

## Jacopo Garzonio – Silvia Rossi

The high degree of syntactic variation displayed by the Italo-Romance varieties has always been an ideal test-bed for various theoretical hypotheses (Kayne 2005). In this paper, we take into consideration microcomparative data from a bunch of Italo-Romance varieties in the expression of spatial relations through complex prepositional phrases. We will focus on AxPart elements (Jackendoff 1983; Svenonius 2006), i.e. lexical prepositions which both in Standard Italian and the Italian dialects can be followed by a small functional preposition, as exemplified in (1) with data from Standard Italian. Standard Italian, like many other languages (see for instance Modern Greek, Terzi 2008, and other typological examples in Cinque 2010: 4-5), displays complex PP structures involving an adverbial/lexical preposition (P) like *sotto* ‘under’, *sopra* ‘over, on’, *davanti* ‘in front of’, *verso* ‘towards’ etc., and a simple/functional preposition, generally *a* ‘to/at’ or *di* ‘of/from’ which introduces the PP complement, i.e. the ‘Ground’.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the striking characteristic of Italian complex PPs is that the functional P following the lexical P displays a high degree of variation, as not only its presence can be optional, obligatory or forbidden, but it can also be substituted by another functional P under various syntactic and semantic conditions:

- <sup>1</sup> See the discussion in den Dikken (2010: 100ff), Cinque (2010: 11) and references therein for the lexical/functional split in the category P. Henceforth, we will be using ‘lexical’ and ‘functional’.

- under to us
- e. \**sotto noi*

The examples in (1) show that the lexical P *sotto* ‘under, beneath’ may be optionally followed by the functional P *a* ‘at, to’, as in (1a,b), yet, when *sotto* is paired with a pronominal complement as in (1c,d), the alternation in the functional P is between *a* and *di* ‘of, from’, while the zero option is ungrammatical, (1e). In the Italo-Romance domain, we find similar alternations involving the same functional Ps (*a*, *di*, or the zero variant), yet crucially, the selectional patterns are minimally different and at first glance, these selectional patterns seem less lexically based.

In the following sections, we will address precisely the different kinds of factors triggering not only the variation in (1) but also the minimally different alternation emerging from microvariation. In this respect, our main intent is to show that the complex patterns of (1) and those of the dialects to be discussed in §3 may be reduced to two fundamental alternations, which in Italian emerge as *a*/Ø and *di*/Ø, and it will also be claimed that all these alternations are in fact syntactically driven. In a nutshell, we maintain that *a* and *di* are case-markers (an intuition already in Rizzi 1988 and Cinque 2010), marking dative and genitive respectively. More precisely, *a* and *di* mark the exact same abstract possessive relation<sup>2</sup> but under different structural configurations within a split PP structure (Cinque & Rizzi 2010 and references therein). We will argue that the selectional patterns emerging in spatial PPs are manifestations of the encoding of possession of the Ground DP at different levels inside the structure of the DPPlace. One of the ingredients of our analysis is the fact that one of these patterns seems to present a configuration we take to be similar to Construct State configurations where the possession relation is not overtly encoded by a case marking preposition. This analysis ties in with the fact that at least in a certain subgroup of Italo-Romance varieties Construct State configurations are indeed attested with relational nouns. This lends further support to the idea that the fine architecture of PPs is built upon a DPPlace.

The paper is organised as follow: section §2 briefly summarizes the analysis we proposed for Standard Italian (Garzonio & Rossi 2016) which is instrumental in order to account for the Italo-Romance data. The microcomparative data are discussed in §3, where we focus on at least one representative variety for Italo\_Romance dialectal macro-area, showing

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<sup>2</sup> On possession marking within the PP see Terzi (2008, 2010), and Svenonius (2006) and Cinque (2010) for cross-linguistic evidence of genitive/possessive markers on DP Grounds under AxParts.

how the formal proposal outlined in the previous section for Standard Italian can be applied also to the minimally different Italo-Romance cases. Section §4 presents some general conclusions.

## 2. AxParts and Case in Italian Complex PPs: the Split-PP view

### 2.1 Selectional patterns and previous analyses of Standard Italian Complex PPs

Following Rizzi (1988), Italian lexical/AxPart Ps can be grouped into three main classes according to the restrictions they impose on the appearance of a small functional P before their Ground object:<sup>3</sup>

1) Group 1 Ps, G1 Ps, which are obligatorily followed by the same functional P in all contexts. In most cases this functional P is *a* ‘at/to’ (*accanto a* ‘next to’; *addosso a* ‘on, against’; *davanti a* ‘in front of’; *dirimpetto a* ‘opposite to’; *fino a* ‘till’; *incontro a* ‘towards’; *intorno/attorno a* ‘around’; *vicino a* ‘near’):<sup>4</sup>

- (2)            *Il cane correva accanto \*(a) un bambino /\*(a) me.*  
                  the dog        ran            beside        to a kid       /   to me  
                  ‘The dog ran next to a kid /me.’

2) Group 2, G2 Ps, which are optionally followed by a functional P *a*, (*attraverso (a)* ‘through’; *contro (a)* ‘against’; *dentro (a)* ‘in, inside’; *dietro (a)* ‘behind (of)’; *lungo (a)* ‘along’; *oltre (a)* ‘beyond, besides’; *presso (a)* ‘by’; *rasente (a)* ‘near, grazing’; *sopra (a)* ‘on, above’; *sotto (a)* ‘under, beneath’):

- (3)            *Maria mise le chiavi dentro (a) un cassetto.*  
                  M.        put        the keys        inside to a drawer  
                  ‘Mary put the keys in a drawer.’

<sup>3</sup> Rizzi (1988) groups together spatial and non-spatial Ps (temporal, causal, comitative, etc.). We consider only the former as it can be argued that the latter are ultimately derived from Ps which were originally spatial.

<sup>4</sup> To Group 1 belong also lexical Ps which require *di/da* ‘from’:

- *di* ‘of’: *fuori di* ‘out of’;  
 - *da* ‘off’: *lontano da* ‘away from’; *fuori da* ‘out of’.

3) Group 3, G3 Ps, that are never followed by a functional preposition (*circa* ‘concerning’; *verso* ‘towards’):

- (4) *Maria corse verso (\*a) la stazione.*  
 M. ran towards the station  
 ‘Mary ran towards the railway station.’

These selectional patterns however are sensitive to the categorial nature of the Ground: while G1 Ps are always followed by the same functional Ps in all contexts, G2 Ps and G3 Ps may select the functional P *di* with pronominal Grounds. More specifically, G3 Ps are obligatorily followed by *di*, (5a), while G2 Ps select alternatively *di* or *a* (5b).

- (5) a. *La palla rotolò verso (\*di) noi.* (Group 3)  
 the ball rolled towards of us  
 ‘The ball rolled towards us.’  
 b. *La palla rotolò sotto di/a noi.* (Group 2)  
 the ball rolled under of/to us  
 ‘The ball rolled under us.’

The selectional patterns of the three P groups are summarised in Table 1 taken from Garzonio & Rossi (2016: 124). The rather complex picture emerging from these data can be simplified in the generalisation in (6):

	Full DP Object of P	Pronominal object of P
Group 1	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>
Group 2	<i>a/Ø</i>	<i>a/di</i>
Group 3	<i>Ø</i>	<i>di</i>

Table1. Alternations in functional Ps according to type of complement

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These Ps appear to express Source meaning even when temporal, cf. *fin da* ‘since’. As shown in many recent works, the Source semantics and syntax are more complex than those of Goals and Locations (see Pantcheva 2011). Precisely because these Ps are structurally different, we do not tackle them here.

