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Grammatical Analyses in Basque and Romance Linguistics

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A MINIMAL ACCOUNT OF SPANISH ADJECTIVE POSITION AND INTERPRETATION*

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0. *Introduction*

UG proposals concerning the syntax of attributive adjectives (i.e., adjectives that modify N within a DP projection) are numerous and diverse, even if we consider only those framed within recent phrase structure theory, that is, the approach in which functional categories head functional projections and take lexical phrases as their complements. In a rough sketch of previous work, a broad distinction may be established between non-uniform and uniform analyses of attributive adjectives: analyses in which adjectives are not given a uniform structural definition and analyses in which adjectives are given a uniform structural definition.¹ It would take too long to review all these previous works, but what we can certainly assert after a close look at them is that the situation is magmatic, suggesting that principles in the field are not as restrictive as we desire them to be, and demanding extreme parsimony in motivating any part of our proposals. Indeed, even if differences between analyses of adjectives are due to justifiable factors (the fact that only partial aspects of the syntax of the category are taken into consideration, i.e., only, modal or qualitative or prenominal, or

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¹ Non-uniform analyses of adjectives are provided in Bernstein (1991, 1993), Valois (1991), Zamparelli (1993) following Abney (1987), Lamarche (1991), Bouchard (1995), Giorgi & Longobardi (1991), etc. A very suggestive non-uniform analysis of qualitative Spanish adjectives can be found in Martín (1995). On the other hand, the point of departure for a uniform treatment of attributive adjectives is Cinque (1994) where it is proposed that all adjectives are generated as specifiers of the functional projections. An approach in this line, applied only to Spanish postnominal adjectives, is pursued by Bosque & Picallo (1996).

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postnominal adjectives are targets of analyses; the differences in the whole theoretical approach, for example the number of functional categories which can be accepted, or the distinction or non distinction between adjuncts and specifiers; etc.), it is also clear that the distance between uniform and non-uniform analyses is partly dependent on the importance given to the semantics of the adjective-noun relation.²

In this work I examine prenominal qualitative and modal/eventive Spanish adjectives and I motivate a relativized version of the non-uniformity thesis, which also advocates a quite strict relation between position and interpretation. To start with, I propose that prenominal adjectives fall into four classes: modal epistemic (*posible solución* "possible solution"), intensional 'privative' (*único amigo* "only friend", *pobre hombre* "poor man"), circumstantial or eventive (*frecuentes viajes* "frequent trips"), and qualitative non-restrictive (*blanca nieve* "white snow") modifiers. Postnominal adjectives, on the other hand (which will be frequently mentioned but not actually studied in this article),³ are only qualitative restrictive modifiers. This classification is somehow an idealization –as will be the generalizations concerning adjective order and relative position– which is rather different from the ones usually assumed.

The general claim that adjectives cannot receive a uniform analysis is articulated through the following hypotheses, from which their basic syntactic properties as well as their intensional and extensional interpretations follow straightforwardly:

(A) Adjectives are mostly predicates but while prenominal adjectives are either predicates of existence or predicates of event, postnominal adjectives are only property assigning predicates.⁴ Prenominal adjectives are in the domain of a DegP shell external to the lexical NP projection (Zamparelli 1993, Corver 1997ab). More specifically, qualitative scalar prenominal adjectives are adjoined to a Deg head which discharges its features on the scalar qualitative adjective. Modal and intensional privative prenominal adjectives are X(P)s base adjoined either to DegP or to NP depending on the lexical relation they establish with the head noun. On the other hand, qualitative adjectives surfacing postnominally in

² This is clearly the case in Lamarche (1991), Bouchard (1995) and Martín (1995), among others.

³ But cf. Demonte (1997).

⁴ If instead of following a Davidsonian approach we were taking adjectives as predicate modifiers (Montague 1974) we could say that most prenominal adjectives are operators, namely functions mapping predicates to predicates, elements ranging over variables in the theta-grid of N. Very possibly, intensional restrictive adjectives like *único* "only" or *verdadero* "true" are both predicates of existence and operators predicating a proposition from a proposition. On the contrary, modal adjectives like *posible* "possible" are not predicates but only operators.

Romance languages (and qualitative adjectives which will later move to Deg) are predicates of a small clause predicative structure (Bernstein 1993).⁵ This small clause has N as its subject.

(B) These different forms of adjective projection and derivation are generally related to principles of thematic discharge (Higginbotham 1985), which ultimately are subparts of a general principle of Full Interpretation.⁶ In other words, I will push forward the idea that Merge is driven by selectional properties of predicates (Chomsky 1995), claiming that non-qualitative adjective modifiers are inserted by Merge into their canonical position. In addition, I will claim that qualitative adjectives, when marked with a feature [+Deg], move to DegP in order to check the features of a Deg head.

Certain parts of the hypotheses above (although not the approach as a whole) have antecedents in generative linguistics. The idea that certain prenominal adjectives are heads taking NPs as their complements originates in Abney (1987) and it is extended in Bernstein (1993) and Zamparelli (1993, 1997). In their view, however, only intensional (modal or privative) adjectives like *alleged*, *frequent* or *complete* give rise to this configuration. Martín (1995), studying Spanish, inverts the proposal just mentioned and claims that qualitative 'epithet' adjectives are heads, while intensional adjectives are specifiers of NP; I will follow a similar line but I will assert that the prenominal position of qualitative adjectives is the result of movement to Deg of a base generated postnominal adjective. The proposal that certain adjectives are base generated as adjuncts is suggested in Valois (1991). The hypothesis that certain postnominal adjectives are predicates in a predicative structure is also present in Bernstein and Zamparelli. The application of Pollock's V head-movement hypothesis to the nominal projection starts in Cinque (1994) and has received strong support later on.

