

RESEARCH

Spanish prepositions and silent PLACE

Carolina Fraga

CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY, US

cfraga@gradcenter.cuny.edu

In this work I investigate the syntax and interpretation of two groups of spatial prepositions in Spanish: “small” Ps (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’) and “big” Ps (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’). I show that small versus big Ps display a series of asymmetries, such as the (in)ability to take bare nominals and the (un)availability of coordination and adverb intervention. I propose that these contrasts can be derived under the hypothesis that small Ps select a single nominal complement, whereas big Ps select a more complex Possessor-Possesum structure, where the nominal occupies a specifier position, acting as the possessor of a silent PLACE element. Furthermore, I argue that unifying big Ps (but crucially not small Ps) with possessive structures accounts for the delimited versus non-delimited interpretation of these Ps.

Keywords: prepositions; Spanish; silent PLACE; possession

1 Introduction

This paper addresses the syntax of two groups of spatial prepositions in Spanish. These prepositions have the property that they come in pairs, and both members of the pair are very often reported by native speakers to be equivalent in meaning. (1) below shows an example with the *bajo* ‘under’/*debajo* ‘DE.under’ pair, (2) with *tras* ‘behind’/*detrás* ‘DE.behind’ and (3) with *ante* ‘front’/*delante* ‘DE.L.front’.¹

- (1) a. El libro está bajo la mesa.
the book is under the table
‘The book is under the table.’
b. El libro está debajo de la mesa.
the book is DE.under of the table
‘The book is under the table.’
- (2) a. Juan estaba escondido tras la columna.
Juan was hidden behind the column
‘Juan was hidden behind the column.’
b. Juan estaba escondido detrás de la columna.
Juan was hidden DE.behind of the column
‘Juan was hidden behind the column.’

¹ The glossing of many of the examples in this work has not been an easy task. The reason for this is that most of the Spanish morphemes that make up the Ps that are the object of this paper do not have an obvious equivalent in the glossing language, English. In the case of roots (e.g. *bajo* in *debajo*), I always provided a gloss (the Ps *bajo*, *tras* and *ante* are glossed as ‘under’, ‘behind’, and ‘front’, respectively). In the case of affixes (e.g. *de* in *debajo*), I was more cautious. When I was not able to commit to a gloss at a certain point in the discussion, I simply left the morpheme un glossed in SMALL CAPS. (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’).

- (3) a. María se paró ante la catedral.
 María SE stood front the cathedral
 ‘María stood in front of the cathedral.’
- b. María se paró delante de la catedral.
 María SE stood DE.L.front² of the cathedral
 ‘María stood in front of the cathedral.’

It is clear that the Ps in the (a) and (b) examples in (1)–(3) above have a different morphological make-up. In the (a) examples the Ps (*bajo* ‘under’, *tras* ‘behind’ and *ante* ‘front’) are directly followed by a nominal complement (e.g. *la mesa* ‘the table’, *la columna* ‘the column’, *la catedral* ‘the cathedral’, respectively). In contrast, in the (b) examples, the Ps appear prefixed by the morpheme *de* ‘DE’ (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’, *detrás* ‘DE.behind’, *delante* ‘DE.L.front’), and the nominal complement is in turn introduced by *de* ‘of’ (e.g. *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’, *detrás de la columna* ‘DE.behind of the column’, *delante de la catedral* ‘DE.L.front of the cathedral’). Because the Ps in the (a) examples appear to be simpler than those in the (b) examples, in this paper I refer to them as “small” Ps. Along the same lines, because the Ps in the (b) examples appear to be more complex than those in (a), I refer to them as “big” Ps.

The purpose of this work is twofold. In the first place, I show that in spite of the apparent synonymy between the (a) and (b) examples in (1)–(3), there are several contexts and syntactic environments in which the differences between small and big Ps come to light. In the second place, I propose that all the differences we observe can be explained if we postulate that the Ps in (a) and (b) project different structures. In other words, the contribution made by this work is both empirical and theoretical.³

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I present the first syntactic asymmetry between small and big Ps. I show that a bare nominal (e.g. *tierra* ‘earth’) is possible as the complement of a small P like *bajo* ‘under’ (e.g. *bajo tierra* ‘under earth’). However, a bare nominal is not possible as the complement of a big P like *debajo* ‘DE.under’ (e.g. **debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’). As has been observed in the literature, bare nominals cannot be A-specifiers in Spanish (Cuervo 2003). I attribute this contrast between small and big Ps to the hypothesis that the nominal in the structure of a small P is a complement, whereas the nominal in the structure of a big P is actually occupying an A-specifier position. With this fundamental complement/specifier difference in place, I then go on to flesh out the analysis for small and big Ps. In particular, I postulate that in the case of small Ps (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’), what we see is what we get: the P selects a single nominal complement. In contrast, the structure of big Ps (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’) is more complex: the complement of a big P is a functional projection whose specifier is the nominal (as confirmed by the bare nominal facts) and whose complement is a silent PLACE element (in the spirit of Kayne 2004). Inside this projection, the nominal (e.g. *de la mesa* ‘of the table’ in *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’) is analyzed as the possessor of PLACE. The remainder of the paper aims to show how a series of contrasts between these groups of Ps receive a straightforward explanation under the analysis proposed. In concrete, in section 3 I discuss two syntactic asymmetries between small and big Ps: coordination and adverb intervention. I argue that the analysis of these facts lends support to the higher

² Related to footnote 1, another complication arises with the glossing of the morpheme (*el* in *delante*. It may be the case that it corresponds to the definite article *el* ‘the’. However, as this morpheme does not appear in other big Ps like, for instance, *debajo* (**delbajo*), another possibility is that it is inserted for purely phonological reasons. Therefore, I have left this morpheme unglossed as ‘L’.

³ Although small Ps (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’) and big Ps (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’) exist, to the best of my knowledge, in all varieties of Spanish, there is crosslinguistic variation regarding some of the phenomena discussed in this work. The judgments presented here specifically correspond to those found in the variety of Spanish known as Rioplatense Spanish, spoken in and around the Rio de la Plata Basin of Argentina and Uruguay.

structural complexity of big Ps put forth in this work. In section 4, I address the differences in interpretation between small and big Ps. I show that small Ps may have locative or non-locative interpretations. In contrast, big Ps necessarily have a locative interpretation. I claim that this asymmetry follows from the presence of a silent PLACE element in the structure of big Ps, but not in the structure of small Ps. I also present evidence that the nominal in the complement of a small P may have a delimited or a non-delimited interpretation (a notion I present and discuss in section 4), whereas the nominal in the complement of a big P has to be necessarily interpreted as delimited. I argue that this is a consequence of the fact that the nominal in the structure of a big P is a possessor (in particular, the possessor of PLACE), whereas the nominal in the structure of a small P is not. Finally, in section 5 I review all the evidence gathered and show how each of the findings lends support to the structures proposed. In this last section I also raise some open questions and conclude.

2 Small and big Ps

In this section I analyze the behavior of small and big Ps with respect to bare nominals. First, I review some general observations made about the distribution of bare nominals in Spanish inside the clause. I show how these facts are best captured if we assume, following Cuervo (2003), that “an unmodified common noun cannot be an A-specifier.”⁴ The relevance of this observation is that the distribution of bare nominals can now serve as a diagnostic to test further structures: if a bare nominal is not allowed in a certain structure, it is because it is occupying an A-specifier position and, conversely, if a bare nominal is allowed in a certain structure, then it follows that it is not occupying an A-specifier position. Then, I show how small and big Ps pattern differently with respect to the possibility of allowing a bare nominal. This will be taken as evidence that the nominal is a complement in the case of small Ps (*bajo tierra* ‘under earth’) but an A-specifier in the case of big Ps (**debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’).

2.1 Unmodified bare nominals in Spanish

It has been widely observed in the literature (Suñer 1982; Contreras 1985; Bosque 1990; among others) that unmodified bare nominals in Spanish have a restricted distribution. Some examples of these restrictions are given in (4), (5) and (6) below (examples (4) and (5) are taken from Cuervo 2003, and example (6) is adapted from Bosque 1990).

- (4) a. Tus amigos trajeron vino/ copas.
 your friends.NOM brought wine.ACC/ wine-glasses.ACC
 ‘Your friends brought wine/wine glasses.’
- b. *Vino es bueno para la salud.
 wine.NOM is good for the health
 ‘Wine is good for the health.’
- (5) a. Cayeron amigos.
 fell friends.NOM
 ‘(Some) friends dropped by.’
- b. *Amigos cayeron.
 friends.NOM fell
 ‘(Some) friends dropped by.’

⁴ The label “A-specifier” stands for “Argumental specifier.” This term is used to designate an argument that merges as the specifier of the head that selects it as opposed to merging as its complement. For example, in a sentence like *Mary likes cats*, it is standardly assumed that the DP *cats*, which merges with the verb head first, merges as its complement, whereas the DP *Mary* merges as the specifier of *likes cats*, more specifically, as an A-specifier (of this V or, alternatively, of a higher little *v* head).

- (6) a. Fue encontrado petróleo en Jamaica.
 was found oil.NOM in Jamaica
 ‘Oil was found in Jamaica.’
- b. *?Petróleo fue encontrado en Jamaica.
 oil.NOM was found in Jamaica
 ‘Oil was found in Jamaica.’

The contrast between (4a) and (4b) shows that the restriction on bare nominals applies to subjects (4b) and not to objects (4a). The examples with unaccusatives and passives, in (5) and (6) respectively, show, furthermore, that the restriction applies to a subset of subjects, namely, preverbal ones. As we can see from the facts in (5) and (6), the sentences are grammatical if the bare nominal subjects *amigos* ‘friends’ and *petróleo* ‘oil’ appear postverbally, but they are ungrammatical if they appear preverbally. Naturally, if the nominals in (4)–(6) are not bare, the (b) sentences become grammatical.

The observation that bare nominals cannot appear as preverbal subjects is captured by Suñer (1982) as The Naked Noun Phrase Constraint, whose formulation is given in (7).

- (7) *The Naked Noun Phrase Constraint*
 An unmodified common noun in preverbal position cannot be the surface subject of a sentence under conditions of normal stress and intonation.
 (Suñer 1982: 209)

However, as Cuervo (2003) points out, the constraint in (7) needs to be refined. Although it accurately describes the asymmetries in (4)–(6), it fails to capture two important sets of facts: the impossibility of bare nominals as the subjects of unergative verbs and the impossibility of bare nominals as the subjects of small clauses.

In (8) below we see an example where the bare nominal *chicos* ‘kids’ appears as the subject of the unergative verb *festearon* ‘celebrated’ (examples from Cuervo 2003).

- (8) a. *Chicos festejaron.
 kids.NOM celebrated
 ‘Kids celebrated.’
- b. *Festearon chicos.
 celebrated kids.NOM
 ‘Kids celebrated.’
- c. Los chicos festejaron.
 the kids.NOM celebrated
 ‘The kids celebrated.’
- d. Festearon los chicos.
 celebrated the kids.NOM
 ‘The kids celebrated.’