- (6) If a lexical P requires *di* with pronouns then this same lexical P may have  $\emptyset$  with full DPs.

In other words, the selectional patterns of Standard Italian complex PPs can be reduced to two basic alternations: a *a*/ $\emptyset$  alternation affecting only G2 Ps with full DPs Ground, and a ‘Ground-sensitive’ *di*/ $\emptyset$  alternation affecting both G2 Ps and G3 Ps (the *a*/*di* alternation of G2 Ps with pronouns is a by-product of the two basic alternations above).

In more formal terms, Garzonio & Rossi (2016) argue that the *a*/ $\emptyset$  alternation is the superficial reflex of a structural difference at the PP-internal level, in the sense that it signals different categorisation and movement possibilities of the lexical P inside a fine-grained PP structure. By contrast, the *di*/ $\emptyset$  alternation is relevant at the DPPlace-internal level, as it is dependent only on the morpho-syntactic nature of the prepositional object.

Some of the above data, in particular the presence vs. absence of *a* after G2 Ps, has already been investigated in a number of previous works. For instance, Rizzi (1988) points out that there seems to be true optionality after some lexical Ps (for instance *sotto* ‘under’ and ‘*sopra* ‘on’), and in many cases, the choice between *a* or  $\emptyset$  is a matter of speakers’ preferences. For some speakers moreover, the presence or absence of *a* yields slightly different interpretations of the Ground: the  $\emptyset$  variant favours a locative interpretation (7a), while the *a*-variant favours a directional interpretation, (7b) (examples in Rizzi 1988: 522).<sup>5</sup>

- (7) a. *Vai dietro quella macchina.*  
       go.IMP behind that car  
       ‘Go and place yourself behind the car.’  
       b. *Vai dietro a quella macchina.*  
       go.IMP behind to that car  
       ‘Go after that car.’

More recently, Tortora (2008) offers a first formal account of the optionality of *a* after G2 Ps, identifying a semantic trigger which results in two different syntactic structures.

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<sup>5</sup> This semantic variation however emerges clearly only with the P *dietro*, a P item that may form phrasal verbs like *andare dietro* ‘lit. to go behind, to follow’. Thus the distinction in (7) may be due to two different underlying structural configurations: *andare* + [<sub>PP</sub> *dietro quella macchina*] for (7a), i.e. [V + PP], and *andare dietro* + [<sub>PP</sub> *a quella macchina*] for (7b), i.e. a verb-particle combination.

Specifically, Tortora (2008) proposes that the presence vs. absence of *a* yields an “aspectual” interpretation of the Ground as denoting *bounded* (8a) or *unbounded* (8b) space.

- (8)
- a. *Corri dentro Ø il parco.*  
run.IMP inside the park  
‘Get into the park.’ [to a specific point, either to the middle of it or just inside, close to the entrance]
  - b. *Corri dentro a-l parco.*  
run.IMP inside to-the park  
‘Get into the park.’ [no specific point is conceptualized]

In structural terms, *a* lexicalises the head of an aspectual projection in a fine-grained PP structure (see the Introduction to this volume), AspPlaceP, encoding spatial *boundedness*: if *a* is present, the space denoted by the Ground is a wide unspecific space, while if *a* is dropped, the space denoted by the Ground is punctual. Hence, the *a*/Ø alternation should be ruled out in a case like (9) on interpretative grounds:

- (9)
- a. *Vai a giocare dietro a quell'albero.*  
go.IMP to play behind at that tree  
‘Go play behind that tree.’
  - b. *\*Vai a giocare dietro Ø quell'albero.*  
go.IMP to play behind that tree

However, as Tortora (2008: 273) herself notes, both (8) and (9) are subject to a great deal of inter-speaker variation as many speakers do not perceive any difference in interpretation, while for others (9b) is perfectly acceptable.

Another account of the *a*/Ø alternation in Italian complex PPs is that of Folli (2008 and previous work), whose proposal is based on considerations on the interactions between complex PPs and manner of motion verbs,<sup>6</sup> which in Italian belong to two distinct classes: a

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<sup>6</sup> As is well known from Talmy’s (1985, 2002) generalisation, Italian and English differ as regards the expression of path and manner of motion on verbs: *verb-framed* languages like Italian express path on the verb while manner of motion is expressed separately on a ‘satellite’ element (ia); *satellite-framed* languages on the contrary express manner of motion on the verb and path on the satellite:

class of unergative verbs like *camminare* ‘to walk’ and *danzare* ‘to dance’, which require the auxiliary *have* in compound tenses and are notoriously unable to occur with goal PPs, cf (10a); and a second class including verbs like *correre* ‘to run’, *volare* ‘to fly’, *gattonare* ‘to crawl’ which may have both an unergative variant, (activity, requiring *have*), (10b), and an unaccusative variant requiring *be* and permitting goal PPs (10c).

- (10)
- |    |                             |                |                   |                         |
|----|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| a. | # <i>Ho</i>                 | <i>danzato</i> | <i>a-l parco.</i> | (locative reading only) |
|    | have.1sg                    | danced         | to-the park       |                         |
|    | ‘I danced inside the park.’ |                |                   |                         |
| b. | # <i>Ho</i>                 | <i>corso</i>   | <i>a-l parco.</i> | (locative reading only) |
|    | have.1sg                    | run            | to-the park       |                         |
|    | ‘I ran inside the park.’    |                |                   |                         |
| c. | <i>Sono</i>                 | <i>corso</i>   | <i>a-l parco.</i> | (goal reading)          |
|    | be.1sg                      | run            | to-the park       |                         |
|    | ‘I ran into the park.’      |                |                   |                         |

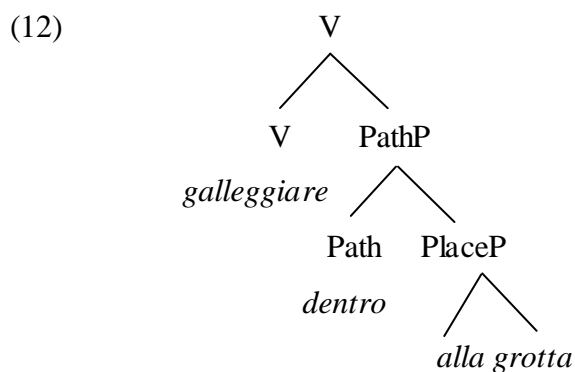
Folli (2008) notices however that verbs of the first class, i.e. the *walk*-class, can acquire a directional interpretation and thus occur with a goal PP only when they are paired with a complex PP which delivers a telic interpretation of the event (see the occurrence with the *in x time* adverbial). Yet, importantly, in such case, the lexical P must be followed by the small P *a*, cf. (11), from Folli (2008: 213).