All of these proposals, however, will be revised in the following pages where, as I have said, generation and derivation of adjectives will be related to ways of thematic discharge and necessity of feature checking. Moreover, projection of functional categories between NP and DP will not be simply a way of stating word order effects but will crucially depend on the fact that formal features of N

⁵ I will not take into account in this work relational or pseudo-adjectives like *musical* or *English* (as in *English musical comedy*) which are always postnominal in Spanish. See Bosque & Picallo (1996) for a thorough study of these forms and for references to traditional and theoretical analyses of these adjectives.

⁶ FI holds "that an element can appear in a representation only if it is properly 'licensed'" (Chomsky 1995:151). FI is then a 'convergence' condition (1995:194); objects which are interpreted at the A-P and C-I interfaces satisfy FI.

and Adj have to be checked, in a Minimalist approach to feature projection and category merging (Chomsky 1995).

The organization of this paper is as follows. The first section deals with the question of whether pre and postnominal adjectives, both being –descriptively speaking– modifiers, are the same type of constituent. In section 1.1 a series of empirical generalizations concerning the syntax and interpretation of Spanish adjectives, not considered so far in formal studies of attributive adjectives, will firstly be introduced in order to set a point of departure for the theory to be developed. In 1.2 a DP structure in which a distinction is made between adjectives appearing in Deg heads and adjunct prenominal adjectives (theta markers and predicates of existence and event, respectively) is proposed and argued for through evidence concerning generic/specific interpretation, postnominal relatives, licensing of null nominals, agreement and so on. In section 2 a derivation for qualitative prenominal adjectives is briefly presented and justified.

1. *Prenominal adjectives in DPs*

1.1 *Deriving the class of data and its range*

There are countless descriptive generalizations concerning distribution, classes, order constraints and meaning differences between prenominal and postnominal attributive adjectives. To start with I would like to set apart the following facts and contrasts which bear directly on the central issues to be discussed later on. At the same time, these facts show the many limitations of uniform approaches to the syntax of attributive adjectives.

1.1.1 Pre-nominal adjectives belong to four classes which are illustrated in (1): (i) modal ‘epistemic’ adjectives, in which speaker-oriented and subject oriented adjectives occur, (1a); (ii) intensionally oriented adjectives which either intensify (*verdadero, pobre*), restrict (*único, simple*) or evaluate (*falso*) the reference of the noun, (1b); (iii) circumstantial adjectives which denote temporal, locative and manner parameters associated with the noun, (1c), and (iv) non-restrictive non-intensional qualitative adjectives, (1d):

- (1) a. **modal epistemic adjectives:** {*posible* ‘possible’, *necesario* ‘necessary’, *probable* ‘probable’, *presunto* ‘alleged’, *supuesto* ‘supposed’, *presumible* ‘presumable’} *asesino* ‘murderer’
- b. **intensionally oriented adjectives (intensifiers, restrictive and evaluative):** {*completo* ‘complete’, *rotundo* ‘total’, *perfecto* ‘perfect’, *verdadero* ‘true’, *simple* ‘simple’, *exclusivo* ‘exclusive’, *único* ‘only’, *falso* ‘false’} *fracaso* ‘failure’

- (1) c. **circumstantial adjectives:** *el antiguo acuerdo* ‘the old agreement’, *el actual presidente* ‘the present president’, *los frecuentes saludos* ‘the frequent greetings’
- d. **non-restrictive qualitative adjectives:** *la roja manzana* ‘the red apple’, *su alegre esposa* ‘his happy wife’, *un prudente abogado* ‘a cautious lawyer’

I name the above subclasses according to the semantic entity they modify.⁷ Modal adjectives establish a different possible world to evaluate the truth of the referential variable bound by the determiner. Privative and uniqueness adjectives are focal-like markers on the denotation of noun phrases, they focus on the attribute indicated by N. Circumstantial adjectives bind a spatio-temporal position (an *e* argument) in the theta-grid of Ns.⁸ Finally, qualitative adjectives bind the reference of N (in fact, a distinguished property expressed by N; it is in this sense that they are reference modifiers, i.e., functions from denotations to denotations (Larson 1995)).

Adjectives in (1a) and (1b) –which have strict correspondence in certain classes of adverbs– always precede the noun, as shown in (2a). A reduced set of the adjective forms in (1a) and most of the forms in (1b), when appearing postnominally (*posible, falso, pobre*), have a different reading. In this position they assign a property to the noun as indicated by the glosses in (2b):

- (2) a. *el presunto asesino* ‘the alleged murderer’ — **el asesino presunto* / *el presumible debate sobre los presupuestos* ‘the presumable debate on (the) budget’ — **el debate presumible sobre los presupuestos*
- b. *el posible viaje* ‘the possible trip’: ‘It is possible that we make a trip’ — *el viaje posible* ‘the viable trip’ / *un perfecto fracaso* ‘a total failure’: ‘It was a perfect failure’ — *un fracaso perfecto* ‘The failure was perfect’

1.1.2 Qualitative adjectives in (1d) (and also circumstantial ones in (1c)) can appear both preposed and postposed to N but they differ significantly in their meaning relation with the modified N, as has been largely noticed in the

⁷ Zamparelli (1993:138) distinguishes only two classes of prenominal adjectives in Italian which he names ‘restrictive’ (those which change the denotation of the noun: *frequente, completa*, etc.) and ‘non-restrictive’ adjectives (*dorata, bella*, etc.), respectively.