In (8a) *chicos* ‘kids’ is a preverbal subject and the sentence is predicted to be ruled out by (7), which bans, precisely, bare nominals in preverbal subject position. In (8b), on the other hand, the subject *chicos* ‘kids’ appears *postverbally* and, according to (7), is expected to be grammatical (the formulation states that bare nominals are banned when they appear as *preverbal* subjects, and this is not the case in (8b), where *chicos* ‘kids’ appears postverbally). In other words, the formulation in (7) accounts for the facts in (4)–(6) but makes the wrong predictions for (8).

Apart from this, there is a set of facts that is simply not covered by (7). This is the case of bare nominals as the subject of small clauses, an example of which is given in (9) (example from Cuervo 2003).

- (9) *Tu amiga consideraba interesantes películas. (Cf. las películas)
 your friend considered interesting movies.ACC
 ‘Your friend used to consider movies to be interesting.’

In (9) we can see that a bare nominal like *películas* ‘movies’ cannot be the subject of a small clause (in this particular case, it cannot be the subject of *interesantes* ‘interesting’). In order for the ungrammaticality of this sentence to receive the same explanation as the ungrammaticality of the examples mentioned before, the formulation in (7) needs to be revised to include not only the subjects of verbs, but other subjects as well.

Cuervo proposes the following formulation to explain the bare nominal facts.

- (10) *The Naked Noun Phrase Constraint Revised*
 An unmodified common noun cannot be an A-specifier. (Cuervo 2003: 115)

Let’s now briefly review how the new formulation in (10) captures the bare nominal facts presented in this section. The bare nominals *vino* ‘wine’, *amigos* ‘friends’ and *petróleo* ‘oil’ are in complement position in (4a), (5a) and (6a), and they are therefore licit. In contrast, they are A-specifiers in (4b), (5b) and (6b) and they are consequently ruled out. The subject of an unergative verb is always merged as an A-specifier (standardly, of little *v*). This is why a bare nominal such as *chicos* ‘kids’ is never possible as the subject of an unergative verb, independently of whether it appears postverbally (8b) or preverbally (8a). Finally, the bare nominal *películas* ‘movies’ in (9) is merged as the A-specifier of the AP *interesantes* ‘interesting’ (or, alternatively, some higher functional projection). This is disallowed by (10), and its ungrammaticality follows. A fundamental advantage of the formulation in (10) over (7) is that it makes it possible to account for the ungrammaticality of bare nominals not only as the subjects of verbs or adjectives but also in other domains of the grammar. As a matter of fact, the extension of the formulation in (10) to account for the (un)grammaticality of bare nominals in the domain of spatial expressions is, precisely, one of the contributions made by this work.⁵

In the next section I discuss the asymmetric behavior of small and big Ps in their ability to allow bare nominals. Following (10), I argue that this asymmetry is explained if the nominal that follows a small P (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’) is its complement, whereas the apparent complement of a big P (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’) is really in an A-specifier position.

2.2 Small and big Ps and bare nominals

As mentioned in section 1, it is a well-known fact that most varieties of Spanish display pairs of locative prepositions like the ones shown in the (a) and (b) examples below (examples (1)–(3) are repeated as (11)–(13)).

- (11) a. El libro está bajo la mesa.
 the book is under the table
 ‘The book is under the table.’

⁵ One reason that leads Cuervo (2003) to propose the more general formulation in (10) over one that simply bans a bare nominal from being the subject of a predicate is that (10) also makes it possible to account for the ungrammaticality of bare nouns as dative arguments since, under Cuervo’s analysis, datives are always licensed as A-specifiers. The reader is referred to Cuervo (2003) for examples and discussion.

- b. El libro está debajo de la mesa.
the book is DE.under of the table
'The book is under the table.'
- (12) a. Juan estaba escondido tras la columna.
Juan was hidden behind the column
'Juan was hidden behind the column.'
- b. Juan estaba escondido detrás de la columna.
Juan was hidden DE.behind of the column
'Juan was hidden behind the column.'
- (13) a. María se paró ante la catedral.
María SE stood front the cathedral
'María stood in front of the cathedral.'
- b. María se paró delante de la catedral.
María SE stood DE.L.front of the cathedral
'María stood in front of the cathedral.'

It is interesting to note that an unmodified bare nominal such as *tierra* 'earth' can appear as the complement of a small P like *bajo* 'under', as shown in (14).

- (14) El pirata escondió el tesoro bajo tierra.
the pirate hid the treasure under earth
'The pirate hid the treasure underground.'

However, this is not the case for all Ps. A bare nominal cannot be the complement of a big P like *debajo* 'DE.under' (15).

- (15) *El pirata escondió el tesoro debajo de tierra.⁶
the pirate hid the treasure DE.under of earth
'The pirate hid the treasure underground.'

It appears to be the case, furthermore, that the difference in the availability vs. unavailability of bare nominals is not unique to the *bajo* 'under'/*debajo* 'DE.under' pair, but is, rather, a contrast exhibited by small and big Ps in general, as shown below. In (16) we can see one more example with *bajo* 'under' and *debajo* 'DE.under', (17) and (18) are examples with *tras* 'behind'/*detrás* 'DE.behind', and *sobre* 'on' and *encima* 'on.top',⁷ respectively.

- (16) a. La ciudad estaba enterrada bajo nieve.
the city was buried under snow
'The city was buried in snow.'

⁶ As is expected from the behavior of bare nominals in general, examples like (15) tend to become considerably better if the bare nominal is modified or coordinated, as shown below.

- (i) debajo de tierra muy húmeda
DE.under of earth very moist
'under very moist earth'
- (ii) debajo de tierra y arena
DE.under of earth and sand
'under earth and sand'

⁷ Although the Ps in the *sobre* 'on'/*encima* 'on.top' pair are not morphologically related, I have decided to include them here too because they seem to exhibit the same contrast with respect to bare nominals as the other small and big Ps discussed in this work.

- b. *La ciudad estaba enterrada debajo de nieve.
the city was buried DE.under of snow
'The city was buried in snow.'
- (17) a. Había personas escondidas tras muros.
have.PAST people hidden behind walls
'There were people hidden behind walls.'
- b. ?Había personas escondidas detrás de muros.
have.PAST people hidden DE.behind of walls
'There were people hidden behind walls.'
- (18) a. Me gusta pintar sobre madera.
CL_{DAT}.1SG like paint.INF on wood
'I like to paint on wood.'
- b. *Me gusta pintar encima de madera.
CL_{DAT}.1SG like paint.INF on.top of wood
'I like to paint on wood.'

What the data in (14)–(18) show is that whereas a bare nominal is possible as the complement of a small P like *bajo* 'under', *tras* 'behind' and *sobre* 'on', it is not possible as the complement of a big P like *debajo* 'DE.under', *detrás* 'DE.behind' and *encima* 'on.top'. In (16a) *bajo* 'under' is followed by the bare mass noun *nieve* 'snow' and the sentence is grammatical. On the other hand, in (16b) *debajo* 'DE.under' is followed by the same nominal (introduced by *de*) and the sentence is ungrammatical. In a similar fashion, *tras* 'behind' can be followed by the bare plural *muros* 'walls', but a sentence where *detrás* 'DE.behind' is followed by *muros* 'walls' (again, introduced by *de*) is marginal.⁸ Finally, the P *sobre* 'on' can be followed by a bare mass noun like *madera* 'wood'. However, this option is unavailable for *encima* 'on.top'.⁹ I propose that this contrast between small and big Ps follows directly from Cuervo's revised version of the Naked Noun Phrase Constraint, repeated below.

(19) *The Naked Noun Phrase Constraint Revised*

An unmodified common noun cannot be an A-specifier. (Cuervo 2003: 115)

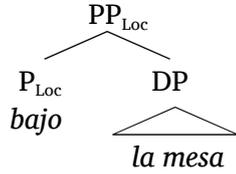
Specifically, I propose that bare nominals are banned in the Spanish PPs in the (b) examples in (16)–(18) for exactly the same reason that they are banned inside the clause: unmodified bare nominals cannot be A-specifiers. This amounts to saying that the nominal that follows a small P like *bajo* 'under', *tras* 'behind', *sobre* 'on' is its complement, whereas the apparent complement of a big P like *debajo* 'DE.under', *detrás* 'DE.behind' and *encima*

⁸ Note that whereas **debajo de nieve* 'DE.under of snow' (16b) and **encima de madera* 'on.top of wood' (18b) are ungrammatical, ?*detrás de muros* 'DE.behind of walls' (17b) is marginal. The reader might wonder what the source of this difference in judgment is. First, it is important to note that (17b) ?*detrás de muros* 'DE.behind of walls' is worse than (17a) *tras muros* 'behind walls', which is the relevant contrast. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that in the case of bare nominals in the clause some bare nominals are deemed ungrammatical, as is the case of *vino* 'wine' in (4b) and *amigos* 'friends' in (5b). In contrast, others, such as *petróleo* 'oil' in (6b), get a slightly better judgment (*?). It is possible that by looking into the contrasts in the clause we may gain some insight into the contrasts found in the realm of Ps. For the time being, I leave this question open.

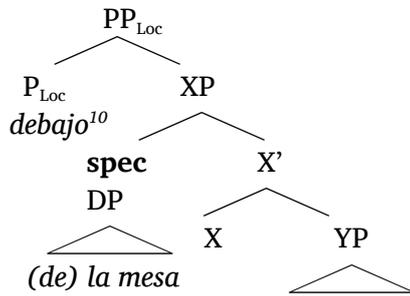
⁹ An objection that might be raised to the data in (14)–(18) is that the small P + bare nominal strings presented here constitute lexicalized phrases of some kind. There is strong evidence, however, that this is not the case. For instance, lexicalized phrases like *bajo llave* 'under key' (meaning "locked") do not admit modification of their parts: **bajo llave segura* 'under key safe' (meaning "safely under lock and key"). In contrast, the small P + bare nominal strings presented here do: *bajo tierra húmeda* 'under earth moist' (meaning "under moist earth").

‘on.top’ is in an A-specifier position. What I propose, then, is that while small Ps have the structure in (20), big Ps have the structure in (21). I have used the small PP *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’ and the big PP *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’ as an example.

(20) Structure for *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’:



(21) Structure for *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’:



In the following section I motivate the structures in (20) and (21). Building on work by Terzi (2005; 2006; 2008; 2010) and others, I argue that (21) contains a silent noun PLACE and that what is standardly taken to be the complement of the locative P, *(de) la mesa* ‘(of) the table’ in (21), is the possessor of silent PLACE. In contrast, I argue that the P in (20) does not select a Possessor-Possessum structure with silent PLACE, but rather a simple DP. This is going to set the stage for section 3, where we see that the numerous predictions made by these structures are borne out.