- (11)
- |    |   |                  |                           |                      |
|----|---|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| a. | <i>La barca</i>                               | <i>galleggiò</i> | <i>dentro alla grotta</i> | <i>in un attimo.</i> |
|    | the boat                                      | floated          | inside to-the cave        | in a moment          |
| b. | * <i>La barca</i>                             | <i>galleggiò</i> | <i>dentro la grotta</i>   | <i>in un attimo.</i> |
|    | the boat                                      | floated          | inside the cave           | in a moment          |
|    | ‘The boat floated into the cave in a moment.’ |                  |                           |                      |

Structurally, the manner of motion verb *galleggiare* enters a syntactic configuration in which the lexical P expresses Path, while *a* heads a PP expressing Place, the Goal of motion.

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(i) a. *Maria* *entrò nella stanza ballando.* (Italian: verb-framed)  
M. entered in-the room dancing



Once again however, the ‘minimal pair’ in (11) is not accepted by all speakers. Though our account is certainly in line with Folli’s, we maintain that the triggers behind the *a/Ø* alternation in G2 Ps are purely syntactic and that the different interpretative nuances described by the studies cited so far may be a by-product of the different structural configurations we attribute to the two variants, i.e., syntactic operations yield strings that may be interpreted in different ways, hence the inconsistent judgments.

Note however that none of the previous studies has tried to give a unified analysis of the two alternations of Table 1 that is, the role of pronominal Grounds is left out of the picture, even though some of the interpretations Tortora (2008) and Folli (2008) notice emerge even with pronouns in G2 Ps with the *a/di* alternation. In the following sections, we present a split PP account of the *a/Ø* alternation with full DP Grounds in Italian to be extended first to pronominal Grounds, and then to be applied to the Italo-Romance data.

## 2.2 Complex PPs and full DP-Grounds: The Split PP view

An impressionistic interpretation of Table 1 seems to suggest that the optionality of *a* in G2 Ps with full DP Grounds may be due to a synchronically unresolved categorial ambiguity of these Ps between prepositions of the first and the third type. Hence, we first consider the less variable G1 Ps and G3 Ps in order to shed some light on the syntactic configuration(s) underlying the *a/Ø* alternation in G2 Ps.

### 2.2.1 Group 1 Ps and Group 3 Ps

The selectional patterns of G1 Ps and G3 Ps are certainly more predictable, in the sense that the presence of *a* with G1 Ps and its absence with G3 Ps is obligatory. Starting with G1 Ps, we notice that *a* is always present irrespectively of the nominal vs. pronominal nature of the



Ground, and such small P moreover does not seem to impose any particular interpretative value to the whole complex. These properties are reminiscent of the selectional properties of complex PP structures with adverbial value (13a), and of transparently P + N prepositional complexes (13b), which require *a*:

- (13)
- a. *In mano/testa a-l professore/a lui.*  
in hand/head to-the professor/to him  
‘In the professor’s hand/head / In his hand/head.’
  - a’. \**In mano di lui/\*In mano il professore.*
  - b. *Di fronte a-lla chiesa/Di fronte a lui.*  
in front to-the church/in front to him  
‘In front of the church/in front of him’
  - b’ \**Di fronte di lui/\*di fronte la chiesa.*

Just like the cases in (13), G1 Ps may be “more lexical”<sup>7</sup> in a sense. Taking this superficial parallel to be also a structural and a semantic parallel, we claim that in both G1 Ps and the cases in (13), *a* is a dative case-marker, which introduces an ‘external possessor’: in (13), *a* marks the external possessor of the nominal immediately preceding it, while in G1 Ps *a* marks the Ground as the external possessor of a nominal present in the fine-grained PP structure. More precisely, we consider the relation between the Ground and the AxPart item analogous to a Possessor-Possessee relation mediated by a predicate. Thus, the obligatory *a* of G1 Ps instantiates an external “possessive” function, akin to cases like the following:

- (14)
- a. *Ho lavato le mani a-lle bambine.*  
have.1sg washed the hands to-the girls  
‘I washed the girls’ hands.’
  - b. *A Maria fa male il ginocchio.*  
to M. hurts the knee  
‘Maria’s knee is hurting.’

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<sup>7</sup> Most Group1 Ps selecting for *a* still retain a very well recognisable functional P before their AxPart component: *d-avanti* ‘lit. of-forward’, *a-(f) fianco* ‘at-side’, *a-(c) canto* ‘at-corner’, *in-contro* ‘in-against’, *a-(t) torno* ‘at-round’, etc.

Denotationally, the dative/oblique case marker *a* signals an inclusion relation w.r.t. an internal argument of a predicate (Manzini & Savoia 2010), i. e., it includes/possesses ( $\sqsubseteq$ ) the internal argument. In the PP, the internal argument is not the AxPart P (though these elements may derive historically from Ns), but following Terzi (2008) and Cinque (2010), we consider AxParts to be modifiers of an unpronounced PLACE head which projects an entire DPPlace. Hence, *a* case-marks the external possessor of PLACE which is to be treated as the direct object in a ditransitive construction.<sup>8</sup> The underlying representation for (2) and (13b) are as follows:

- (15)      a.    *accanto a un bambino.*  
                  [PP<sub>dir</sub> *TO* [PP<sub>stat</sub> *AT* [DPPlace ... [AxPartP *accanto* [<sub>CP</sub> *a* [DP *un bambino* PLACE...]]]  
                  b.    *di fronte alla chiesa.*  
                  [PP<sub>source/stat(?)</sub> *di* ... [AxPartP *fron*te [<sub>CP</sub> *a* [DP *la chiesa* PLACE... ]]

Turning now to G3 Ps with the account in (15) in mind, we immediately notice that these Ps do not case-mark their DP Ground for dative. In interpretative terms, *verso* is a purely ‘directional’ P which seems to imply a directed motion, even in stative predicates, (16):

- (16)      *Verso*            *il centro*            *ci sono*            *due distributori.*  
                  towards            the centre            there are            two petrol stations  
                  ‘You’ll find two petrol stations towards the city centre.’

G3 Ps can be claimed to have an intrinsic path feature, not dependent on the verb’s selection, thus forcing a *path* interpretation of the entire event. Most importantly, the Ground of *verso* is not perceived as an *endpoint* as no telicity is involved.<sup>9</sup> We take this forced interpretation and

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<sup>8</sup> Ditransitive constructions involve a predicate, i.e. a verb, which selects both the direct object and the indirect object. In the PP domain, PLACE is selected by the functional head PStat (see Cinque 2010 and references). Taking this parallel further, one may consider that in ditransitive constructions the direct and indirect objects are part of one single DP selected by the verb, just like PLACE and the Ground are related in the DPPlace.

<sup>9</sup> See the ungrammaticality of (i):

(i)      \*Sono corso verso la stazione in 5 minuti.  
                  am.1sg run towards the station in 5 minutes

the lack of case-marking requirements on the Ground as evidence that G3 Ps are ‘true’ Ps and are directly merged in PPdir:

- (17) [PP<sub>dir</sub> *verso* [PP<sub>stat</sub> *AT*...[DP<sub>Place</sub> ... [AxPart [ $\subseteq$ P [DP *il centro* PLACE] ...]