⁸ It can be argued that it is not clear what type of *e* argument appears in sequences like *my old friend* (in the sense of ‘a long standing friend’). As in Larson (1995), I will claim that the variable *e* may also range over states.

literature. Following a distinction made by Kamp (1975:153), I will assert that prenominal qualitative adjectives “contribute to the delineation of the (class of) objects that the complex NP of which it is part is designed to pick out”, while postnominal adjectives “help to determine the particular individual which is the intended referent of the description in which the adjective occurs”. Adjectives like the one in (3a) are usually called restrictive qualitative adjectives; the equivalent form in (3b) is called a non-restrictive adjective:

- (3) a. *Dame la rosa delicada*
 give-me the rose delicate
 “Give me the rose (which is) delicate”
 b. *Dame la delicada rosa*
 give-me the delicate rose
 “Give me the delicate rose”

There are two possibilities regarding the genesis of these interpretations. We could think, as does Zamparelli (1993:138), that these interpretations are simply pragmatically imposed over two possible structures. We could claim, alternatively, that they derive from the syntax of the construction. I will motivate the second option taking the interpretation of generic and non-specific subjects as crucial data.

1.1.3 Ideally, in prenominal position, sequences of adjectives have at most one qualitative adjective and a variable number of members of the other three classes. In (4) the first example shows two qualitative adjectives, the second one a modal followed by a qualitative adjective:

- (4) **mi alto simpático amigo* “my tall nice friend” (cf. *mi alto amigo* “my tall friend”) / *mi posible futura amplia vivienda* “my possible future spacious house”

However, it is unusual to find more than two consecutive adjectives preceding the noun. In fact, series of more than two adjectives sound awkward, although they are attested:

- (5) a. ?*la supuesta única antigua amiga de mi madre que aún vive*
 the supposed only old friend of my mother who still lives
 “The supposed only old friend of my mother who is still alive”

- (5) b. ...*que un posible futuro buen rey es un buen padre*
 ...that a possible future good king is a good father
 “...that a possible future good king is a good father”
 (*El País*, 3-10-1997:12)

More importantly, the order between the above mentioned adjectives is not as rigid as has been assumed. Epistemic adjectives may both precede and follow qualitative adjectives, (6a), and the same is true for intensional restrictive adjectives, (6b):

- (6) a. *el presunto delgado asesino* “the alleged thin murderer” — *el delgado presunto asesino* “the thin alleged murderer” / *la supuesta vieja iglesia románica* “the supposed old Romanic church” — *la vieja supuesta iglesia románica* “the old supposed Romanic church”
 b. *mi única divertida colega* “my only funny colleague” — *mi divertida única colega* “my funny only colleague”

Scope relations are interchangeable depending on the mutual structural relation in the two orders mentioned: in the first example in (6a) *presunto* has scope over *delgado asesino*; in *delgado presunto asesino* the scope relations are reversed. Sequences in the order M(odal)+Q(ualitative)+N have an additional reading in which the modal is an adverb modifying only the adjective (*la supuesta vieja iglesia* = *la supuestamente vieja iglesia*). It has to be said that most of the speakers find more unusual (although not ungrammatical) sequences with the qualitative adjective preceding the modal perhaps because epistemic elements are usually found in higher positions in sequences of operators.⁹

Relative freedom of order and constraints on the number of possible prenominal adjectives are two facts which strongly militate against the analysis of adjectives as specifiers of a set of rigidly ordered functional categories parallel to those projecting between VP and IP. Regarding the facts we have just mentioned, let us say, for the time being, that a provisional generalization is that epistemic (and intensionally oriented privative) adjectives appear to be able to adjoin to constituents situated at different levels in the functional projection of DP.

Epistemic adjectives as well as restrictive and intensifying (intensionally oriented) adjectives can also invert their positions both among members of the two classes (although in this case with stronger constraints), as in (7a), and

⁹ Not all combinations are possible, of course, and examples like the following ones trigger different judgements among informants: *ok?/*un brillante posible sustituto* “a bright possible substitute”, *???la visible necesaria reforma* “the visible necessary reform”, etc.

among members of the same class, (7b) and (7c) with the corresponding effects in scope relations. *La supuesta/probable falsa declaración* means that “possibly the statement is false” while *la falsa supuesta/probable declaración* means that “something which possibly is a statement is false”; *el supuesto presunto asesino* means that “supposedly the murderer is not the murderer (just he is an alleged murderer)” while *el presunto supuesto asesino* means that “allegedly somebody is supposed to be the murderer”; in *mi verdadero único amigo*, *verdadero* broadens the reference of *único amigo* while *único* in *mi único verdadero amigo* restricts the reference of *verdadero amigo*:

- (7) a. *la supuesta falsa declaración* “the supposedly false statement” — *la falsa supuesta declaración* “the false supposed statement”
 b. *el presunto supuesto asesino* “the alleged supposed murderer” — *el supuesto presunto asesino* “the supposed alleged murderer”
 c. *mi verdadero único amigo* “my true only/unique friend” — *mi único verdadero amigo* “my only/unique true friend”