2.3 Big Ps and silent PLACE

Authors like Terzi (2005; 2006; 2008; 2010) and Noonan (2010), among others, have argued that an unpronounced noun PLACE (henceforth, “silent PLACE”) forms part of the structure of locative Ps. They have proposed, furthermore, that what is standardly taken to be the complement of the locative P (e.g. *la mesa* ‘the table’ in *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE. under of the table’) is the possessor of silent PLACE. In this section, I very briefly go over the arguments put forward by Terzi (2010) to support her analysis. I propose that while locative Ps can select a Possessor-Possessum structure containing a silent PLACE element, this is not the case for all Ps. While big Ps like *debajo* ‘DE.under’ do select this structure, small Ps like *bajo* ‘under’ select a single DP complement. I argue that by proposing these different structures for big and small Ps, we can arrive at a straightforward explanation for a series of syntactic and interpretative asymmetries exhibited by these groups of Ps. These asymmetries are the object of discussion of section 3.

One of the main pieces of evidence that leads Terzi (2010) to propose that there is a silent noun PLACE in the structure of locative Ps comes from genitive clitics in Modern

¹⁰ In (21) the P *debajo* ‘DE.under’ is shown as an unanalyzed block. However, I consider this element to be bimorphemic. I go back to this point in the concluding remarks.

Greek. In Modern Greek, when a clitic appears as the complement of a locative P it must necessarily appear in the genitive case, as shown in (22) and (23) below (examples taken from Terzi 2010).

- (22) Stathika piso tis.
stood-1SG behind she-CL-GEN
'I stood behind her.'
- (23) Kathomun epano tu.
was.sitting-1SG on he-CL-GEN
'I was sitting on him.'

As genitive case appears primarily on the complement of nominals in Modern Greek, this seems to constitute strong evidence that a nominal element of some kind is involved in these structures.

Once having established the existence of a nominal in the structure of locative Ps, Terzi points out that there is a strong parallelism between adjectives and locative Ps. This leads her to propose that locative Ps are not themselves nouns, as has been argued for in the literature (Marácz 1984; Bresnan 1994; Collins 2004; Aboh 2010), but that they are rather modifiers, modifiers of a noun, specifically, they are modifiers of silent PLACE.

Terzi then extends her analysis of Greek locative Ps to Spanish locative Ps, and suggests that locative Ps in Spanish can also be argued to contain an unpronounced PLACE noun. The presence of this unpronounced noun is responsible for the "nominal flavor" of these Ps, an observation that has very often been reported in the literature, but that has never received a satisfactory explanation. Specifically, Terzi points out that the presence of silent PLACE might explain, among other things, why a locative PP headed by *debajo* 'DE. under' in Spanish can follow a P like *desde* 'from' as shown in (24) below, a distribution that is typical of nouns. It might also provide a straightforward explanation for why a locative P like *detrás* 'DE.behind' can be followed by a possessive, as shown in (25) (examples taken from Terzi 2010).

- (24) El gato me espiaba desde debajo de la mesa.
the cat CL_{ACC}.1SG was.spying from DE.under of the table
'The cat was spying on me from under the table.'
- (25) Venía un hombre detrás mío.¹¹
was.coming a man DE.behind mine
'A man was coming behind me.'

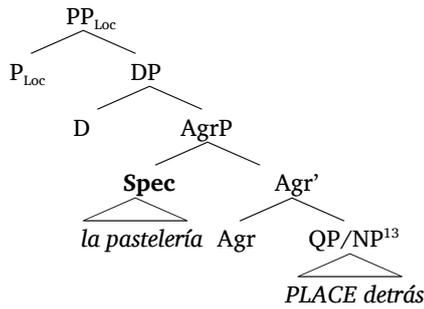
The analysis that Terzi arrives at is the one shown in simplified form in (26) below.

¹¹ An anonymous reviewer draws attention to the fact that when the nominal that is the complement of the P is replaced by a possessive pronoun, the possessive pronoun always surfaces in the masculine singular, independently of the gender and number of the nominal it replaces.

- (i) debajo de la mesa
DE.under of the.FEM table.FEM
- (ii) debajo **suyo** [suyo = de la mesa]
DE.under POSS.MASC.SG

As the reviewer points out, these facts, also discussed in Fábregas (2007), support the view that there is a silent PLACE element used as a target for agreement.

(26) *Structure for detrás de la pastelería*¹² ‘behind the pastry shop’ (Terzi 2010)



My analysis of small and big Ps in Spanish will considerably build on Terzi’s analysis of Greek and Spanish locative Ps. My proposal will, however, differ from hers in certain important respects. I will assume with Terzi that it is necessary to postulate a silent noun PLACE in the structure of locative Ps. However, although Terzi suggests that silent PLACE is present in the complement of all locative Ps, I will propose that it is present in the complement of big Ps (e.g. *debajo* ‘DE.under’) but it is absent from the complement of small Ps (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’). For big Ps I will then propose an analysis à la Terzi, where what is traditionally taken to be the complement of the locative (e.g. *la mesa* ‘the table’ in *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’) is actually the possessor of silent PLACE. In contrast, for small Ps I will propose an analysis where what we see is what we get: the complement of the locative P is just a DP.¹⁴ Interestingly, if we go back to the arguments put forth by Terzi to argue in favor of the presence of a silent noun PLACE in locatives in Spanish, we can see that the arguments presented to account for the ‘nominal flavor’ of Ps hold good of big Ps, as seen in (24) and (25) above, but not of small Ps, as shown below. (27) is considered marginal by most speakers, and (28) is rejected as ungrammatical.

(27) ?El gato me espiaba desde bajo la mesa.
 the cat CL_{ACC}.1SG was.spying from under the table
 ‘The cat was spying on me from under the table.’

(28) *Venía un hombre tras mío.
 was.coming a man behind mine
 ‘A man was coming behind me.’

I will therefore propose that there is a silent noun PLACE in the complement of big Ps but not in the complement of small Ps.

Another important point in which my analysis will differ from Terzi’s is that I will not assume that the locative is a modifier of silent PLACE. I will propose rather that it is a P head, the head of PP_{Loc} in (25)/(26), selecting either a Possessor-Possesum structure (in the case of big Ps) or a single DP (in the case of small Ps). The reason for this is that although a locative-as-modifier analysis may be justified for Modern Greek, there is in principle no evidence that points in this direction for Spanish. As adjectives are the only words that can modify a noun directly in Spanish, I assume that under a locative-as-modifier analysis this is what locative Ps would need to be considered. However, small

¹² Under Terzi’s analysis the [QP/NP PLACE detrás] constituent then moves to the specifier of DP triggering the appearance of *de* in D, yielding *detrás de la pastelería* ‘DE.behind of the pastry shop’ *behind the pastry shop*.

¹³ Inside the QP/NP PLACE detrás, the adjective detrás would be a postmodifier of PLACE, just as *blanca* ‘white’ is a postmodifier of *flor* ‘flower’ in *la flor blanca*, literally ‘the flower white’.

¹⁴ It is important to mention that the idea that some locative Ps select a complement with silent PLACE whereas others do not is entertained but later on dismissed by Terzi (Terzi 2010).

and big Ps in Spanish do not exhibit adjectival properties. For one thing, they do not allow comparatives and degree words, as shown in the examples below.

- (29) a. Pusimos los estantes sobre la mesada.¹⁵
 put.PAST.1PL the shelves over the counter
 ‘We put the shelves above the counter.’
- b. *Pusimos los estantes **muy** sobre la mesada
 put.PAST.1PL the shelves very over the counter
 ‘We put the shelves too high up above the counter.’
- c. *Pusimos un estante **más** sobre la mesada **que el otro**.
 put.PAST.1PL a shelf more above the counter than the other
 ‘We put one shelf higher above the counter than the other one.’
- (30) a. Juan se paró detrás de la columna.
 Juan SE stood DE.behind of the column
 ‘Juan stood behind the column.’
- b. *Juan se paró **muy** detrás de la columna.
 Juan SE stood very DE.behind of the column
 ‘Juan stood a considerable distance behind the column.’
- c. *Juan se paró **más** detrás de la columna **que Pedro**.¹⁶
 Juan SE stood more DE.behind of the column than Pedro.
 ‘Juan stood further behind the column than Pedro.’

In short, I have shown that at least in Spanish locative Ps do not exhibit adjectival properties.¹⁷ If it is only adjectives that can modify a noun directly in Spanish, and locatives are not adjectives, then, nothing else said, the null hypothesis is that they are not modifiers of a noun. In other words, they are not modifiers of silent PLACE. Although small and big Ps may diachronically derive from adjectives as seen in, for instance, the case of the locative P *bajo* (*bajo la mesa*, literally ‘low the table’, *under the table*) and its adjectival counterpart *bajo/a* (*una montaña baja* ‘a mountain low’, *a low mountain*), synchronically they do not show any trace of adjectival behavior. I will thus simply take them to be Ps.

¹⁵ *Mesada* is a word used in Rioplatense Spanish to refer to the kitchen counter.

¹⁶ This sentence has a grammatical reading under which the speaker is not comparing how far behind the column Pedro and Juan are, but is comparing, rather, whose position can be better described as ‘being behind the column.’ In other words, the interpretation would correspond to something like ‘Juan stood more properly behind the column than Pedro.’ Under this reading, *más* ‘more’ is not comparing distances but, as suggested by Christina Tortora (p.c), seems to be acting as a modifier of (perhaps) a silent PROPERLY adverb. For this reason, I will not take this example to imply that locative Ps in Spanish admit comparatives. Note that even nominals, which clearly admit no comparatives, allow this comparative ‘properly’ reading, as in, for instance *This is more a magazine than a book*, where the interpretation seems to be roughly ‘This object should more properly be referred to as a magazine than a book.’

¹⁷ An anonymous reviewer mentions that, in the context of a marathon, it would be felicitous to utter sentences like the those below.

- (i) Juan se paró **muy** detrás del pelotón de entrada.
 Juan SE stood very DE.behind of.the group of entry
 ‘Juan stood very much behind the group at the entrance.’
- (ii) Juan se paró **más** detrás del pelotón **que Pedro**.
 Juan SE stood more DE.behind of.the group than Pedro
 ‘Juan stood further back behind the group than Pedro.’

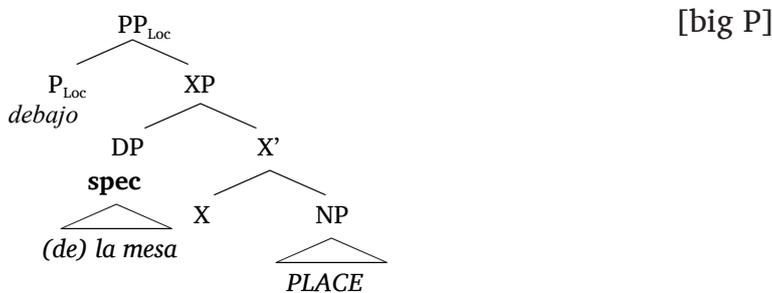
According to what the reviewer suggests, in these examples *muy* ‘very’ and *más* ‘more’ are true degree words measuring and comparing distance (they would not be modifiers of a silent PROPERLY element like in the examples discussed in footnote 16). These examples sound marginal to the author’s ears. However, what these facts may be showing is that varieties which accept (i) and (ii) should most probably have an analysis of big Ps closer to Terzi’s than what is proposed in this work.

