG SE=die-PST.1PL of hunger
 ‘We didn’t die of hunger.’

¹⁸European Portuguese varieties display complex clitic positioning patterns. This issue, however, goes far beyond the scope of the present chapter. For a seminal description on this issue see Martins (2016a). Furthermore, a recent study by the same author (Martins 2021) highlights the clitic positioning in insular Portuguese varieties of the Madeira and Azores archipelagos.

- (30) Já se criámos dois de cada vez.
 even SE=raise-PST.1PL two at each time
 ‘We even raised two at a time.’

The proclitic position of *se* could explain the preferable omission of *a gente* and the use of the person marking morpheme *-mos* in these contexts. The combination of the three person marking items – *a gente*, morphological 1PL marking *-mos* and the element *se*¹⁹ – could lead to over-specification of 1PL person-encoding on the verb.²⁰

5.3 Adjectival agreement

For standard EP, Martins (2009: 191-192) states that the element *se* in impersonal constructions cannot establish adjectival agreement in predicative contexts. Comparing with the adjectival agreement properties found in dialectal EP varieties, the author differentiates between two types of “impersonal *se*”: one found in standard EP varieties, whose number feature corresponds to “singular”; the other one, found in EP dialects, manifesting the construction under analysis, displays the number feature “plural” and therefore allows “plural agreement between *se* and an adjectival predicate” (Martins 2009: 192). Additionally, the author proposes two examples illustrating the ungrammaticality of plural adjectival agreement in *se-IMP* constructions in standard EP, reproduced here as (31) and (32):

¹⁹There are no examples manifesting all three person marking items in the corpus under study. For illustrative purposes, consider the following fabricated example:

- (i) * A gente trabalhamos-se muito.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL work-PRS.1PL=SE a lot
 ‘We work a lot.’

²⁰Despite the overall high productivity of [(*a gente*)+*se*], reflexive/reciprocal verbs seem to restrict the use of this construction. It must be noted that *se* is homonymous to the reflexive/reciprocal 3SG and 3PL clitic in Portuguese. Moreover, in some varieties with the pronoun *a gente* – including those mentioned here – it formally coincides with the 1PL reflexive/reciprocal clitic (Martins 2009: 185). Thus, in our data, reflexive/reciprocal verbs tend to block the use of [(*a gente*)+*se*], due to the unacceptability of the sequence **se-se* discussed in Martins (2009: footnote 18). The ungrammaticality of the sequence **se-se* also accounts for the well-attested incompatibility of reciprocal/reflexive verbs in *se-IMP* constructions. In light of these observations, further analyses are required to understand the use of [(*a gente*)+*se*] with other clitic pronouns.

- (31) Quando se é novo...
 When SE=be.PRS.3SG young-M.SG
 ‘When one is young...’
- (32) * Quando se é novos...
 When SE=be.PRS.3SG young-M.PL
 ‘When one is young...’

In terms of the hybrid construction [(*a gente*)+*se*], the data under analysis here confirm the tendencies described in Martins (2009). Thus, the hybrid construction exclusively triggers plural agreement in predicative contexts. Moreover, our data include cases of agreement reflecting the gender of the intended referents, as shown in examples (33) and (34):

- (33) Quando se era pequenos?
 when SE=BE.IPFV.3SG little-M.PL
 ‘When (we) were little?’
- (34) Era-se pequenas.
 be.IPFV.3SG=SE little-F.PL
 ‘(We) were little.’

The agreement contrast between these two examples stems from the fact that the group alluded to in example (34) is exclusively female (the informant is referring to herself and the neighbor’s daughter). Example (33), however, relates to the informant’s brothers and sisters, thus displaying default masculine and plural adjectival agreement.

The data under analysis suggest that the hybrid construction [(*a gente*)+*se*] displays non-variable plural adjectival agreement in predicative contexts. However, in terms of gender agreement, variable patterns can be found. These variable gender agreement patterns are consistent with those attested for other 1PL person marking items in Portuguese (Costa & Pereira 2013, 2005, Pereira 2003). Furthermore, the fact that the element *se* of hybrid constructions exclusively triggers plural agreement on the predicate might further endorse its status as a 1PL person marker.