All these facts highlight a strong difference with respect to English, and perhaps Italian, where longer series of adjectives seem to be allowed. In such series, moreover, adjectives are strictly ordered (Valois 1991, Crisma 1990, Cinque 1994). Nevertheless, a fact in which Spanish appears to be similar to these languages regards the order between epistemic and circumstantial, and epistemic and some intensionally oriented restrictive / intensifying adjectives; *grosso modo* modal adjectives always precede circumstantial adjectives as in (8a), and modals sometimes should precede restrictive adjectives as in (8b):

- (8) a. *Los supuestos frecuentes viajes de Luis asustan a su mujer*
 the supposed frequent trips of Luis frighten to his wife
 ??*Los frecuentes supuestos viajes de Luis asustan a su mujer*
 the frequent supposed trips of Luis frighten to his wife
 “Luis’ supposed frequent trips frighten his wife”
 b. *Me preocupa el probable completo fracaso de la obra*
 me-Dat worries the probable complete failure of the play
 **Me preocupa el completo probable fracaso de la obra*
 me-Dat worries the complete probable failure of the play
 “I am worried about the probable complete failure of the play”
 (cf. It. *La probabile completa invasione di Giove* / **La completa probabile invasione di Giove*, from Zamparelli 1993: 142)

There are cases, though, in which a circumstantial adjective appears before an epistemic one (*el siguiente posible problema* “the following possible problem”

or *el futuro posible rey* “the future possible king”)¹⁰ suggesting again that eventive (circumstantial) and intensional adjectives share basic syntactic properties.

Similarly to modal and intensionally oriented adjectives, circumstantial (manner and temporal adjectives, especially) show free order when they co-occur.¹¹

- (9) *sus frecuentes furtivas entradas* “his/her frequent furtive entrances”
 — *sus furtivas frecuentes entradas* “his/her furtive frequent entrances” /
su prudente corta actuación “his/her cautious short performance” — *su corta prudente actuación* “his/her short cautious performance”

The generalization, then, is that adjectives which directly bear on the hidden denotation of N (which take its denotation as a value: most of circumstantial and some restrictive adjectives) must follow modal ones and must be adjacent to the noun, after qualitative adjectives. But modal and intensionally restrictive adjectives can appear either preceding or following non-restrictive qualitative adjectives when co-occurring with them. In addition, members of epistemic and intensionally oriented classes can be adjacent, in any order (cf. (7b) and (7c)).

1.1.4 Only qualitative adjectives appear in the postnominal position; these adjectives, as I have said, are usually classifiers and restrict the denotation of N. Now, temporal adjectives like *futuro* “future”, *próximo* “next” which, from a semantic point of view, are a subpart of circumstantial adjectives, can also appear postnominally (*el anterior presidente* “the former president” but also *el presidente anterior*). However, the alternation in pre and postnominal position does not have in this case the same meaning constraints than that of regular qualitative adjectives, since the interpretation of temporal adjectives remains constant independently of the position in which they occur. Silva-Villar & Gutiérrez-Rexach (1996) claim that these adjectives carry an optional abstract temporal feature; for this reason they firstly adjoin to N making a cluster with it and are then attracted to a T heading a TP projecting above NP. If this analysis is on the right track, it would imply that different locations of the same adjectives will always be a result of movement due to feature checking. This is the line that I will explore to explain the syntax and interpretation of qualitative adjectives; I will leave temporal adjectives out of my analysis, though.

¹⁰ I owe this observation to J. Martín.

¹¹ Valois (1991: 149) also provides English examples with subject oriented and manner adverbs in this order: *the clever careful invasion of Jupiter*. As Bernstein (1993: 101, fn 31) recalls, Valois uses these data to assert that more than one adjective can be adjoined to the same projection.

In contrast with prenominal adjectives postnominal adjectives can be stacked (especially color and shape adjectives as in (10)):

- (10) a. *Dame el sombrero rojo redondo*
 give-me the hat red round
 "Give me the round red hat"
- b. *Dame el sombrero redondo rojo*
 give-me the hat round red
 "Give me the red round hat"

It has to be said that stacking in this case does not mean relative scope. Actually, with intersective adjectives, like color and shape, each adjective modifies the N independently.

Sequences of more than two postnominal qualitative adjectives are however unusual. Even if attributive adjectives are by default individual level (both in pre and postnominal position), stage-level participial adjectives can only occur postnominally as in (11a). In (11b) we have sequences of intersective and non intersective adjectives, the only constraint being that intersective adjectives tend to be adjacent to N. Color and form adjectives tend to be adjacent to N while evaluative adjectives like *maravilloso* usually appear in final position in a sequence:

- (11) a. *el libro roto* — **el roto libro*
 the book broken the broken book
la barca vendida — **la vendida barca*
 the boat sold the sold boat
- b. *El libro amarillo sucio* — *?/*el libro sucio amarillo*
 the book yellow dirty the book dirty yellow
la niña delgada bellisima — **la niña bellisima delgada*
 the girl thin beautiful the girl beautiful thin

Differences with prenominal adjectives are striking in this regard. Usually prenominal qualitative adjectives are not stacked, as (12a) illustrates. Only elative adjectives –interpreted in these cases as a subclass of modal/speaker-oriented adjectives (not strictly qualitative elatives)¹²– can precede (and form a sequence with) a prenominal qualitative adjective, as in (12b):

¹² Namely, *la maravillosa larga jornada* "the wonderful long day" means something like *la maravillosamente larga jornada* "the wonderfully long day". When this meaning is not possible elative prenominal adjectives preceding qualitative ones are marked ungrammatical as in **la preciosa elegante bolsa* "the beautiful elegant purse". Observe that in this case interpretation as "the beautifully elegant purse" is not possible).