The analysis here proposed for G3 Ps poses however a potential problem: if the Ground is *always* the possessor of PLACE, how is this possession relation encoded structurally? In other words, can we argue for a prepositionless/caseless possession relation? It is tempting to assume that the unmarked Ground of G3 Ps enters a syntactic configuration akin to ‘Construct State’. This hypothesis may be partially supported by two distinct pieces of evidence: (i) in Construct State languages like Hebrew, Construct State is indeed used in the P domain (Botwinik-Rotem and Terzi 2007); (ii) in Italo-Romance, Construct State is attested with a number of nominal types, all ‘relational’ nouns, such as kinship terms, body parts and the N *casa* ‘home’ (Rohlf 1969; Longobardi 2001; Silvestri 2013: 135ff). Following Longobardi’s (2001), analysis for the only Construct State N in Italian, *casa*, we propose that the null PLACE moves to the D° of DPPlace. As to the Ground DP, we propose that it raises to a projection within DPPlace, which we dub  $\subseteq$ 1P, just above AxPartP:

- (18) [PP<sub>dir</sub> *verso* [PP<sub>stat</sub> *AT*...[DP<sub>Place</sub> D° PLACE... [ $\subseteq$ 1P *il centro* [AxPart [ $\subseteq$ 2P [DP ~~*il centro*~~ PLACE] ...]

Thus, the possessive relation between the full-DP Ground and PLACE is maintained despite the obligatory different markings on the Ground, *a* vs.  $\emptyset$ , under G1 and G3 Ps respectively. What differs in G1 vs. G3 Ps structurally is the fact that G1 Ps remain *in situ* and possession/inclusion is overtly marked in  $\subseteq$ 2P because PLACE remains *in situ*, while G3 is merged directly in PPstat, and the possession/inclusion relation is realized through movement of PLACE to D°, thus triggering a Construct State configuration with the Ground in  $\subseteq$ 1P. Under this view, our analysis partially lends further typological support to Medeiros’ (this volume) observation that some differences in the morphosyntactic distribution of PP-internal items do not depend on specific locative values, but signal different encoding strategies of possession under specific configurations.

### 2.2.2 Group 2 Ps: external possessors and ‘Construct State’

The categorial ambiguity mentioned above for G2 Ps refers precisely to a structural ambiguity, hence a Merge ambiguity, for these Ps between a structure like (15) and one like (18): when G2 Ps are merged directly in SpecPPstat no overt possessive marking takes place (19a) as in G3 Ps, while if they are merged in AxPartP, they will behave as G1 Ps and select for a case-marked DP (19b).

- (19) a. [PP<sub>dir</sub> [PP<sub>stat</sub> *dentro* AT [DP<sub>Place</sub> D° PLACE ... [⊆<sub>1P</sub> *il parco* [AxPart [⊆<sub>2P</sub> [DP # ~~*parco*~~ PLACE] ...]
- b. [PP<sub>dir</sub> [PP<sub>stat</sub> AT [DP<sub>Place</sub> D° ... [⊆<sub>1P</sub> [AxPart *dentro* [⊆<sub>2P</sub> *a* [DP *il parco* PLACE] ...]

This ‘true’ optionality is restricted to cases in which G2 Ps appear in stative predicates, since as noted by Folli (2008), under a verb of motion the *a*-variant encodes the Endpoint of movement. We essentially follow Folli (2008) in assuming that in directional contexts, the lexical P is merged in PP<sub>dir</sub>, but we maintain that this is *always* the case when a G2 P is selected by a verb of motion, i.e. when it is *directional*. Thus, we argue, no ‘true’ optionality should arise with *directional* G2 Ps: the *a*-variant entails an Endpoint reading which is not available with the Ø-variant, the latter behaving then like G3 Ps (the Ground is interpreted as a generic Goal).

- (20) [PP<sub>dir</sub> *dentro* [PP<sub>stat</sub> AT [DP<sub>Place</sub> D° PLACE ... [⊆<sub>1P</sub> Ground [AxPart [⊆<sub>2P</sub> [DP ~~Ground~~ PLACE] ...]

To account for Folli’s (2008) cases however we do not claim that *a* is hosted in ⊆<sub>2P</sub>. We argue instead that this Endpoint *a* is obligatorily present for purely syntactic requirements: in order to yield the Endpoint semantics, the DP Ground is extracted from its basic position inside the DPPlace and moved out of it into PP<sub>stat</sub>, where it is marked with *a*:

- (21) [PP<sub>dir</sub> *dentro* [PP<sub>stat</sub> *al parco* PLACE... [AxPart [⊆<sub>P</sub> ~~[DP *il parco* PLACE]~~ ...]

Such account is inspired by the fact that *a*-marking on the Ground is obligatory in Italian when the Ground of G2 Ps is *wh*-extracted and moved into the Left Periphery (Rizzi 1988):

- (22) a. *A cosa l'hai messo sopra?*  
           to what it have.2sg put on  
           ‘What did you put it on?’  
       b. *\*Cosa l'hai messo sopra?*

In other words, we argue that these cases are instances of Differential Object Marking of a full-DP Ground extracted outside DPPlace. In support of our claim, consider the following cases in which a direct object is extracted from inside the VP/vP and into the CP layer, and is case-marked with *a* (Benincà et al. 1988):<sup>10</sup>

- (23) a. *A me la polizia non mi prende.*  
           to me the police not me catches  
           ‘The police are not catching me.’  
       b. *A Gianni chi lo vede?*  
           to G. who him sees  
           ‘Who’s seeing Gianni?’

We prefer such analysis for Folli’s (2008) cases since it gives a unitary account of similar facts (*a*-marking) across different domains.

In conclusion, the different structures proposed for G2 Ps may be the real source of the high degree of inter-speaker variation in the optionality of *a* with these items: speakers must make sense of a purely syntactic-driven ambiguity, and tend to attribute different interpretative values to the two variants.

### 2.3 Complex PPs and pronominal Ground: the *di*/Ø alternation

As mentioned above, previous studies on the *a*/Ø alternation concentrate on interpretative differences as triggers for different syntactic configurations in which the small P *a* spells out the head of a projection connected to very specific semantic values (Place, Asp). None of the abovementioned studies however has noticed that similar interpretative differences arise with

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<sup>10</sup> Notice that Italian, unlike Ibero-Romance and Southern Italo-Romance, does not allow DOM inside the VP/vP:

(i) *\*Ho visto a Maria.*  
       Have.1sg seen to M.

The cases in (23) cannot be considered simple topicalisations.

pronominal Grounds, for which the  $\emptyset$ -variant is ungrammatical. Consider the pair in (24) with a manner of motion verb of the *run*-type like *volare* ‘to fly’: in its inaccusative variant, the *a*-variant of the complex PP entails the Endpoint semantics noticed by Folli (2008), while the *di*-variant in (24a) yields an interpretation in which the butterfly went flying through a space above us but it may not have landed on us (cf. the interpretation of the  $\emptyset$ -variant of Group 2 Ps in path contexts):

- (24)      a.    *La farfalla*            *è volata*            *sopra di noi.*  
                  the butterfly        is flown            over of us  
                  ‘The butterfly flew over and past us.’  
              b.    *La farfalla*            *è volata*            *sopra a noi.*  
                  the butterfly        is flown            over to us  
                  ‘The butterfly flew onto us.’

Under the analyses proposed thus far, the account of (24b) is straightforward: the Ground is extracted from within the DPPlace into PPStat and is marked with *a*, acquiring an Endpoint reading:

- (25)      [<sub>PPdir</sub> *sopra* [<sub>PPstat</sub> *a noi* PLACE [<sub>DPPlace</sub> D° ... [<sub>⊆1P</sub> [<sub>AxPartP</sub> [<sub>⊆2P</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> ~~*noi*~~ PLACE] ...]