5.4 Coreference

Coreference has been identified as an essential contributing factor for the expression or omission of subject pronouns in pro-drop languages. There is a broad consensus that coreference with a previous subject favors the omission of subject

pronouns (Silva-Corvalán 1982, among others). This section focuses on the role of coreference regarding the structural and semantic features of [(*a gente*)+*se*]. Even though this study does not claim to contemplate all the factors that enable subject omission in these contexts, the examples clearly illustrate that, even in contexts lacking an overt subject and those without an immediate 1PL subject antecedent, *se* establishes 1PL reference.

Previous studies on the variation of 1PL pronominal expression in Portuguese varieties have shown that the newer pronoun *a gente* occurring with 3SG verb forms can only be omitted in a restricted number of contexts. One requirement is coreference with the overt antecedent *a gente* (de Paiva Sória 2013). The quantitative analyses on rural MP varieties (cf. §3) confirm the tendencies found in previous research: only five examples of null subject *a gente* were found in the corpus. This is in line with Posio’s findings for continental EP varieties, where overt *a gente* even appears “in contexts that strongly favor the omission” (2012: 345).

In the context of the hybrid construction [(*a gente*)+*se*], the omission rate is much higher, occurring in 68.7% of the cases displaying 1PL reference (cf. Table 3). The data under analysis suggest that coreference is a key factor affecting the omission of the subject pronoun in hybrid constructions, resulting in a 3SG verb form and the clitic *se*. Furthermore, discourse connectedness (in terms of Paredes Silva 1993) appears to determine whether a given occurrence of *se* is to be interpreted as personal rather than impersonal. Example (35) shows the ability of the clitic *se* to maintain 1PL-specific reference when the pronoun *a gente* is omitted.

- (35) A gente era-se costumadas ambas.
 PRON.SBJ.1PL be.IPFV.3SG=SE accustomed both
 ‘We were used to each other.’
 Ia-se para a escola,
 go.IPFV.3SG=SE to the school
 ‘(We) used to go to school’
 ia-se as duas passava-se ali...
 go.IPFV.3SG=SE the two.FPL pass-IPFV.3SG=SE there
 ‘(we) used to go together, (we) would pass by..’

Cameron (1995) proposes that a 1PL expression is usually introduced into discourse only after its reference – or parts of the referent set – has previously been established in the discourse. This can be seen in example (36) where the informant starts the utterance with *eu* and then goes on to refer to herself and

her spouse, which can be inferred from the semantics of the verb *casar*. Partial coreference is thus established between the clitic *se* and the first person singular personal pronoun *eu*.²¹

- (36) Eu quando casei, criava-se dois [porcos].
 PRON.SBJ.1SG when marry-PST.1SG raise-IPFV.3SG=SE two [pigs]
 ‘When I got married, (we) raised two [pigs].’

The importance of coreference between a 1PL antecedent and the element *se* becomes even more evident when discourse-initial contexts are considered.

- (37) Matava-se um porco, era tudo salgado.
 kill-IPFV.3SG=SE a pig be.IPFV.3SG everything salted
 ‘One used to kill pigs, everything had to be salted.’
 Comprava-se uma salga para salgar o porco.
 buy-IPFV.3SG=SE a <name> to salt-INF the pig.
 ‘One bought a salting vessel to salt the pig.’

In discourse-initial contexts, the absence of *a gente* or another 1PL referent renders the personal interpretation of *se* improbable or at least impossible to determine. Consider the contrast between the previous example (37) and example (38) below:

- (38) Em princípio, a gente foi-se bebês.
 in beginning PRON.SBJ.1PL be.PST.3SG=SE babies
 ‘First, we were babies.’
 Depois cresceu-se, foi-se para a Escola das Irmãs.
 then grow.PST.3SG=SE go.PST.3SG=SE to the <name of the school>
 ‘Then (we) grew up, (we) went to Escola das Irmãs.’
 Mas como os meus pais não tinham a possibilidade de pôr a gente a estudar,
 apenas se deu a terceira classe.
 only SE=give.PST.3SG. the third class
 ‘(we) only completed the third grade.’