- (12) a. **la delgada alta señora* — **la alta delgada señora*
 the thin tall woman the tall thin woman
**la roja olorosa rosa* — **la olorosa roja rosa*
 the red fragrant rose the fragrant red rose
**el largo doloroso silencio* — *?el doloroso largo silencio*
 the long painful silence the painful long silence
- b. *la maravillosa larga jornada*
 the wonderful long day
**la larga maravillosa jornada*
 the long wonderful day
la extraordinaria dorada librería
 the extraordinary golden bookcase
**la dorada extraordinaria librería*
 the golden extraordinary bookcase

This idealization of the Spanish order and occurrence of pre and postnominal adjectives, which is not as partial as the paradigms usually provided by the analysts, strongly suggests an analysis in which both types of adjectives have a different source and different syntactic and semantic properties. This is the hypothesis that I explore in the next subsection.

1.2 In support of a different syntactic derivation for pre- and postnominal adjectives. The DegP hypothesis

1.2.1 In uniform analyses of adjective modification, as I have said, adjectives are considered specifiers of either lexical or functional projections; whether they project in the Spec of NP or in the Spec of FP is a secondary matter, the only requirement being that of satisfying order facts, except for the case of ethnic relational adjectives which are usually considered as specifiers of NP. However, there are general conceptual reasons which make this hypothesis difficult to accept.

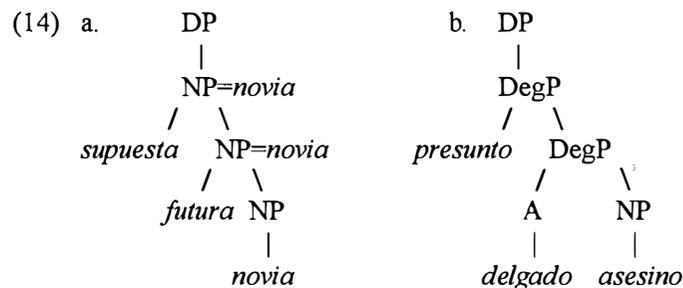
First, if specifiers of functional categories are supposed to check some particular features,¹³ we will have to accept that different kinds of adjectives provide different features to be checked, perhaps semantic features like manner, subject orientation and the like.¹⁴ This supposition is plausible but it has the

¹³ This observation does not hold for specifiers of lexical categories like Spec of VP. I thank O. Fernández-Soriano for bringing this point to my attention.

¹⁴ Sánchez (1996) has an interesting analysis of Spanish pre- and postnominal adjectives based on the idea that Modal and Aspectual Phrases are projected within NP.

prenominal adjectives are ‘appositive’ and ‘explicative’ would be a consequence of a thematic relation in which a constitutive role of N (not its Referential variable) is an argument of A (saturates an open position in its theta-grid). The referential variable in N, <1,R>, will then be available to be theta-bound by D.

1.2.2 In addition, I assume that all non-scalar adjectives (modal, intensional and circumstantial) are more or less freely generated as (successive) adjuncts to the non-argumental maximal projections NP and DegP. Modal and privative adjectives can adjoin to any of the two projections or to both of them, circumstantial adjectives adjoin only to NP. The reason for this type of projection is thematic discharge: modal and intensionally oriented restrictive adjectives, when they are attributive modifiers, do not denote or modify objects but simply the attribute indicated by N (the N “is mentioned [rather] than used” (Higginbotham, 1985:567)). In this sense modal and restrictive adjectives, syntactically speaking, appear to be predicates saturating the R argument as far as it is a property denoting argument (they are predicates of existence as we have actually said). On the other hand, circumstantial adjectives saturate the spatio-temporal E-argument in the theta-grid of N. The reason why temporal-spatial predicates have to be syntactically closer to the bindee is unclear, but we can speculate that it follows from the fact that modal, intensionally oriented and circumstantial adjectives have to be broadly L-related to the item to which they adjoin. In this sense, modality will always modify temporality, but not vice versa. (14a) and (14b) illustrate, respectively, the formation of *la supuesta futura novia de Juan* ‘Juan’s supposed future fiancée’, *el presunto delgado asesino* ‘the alleged thin murderer’:



These representations are minimal and follow from Full Interpretation to the extent that adjunct adjective modifiers (not all adjuncts) also merge for L-related or interpretive reasons. What these data show, in any case, is that the operation underlying (14) “applies anywhere without special stipulation” and it will be the interface LF level which will have to say whether some combination leads to

crashing of the derivation because “some wrong choice has been made” and it contains an uninterpretable element (Chomsky 1995:231). Recently, discussing adverbial adjuncts, Bartra & Suñer (1997) have argued that adjuncts are hosted on clones or duplicates of the specifiers of functional categories and that certain adverbs host there when they are semantically related to the content of the functional category. This idea is similar to ours although we claim that adjectives are adjuncts simply to non argumental maximal projections. Freedom of position and scope facts are easily deduced from this analysis. Notice, finally, that such freedom of position cannot be obtained through N-movement (since this type of adjective always precedes N) not even through movement of adjectives within NP. (There will be no features to be discharged through adjective movement.)

