Spanish and French HOMŌ-derived Impersonal Pronouns: Stalled Grammaticalization

Introduction: Various impersonal pronouns (Imp) in Romance are derived from the Latin noun HOMŌ, "man." For example, Modern French (MF) has *on* (1) and Catalan has *hom* (2).

(1)　On　ne　parle　pas　anglais　ici.　　　　(2)　Hom no　parla　anglès aquí.
　　　Imp Neg speaks Neg English here　　　　　Imp Neg speaks English here
　　　"One does not speak English here."　　　　　"One does not speak English here."

Old Spanish (OS) *omne* could be used to express a generic subject, as in (3) and (4), until other impersonal constructions replaced it in the sixteenth century (Brown 1931, Pozas Loyo 2004).

(3) Quando omne$_i$ trabaja...*pro*$_i$ non siente tenptaçión　(4) Cuando omne non puede dormir...
　　　When　Imp　works Imp Neg feels temptation　　　　　when　Imp　not can　　sleep
　　　"When one works one does not feel temptation."　　　"When one cannot sleep...."

Why did this pronoun disappear in Spanish but persist in French? I propose that *omne* was subject to a linguistic cycle, in the sense of Van Gelderen (2011), that failed to reach completion; i.e., a "stalled" cycle. In MF, the cycle is complete with *on* fully grammaticalized. I take *on* to be a functional head that licenses generic *pro* (Mendikoetxea 2008). Some researchers attribute the disappearance or emergence of HOMŌ pronouns to language contact (Giacalone Ramat & Sansò 2007, D'Alessandro 2014) or lack of frequency (Brown 1931). I claim that *omne* disappeared due to competition from another method of generic subject expression, impersonal *se* (Imp$_{se}$), which was already grammaticalized as a head in the sixteenth century (Maddox 2016), when *omne* was a full DP. Chomsky's (1995) Late Merge Principle (LMP) states that it is more economical to merge as a head rather than merge and then move. This also applies diachronically (Van Gelderen 2011). In this case, when posed with two options to express a generic subject, *omne* or Imp$_{se}$, a speaker was more apt to "choose" Imp$_{se}$ for purposes of economy, which also explains the lack of frequency of *omne* compared to Imp$_{se}$ (Brown 1931). Diffrences in distribution of *omne* and *on* is evidence that they were subject to a linguistic cycle.

Degrees of deficiency: Following Van Gelderen (2011), tests of coordination and modification can diagnose the status of an element as a head (X) or a phrase (XP). Thus, phrases tend to be reanalyzed as heads diachronically because it is more economical. MF *on* has the properties of a head since it cannot be coordinated (5), modified (6), or separated from the verb (7) by XPs.

(5) *On et elle parlent beaucoup. (6) *On intelligent parle français. (7) *On souvent arrive tard.
　　　Imp and she speak a-lot　　　　　Imp intelligent speaks French　　　Imp often　arrives late

Egerland (2003) proposes two classes of impersonal HOMŌ pronouns. Class 1 pronouns like MF *on* can have variable agreement (other than masculine singular) (8), can have either a generic (1) or arbitrary reading (9), and cannot be objects (10). Class 2 impersonal pronouns cannot have variable agreement, can only have generic interpretation, and can be subjects and objects.

(8) Quand on est belles...　　(9) On　a travaillé deux mois　pour résoudre le problème.
　　　when Imp is pretty.F.Pl　　　Imp has worked two months　to　resolve the problem
　　　"When one is pretty..."　　　　　"Someone worked two months in order to fix the problem."

(10) *Ils　on voient.　　　　　(11) ca non ensuzia a　omne comer con las manos non lavadas.
　　　they Imp see　　　　　　　for not　soils DOM Imp　eat with the hands not washed
　　　Intended: "They saw one."　　"For it does not soil a person to eat with their hands unwashed."

Omne belongs to Class 2. A search in the CORDE yielded no evidence of variable agreement or arbitrary interpretation. *Omne* can, however, function as an object, as in (11) above. *Omne* additionally qualifies as a weak pronoun DP following Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) since it can be separated from the verb (12), it can occupy XP positions and it can be modified (13).