Hence, cases like (24b) are treated like Folli’s cases (2008) of *directional* G2 Ps with Endpoint reading.

A case like (24a) however needs further discussion, since *a*-marking of pronominal Grounds in G2 Ps is very restricted, *di*-marking being the norm.<sup>11</sup> Considering now that in G3 Ps, which obligatory take the ‘Construct State’ configuration with full-DP Grounds, pronouns must be introduced by *di*, we can argue that *di*-marking is the direct counterpart of ‘Construct State’ with full-DP Grounds. As such, (24a) would receive an account along the lines of (26), in which the AxPart element is moved to PPstat and the PLACE head moves to D°:

<sup>11</sup> Notice that many speakers strongly reject the *a*-variants of pronominal Grounds with G2 Ps in stative contexts:

(i)      \*Il gatto dorme sotto a noi.  
              the cat sleeps under to us

- (26) [PP<sub>dir</sub> [PP<sub>Stat</sub> *sopra* [DP<sub>place</sub> D° PLACE... [Deix [⊆<sub>1P</sub> [AxPartP [⊆<sub>2P</sub> [NPP<sub>place</sub> *noi* PLACE]  
... ]

Now we are left with one last problem: how can we account for the obligatory presence of *di* with pronouns? In other words, why is ‘Construct State’ disallowed with pronominal Grounds in general? For these cases, we argue that *di* is a genitive case marker required by the defective structure of pronominal DPs, which are *bare* elements.<sup>12</sup> We follow again Manzini & Savoia (2010), and consider *di* as expressing ‘inclusion’ ( $\subseteq$ ), but at a different structural level. In other words, it is not possible to express with *bare* elements the inclusion relation of the ‘construct state’-type seen above for G3 Ps. Our proposal for the *di*-variants hinges on the fact that *bare* elements lack a restrictor (N) and can be moved to a dedicated position in the functional layer of the DPPlace.<sup>13</sup> We identify this position as Deix for deictic items, as personal pronouns can be claimed to be deictic:

- (27) [PP<sub>dir</sub> [PP<sub>Stat</sub> *sopra* [DP<sub>place</sub> D° PLACE... [Deix *di noi* [⊆<sub>1P</sub> [AxPartP [⊆<sub>2P</sub> [NPP<sub>place</sub> PLACE] ... ]

### 3. Complex PPs in Italo-Romance: some case studies

In this section, we take into consideration the alternations considered so far across five distinct varieties of Italo-Romance. As expected, the Italo-Romance domain presents a high degree of microvariation not only in the lexical entries of the different AxPart Ps but also in their selectional patterns of functional Ps. However, it will be shown that these patterns can be systematically derived through the same structural factors considered in the previous sections for Standard Italian complex PPs. The distributional properties of complex PPs in Italo-Romance illustrated in what follows are then further evidence for the highly articulated structure of PPs, while the individual minor cross-dialectal differences are to be considered as

<sup>12</sup> That *di* is required not only with pronominal Grounds but with *bare* items in general is supported by two distinct but interrelated facts: 1) modified pronominal Grounds require *a* or  $\emptyset$  (Rizzi 1988: 523), and 2) some speakers require *di* also with unmodified demonstratives and marginally with proper names.

<sup>13</sup> That bare elements have a dedicated position in functional layers is uncontroversial since Kayne’s (1975) work on French quantifiers; see recently Garzonio & Poletto (2017) on a similar analysis of bare *tutto* ‘everything’ in Italo-Romance.

a result of parametric choices and therefore—adopting a lexicalist approach to variation—of differences at the lexical level of individual items and/or groups of items (Roberts 2012).

Each variety here investigated has been selected as representative of an Italo-Romance dialectal macro-area: Gazzolo d’Arcole (Verona) for Venetan; Cisterna del Friuli (Udine) for Friulian; Dosolo (Mantua) for Gallo-Italic; Trani (Bari) for Apulian; and Mussomeli (Caltanissetta) for Sicilian. The data have been collected through specific questionnaires in which native speakers were also asked to comment on specific sentences in order to capture possible interpretative differences among variants.

### 3.1 Venetan

The variety of Gazzolo d’Arcole (Verona), spoken in the western part of the Veneto region, presents a selectional pattern which is found also in other varieties of Venetan (see for instance, Carmignano di Brenta, Padua, Penello 2003). Unlike Standard Italian, AxPart Ps in this variety do not select the functional P *a*, cf. (28) for the P items corresponding to Italian GP 1 Ps *davanti* ‘in front of’ and *attorno* ‘around’, and (29) for the P items corresponding to Italian GP 2 Ps *sotto* ‘under’ and *dietro* ‘behind’:

- (28) a. *Se ghemo*      *‘isti*              ***davanti Ø*** *la ciesa*  
           refl have.1pl    seen.pl            in.front the church  
           ‘We met in front of the church.’
- b. *Go corso*      ***intorno Ø***      *la casa/par torno Ø* *la casa*  
           have.1sg run    around            the house/for round    the house  
           ‘I ran around the house.’
- (29) a. *El gato*            *l’è scapà*            ***soto Ø*** *el leto.*  
           the cat            he is run            under the bed  
           ‘The cat dashed under the bed.’
- b. *El gato*            *el se ga sconto*            ***de drio Ø*** *el divano.*  
           the cat            he refl has hidden      of behind the sofa  
           ‘The cat hid behind the sofa.’

As such, this Venetan variety seems to lack a class of Ps behaving like proper G1 Ps, that is, AxPart Ps that obligatorily select a specific functional P when paired with a Ground



DP. However, when these AxPart Ps are followed by a pronominal Ground, the functional Ps *di* appears in all groups of Ps:

- (30) a. *Me so sentà zò davanti de lù.*  
 refl am sat down in.front of him  
 ‘I took a seat in front of him.’  
 b. *El gato l’è scapà soto de lù.*  
 the cat he is run under of him  
 ‘The cat dashed under him.’  
 c. *El gato el se ga sconto de drio de mè.*  
 the cat he refl has hidden of behind of me  
 ‘The cat hid behind me.’

In Gazzolo then, all complex Ps pattern like G3 Ps of Standard Italian in taking Ø with Ground DPs and *di* with pronominal Grounds. Extending the analysis put forward above for Italian G3 Ps to the cases of Gazzolo, we should conclude that all AxPart Ps of this variety involve assignment of structural Case via a sort of Construct State configuration between the Ground and the null PLACE head. In other words, all AxPart Ps of Gazzolo and similar Venetan varieties should be treated as ‘true’ prepositions hosted in the higher functional portion of the PP structure (either PPdir or PPstat):

- (31) AxPart + DP Ground (‘Construct State’): *davanti/soto la tola*

[PPDir [PPStat *davanti/soto* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix [<sub>CP1</sub> *la tola* [AxPartP [<sub>CP2</sub> [NPPplace ~~*la tola*~~ PLACE] ... ]

- (32) AxPart + *di* + Pronominal Ground: *davanti/soto de lù*

[PPDir [PPStat *davanti/soto* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix *de lù* [<sub>CP1</sub> [AxPartP ~~*davanti/soto*~~ [<sub>CP2</sub> [NPPplace PLACE] ... ]

Incidentally, it should be noticed that many varieties of Venetan (here included Gazzolo) present an articulated system of particle verb constructions, with locative (clearly AxPart) items involved not only in transparently spatial phrasal verbs like *nar su* ‘to go up’ but also in non-transparent, fully actional constructions like *magnar fora* ‘to eat up’ (Benincà

& Poletto 2006). Moreover, many varieties of Venetan also display null Ps in certain locative expressions involving a small class of nominals like *casa* ‘home’ or *scuola* ‘school’ as in *Sto/Vo casa* ‘I am/I go home’, which might be interpreted as special cases of particle verb constructions (see Rossi 2016 for detailed references).