As for relative adjectives mentioned in (12b), it has to be said that these adjectives, when truly qualitative, are incompatible with other qualitative adjectives, as in (15),

- (15) **la delgadísima alta mujer*
 the very-thin tall woman
 **una soberbia educada profesora*
 a splendid educated teacher

suggesting that two successive DegPs cannot be licensed.¹⁸ (12b) is then a different structure.

I now would like to provide syntactic empirical evidence in favor of the representations proposed in (13) and (14) and the assumptions on which they rely.

1.2.2.1 *Variable binding in Adj+N structures.* A piece of evidence that the different interpretations of pre- and postnominal adjectives are not simply pragmatically imposed over a possible structure but are sensitive to the syntax of the construction is that definite NPs with preposed qualitative adjectives cannot be generic subjects, as opposed to those with postposed adjectives:

¹⁸ I thank I. Bosque for this observation.

- (16) a. **Los desdentados leones_{gen} se alimentan siempre de hierbas*¹⁹
 the toothless lions Refl eat always of grass
 "Toothless lions always eat grass"
- b. *Los leones desdentados se alimentan siempre de hierbas*
 the lions toothless Refl eat always of grass
 "Lions (which are) toothless always eat grass"

In the same line, definite NPs with prenominal adjectives cannot be subjects of sentences headed by verbs which select kind-denoting subjects, as *extinguish* in (17):

- (17) a. **Los desdentados leones se están extinguiendo*
 the toothless lions Refl are disappearing
 "Toothless lions are disappearing"
- b. *Los leones desdentados se están extinguiendo*
 the lions toothless Refl are disappearing
 "Lions which are toothless are disappearing"

The presence of prenominal adjectives also has consequences on the interpretation of indefinite NPs. As noted by Bosque (1996) and Picallo (1994), indefinite NPs with prenominal qualitative adjectives only have specific interpretation. This semantic property is visible in the ungrammaticality of DPs with prenominal adjectives in intensional imperative contexts where specific interpretation is not possible, (18a), or in the impossibility of distributive reading for an indefinite DP with a prenominal qualitative adjective in a quantificational context, (18b). Indefinite NPs with postnominal adjectives, on the contrary, do not show this restriction and are ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific interpretation (the examples in (18) are based on Bosque 1996):

- (18) a. **Préstame un azul lápiz / Préstame un lápiz azul*
 lend-me a blue pencil / lend-me a pencil blue
 "Lend me a blue pencil"
- b. **Todos los niños trajeron una roja rosa*
 all the kids carried a red rose
Todos los niños trajeron una rosa roja
 all the kids carried a rose red
 "All the kids carried a red rose"

¹⁹ Notice that (16a) —as well as (17a)— would be correct sentences if *toothless lions* had a specific reference, or if being toothless were a general property of lions.

According to Diesing, elements having quantificational force are operators "binding the variable introduced in the restrictive clause" once the tree splitting procedure distinguishing restrictive clause and nuclear scope has taken place (Diesing 1992:94). In generic sentences the variable is bound by the generic operator and in this case the generic NPs are mapped into the restrictive clause (the quantifier having undergone QR by which it adjoins to IP). It appears that in sentences like (16a)–(17a) the restrictive clause is not formed; N cannot be the restrictor of the variable.

On the other hand, weak determiners like *un* do not have quantificational force on their own, according to Heim (1982), moreover, indefinites are not inherently quantified but merely introduce variables in the logical representation. By virtue of these properties they have two possibilities:

in their quantificational (strong) reading they undergo QR as strong quantifiers do, on their cardinal reading they remain within VP at LF and are mapped into the nuclear scope by the tree splitting procedure. On [this] cardinal reading weak indefinites are bound by existential closure [...] in the existential closure reading a weak determiner has no quantificational force, it functions as a cardinality predicate (Diesing 1992:6)

The question is now what prevents restrictive clause formation in the two cases, what forces the NP to remain within the VP or, in other words, what blocks generic or strong binding in DPs when the adjective precedes the noun? I claim that this impossibility is determined by the syntax of NPs with prenominal adjectives. In structures like (13) the variable which has to be bound by the generic operator —as well as the variable introduced by indefinites with strong quantificational reading, triggering the non-specific interpretation— is closed off by the Deg operator (which appears to be an unselective operator) in combination with the adjective adjoined to it in the syntax. In this sense there is no variable available for any other quantifier, and closure by default is forceful.²⁰ The situation is similar to the one described by Diesing for sentences with experiencer verbs and generic objects in which the generic operator binds two variables: here we have Deg binding the G(rade) variable and also R; on the other hand, we have one variable, R, ready to be bound by two operators in competition. The lower operator induces a Relativized Minimality effect.

²⁰ Bosque (1996:9) states these facts in terms of the interaction of the quantificational domains triggered both by the Deg operator and the indefinite nominal. Our explanation, on the contrary, relies on the syntactic fact that Deg is present and binds the R variable, thus blocking binding by a quantifier.