To summarize this section, in this work I propose an analysis where small and big Ps project different structures. For big Ps like *debajo* ‘DE.under’, I follow Terzi and postulate that these Ps select a Possessor-Possesum structure where the apparent complement of the P is really the possessor of silent PLACE. In contrast, small Ps like *bajo* ‘under’ select a DP complement. The relevant structures for big and small Ps are shown below.

(31) Structure for *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’



(32) Structure for *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’



3 Other syntactic asymmetries between small and big Ps

In this section I analyze two other syntactic asymmetries exhibited by small and big Ps: namely, the (un)availability of coordination and adverb intervention facts. I argue that these otherwise puzzling phenomena can receive a natural explanation if we assume the structures proposed in this work. In section 4 I discuss the interpretative contrasts: in particular, the availability of (non-)locative meanings and the (non-)delimited interpretation of the nominal.

3.1 Coordination

One surprising contrast between small and big Ps is that whereas coordination of the complement of a big P is perfectly grammatical, coordination of the complement of a small P is considerably degraded, as illustrated in (33a) and (33b), respectively.

- (33) a. Hay migas debajo [de la cama y de la mesa].
 have.PRES breadcrumbs DE.under of the bed and of the table
 ‘There are breadcrumbs under the bed and the table.’
- b. *?Hay migas bajo [la cama y la mesa].
 have.PRES breadcrumbs under the bed and the table
 ‘There are breadcrumbs under the bed and the table.’

What makes this set of data particularly puzzling is the fact that phrases like *la cama* ‘the bed’ and *la mesa* ‘the table’ can easily be coordinated in other syntactic positions, as shown in (34).

- (34) a. [La cama y la mesa] están en el depósito. [subject]
 the bed and the table are in the warehouse
 ‘The bed and the table are in the warehouse.’
- b. Tenemos que lustrar [la cama y la mesa]. [object]
 have.PRES.1PL that polish.INF the bed and the table
 ‘We have to polish the bed and the table.’

The unavailability of coordination in (33b) remains, therefore, somewhat of a mystery.

3.1.1 Case assigners and coordinate structures

Interestingly, Demonte (1991) points out a context in which coordination of nominals is disallowed. Her example is given in (35) below.

- (35) *Visité a [mi hermana y la tía Enriqueta].¹⁸
 visited.1SG A my sister and the aunt Enriqueta
 ‘I visited my sister and Aunt Enriqueta.’

Compare this with the following grammatical sentence.

- (36) Visité [a mi hermana] y [a la tía Enriqueta].
 visited.1SG A my sister and A the aunt Enriqueta
 ‘I visited my sister and Aunt Enriqueta.’

Demonte (1991) relates the contrast between (35) and (36) to Vergnaud’s (1974) and Jaeggli’s (1982) observation that Case-assigners cannot be omitted in coordinate structures. The unavailability of coordination in (35) follows, Demonte (1991) claims, if *a* is taken to be a Case-assigner in these examples.

With this observation in mind, I suggest that the ungrammaticality of (33b) receives the same explanation as the ungrammaticality of (35). In other words, I propose that in the complement of *bajo* ‘under’ there is actually more than meets the eye. Specifically, I claim that there is a Case-assigner, and that it is precisely the presence of this element in the structure that is responsible for the ungrammaticality of (33b). I outline the specifics of this analysis in the subsection to follow.

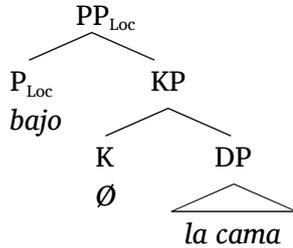
3.1.2 Small and big Ps and Case

As discussed in section 2, Ps like *bajo* ‘under’, *ante* ‘front’ and *tras* ‘behind’ do not seem to exhibit adjectival properties (for instance, they do not admit degree words or comparatives). However, it seems clear that they are diachronically derived from adjectives. We might argue, then, that although they are unlike adjectives in most regards, they still share with them the impossibility to directly Case-mark their complement. It might be possible then (and most probably likely, if Case is only assigned by functional heads) to postulate that the complement of a small P receives case not from P_{Loc} itself but from a Case-assigner that happens to be null. What this means is that positing a null Case-assigner in these structures may not only capture the facts, as we will see shortly, but might in fact, be theoretically welcome.

¹⁸ An anonymous reviewer points out that while a sentence like (35) is ungrammatical if it describes two events, it becomes grammatical if it describes a single event. In other words, (35) is possible if, for example, my sister and Aunt Enriqueta live together and a single visit is involved. However, the focus of the discussion in the text is the two-event-reading, the one that renders the omission of *a* ungrammatical. I make a brief comment on the single-event reading in the context of Ps in footnote 23.

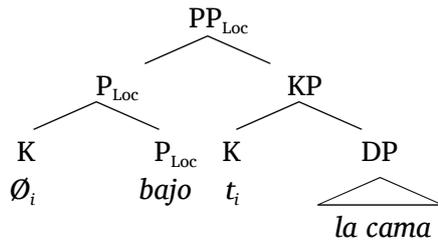
To be concrete, what I propose is that a small PP like *bajo la cama* ‘under the bed’ has the structure schematized in (37), where \emptyset represents a null Case-assigner.

(37) *Structure for bajo la cama ‘under the bed’*



I further propose that this null Case-assigner is affixal in nature and needs to attach to an appropriate host. I take P_{Loc} to be such a host. In the example above, \emptyset undergoes head-to-head movement from the head position of KP and attaches to P_{Loc} *bajo* ‘under’. This is shown in (38).

(38) *Attachment of \emptyset to P_{Loc} in bajo la cama ‘under the bed’*



It is worth pointing out that the analysis of the null Case-assigner proposed here builds on Pesetsky’s (1992) analysis of the null complementizer in English. Pesetsky (1992) proposes that the null complementizer is an affix that must undergo attachment to a lexical head. This affixation takes place through head movement of C to V. His account therefore explains, among other things, why the null complementizer is possible in (39) but not in (40) (examples from Bošković & Lasnik 2003).

(39) (?)It was widely believed [_{CP} C [_{IP} he liked linguistics]]

(40) * [_{CP} C [_{IP} He liked linguistics]] was widely believed.

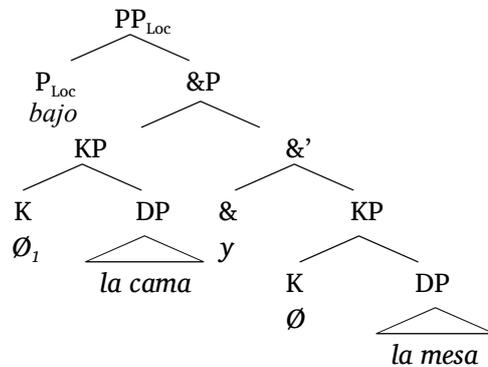
In (39), null C incorporates into V. However, (40) is ruled out because in this structure null C would be moving out of an island (specifically, a subject). The parallelism between null K and null C will be taken up again at the end of this section.

I now go on to show how, with these two assumptions in mind (namely, that there is a Case-assigner in the structure of Ps, and that this Case-assigner needs to attach to a host), the mystery of the ungrammaticality of (33b) suddenly dissolves. Example (33b) is repeated below as (41).

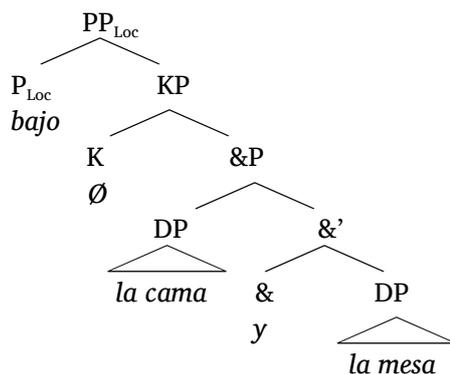
(41) *?Hay migas bajo [la cama y la mesa].
 have.PRES breadcrumbs under the bed and the table
 ‘There are breadcrumbs under the bed and the table.’

As mentioned before, it has been observed (Vergnaud 1974; Jaeggli 1982; Demonte 1991), that Case-assigners cannot be omitted in coordinate structures. What this means is that the structure of *bajo la cama y la mesa* ‘under the bed and the table’ has to necessarily be the one sketched in (42) and, crucially, cannot be the one in (43).

(42) **Structure (A)** for *bajo la cama y la mesa* ‘under the bed and the table’¹⁹



(43) **Structure (B)** for *bajo la cama y la mesa* ‘under the bed and the table’
[IMPOSSIBLE TREE]



As the structure in (43) is not possible (because, as was mentioned above, Case-assigners cannot be omitted in coordinate structures) we are simply going to disregard it.²⁰ We will therefore just focus on (42). By looking at the structure in (42) we can now get a clearer idea as to why *bajo la cama y la mesa* ‘under the bed and the table’ is ungrammatical. There are, as a matter of fact, several reasons why the structure in (42) fails. Let’s review them. In the first place, it is clear that the first null Case-assigner (\emptyset_1) cannot extract without falling into a Left Branch Violation (KP is the specifier of &P). In the second place, although the second Case-assigner (\emptyset_2) is in a position out of which it could in principle extract, nothing else said, it would not be able to incorporate into *bajo* ‘under’ without violating locality (there is an intervening head, namely, “&”). As one of these Case-assigners (\emptyset_1) and maybe even both, fail to incorporate, the structure is ruled out by some form of the Stranded Affix Filter (in the sense of Lasnik 1981). Finally, it is worth

¹⁹ I am assuming here a Conjunction-as-head analysis, following work by Thiersch (1985), Kayne (1994), Munn (1994), among others.

²⁰ As stated above, this structure is impossible for (41). For the availability of this structure for other PPs under specific circumstances, see footnote 23.

mentioning that even if both Case-assigners could extract (that is to say, in the unlikely event that we should be able to propose an alternative coordinate structure in which \emptyset_1 and \emptyset_2 could extract and incorporate) we would still be faced with a situation in which two affixes of exactly the same kind incorporate into a single host, something that is, at best, suspect.²¹

With the ungrammaticality of (41) now explained, let's take a brief look at (33a), the big P counterpart of (33b), repeated here as (44).

- (44) Hay migas debajo [de la cama y de la mesa].
 have.PRES breadcrumbs DE.under of the bed and of the table
 'There are breadcrumbs under the bed and the table.'

Example (44) does not of itself tell us anything interesting about the structure of big Ps. Its grammaticality is fully expected, as coordination of elements of the same category (with the exception precisely of the nominals mentioned in this section) is assumed to be possible. However, notice that (45) is ungrammatical, on a par with (41) and (35).

- (45) *Hay migas debajo de [la cama y la mesa].
 have.PRES breadcrumbs DE.under of the bed and the table
 'There are breadcrumbs under the bed and the table.'