These phenomena, though not involving prepositions proper, might nonetheless lend indirect support to the proposal outlined in (32) since they all hint at a more ‘functional’ nature of P items in this variety, which structurally translates into a higher projection occupied by these items inside the PP structure.

### 3.2 Friulian

The Friulian variety of Cisterna del Friuli, spoken in the western part of the Friuli region, displays a selectional pattern in complex Ps which is found also in certain varieties of Venetan (particularly in the eastern part of the Veneto). Specifically, Friulian seems to select the functional P *di* ‘of’ under most AxPart Ps corresponding to both G1 Ps and G2 Ps of Italian, exemplified in (33) and (34) respectively.

- (33) a. *Si sin vioduus **devant da** la glesie.*<sup>14</sup>  
 refl are seen in.front of the church  
 ‘We met in front of the church.’
- b. *Al a coruut **ator da** ciase.*  
 he has run around from the house  
 ‘He ran around the house.’
- (34) a. *Il ghat al e laat di corse **sot da** taule*  
 the cat he is gone of running under from table  
 ‘The cat dashed under the table.’
- b. *Il ghat a si e taponaat **davor dal** divano.*  
 The cat he refl is hidden behind from the sofa  
 ‘The cat hid behind the sofa.’

<sup>14</sup> Friulian has various forms for the so-called ‘articulated prepositions’, that is functional Ps which are compound with the definite article, for instance *di* ‘of’ + *la* ‘the.SG.FEM’ becomes either *da la* (with lowering of /i/ to /e/ and eventually /a/), or *da*. Moreover, Friulian does not distinguish between the Italian *di* ‘of’ and *da* ‘from’.

However, *dentri* ‘inside’ and *par sore* ‘on, over’ corresponding to the Italian G2 Ps *dentro* and *sopra* may also have a zero variant which does not seem to give rise to interpretative differences:

- (35) a. *Al e saltaat par sore Ø il liet.*  
 he is jumped for over the bed  
 ‘He jumped onto the bed.’
- b. *La bale a e colade dentri Ø il poç.*  
 the ball it is fallen inside the well  
 ‘The ball fell into the well.’

Incidentally, it is interesting to notice that the Italian G3 P *verso* ‘towards’ is rendered in Friulian as *da la bande* ‘lit. ‘of the side/part’, which presents an AxPart item *bande* ‘side’ still present and used in Friulian as a proper N. Yet, just like other Ps, *da la bande* selects *di* ‘of’ with Ground DPs:

- (36) *L'ai vioduut c al ciaminave da la bande da la stasion.*  
 him have.1sg seen that he walked from the side of the station  
 ‘I saw him walking towards the station.’

Pronominal Grounds in Friulian are invariably introduced by the preposition *di* ‘of’ for all Ps:

- (37) a. *Mi soi sentaat devant di lui.*  
 refl am sat in.front of him  
 ‘I took a seat in front of him.’
- b. *Il ghat al e laat di corse sot di lui.*  
 the cat he is gone of running under of him  
 ‘The cat dashed under him.’
- c. *Al e saltaat par sore di loor.*  
 he is jumped for over of them  
 ‘He jumped on them.’
- d. *Al e sbrissaat davor di me.*

he is slipped                      behind of me  
‘He slipped behind me.’

A partial exception to such otherwise coherent picture is the P *da le bande* ‘towards’, which marks the relation between the P complex and the pronominal Ground by means of a possessive modification of the AxPart item *bande* ‘sides’, thus indicating even more clearly that such item still retains much of its nominal nature (signaled moreover by the presence of the definite singular feminine determiner *la*):

- (38) *L'ai vioduut                      c al ciaminave                      da la loor bande.*  
him have.1sg seen      that he walked                      from the their side  
‘I saw him walking towards them.’

To sum up, the selectional patterns of complex Ps in Friulian are rather straightforward: Ground DPs and pronominal Grounds are both introduced by the same functional P *di*. What is interesting is that Friulian does not display *a* as a functional P in complex PPs and, once again, just like Italian and Venetan, the zero variant—the ‘Construct State’ variant—is only attested with Ground DPs.<sup>15</sup>

- (39) AxPart + DP Ground (‘Construct State’): *dentri il poç*  
[PPDir [PPStat *dentri* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix [ $\subseteq$ P1 *il poç* [AxPartP [NPPlace ~~*il poç*~~  
PLACE] ... ]
- (40) AxPart + *di* + DP Ground: *devant/sot da taule*  
[PPDir [PPStat *devant/sot* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix *da taule* [ $\subseteq$ P1 [AxPartP ~~*devant/sot*~~  
[NPPlace PLACE] ... ]
- (41) AxPart + *di* + Pronominal Ground: *devant/sot di me*  
[PPDir [PPStat *devant/sot* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix *di me* [ $\subseteq$ P1 [AxPartP ~~*devant/sot*~~  
[NPPlace PLACE] ... ]

<sup>15</sup> In fact, there is at least one context in which Friulian admits *a* with complex PPs, that is, with cases of *wh*-extraction of the Ground:

(i) A ce lu atu metuut parsore?  
to what it have.you put on? ‘What have you put it on?’

This lends support to the analysis put forward above: if *a* is never attested within Friulian complex PPs, it follows that the *a* marking of a *wh*-extracted Ground is different from the  $\subseteq$ 2P *a* under AxPartPs.

The analysis here proposed seeks to make sense of the unavailability of the small P *a* in the complex PPs of Friulian. Structurally, this is captured by assuming that  $\subseteq P2$  is unavailable as consequence of microparametric choice, while DeixP can encode the inclusion relation. A possible piece of evidence in support of the special status of deixis in this variety is the fact that some deictic adverbs, in particular *there*, are built as overt DPPlace items with a phonetically realized PLACE: *lavie* (lit. ‘there way’, cf. Kayne’s (2004) proposal on *here* and *there*):

- (42) [PPDir [PPStat AT [DPPlace ... [Deix *la vie* [ $\subseteq P1$  [AxPartP *vie* [NPPlace *vie*] ... ]]<sup>16</sup>

### 3.3 Gallo-Italic

For the Gallo-Italic area, we considered the variety of Dosolo, a town near Mantua, in the south-eastern part of Lombardy, on the river Po. This variety does not seem to differ much from Italian in the sense that it makes a distinction between 3 groups of Ps with the same selectional patterns as their Italian counterparts, see the examples (43)-(45) for G1, G2 and G3 respectively:

- (43) a. *As siom vest davant ala ciesa.*  
 refl have.1pl seen in.front to.the church  
 ‘We met in front of the church.’  
 b. *Am su sintà davant a lo.*  
 refl am sat in.front to him  
 ‘I took a seat in front of him.’
- (44) a. *Al gat l’è curs sota Ø la taula.*  
 the cat he is run under the table  
 ‘The cat dashed under the table.’  
 b. *Al gat l’è curs sota ad lo.*  
 the cat he is run under of him  
 ‘The cat dashed under him.’