²¹This partial coreference is connected to what Gelbes (2008: 522–524) calls “correferencia inclusiva” (‘inclusive correferentiality’).

Example (38) shows another extract of a discourse-initial context. The informant answers a question on how many siblings she has and how they were brought up. She retrieves the set of referents – the informant and her siblings – by using the pronoun *a gente* in the first sentence. What follows is a chronological depiction of the events with coreferential null subjects. Interestingly, in (38) the pronoun *a gente* is omitted in the fourth sentence (*apenas se deu a terceira classe*), even though there is discontinuity regarding the previous subject *os meus pais*. This shows, in part, that coreference cannot fully account for the variation between expression and omission of the subject in hybrid constructions. The correct interpretation of the 1PL subject, in this case, is most probably established by the perfective past (*deu*) describing an event anchored in time, thus favoring a personal interpretation (Siewierska 2011).

As anticipated in the introductory lines to this section, there are particular contexts in which the omitted subject of the hybrid construction is not coreferential to the previous subject. The following examples, for instance, show contexts that strongly favor the omission of the subject. Hence, the element *se* is used to encode 1PL person marking on its own.

- (39) Teresinha, vai-se brincar!
 <name> go.PRES=SE play-INF
 ‘Teresinha, let’s go play!’
- (40) A: A senhora brincava com os seus irmãos?
 the Mrs play-IPFV.3SG with the your siblings
 ‘Did you play with your siblings?’
 B: Brincava-se ao domingo.
 play-IPFV.3SG=SE on-the Sunday
 ‘Yes, (we) played on Sundays.’

Example (39) shows a cohortative construction that “expresses the exhortation to the addressee to carry out an action together with the speaker” (Dobrushina & Goussev 2005: 179). Hence, the interpretation of the referent is inherently personal (i.e., deictic). Another context in which *se* establishes personal 1PL reference is found in affirmative verbal responses, such as (40). In these contexts, the element *se* retrieves the set of referents defined in the question (i.e., the informant and her siblings) thus assuming the role of a 1PL person marker. These examples can be considered crucial evidence for the reanalysis of *se* of the hybrid constructions in rural MP varieties.

6 Conclusion

Rural Madeiran Portuguese varieties manifest two predominant 1PL pronominal expressions: *a gente* and the more common variant [(*a gente*)+*se*]. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis indicates that the presence of *se* allows for substantial variation in terms of the presence and absence of *a gente* or other subjects displaying 1PL reference (cf. Table 3). To account for this fact, a hypothesis was anticipated that the clitic *se* seems to display 1PL marking features in the absence of other person markers. There is evidence within the syntactic properties of [(*a gente*)+*se*] outlined in this study that seems to support this tentative hypothesis:

1. There is a meager rate of 1PL verb forms in the context of these constructions, which might instigate that *se* suffices to establish 1PL reference.
2. The hybrid construction (with and without the overt subject) can trigger variable gender agreement according to the constellation of the alluded group. However, in terms of number adjectival agreement in predicative contexts it exclusively triggers plural agreement.
3. Independently of its coreference with a 1PL antecedent, *se* can trigger personal interpretations in contexts lacking an overt subject. Thus, it can be found in verbal affirmative answers and cohortative constructions, both of which favor the omission of the subject.

In terms of its referential properties, several observations can be made. The hybrid construction, whose constituents originate from impersonalizing strategies, might imply not only specific interpretations but also deictic ones, even in the contexts mentioned above lacking an overt subject. The fact that *se* can refer to speech-act participants is the most straightforward argument supporting the initial tentative hypothesis. However, more research is needed to determine whether or not discourse-initial antecedentless contexts are the only restriction for the occurrence of *se* referring to a specific 1PL subject. Moreover, the analysis of diachronic data could offer more substantial insights into the possible origins of this hybrid construction.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to all the informants who agreed to participate. Moreover, I wish to thank Carlota de Benito Moreno, Johannes Kabatek, two anonymous reviewers and the editors of this volume for their helpful comments, suggestions and insights.

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