(12) si omne bien non cata...   (13) ... todo omne que deva deuda a otro...
    if Imp   well not observe   every Imp that owes debt to another
    "In one does not observe well..."   "...every one that owes debt to another..."

Thus, *omne* was a weak Class 2 impersonal pronoun. It was deficient but not as deficient as MF *on* since it retained agreement features, had only a generic interpretation, and displayed pronominal distribution. *Omne* stalled at an earlier stage in the cycle than MF *on* has reached.

Coreferentiality: Maddox (2016) shows that another impersonal pronoun, Spanish generic *uno*, licenses a generic subject *pro* across clauses via topic-identification while Imp$_{se}$ does not. This difference is due to *uno* being a full DP and thus eligible for topichood. Since Imp$_{se}$ is a functional head, it cannot serve as a topic. If *omne* was a full DP in OS and *on* is a functional head in MF, similar patterns are predicted where *omne* should license *pro* crossclausally while *on* will only license it clause internally.   A factor that complicates this is that MF is a non-null subject language lacking bare subject *pro*. In fact, MF requires *on* in each clause (Cabredo-Hofherr 2004, 2010). Nevertheless, Old French (OF) had null subjects and so the diagnostic can be applied to OF which also had *on*, though with orthographic variation. Historical data support the prediction: OF *on* licenses generic *pro* crossclausally (14) as does OS *omne*, as in (3) above.

 (14)   ne se   peüst on$_i$ porpenser de richece ...en cel leu trover ne   *pro*$_i$ peüst.
        not Pron$_{se}$ could Imp   imagine of richness   in that place find not pro could
        "One could not imagine any richness...in that place that one could not find."

Since OF *on* licensed *pro* in the same way as *omne* and *uno*, two full DPs, it may not have been fully grammaticalized as a functional head; i.e., in OF it may have still been a weak Class 2 impersonal pronoun like *omne*. Supporting evidence for this is in (15) and (16) from Welton-Lair (1999), showing that *on* can be separated from the verb by XPs; i.e. interpolation.

(15)   Sainz Boneface que   l'um   martir apelet.(16)   Quant l'en   en la meson Dieu entre.
        Saint Boniface whom the-Imp martyr call   when the-Imp in the house God enters
        "Saint Boniface, whom people call martyr."   "When one enters the house of God."

The parallel with (12) is expected if OF *on* and OS *omne* were less grammaticalized than MF *on*.

Cyclic Replacement: In MF, the impersonal pronoun cycle is complete. The clitic *on*, originally a full DP, is now a functional head that licenses *pro* locally, like Imp$_{se}$ in Spanish. This cycle failed to reach completion in OS with *omne* because Imp$_{se}$ was already grammaticalized as the same generic *pro*-licensing head while *omne* was still a full DP, albeit a weak pronoun. Since it is more economical to merge as a head rather than merge and then move as a DP to satisfy feature-checking per the LMP, speakers selected Imp$_{se}$ more often than *omne*, which eventually disappeared. Generic *uno* has now replaced *omne* in the impersonal pronoun cycle. This explains why Imp$_{se}$ does not exist in French (Dobrovie-Sorin 1998); i.e., *on* was grammaticalized as the head marking impersonality early on and, consequently, *se* was never reanalyzed as such.

References: Brown, C.B. 1931. The Disappearance of the Indefinite Hombre from Spanish. *Language* 7:265-277. Gelderen, E. van. 2011. *The Linguistic Cycle.* Oxford: UP. Maddox, M. 2016. Null Generic Subjects in Spanish and the Typology of Null Subject Languages. Paper at LSRL 46 at Stony Brook University. Mendikoetxea, Amaya. 2008. Clitic Impersonal Constructions in Romance: Syntactic Features and Semantic Interpretation. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 106:290-336. **Diachronic data:** (3) Vicente Ferrer, *Sermones*; (4) Juan Manuel, *El Conde Lucanor*; (11) Alfonso X, *Setenario*, p. 248; (12), Gonzalo de Berceo, *Vida de San Millán de Cogolla*, p. 249; (13), *Fuero de Burgos*, Philadelphia Ems.245, para. 516; (14), *Roman d'Énéas*, 456-458; (15), Anonymous, *Alexis*, .566; (16), Rutebeuf., *Le Miracle de Théophile*, 275.