It is interesting to note that not all prenominal adjectives contribute to cancelling the generic reading. This reading is available in two cases: (a) when the adjective to the left of N is a qualitative ‘epithet’ (an even more constrained reading of prenominal qualitative adjectives), (b) when the prenominal adjective is intensional, either modal, temporal or restrictive. (19) illustrates the ‘epithet context’:

- (19) a. *El desdentado oso hormiguero sólo come animales mínimos*
 the toothless bear anteater only eats animals minimal
 “The toothless anteater only eats very small animals”
- b. *La efímera hierba siempre dura una semana*
 the ephemeral grass always lasts a week
 “The ephemeral grass always lasts one week”

The intuition that certain prenominal adjectives specify “a prototypical value of the noun” (Martín 1995:203), embodied in the traditional notion of epithet adjectives, derives from the syntax of scalar and non-scalar adjectives. In the case of *la blanca nieve* “the white snow” as compared with *los blancos claveles* “the white carnations”, *white* satisfies all the conditions to be epithetic: it is an intersective or absolute adjective, as color adjectives usually are, and it expresses a property which cannot be possessed ‘to a certain degree’ by the *snow* (as tallness can be a property relative to a given man). In the same way, although not for identical reasons, being toothless is scalar for lions but non-scalar when applied to anteaters. In this sense, intersective adjectives are not gradable and, as a consequence of this, when used as epithets they cannot be taken as a means to highlight a distinguished property of the entity to which they apply. I claim then that qualitative epithets are not complements of a DegP, they are not operators in this sense, but simply adjectives adjoined to the noun to which they modify. In effect, epithets must always appear adjacent to N and plausibly they are incorporated into the noun.

(20a), with a generic adverb, (20b), where the NP with prenominal adjectives is the subject of an individual-level predicate, and (20c), where the DP is in a modalized sentence, instantiate cases in which operator prenominal adjectives do not interfere with a generic reading (more accurately, these contexts *favor* the generic reading).²¹

- (20) a. *El/Un futuro maestro siempre produce admiración*
 the/a future teacher always causes admiration
 “The/a future teacher always causes admiration”

²¹ Recall that *siempre* “always” can appear in contexts with existential subjects (*Firemen are available*). The observation was brought to my attention by A. Mendikoetxea.

- (20) b. *El/Un presunto asesino sabe que tiene que defenderse*
 the/an alleged murderer knows that he has to-defend-Ref1
 “The/an alleged murderer knows that he has to defend himself”
- c. *El/Un mero mal gesto no puede provocar tal reacción*
 the/a mere bad gesture not may provoke such-a reaction
 “The/a mere bad gesture may not provoke such a reaction”

The facts in (20) suggest then that N-movement cannot be responsible for the relative ordering of N and A, and that not all prenominal adjectives are the same syntactic element. They show moreover that it is the presence of Deg, and of the corresponding adjectival head closing the variable in N, that explains the fact that sentences in (16a), (17a) and (18) cannot have generic NPs. Indirectly, these facts provide support for the idea that modal and circumstantial adjectives are not heads but constituents adjoined to NP or to projections above NP, since they do not block binding by a higher operator.

1.2.2.2 *The occurrence of the degree words tanto / mucho in A+N constructions.* A second empirical argument for having prenominal adjectives adjoined to a Deg head –and for having a different structural position for postnominal adjectives– comes from the phenomena of occurrence of the degree word *tan(to)/mucho* in NPs with adjective modifiers. (21a) as opposed to (21b) indicates that complements of this degree word cannot induce connectivity when the corresponding NP has a prenominal adjective, while connectivity is possible when the corresponding NP has a postnominal adjective:

- (21) a. **Esta semana la radio ha recibido desesperadas*
 this week the radio has received desperate
llamadas, pero no tanto ___ como la semana pasada
 calls but not so-much as the week last
Esta semana la radio ha recibido llamadas desesperadas, pero
*no tanto*²² ___ como la semana pasada
 “This week the radio has received desperate calls, not as (much)
 ___ as last week”

²² We consider *tanto* “so much” as an adverbial degree word (it serves to denote degree of a property) while *tantos/tantas* “so many” appears to be a quantitative item (it denotes quantity). I thank Luis Eguren for suggesting to me examples similar to the ones here.

- (21) b. **En mi juventud lei interesantes libros, aunque*
 in my youth I-read interesting books although
no mucho ___
 not much
En mi juventud lei libros interesantes, aunque no mucho
 “When I was young I read interesting books although not that
 much ___”

Whatever the interpretive mechanism is, it can be argued (in the spirit, although not in the word, of Corver’s explanation for ‘split topicalization’) that the empty position in the second conjunct has to recover the features of a constituent A-N to guarantee correct interpretation. Now, if connectivity requires proper government and structural identity, we might assert that *tanto/mucho* in (21) are not proper governors under the supposition that these items have to occupy the head position of a Deg phrase, but such a position, in the antecedent, would be occupied by the qualitative adjective moved to this position to check its degree features, as I have suggested.

The facts in (22) show another interesting contrast: when NPs are exclamative, pronominal adjectives cannot be preceded by a degree word like *tan*; on the contrary, the degree word is possible (actually, forceful either syntactic or morphologically, in the case of the superlative) when the adjective is postnominal:

- (22) a. *¡Qué (*tan) bonita niña!*
 what such-a pretty girl
 “What (such-a) pretty girl!”
- b. *¡Qué niña *(tan) bonita! / ¡Qué persona (tan) maravillosa!*
 what girl so pretty what person so wonderful
 “What (such-a) pretty girl!” ”What a wonderful person!”

These facts might suggest that DegP is always present when the adjective is pronominal. Although we do not have a clear proposal regarding this contrast, the main intuition is the following. In structures similar to (22a) the wh-word, which is a quantifier, will be generated as head of a QP selected by Deg, Deg being forced by the presence of the scalar adjective. The impossibility of **que tan* will follow from subcategorization (a Deg head cannot follow a Q element).