<sup>16</sup> We treat *vie* as the lexicalization of PLACE since it is found not only with *lavie* ‘there’ and *ca vie* ‘here, lit. here way’, but it is attested also with some adverbials clearly deriving from a complex P+AxPart+*vie*, cf. *parsotvie* ‘lit. for under way = under, furtively’, (*par*)*sorevie* ‘lit. for over way = over, extra’, *devantvie* ‘in front’.

- (45) a. *A lu vest cal caminava vers Ø la stasion.*  
 I him.have.1sg seen that-he walked towards the station  
 ‘I saw him walking towards the station.’
- b. *A lu vest cal caminava vers ad lur.*  
 ‘I saw him walking towards them.’

Thus, this Gallo-Italic variety has G1 Ps selecting the same P regardless of the nominal vs. pronominal nature of the Ground, and G2 and G3 Ps which allow a zero variant with full DP Grounds. Once again, pronominal Grounds under G2 and G3 Ps obligatorily select *di*. The analysis of the patterns attested in this variety is the same as those of Standard Italian.

### 3.4 Intermediate Southern varieties: Apulian and Verbicarese

The data presented in this subsection are from two Intermediate Southern varieties, that of Trani, near Barletta, and Verbicarese, a variety of the Lausberg Area in Northern Calabria. In these dialects, the selectional patterns of AxPart P on full DP Grounds are the same as Italian, that is, there are G1 Ps obligatorily selecting *a* ‘to’, (46), and G2 Ps optionally allowing *a* (47):

- (46) a. *C sim vist ‘nanz a la chise* (Trani)  
 refl. are.1pl seen in.front to the church
- a’. *N’amə vistə nnant’a chíasia* (Verbicarese)  
 refl. have.1pl seen in.front to.the church  
 ‘We met in front of the church.’
- b. *È fett na cors torn torn Ø a cas.* (Trani)  
 is done a run round round the house
- b’. *Ha currutə ntuarəna Ø a casa* (Verbicarese)  
 has run round the house  
 ‘He went jogging around the house.’
- (47) a. *U’ gatt ste a dorm sotto Ø u’ tavl.* (Trani)  
 the cat stays to sleep under the table

- a'. U gwaṭṭə sta durmwennə (**a-**)**sutt**'u twavəḷə. (Verbicarese)  
the cat stays sleeping (to-)under the table  
'The cat is sleeping under the table.'
- b. U' so pust **sop o' liett** (Trani)  
it am put on to.the bed
- b'. Hajə misə (a-)**sup**' u liəttə. (Verbicarese)  
have.1sg put (to-)over the bed  
'I've put it on the bed.'
- c. E' sciulat **ret o divan**. (Trani)  
is slipped behind to.the sofa
- c'. Ha scivulwatə **arrier'**u/allu divanə. (Verbicarese)  
has slipped behind the/to.the sofa  
'It slipped behind the sofa.'
- d. La pall iè cadut **ind (a) stu puzz**. (Trani)  
the ball is fallen in to this well
- d'. A padda ha caduta **ajint'** u puzzu. (Verbicarese)  
the ball has fallen to-in the well  
'The ball fell into this well.'

Trani moreover has G3 Ps selecting no functional P, (48):<sup>17</sup>

- (48) U' so vist che stev a cammnè **verse Ø la stazion**.  
him am seen that stayed to walk towards the station  
'I saw him walking toward the station.'

Yet, unlike Italian and the varieties considered so far, pronominal Grounds are always introduced by the functional P *a* 'to' regardless of the preceding AxPart P in both varieties:

- (49) a. M so assettat **'nanz a idde**. (Trani)  
refl am seated in.front to him
- a'. M'ajə sədutə **nnant'a jjiddə**. (Verbicarese)

<sup>17</sup> The informant for Verbicarese rephrased the Axial Expression using a verbal periphrasis literally meaning "in order to reach".

- ‘I took a seat in front of him.’
- b. *U’ gatt ste a dorm sott a me.* (Trani)  
 the cat stays to sleep under to me  
 ‘The cat is sleeping under me.’
- c. *U’ so pust sop a lore.* (Trani)  
 it am put over to them  
 ‘I put it onto them.’
- d. *È sciulat ret a me.* (Trani)  
 is slipped behind to me  
 ‘It slipped behind me.’
- e. *U’ so vist che stev a cammnè verse a lore.* (Trani)  
 him am seen that stayed to walk towards to them  
 ‘I saw him walking towards them.’

Thus, these varieties differ from Standard Italian and from the other Italo-Romance varieties in that they obligatory take *a* with pronouns. This state of affairs is likely to be related to the mandatory dative marking of the possessor of a specific class of possessee, mainly kinship terms and other relational nouns like body parts (see Silvestri 2013, in prep. for Verbicarese).

- (50) AxPart + *a* + DP Ground: *nanz/sop o’ (P+D) liett*  
 [PPDir [PPStat *AT* [DPplace ... [Deix [⊆P1 [AxPartP *nanz/sop* [⊆P2 *a* [NPPplace *-u liett* PLACE] ... ]
- (51) AxPart + DP Ground (‘Construct State’): *sotte u’ tavl*  
 [PPDir [PPStat *sotte AT* [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix [⊆P1 *u’ tavl* [AxPartP [⊆P2 [NPPplace ~~*u’ tavl*~~ PLACE] ... ]
- (52) AxPart + *a* + Pronominal Ground: ‘*nanz/sott a me*  
 [PPDir [PPStat *AT* [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix [⊆P1 [AxPartP ‘*nanz/sott* [⊆P2 *a me* [NPPplace PLACE] ... ]

### 3.5 Sicilian

The Sicilian variety investigated is that of Mussomeli, near Caltanissetta, in the central part of the island. In Sicilian, G1 Ps (53) and G3 Ps (54) behave like their Italian counterparts:



- (53) a. *Nni vittimu davanti â chiasi.*  
 refl. saw in.front to.the church  
 ‘We met in front of the church.’
- b. *M’assittavu davanti ad iddru.*  
 refk. sat in.front to him  
 ‘I sat in front of him.’
- (54) *U vitti ca camminava agghìari/versu Ø a stazioni.*  
 him saw that walked towards the station  
 ‘I saw him walking towards the station.’

Unlike Italian, however, the Sicilian counterparts of the Italian G2 Ps do not seem to allow a zero variant with nominal Grounds:

- (55) a. *Santà ncapu au liattu.*  
 jumped on to.the bed  
 ‘He jumped onto the bed.’
- b. *U misi ncapu au liattu.*  
 it put on to.the bed  
 ‘I put it on the bed.’
- c. *Sciddricà darriari au divanu.*  
 slipped behind to.the sofa  
 ‘It slipped behind the sofa.’
- d. *U palluni cadì dintra au puzzu.*  
 The ball fell in to.the well  
 ‘The ball fell into the well.’

Yet, with pronominal Grounds, both *a* or *di* may be selected, while the zero variant is not possible. Moreover, as in Standard Italian, there is a *a/di* alternation connected to different interpretations: the *a*-variant yields an endpoint interpretation of the Ground which is not present with the *di*-variant.