The ungrammaticality of (45) is more interesting because it seems to confirm the intuition that *de* 'of' in the complement of big Ps is also a Case-assigner. In other words, sentence (45) is ungrammatical on analogy with (41) (and Demonte's (35)). What this means is that both the nominal in the complement of small Ps and the nominal in the complement of big Ps are embedded in an outer KP layer.²² One important difference between these KPs, though, is that the K in the complement of a small P is null, whereas the K in the complement of a big P is overt, a matter to which I return at the end of this section.

Finally, it is important to point out that the asymmetry in coordination facts exhibited by the *bajo* 'under'/'*debajo* 'DE.under' pair is not unique to these Ps but, as expected, extends to the class of small and big Ps as a whole. This is confirmed by the contrast between the (a) and (b) examples below.

- (46) a. ?Juan se paró ante [la catedral y la casa de gobierno].
 Juan SE stood front the cathedral and the house of government
 'Juan stood in front of the cathedral and the house of government.'
 b. Juan se paró delante [de la catedral y de la casa de gobierno].
 Juan SE stood DE.L.front of the cathedral and of the house of government
 'Juan stood in front of the cathedral and the house of government.'
- (47) a. ?Apoyó el bolso sobre [el dibujo y la tarjeta].
 placed.3SG the bag on the drawing and the card
 'He/she placed the bag on the drawing and the card.'

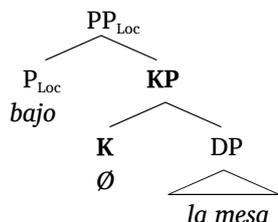
²¹ For a very interesting discussion regarding how extraction is possible out of KPs in Spanish but impossible out of lexical PPs see Jiménez-Fernández (2017; 2020).

²² As mentioned in the main text, there would not be a single KP but rather coordination of KPs in the case of sentences like (33a) and (33b).

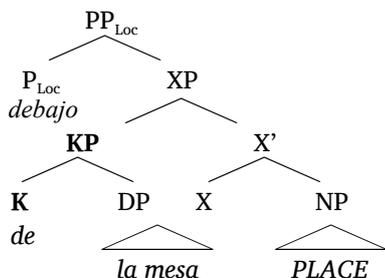
- b. Apoyó el bolso encima [del dibujo y de la tarjeta].
 placed.3SG the bag on.top of.the drawing and of the card
 ‘He/she placed the bag on top of the drawing and the card.’²³

In sum, the structures we end up with for small and big Ps (with the addition of the KP layer argued for here) are the ones schematized in (48) and (49) below.

- (48) Structure of a small P like bajo ‘under’ in bajo la mesa ‘under the table’



- (49) Structure of a big P like debajo ‘DE.under’ in debajo de la mesa ‘DE.under of the table’



Before closing this section, I would like to point out a welcome consequence that follows from the structures in (48) and (49). I proposed earlier that both the nominal selected by a small P and the nominal selected by a big P were KPs. I postulated that in small PPs K was null and affixal and I pointed out that in big PPs K was overt (in this latter case, spelled out as *de* ‘of’). However, I did not provide any explanation as to why K had to be null in one case and overt in the other. Interestingly note that in (48) KP is the *complement* of P_{Loc} but in (49) KP is the *specifier* of the complement of P_{Loc}. The nullness vs. overtness of K in one case and the other might very well follow from this fact. In (48) K is in a position out of which it can extract and subsequently attach to P_{Loc} by means of head movement.

²³ An anonymous reviewer points out that, just as was the case with (35) *Visité a [mi hermana] y [la tía Enriqueta]*, sentences like (46a) and (47a) are grammatical if the situation in question is conceived of as a single event. In the case of (46), if the cathedral and the house of government are next to each other, it might in principle be possible to stand in front of them both. As to (47a), if the drawing and the card are next to each other or on top of each other, it might also be possible to place a bag on top of both objects at the same time. Under these specific scenarios, which involve a single event, (46a) and (47a) become available. It is therefore likely that the (?) judgment for (46a) and (47a) actually stems from the fact that these sentences are ungrammatical under one reading (the two-event reading) and grammatical under another one (the single-event reading). Under the grammatical single-event reading, both DPs are embedded under a single KP layer and extraction of the null K is expected to be possible. However, as the single-event reading may not be easily accessible to speakers, the sentence is perceived as marginal. In contrast, a single-event reading is not available for (41) *Hay migas bajo [la cama] y [la mesa]* as it is for (46a) and (47a). The interpretation of (41) as a single event would require a given set of breadcrumbs to be both under the table *and* under the bed, an impossible scenario. With the two-event reading leading to ungrammaticality, and the single-event reading not being available for pragmatic reasons, sentence (41) fails on both fronts. This would explain why speakers find (41) more degraded than both (46a) and (47a).

However, this is not the case in (49). In this latter structure K is embedded in a specifier and extraction of K would inevitably result in a Left Branch Violation. This might be the reason why overt non-affixal *de* ‘of’ must surface instead. It would be possible then to say that the structures for small and big Ps proposed have the side advantage of explaining why (50a) is possible but (50b) is not.

- (50) a. El libro está debajo de la mesa.
 the book is DE.under of the table
 ‘The book is under the table.’
- b. *El libro está debajo la mesa.
 the book is DE.under the table
 ‘The book is under the table.’²⁴

This brings us back again to the parallel between null K and null C mentioned earlier in this section. The claim made here is that the ill-formedness of (50b) receives the same explanation as the ill-formedness of (40) (repeated as (51) below): both involve movement out of an island.

- (51) *He liked linguistics was widely believed.

3.2 Adverb intervention

I will now present data that shows that when an adverb intervenes between a small P and its complement the sentence is ungrammatical, but when an adverb intervenes between a big P and its complement the sentence is acceptable to some speakers and unacceptable to others. I argue, once again, that these facts constitute evidence in favor of the structures presented in this work.

Consider the following:

- (52) a. Hay migas bajo (***probablemente**) la cama.
 have.PRES breadcrumbs under probably the bed
 ‘There are probably breadcrumbs under the bed.’
- b. Hay migas debajo (%**probablemente**) de la cama.
 have.PRES breadcrumbs DE.under probably of the bed
 ‘There are probably breadcrumbs under the bed.’

What we can see from the facts above is that an adverb like *probablemente* ‘probably’ cannot surface between *bajo* ‘under’ and its complement *la cama* ‘the bed’. However, when *probablemente* ‘probably’ occurs between *debajo* ‘DE.under’ and its complement (introduced by *de* ‘of’), some speakers find it grammatical and some others do not (as shown by the “%” symbol). As expected, the same contrast is exhibited by the other small/big P pairs, as shown below.

- (53) a. Juan se escondió tras (***probablemente**) la columna.
 Juan SE hid behind probably the column
 ‘Juan probably hid behind the column.’

²⁴ Note that we have an explanation for the grammaticality of (50a) and for the ungrammaticality of (50b). We have also provided an explanation for the availability of *El libro está bajo la mesa* ‘The book is under the table.’ This sentence is grammatical because in this structure the null Case-assigner is in a position out of which it can extract and incorporate into its host. However, nothing said so far accounts for the ungrammaticality of the fourth member of the paradigm: *El libro está bajo de la mesa* ‘The book is under of the table.’ In other words, while we have provided an explanation for why the null Case-assigner *can* appear in the complement of a small P, we have no explanation for why it looks like it *must* do so (thus ruling out **bajo de la mesa* ‘under of the table’). For the time being, I leave this question open.

- b. Juan se escondió detrás (%**probablemente**) de la columna.
 Juan SE hid DE.behind probably of the column
 ‘Juan probably hid behind the column.’
- (54) a. Deberíamos pararnos ante (***quizás**) la estatua de mármol.
 should.1PL stand.INF.CL front perhaps the statue of marble
 ‘We should perhaps stand in front of the marble statue.’
- b. Deberíamos pararnos delante (%**quizás**) de la estatua de mármol.
 should.1PL stand.INF.CL DE.L.front perhaps of the statue of marble
 ‘We should perhaps stand in front of the marble statue.’

What I suggest here is that these facts can be easily accommodated if we assume the structures for small and big Ps proposed so far, and a general restriction on adjunction, such as McCloskey’s Adjunction Prohibition (McCloskey 2006).

3.2.1 McCloskey’s (2006) Adjunction Prohibition

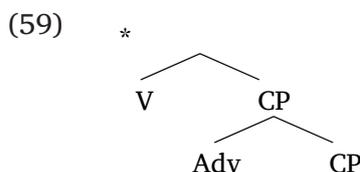
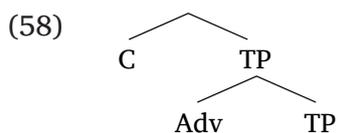
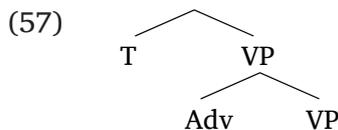
McCloskey (2006) discusses the adjunction possibilities of a group of adverbs that typically occupy a left peripheral position in TP. This group of adverbs includes, among others, temporal modifiers at the sentential level such as *usually*, *in general*, *most of the time*, *yesterday*, *when he arrived*. He observes that many of these adjuncts can appear on the left edge of TP (55a), and many of them can also be adjoined to VP (55b) (examples from McCloskey 2006).

- (55) a. **Usually** I understand what he’s talking about.
- b. I would **usually** go to Bundoran for my holidays.

However, these adverbs cannot appear to the left of the complementizer when they modify material inside the embedded clause. The examples below are all ungrammatical if the adverbial is construed with the lower clause (examples from McCloskey 2006).

- (56) a. ***In general** that he understands what is going on is fairly clear.
- b. *She swore **after she finished her thesis** that she would move to Paris.

McCloskey thus schematizes this observation in the following way.



What the representations above show is that while adjunction to the VP complement of T (57) and adjunction to the TP complement of C (58) are possible, adjunction to the CP complement of V (59) is not. To capture these facts, McCloskey posits the following restriction on adjunction, which he labels the Adjunction Prohibition.

(60) *The Adjunction Prohibition*

Adjunction to a phrase which is s-selected by a lexical (open class) head is ungrammatical. (McCloskey 2006: 93)

I now go on to show how the Adjunction Prohibition can help us account for the different possibilities of adjunction for small and big Ps.

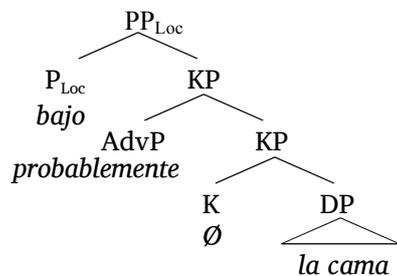
3.2.2 Small and big Ps and the Adjunction Prohibition

Let's go back to the data in (52a) and (52b), repeated below as (61a) and (61b), and see how the Adjunction Prohibition can shed light on the patterns we observe.

- (61) a. Hay migas bajo (***probablemente**) la cama.
 have.PRES breadcrumbs under probably the bed
 'There are probably breadcrumbs under the bed.'
- b. Hay migas debajo (%**probablemente**) de la cama.
 have.PRES breadcrumbs DE.under probably of the bed
 'There are probably breadcrumbs under the bed.'

According to the structure we proposed for small Ps, in (61a) *probablemente* 'probably' would be adjoined to KP, as shown in (62) below.

(62) *Adjunction of probablemente 'probably' in bajo probablemente la cama 'under, probably, the bed'*

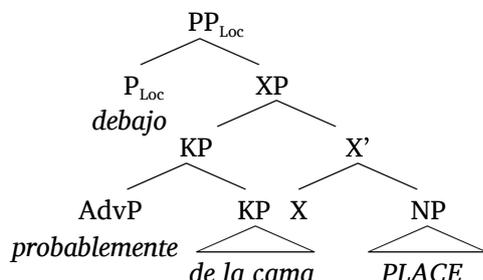


Here, *probablemente* 'probably' is adjoined to a phrase s-selected by a lexical head. Specifically, it is adjoined to the complement of the lexical head *bajo* 'under'. This is precisely what the Adjunction Prohibition bans, so its ungrammaticality is expected.²⁵

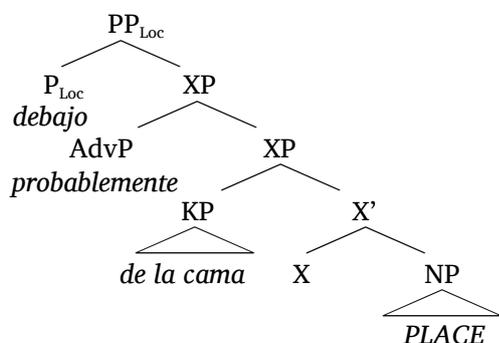
²⁵ Note that I do not suggest that adjunction to DP is another possibility. In other words, I do not propose the following structure as another option for the attachment of the adverbial in (61a): *bajo* [_{KP} ∅ [_{DP} *probablemente* [_{DP} *la cama*]]]. If this site of attachment were indeed possible, the sentence would be incorrectly predicted to be grammatical under this second parsing, as the adverbial would be attached to a phrase selected by a functional head (K) (something deemed to be possible by the Adjunction Prohibition) and not to a phrase s-selected by a lexical head. However, adjunction to a constituent smaller than a KP appears to be banned. Note that a string like **la probablemente cama* 'the probably bed' (with adjunction of the adverbial to NP) is impossible, independently of its distribution. Also, adjunction of *probablemente* 'probably' to DP is ungrammatical in a string like **debajo de probablemente la cama* 'DE.under of probably the bed.' We can therefore conclude that adjunction of *probablemente* 'probably' to the DP in *bajo* [_{KP} ∅ [_{DP} *probablemente* [_{DP} *la cama*]]] is not possible.

In (61b), there should be two possible sites of attachment for *probablemente* ‘probably’, as schematized in (63) below.

- (63) *Adjunction of probablemente* ‘probably’ to *de la cama in debajo probablemente de la cama* ‘DE.under probably of the bed’
 a. *Possibility 1*



- b. *Possibility 2*



In (63a) *probablemente* ‘probably’ is adjoined to the KP *de la cama* ‘of the bed’. However, this is not the only option. As we can see from (63b), another possibility is that the adverb should be adjoined to the whole XP *de la cama PLACE* ‘of the bed PLACE’. It looks like now we have an explanation for why some speakers find (61b) acceptable and others do not. The adjunction in (63a) gives rise to grammaticality: the Adjunction Prohibition bans adjunction to a phrase which is s-selected by a lexical head, but as is clear from (63a) KP is not s-selected by *debajo* ‘DE.under’ (it is the specifier of its complement), so adjunction to KP is predicted to be possible. On the other hand, the adjunction in (63b) gives rise to ungrammaticality. In this latter case, *probablemente* ‘probably’ is adjoined to XP, and XP is s-selected by *debajo* ‘DE.under;’ it is its complement. This explains the mixed judgments.

4 The interpretation of small and big Ps

4.1 Locative vs. non-locative readings

Another important respect in which small and big Ps differ is that small Ps may give rise to PPs with a non-locative reading, whereas this is hardly ever the case for big Ps. The examples below illustrate this asymmetry. Example (64) shows this contrast for *bajo* ‘under’ and *debajo* ‘DE.under’, (65) for *tras* ‘behind’ and *detrás* ‘DE.behind,’ and (66) for *ante* ‘front’ and *delante* ‘DE.L.front’.

- (64) Estos chicos están *debajo de/bajo mi responsabilidad.
 these kids are DE.under of/under my responsibility
 ‘These kids are under my responsibility.’

- (65) Nicolás decidió seguir *detrás de/tras los pasos de su padre.
 Nicolás decided follow.INF DE.behind of/behind the steps of his father
 ‘Nicolás decided to follow in his father’s footsteps.’
- (66) Nos quedamos sin palabras *delante de/ante su generosidad.
 CL.1PL remained without words DE.L.front of/ front his generosity
 ‘His generosity left us speechless.’

This contrast can be explained if big PPs have in their structure a silent PLACE element.²⁶ As small PPs do not have such an element, the locative interpretation is not forced on them.²⁷

4.2 (Non-)delimitedness

There is another interesting respect in which small and big Ps differ. Although speakers typically report no difference in meaning between sentences like (67a) and (67b), they do report a contrast between the (a) and (b) examples in (68)–(69).

- (67) a. Se paró bajo el toldo.
 SE stood under the canopy
 ‘He/she stood under the canopy.’
- b. Se paró debajo del toldo.
 SE stood DE.under of.the canopy
 ‘He/she stood under the canopy.’
- (68) a. Nos acostamos a descansar bajo el sol.
 CL.1PL lay to rest.INF under the sun
 ‘We lay down to rest in the sun.’
- b. #Nos acostamos a descansar debajo del sol.
 CL.1PL lay to rest.INF DE.under of.the sun
 ‘We lay down to rest right underneath the sun.’
- (69) a. Me gusta dormir bajo las estrellas.
 CL.1SG like sleep.INF under the stars
 ‘I like to sleep under the stars.’
- b. #Me gusta dormir debajo de las estrellas.
 CL.1SG like sleep.INF DE.under of the stars
 ‘I like to sleep right underneath the stars.’

²⁶ The following appears to be an exception to the claim that big Ps do not give rise to a non-locative interpretation: *No hay que olvidarse que hay una familia detrás* ‘no have.PRES forget.SE that have.PRES a family DE.behind’ (‘One must not forget that he has a family’). The most salient reading of this sentence is purely non-locative. It means that one must not forget that one’s negative actions or comments towards somebody will affect that person’s family, too.

Also worth noting (thanks to an anonymous reviewer) is the fact that the big P *detrás* ‘DE.behind’ can refer to location in time (in addition to location in place). The reviewer provides the following example from European Colloquial Spanish: *Nos dieron a comer una sopa, y detrás de eso, un filete* ‘CL_{DAT}.1PL gave.3PL to eat a soup and DE.behind of that a steak.’ It could be the case that, as the reviewer suggests, silent PLACE is actually a more general deictic or spatio-temporal element. This does not affect the general proposal made in this work, though.

²⁷ If it is true that small PPs do not contain a silent PLACE element as part of their structure, and if it is also true that silent PLACE is responsible for the locative interpretation of PPs, then we still need to explain where the locative interpretation comes from when small PPs such as *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’, do express location. In other words, if there is no silent PLACE element in *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’, it would seem to follow that the interpretation should be non-locative, contrary to fact. Explaining how we get a locative interpretation in these cases (without silent PLACE) does not seem to be an easy task. However, those who postulate a silent PLACE element for both what I call small and big Ps (as for instance, Terzi 2010) have to face the other side of the coin: how to somehow “suppress” PLACE in the non-locative examples with small Ps in (64)–(66). This task does not seem to me to be easy either. I leave this question open.

The (b) examples in (68) and (69) are not ungrammatical but are semantically anomalous. The only contexts in which sentences like (68b) or (69b) would be acceptable would be, for instance, in a situation in which there is a fake sun and fake stars and the speaker decides to lie right under them (as in, for instance, the case of glow-in-the-dark stars and a glow-in-the-dark sun in a child's room). The intuition seems to be that for the (b) sentences to be felicitous, the Figure (the speaker's body in (68b)) and the Ground (the sun in (68b)) need to be somehow aligned. In other words, it looks like the big P examples necessarily give rise to a more 'punctual' reading of the Ground. The nominal has to be understood as having clearly defined boundaries; it has to be interpreted as delimited. In contrast, in the small P examples the Ground can receive a non-delimited interpretation.²⁸ Note that this effect is not exclusive to the *bajo* 'under'/'*debajo* 'DE.under' pair. The same effect is exhibited by other pairs of small and big Ps such as *ante* 'front'/'*delante* 'DE.L.front' and *sobre* 'on'/'*encima* 'on.top', as illustrated below.

- (70) a. Juan se paró ante el lindísimo paisaje.
 Juan SE stood front the nice.INTENS landscape
 'Juan stood before the beautiful landscape.'
- b. #Juan se paró delante del lindísimo paisaje
 Juan SE stood DE.L.front of.the nice.INTENS landscape
 'Juan stood before the beautiful landscape.'
- (71) a. Hay escarcha sobre la pradera.
 have.PRES frost on the prairie
 'There's frost on the prairie.'
- b. #Hay escarcha encima de la pradera.
 have.PRES frost on.top of the prairie
 'There's frost on the prairie.'

Sentence (70a) can normally describe a situation in which Juan stands before a beautiful landscape. (70b), on the other hand, requires a very specific context. It would be acceptable, for instance, if Juan is standing before a poster or a painting depicting a landscape, but would sound odd otherwise. In a similar fashion, whereas (71a) typically describes a situation in which there is frost on a prairie, (71b) seems to imply that the frost is on a prairie that is not real, such as the one on a drawing or a board game. In other words, what examples (70) and (71) appear to confirm is that in a big PP the nominal is necessarily interpreted as being "delimited" (i.e. as having clearly defined boundaries). Note that if the nominal already describes a surface that is delimited, no contrast arises between the pairs, as expected. This can be seen in the following example with the nominal *la mesa* 'the table'. As the surface of a table is intrinsically delimited, in other words, it has fixed boundaries (contrary to snow, water and others), there is no "clash" in interpretation between the big P and the nominal.

- (72) Hay escarcha encima de/sobre la mesa.
 have.PRES frost on.top of/on the table
 'There is frost on the table.'

The question of course is why this contrast should arise. In other words, why is it that big Ps force a delimited reading of the nominal, while small Ps do not? I believe these facts

²⁸ Note that although the sun is in itself an entity with delimited boundaries, in expressions like *bajo el sol* 'under the sun,' it has an interpretation that corresponds roughly to "sunshine." It is precisely this non-delimited reading that is absent from big PPs.

can receive an explanation if we assume the structures for small and big Ps proposed in this work. What I suggest, specifically, is that the interpretative effect that we observe here is a direct consequence of the fact that the nominal is a possessor in the case of big Ps, but not in the case of small Ps. I believe taking a quick look at possessors in dative constructions may throw some light on this matter. In the next subsection I go on a brief excursus and make some independent observations about the behavior of possessors in dative constructions in Spanish. After the excursus, I come back and discuss the examples presented in this section.