- (56) a. *Sciddricà darriari a mia.*  
 slipped behind to me  
 ‘It slipped behind me.’  
 b. *U gattu s’ammuccià darriari di mia*  
 the cat ref hid behind of me  
 ‘The cat hid behind me.’
- (57) AxPart + *a* + DP Ground: *davanti/darriari au liattu*  
 [PPDir [PPStat AT [DPplace ... [Deix [⊆P1 [AxPartP *davanti/darriari* [⊆P2 *a* [NPPlace *u liattu* PLACE] ... ]
- (58) AxPart + *a* + DP Ground with directional + endpoint reading: *ncapu au liattu*  
 [PPDir *ncapu* [PPStat [*a-u liattu*] PLACE AT [DPplace ... [Deix [⊆P1 [AxPartP ~~*ncapu*~~ [⊆P2 [NPPlace ~~*u liattu*~~ PLACE] ... ]
- (59) AxPart + *di* + Pronominal Ground: *darriari di mia*  
 [PPDir [PPStat *darriari* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix *di mia* [⊆P1 [AxPartP *darriari* [⊆P2 [NPPlace PLACE] ... ]
- (60) AxPart + *a* + Pronominal Ground: *darriari a mia*  
 [PPDir *darriari* [PPStat *a mia* AT [DPplace PLACE ... [Deix [⊆P1 [AxPartP ~~*darriari*~~ [⊆P2 [NPPlace PLACE] ... ]

### 3.6 Summing Up

Although the number of varieties considered in this section is certainly rather limited and more varieties should be added to the investigation, a very clear and robust distributional pattern has emerged: in both Standard Italian and Italo-Romance, only nominal Grounds are allowed to appear under an AxPart P without the intermediation of a functional P, i.e., in a sort of ‘Construct State’ configuration. Pronouns on the other hand are always preceded by a case-marking P, which is normally *di*, but it can also be *a* depending on the following factors: (i) the presence of an Endpoint interpretation of the Ground (as in Sicilian, Gallo-Italic and Standard Italian); and (ii), the general strategy for encoding possessive relations with relational nouns such as kinship terms (as in the Intermediate Southern cases).

More in general, the minimal differences in the complex PP systems considered in the previous sections can be accounted for with the same structural mechanisms which we have seen at work in Italian, i.e., with the same structure in which the Ground occupies different positions within the fine-grained PP. The final position of the Ground within the PP thus depends on the following three factors: (i) the standard position of possessors of relational nouns in the regular DPs; (ii), the presence of a restrictor at the NP level of the possessor (Ground in DPPlace); (iii), the possible movement of the AxPart outside the DPPlace.

Here is a summary of the structures we proposed so far:

- (61) AxPart + *a* + DP Ground = Italian G1 Ps and Southern Intermediate Ps

[PPDir [PPStat *AT* [DPPlace ... [Deix [ $\subseteq$ P1 [AxPartP *davanti/sotto* [ $\subseteq$ P2 *a* [NPPPlace *-l tavolo* PLACE] ... ]

- (62) AxPart + *a* + DP Ground with directional + endpoint reading:

[PPDir *dentro* [PPStat [*a-l tavolo*] PLACE *AT* [DPPlace ... [Deix [ $\subseteq$ P1 [AxPartP ~~*dentro*~~ [ $\subseteq$ P2 [NPPPlace ~~*il tavolo*~~ PLACE] ... ]

- (63) AxPart + DP Ground = ‘Construct State’

[PPDir [PPStat *sotto* *AT* [DPPlace PLACE ... [Deix [ $\subseteq$ P1 *il tavolo* [AxPartP [ $\subseteq$ P2 [NPPPlace *il tavolo* PLACE] ... ]

- (64) AxPart + *di* + Pronominal Ground:

[PPDir [PPStat *davanti/sotto* *AT* [DPPlace PLACE ... [Deix *di me* [ $\subseteq$ P1 [AxPartP ~~*davanti/sotto*~~ [ $\subseteq$ P2 [NPPPlace ~~PLACE~~] ... ]

## 4. Conclusions

The selectional patterns of small Ps in Italian complex PPs have been studied by several scholars, in particular as regards the optionality of *a* ‘to, at’ in G2 Ps, with the precise intent of identifying possible interpretative differences between variants which might be triggers of structural differences. Though some tendencies have been detected, all studies report how speakers are not consistent in judgments and interpretations. Such high degree of inter-speaker variation is usually left unaccounted for. One of the possible factors behind the inconsistency in judgements is certainly the great influence of dialectal grammar(s) in this

area of Italian grammar (as many speakers in Italy are also native or near-native speakers of an Italo-Romance variety).

In this respect, the goal of this paper was twofold: (i) reduce the optionality of *a* in G2 Ps to purely syntactic operations, while also offering a unified analysis which could also account for the selectional patterns in other groups of Ps and with pronominal Grounds; (ii) investigate, at least partially, the complex PPs of some Italo-Romance varieties, in order to reduce microvariation to the same type of syntactic mechanisms operating in Italian.

In more formal terms, we claimed that the three different groups of Italian lexical Ps realise different portions of the fine PP structure (Cinque 2010), and consequently entertain different structural relations with pronominal vs. full DP Grounds, which are marked for case accordingly. Specifically, we argued that both *a* with full DP Grounds and *di* with pronominal Grounds are not the lexicalisations of the higher heads of PPstat/PPdir, but we considered them case-markers encoding an inclusion relation at different structural levels (Manzini & Savoia 2010). The *a*/Ø alternation in G2 Ps with nominal Grounds signals different merge positions of these Ps as either AxPartPs, thus forcing dative marking of the Ground, or ‘true’ Ps, requiring a ‘Construct State’ configuration. The selection of *di* before pronominal Ground is instead dependent on the *bare* nature of the Ground, which allows the latter to scramble PP internally to DeixP and to be marked with a genitive marker inside the DPPlace.

Under this view, our proposal lends further support to the idea that the fine structure of PPs contains a DPPlace (Terzi 2008; Cinque 2010 a. m. o.), and takes the parallel between regular DPs and DPPlace to its limits. If PPstat/dir always embeds a DPPlace we should expect DPPlace to exhibit some syntactic characteristics of standard DPs. In other words, if a possessive relation is established between PLACE and the Ground, the possessive relation should be expressed similarly to regular DPs, modulo the particular nature of the silent PLACE.

The microcomparative data moreover confirm another important generalization which was already apparent in Italian: Italian and the Italo-Romance varieties here investigated mark pronominal Grounds differently from full-DP Grounds. More precisely, if unmarked nominal Grounds under lexical Ps signal a ‘Construct State’ configuration between PLACE and the Ground, the unavailability of Ø-marking with pronouns in all the varieties considered indicates that ‘Construct State’ is not available with pronominal items, a welcome result on crosslinguistic grounds.

A final consideration emerging from the investigation of the Italo-Romance data: considering the selectional patterns of the Italo-Romance varieties, it seems that Standard Italian maintains a structural, i.e. merge ambiguity for G2 Ps, which can be merged as true ‘functional’ Ps outside DPPlace or as modifiers of PLACE inside the DPPlace. Italian dialects on the contrary tend to level this ambiguity as much as possible.

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