4.2.1 An excursus: the possessor in dative constructions

As Cuervo (2003) points out, dative arguments in Spanish can appear with all types of verbs and can have different meanings. One of the meanings expressed by datives, as is standard in many languages, is that of goal or recipient, as exemplified in (73) and (74) below (examples from Cuervo 2003).

(73) Pablo le mandó un diccionario a Gabi.
Pablo CL_{DAT} sent a dictionary to Gabi
'Pablo sent Gabi a dictionary.'

(74) Pablo le puso azúcar al mate.²⁹
Pablo CL_{DAT} put sugar to.the mate
'Pablo put sugar in the mate.' (Lit. 'Pablo put the mate sugar.')

In this excursus I do not go into the specifics of Cuervo's analysis of datives. I simply bring to light an observation that she makes when discussing recipient datives like (74) which I believe is relevant to our understanding of the behavior of small and big Ps.

Cuervo suggests that the general condition for a dative goal is that it should be able to be interpreted as a recipient or intended possessor. This would explain why, although both (75) and (76) are perfectly grammatical, there is a contrast between (77) and (78) (example (74) is repeated as (77)).

(75) Pablo puso azúcar en el mate.
Pablo put sugar in the mate.
'Pablo put sugar in the mate.'

(76) Pablo puso azúcar en la mesa.
Pablo put sugar on the table.
'Pablo put sugar on the table.'

(77) Pablo le puso azúcar al mate.
Pablo CL_{DAT} put sugar to.the mate
'Pablo put sugar in the mate.' (Lit. 'Pablo put the mate sugar.')

(78) #Pablo le puso azúcar a la mesa.
Pablo CL_{DAT} put sugar to the table
'Pablo put sugar on the table.' (Lit. 'Pablo put the table sugar.')

Cuervo argues that the contrast between (77) and (78) arises because the sugar becomes part of the mate when added to it, but it cannot become part of the table. In other words, the reason why the sentence comes out anomalous is that, unlike the mate, the table is not a likely recipient or intended possessor for the sugar. The fact that *el mate* 'the mate' can

²⁹ *Mate* is a drink obtained from dry leaves of a medicinal plant.

be a possessor of the sugar, while *la mesa* ‘the table’ cannot seem to be confirmed by the *tener* ‘have’ sentences below (examples from Cuervo 2003).

(79) El mate tiene azúcar.
the mate has sugar
‘The mate has sugar in it.’

(80) #La mesa tiene azúcar.
the table has sugar
‘There’s sugar on the table.’

Although this observation seems to me to be correct, there is a contrast that still remains unexplained. Consider (81) and (82).

(81) Los pescadores tiraron petróleo en el mar.
the fishermen threw oil in the sea
‘The fishermen poured oil into the sea.’

(82) #Los pescadores le tiraron petróleo al mar.
the fishermen CL_{DAT} threw oil to.the sea
‘The fishermen poured oil into the sea.’ (Lit. ‘The fishermen poured the sea oil.’)

In the situation described in (81) above, the oil *does* become part of the sea when it falls into it, in the same way that the sugar becomes part of the mate when it dissolves in it. It seems to me, then, that there is in principle no reason why example (82), with the clitic *le*, should not pattern with (77).

What appears to bring about the anomaly is that the sea is non-delimited, it is unbounded, and that for some reason unbounded entities do not make good possessors. That the non-delimited nature of the possessor is what seems to be at issue appears to be confirmed by the grammaticality of (84) below.

(83) Juan tiró cloro en la pileta.
Juan threw chlorine in the swimming-pool.
‘Juan poured chlorine into the swimming pool.’

(84) Juan le tiró cloro a la pileta.
Juan CL_{DAT} threw chlorine to the swimming-pool
‘Juan poured chlorine into the swimming pool.’ (Lit. ‘Juan poured the swimming-pool chlorine.’)

The situation described by (84) is almost identical to the one described in (82): in both cases an element dissolves in a liquid and becomes part of it. The only difference between (84) and (82), which both contain the clitic *le*, and the reason for the anomaly of (82), seems to be that, unlike the sea, the swimming-pool is a delimited recipient. Furthermore, the fact that *el mar* ‘the sea’ cannot act as a possessor seems to be confirmed by the anomalous *tener* ‘have’ sentence in (85).

(85) #El mar tiene petróleo.
the sea has oil
‘There is oil in the sea.’

In contrast, *la pileta* ‘the swimming-pool’ is felicitous as the subject of a *tener* ‘have’ sentence, as shown below.

- (86) La pileta tiene cloro.
 the swimming-pool has chlorine.
 ‘The swimming-pool has chlorine.’

4.2.2 Small and big Ps and possession

If the intuition that possessors need to be delimited is on the right track, then this may explain the examples (68)–(71) presented at the beginning of this subsection. I have repeated example (68) as (87) for ease of exposition.

- (87) a. Nos acostamos a descansar bajo el sol.
 CL.1PL lay to rest.INF under the sun
 ‘We lay down to rest in the sun.’
- b. #Nos acostamos a descansar debajo del sol.
 CL.1PL lay to rest.INF DE.under of.the sun
 ‘We lay down to rest right underneath the sun.’

A possible hypothesis is that the anomaly of (87b) (and (69b), (70b), and (71b), for that matter) might be attributed to some kind of semantic clash between the non-delimitedness expressed by the nominals in these examples (*el sol* ‘the sun’ in (87)) and their insertion in a possession structure, which appears to force their delimited reading. If what I have been claiming so far is correct, namely that the nominal in small PPs is a complement, whereas the nominal in big PPs is a specifier and, crucially, a possessor, then this is exactly what we would expect.

An interesting question which arises at this point is why the incompatibility between possessors and non-delimitedness (or unboundedness) should exist. It is likely that the answer to this question lies in the type of possession involved here. I would like to suggest that all of these instances of possession have the following in common: they express part-whole relationships, with the possessor being conceptualized as “the whole” and the possessum as one of its parts, in the sense of Hornstein, Rosen & Uriagereka (2002). Expanding on HR&U (2002), I propose that anything that is conceptualized as a whole must have, by nature, limits or boundaries. It is therefore possible to refer to an apple as *the whole apple* or to a swimming-pool as *the whole swimming-pool*; this is because an apple and a swimming-pool are delimited (or bounded) entities. However, it is not possible to refer to water or the sea as **the whole sea* or **the whole water* precisely because these entities are non-delimited (i.e. they are mass). If I am right, then the clash we find in the sentences with big Ps discussed in this section boils down to an incompatibility between the non-delimitedness (non-wholes) entailed by certain nominals such as *el sol* ‘the sun’ (meaning “sunshine”) and their insertion in a structure where they are interpreted as wholes, and thus required to be delimited (bounded).³⁰

³⁰ The reader may have noticed that if it is true that possessors indeed have to be delimited, then the ban on bare nominals as the complement of big Ps (e.g. **debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’), discussed in section 2.2, may follow directly from this fact. In other words, PPs like **debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’ would be ruled out because the nominal, in this case *tierra* ‘earth,’ is a non-delimited (unbounded) possessor, just as *el sol* ‘the sun’ in *#debajo del sol* ‘DE.under of.the sun’ is. However, there seems to be evidence that subsuming both phenomena under a single explanation might not be desirable. One reason for this is that strings like **debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’ are downright ungrammatical, whereas strings like *#debajo del sol* ‘DE.under of.the sun’ are not ungrammatical but anomalous, and become possible given the right context. Furthermore, as mentioned in footnote 6, as is the case with bare nominals in general, PPs like **debajo de tierra* ‘DE.under of earth’ become grammatical when the nominal is modified or coordinated (i.e. is no longer bare), as in *debajo de tierra muy húmeda* ‘DE.under of earth very moist’ and *debajo de tierra y arena* ‘DE.under of earth and sand’. In contrast, the same anomaly remains when *sol* ‘sun’ is modified: *#debajo del sol de otoño* ‘DE.under of.the sun of fall’. For these reasons, resort to both a syntactic constraint (a ban on bare nominals) and a semantic one (a ban on unbounded possessors) seems to be needed.

5 Concluding remarks

In this article, I introduced a series of syntactic and interpretative asymmetries between small and big Ps, and showed how each of these asymmetries supported a different analysis for small and big Ps. In this final section, I review what part of our analysis it is that each piece of evidence discussed in the previous sections supports and show how all the pieces of the jigsaw put together confirm the structures proposed.

In section 2, I provided evidence that the nominal in the structure of a small PP is a complement and that the nominal in the structure of a big PP is a specifier. Two pieces of evidence seem to provide support for this claim. The first piece of evidence comes from the distribution of bare nominals. I pointed out that Cuervo proposed that bare nominals were banned from A-specifier positions in the clause in Spanish. I argued that the fact that bare nominals were not possible in the structure of big Ps but were possible in the structure of small Ps was a direct consequence of this fact: the nominal in the structure of a small P was a complement but the nominal in the structure of a big Ps was an A-specifier. The coordination facts presented in section 3.1 provide support for this specifier versus complement status of the nominal. In this section, I proposed that the complement of a small P was a KP. This led to a unified analysis of both the nominal in small and big PPs as KPs, the difference being that in the case of small PPs, K is null, whereas in the case of big PPs, K is overt (and spelled out as *de* 'of'). With this enriched structure of the nominal in place, I then hypothesized that the nullness versus the overtness of K in one case and the other could be made to follow from the fact that the nominal is a complement in the case of small Ps, but the specifier of its complement in the case of big Ps.

I also provided evidence that shows that the structure of a big P is more complex than the structure of a small P. In section 3.2 I discussed adverb intervention facts. I pointed out that when an adverb such as *probablemente* 'probably' intervenes between a small P and its complement the sentence is ungrammatical, but when an adverb intervenes between a big P and its complement, it gives rise to mixed judgments. I attributed this contrast to the fact that small Ps have a simpler structure with only one possible site of attachment for the adverbial (resulting in ungrammaticality), whereas big Ps have a more complex structure with two possible sites of attachment for the adverbial (one leading to ungrammaticality, the other one to grammaticality).

In section 4.1 I discussed the presence versus absence of locative readings. I pointed out that big PPs are forced to have a locative interpretation, whereas small PPs can have locative or non-locative readings. I proposed that the obligatory locative reading was a direct consequence of the presence of silent PLACE: as silent PLACE is present in the structure of big PPs, these PPs necessarily have a locative interpretation. As small PPs do not have a silent PLACE element as part of their structure, the locative interpretation is not forced on them.

In section 4.2 I observed that the nominal in the complement of big Ps has to be understood as delimited. In contrast, the nominal in the complement of a small P can be interpreted as delimited, but it can also receive a non-delimited interpretation. I made some independent observations about possessors in dative constructions and drew attention to the fact that in these structures there is also a requirement that the possessor should be interpreted as delimited. I therefore attributed this delimitedness effect to the fact that the nominal in big PPs is a possessor, the possessor of silent PLACE, whereas there is no possessor in the structure of small Ps.

To sum up, the evidence gathered seems to show that: (A) the structure of big PPs is more complex than the structure of small PPs; (B) the nominal in the complement of big Ps is a specifier, whereas the nominal in the complement of small Ps is not; (C) the structure of big Ps, unlike the structure of small Ps, contains a silent PLACE element; (D) the

nominal in the structure of big PPs is a possessor, whereas the nominal in the structure of small PPs is not. These are precisely the structures I proposed in this work.

There are of course many questions which remain. One important question to address is why big Ps (e.g. *de* + *bajo*) are always morphologically more complex than small Ps (e.g. *bajo*). In footnote 10 I mentioned that I consider a big P like *debajo* ‘DE.under’ to be bimorphemic. It would be possible to think, then, that there is a single item *bajo* ‘under’ which can select either a single DP complement (e.g. *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’) or a Possessor-Possesum structure (e.g. *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’).³¹ In the case of *debajo de la mesa*, *de la mesa* would be the specifier of a projection whose complement is silent PLACE. The prefix that we find with big Ps (*debajo* ‘DE.under’) could actually be the spell-out of this possessive head (labeled “X” in example (32)), which has undergone head movement from the head of the Possessor-Possesum structure to the head of PP, leading to the formation of a complex P (*debajo* ‘DE.under’).³² As there is no Possessor-Possesum structure in the case of small Ps, there is no source for prefix *de*.

Another important question is the following: Why can the complement of big Ps be omitted *Ponélo debajo (de la mesa)* ‘put.IMP.CL_{ACC} DE.under of the table’, while the complement of small Ps never can *Ponélo bajo *(la mesa)* ‘put.IMP.CL_{ACC} under the table’? I believe this is ultimately related to a more general property of the grammar, whereby omission of a complement is possible when a head is supported by a clitic. For example, consider the case of a transitive verb such as *ver* ‘see’ in Spanish. This verb does not normally allow omission of its complement: *Vi a Maria* ‘see.PAST.1SG A Maria’/**Vi* ‘see.PAST.1SG’. However, when the head verb appears with an accusative clitic, such as *la*, as in *La vi a Maria* ‘CL_{ACC}.FEM.SG see.PAST.1SG A Maria’, omission of the complement becomes possible: *La vi* ‘CL_{ACC}.FEM.SG see.PAST.1SG’. In previous work (Fraga 2017), I propose that *de* in *debajo* is similar to the clitic *la* in this regard: it is a clitic that allows omission of the complement (in this case, the complement of the big P). This means that just as omission of the complement of *vi* ‘see.PAST.1SG’ is possible when *la* is present: *La vi (a Maria)* ‘CL_{ACC}.FEM.SG see.PAST.1SG A Maria’, omission of the complement of P is possible when the clitic *de* is present (e.g. *de* + *bajo* = *debajo* ‘DE.under’): *Ponélo debajo (de la mesa)* ‘put.IMP.CL_{ACC} DE.under of the table’. In contrast, omission of the complement of *vi* ‘see.PAST.1SG’ is not possible when the clitic *la* is absent **Vi* ‘see.PAST.1SG’, and omission of the complement of P is not possible when the clitic *de* is absent (e.g. *bajo* ‘under’): *Ponélo bajo *(la mesa)* ‘put.IMP.CL_{ACC} under the table’.

There are also two other interesting contrasts between small and big Ps not addressed in this work. One of them has to do with the fact that whereas an animate DP can be the complement of a big P, as in for instance, *El sobre está debajo de la señora* ‘the envelope is DE.under of the lady’, an animate DP is not possible as the complement of a small P: **El sobre está bajo la señora* ‘the envelope is under the lady.’ The second contrast is the following: whereas big Ps allow a personal pronoun in their complement: *debajo de la mesa* ‘DE.under of the table’/*debajo de ella* ‘DE.under of her’, and *debajo de mi mano* ‘DE.under of my hand’/*debajo de la mía* ‘DE.under of the mine’,³³ this is not the case for small Ps: *bajo la mesa* ‘under the table’ but **bajo ella* ‘under her’, *bajo mi mano* ‘under mi hand’ but **bajo la mía* ‘under the mine’. I leave the study of these contrasts for future research.

Finally, I would like to point out that the contrasts exhibited by small and big Ps also seem to be exhibited by other pairs of Ps such as *frente* ‘front’/*enfrente* ‘in.front’ and *sobre* ‘on’/*encima* ‘on.top’. These pairs differ morphologically from those that are the main focus

³¹ For arguments in favor of the existence of a Possessive Phrase inside Hungarian PPs see Dékány (2018).

³² I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this line of analysis.

³³ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this example with a genitive pronoun to my attention.

of this work. The members of the *frente* ‘front’/*enfrente* ‘in.front’ pair are morphologically related but, unlike the members of the *bajo* ‘under’/*debajo* ‘DE.under’ pair: (1) the root is nominal (*frente* ‘front’) and not adjectival (*bajo*, literally ‘low’), and (2) the prefix introducing the big P is not *de* ‘DE’ but *en* ‘IN’. In the case of the *sobre* ‘on’/*encima* ‘on.top’ pair, the Ps are not morphologically related at all. It would be fruitful to carry out further work to find out if these other pairs of Ps do indeed exhibit all the contrasts described here for small and big Ps, and if they do (or if they do not), to refine the analysis developed here to accommodate these other pairs of Ps. This last question, I also leave for future work.

Abbreviations

1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ACC = accusative, ADV = adverb, AGR = agreement, C = complementizer, CL = clitic, D = determiner, DAT = dative, FEM = feminine, GEN = genitive, IMP = imperative, INF = infinitive, K = case, LOC = locative, MASC = masculine, N = noun, NOM = nominative, P = preposition, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PRES = present, Q = quantifier, SG = singular

Acknowledgements

I thank Christina Tortora for her help and feedback during all the stages of this research. This article would not have been possible without her constant guidance and support. I am also grateful to three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and suggestions. All errors are mine.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Aboh, Enoch. 2010. The P route. In Guglielmo Cinque & Luigi Rizzi (eds.), *Mapping spatial PPs* 6. 225–260. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195393675.003.0007>
- Bošković, Željko & Howard Lasnik. 2003. On the distribution of null complementizers. *Linguistic Inquiry* 34. 527–546. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1162/002438903322520142>
- Bosque, Ignacio. 1990. *Las categorías gramaticales*. Madrid: Editorial Síntesis.
- Bresnan, Joan. 1994. Locative inversion and the architecture of Universal Grammar. *Language* 70. 72–131. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/416741>
- Collins, Chris. 2004. The absence of a linker in double object constructions in Niuu. *Studies in African Linguistics* 33. 163–98.
- Contreras, Heles. 1985. Spanish bare NPs and the ECP. In Ivonne Bordelois & Heles Contreras (eds.), *Generative studies in Spanish syntax*, 25–49. Dordrecht: Foris. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110859232-004>
- Cuervo, Maria Cristina. 2003. *Datives at large*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.
- Dékány, Éva. 2018. The position of case markers relative to possessive agreement: variation within Hungarian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 36. 365–400. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-017-9379-7>
- Demonte, Violeta. 1991. Preposiciones plenas y vacías. Su papel en la predicación. In *Detrás de la palabra. Estudios de gramática del español*, 220–232. Madrid: Alianza.
- Fábregas, Antonio. 2007. (Axial) parts and wholes. *Nordlyd* 34. 1–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7557/12.109>
- Fraga, Carolina. 2017. Spatial prepositions in Spanish. *CUNY Academic Works*. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1900

- Hornstein, Norbert, Susan Rosen & Juan Uriagereka. 2002. Integrals. In Juan Uriagereka (ed.), *Derivations: The dynamics of syntax*, 179–191. London: Routledge.
- Jaeggli, Osvaldo. 1982. *Topics in Romance syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Jiménez Fernández, Ángel Luis. 2017. Prepositions and islands: Extraction from dative and accusative DPs in psych verbs. In Joseph Emonds & Markéta Janevová (eds.), *Language Use and Linguistic Structures 5*. 55–172. Olomouc: Palacký University Press.
- Jiménez-Fernández, Ángel Luis. 2020. *Syntax-information structure interactions in the sentential, verbal and nominal peripheries*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kayne, Richard S. 1994. *The antisymmetry of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kayne, R. 2004. Here and there. In Christian Leclère, Éric Laporte, Mireille Piot & Max Silberstein (eds.), *Lexique, syntaxe, et lexique-grammaire (Syntax, lexis and lexicon-grammar). Papers in honor of Maurice Gross*, 254–273. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/lis.24.23kay>
- Lasnik, Howard. 1981. Restricting the theory of transformations. In Norbert Hornstein & David Lightfoot (eds.), *Explanation in linguistics*, 152–73. London: Longman.
- Marác, Lázló. 1984. *The grammar of PP*. Groningen: University of Groningen master's thesis.
- McCloskey, James. 2006. Questions and questioning in a local English. In Raffaella Zanuttini, Elena Herburger & Héctor Campos (eds.), *Cross-linguistic research in syntax and semantics: Negation, tense, and clausal architecture*, 87–126. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Munn, Alan. 1994. *Topics in the syntax and semantics of coordinate structures*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland dissertation.
- Noonan, Maire. 2010. Á to zu. In Guglielmo Cinque & Luigi Rizzi (eds.), *Mapping spatial PPs 6*. 161–195. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195393675.003.0005>
- Pesetsky, David. 1992. *Zero syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Suñer, Margarita. 1982. *The syntax and semantics of Spanish presentational sentence-types*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Terzi, Arhonto. 2005. Locative prepositions as possessums. In Marina Mattheoudakis & Angeliki Psaltou-Joycey (eds.), *Selected papers from the 16th International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, 133–144. Thessaloniki: University of Thessaloniki.
- Terzi, Arhonto. 2006. Locative prepositions as modifiers of an empty noun. *GLOW (Generative Linguistics in the Old World) Newsletter 56*.
- Terzi, Arhonto. 2008. Locative prepositions as modifiers of an unpronounced noun. In Charles Chang & Hannah Haynie (eds.), *Proceedings of the 26th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, 471–479. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project.
- Terzi, Arhonto. 2010. Locative prepositions and Place. In Guglielmo Cinque & Luigi Rizzi (eds.), *Mapping spatial PPs 6*. 196–224. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195393675.003.0006>
- Thiersch, Craig. 1985. *VP and scrambling in the German mittelfeld*. Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut manuscript.
- Vergnaud, Jean Roger. 1974. *French relative clauses*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology unpublished doctoral dissertation.

How to cite this article: Fraga, Carolina. 2020. Spanish prepositions and silent PLACE. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 5(1): 123.1–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.1269>

Submitted: 03 April 2020

Accepted: 11 September 2020

Published: 23 December 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

]u[

Glossa: a journal of general linguistics is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press.

OPEN ACCESS 