1.2.2.3. *Postnominal elative adjectives.* The sentences in (23) show that postnominal implicitly or morphologically graded adjectives (namely elative adjectives and adjectives inflected with the superlative affix *-ísimo*) are not

possible in NPs with a definite determiner, as in (23a). Now, when the determiner is indefinite, graded adjectives are possible both pre- and postnominally, (23):²³

- (23) a. **Se puso el sombrero horrible/precioso/bell-ísimo*
 Refl put-on/3sg. the hat horrible/beautiful/pretty-very
- a'. *Se puso el horrible/precioso/bell-ísimo sombrero*
 Refl put-on/3sg. the horrible/beautiful/pretty-very hat
 “He put on the horrible/beautiful/very pretty hat”
- b. *Se puso un sombrero horrible/precioso/bell-ísimo*
 Refl put-on/3sg a hat horrible/beautiful/pretty-very
- b'. *Se puso un horrible/precioso/bell-ísimo sombrero*
 Refl put-on/3sg. a horrible/beautiful/pretty-very hat
 “He put on a horrible/beautiful/very pretty hat”

The contrast in (23a/a’), namely, the fact that we cannot have intrinsically or morphologically graded adjectives in postnominal position could be taken as direct evidence for our proposal: adjectives marked with a [+Deg] feature raise to Deg as shown in (13). These facts, which would otherwise be unexpected, also suggest that Deg is somehow licensed by a strong determiner. The remaining question is why evaluative adjectives can appear both pronominally and postnominally in indefinite DPs. We will not provide an answer for this contrast here, but it appears that this behavior is related to the nature of indefinites: they function as cardinality predicates and they do not force overt movement of the superlative adjective.

Juan Martín (p.c.) provides another interesting contrast along the same lines. He has rightly observed that while *-ísimo* superlatives are typically pronominal, adjectives graded with the intensifier *muy* “very” are characteristically postnominal. (24a) is the natural paradigm in definite NPs; in a sentence like (24b) *muy buena* should receive a special intonation:

- (24) a. *Los niños muy gordos no pueden pasar por esta puerta*
 the kids very fat not can go through this door
 **Los muy gordos niños no pueden pasar por esta puerta*
 the very fat kids not can go through this door
 “The very fat kids cannot go through this door”
- b. *La MUY BUENA madre de Juan le perdona todo*
 the very good mother of Juan him-CI forgives everything
 “Juan’s very nice mother forgives him everything”

²³ Contrasts similar to the ones in (23) are provided in Leonetti (1999).

This contrast will follow straightforwardly from the analysis of adjective movement that we present in 2.1 below.

1.2.2.4 *Only postnominal adjectives license empty Ns*. Brucart (1987:3.2.3) noted that the identification of empty nominal heads in structures like (25) requires the presence of both a determiner and a lexical 'specificative' complement. He finds PPs headed by *de* as well as adjectives among such specificative complements:

- (25) *Está bien la americana gris, pero prefiero la verde/ de rayas*
 it-is fine the jacket gray but I-prefer the green/ of stripes
 "I like this grey jacket, but I prefer the green one/one with stripes"
 (From Brucart 1987:228)

Dumitrescu & Saltarelli (1996:2.3) have recently remarked that ellipsis of the nominal head is possible only with postnominal adjectives. This assertion is proved by the fact that adjectives occurring only prenominal (like *mero* "mere" in (26a) below) are not possible in elliptical contexts; (26b) shows, according to them, that in structures involving adjectives which are ambiguous between an extensional and an intensional reading (*gran* "great/big", *viejo* "old", *mero* "mere", *simple* "simple", etc.), a coordination cannot be established when the intensional preposed form appears in the first conjunct. Since coordination requires semantic and syntactic compatibility this fact leads one to the supposition that in (26b) the adjective in the second conjunct is prenominal. As shown in (26c) coordination with the corresponding extensional postnominal forms gives grammatical results:

- (26) a. **Aceptamos tus nuevas opiniones, pero no las meras* __
 we-accept your new opinions but not the mere-ones
 "We accept your new opinions but not the mere ones"
 (From Dumitrescu & Saltarelli 1996:41)
- b. **Tengo una simple propuesta, y no una complicada* __
 I-have a plain proposal and not a complicated-one
 "I have a plain proposal, not a complicated one"
- c. *Tengo una propuesta simple y no una complicada* __

It can be claimed that licensing of empty nominals occurs after N-movement takes place (leaving postposed a qualitative adjective generated in prenominal position as specifier of a lexical or a functional head). Another possibility is to claim, as in Bernstein (1993), that it is the presence of a Word Marker Phrase

[WMP] above the NP to which the adjective adjoins that plays a role in the licensing of null nominal constructions. In structures like *uno rojo* "a red one", she assumes that the word marker *-o* is generated in the head of the WMP; the WM *-o* then raises through each successive X^0 until it reaches its D host. As to the licensing of the empty nominal, Bernstein states that one possibility is "to say that the word marker is able to head-govern, and thereby license, the empty NP projection" (1993:126).

There are two problems with this analysis. To the best of my knowledge, Bernstein does not consider null nominals with definite determiners but only sequences like *uno rojo* "a red one"; however, sentences like *Quiero el rojo* "I want the red one" are as common as those with the indefinite *uno* "a", that is, licensing of empty nominals is possible even in the absence of an explicit word marker affix. A second problem is that if we assume Bernstein's idea that licensing of null Ns is due to head government by WM, we will imply that empty nominals are licensed in structures with prenominal qualifying adjectives, a prediction which appears to be contrary to fact. Actually, if this were the situation, we should expect coordination of structures with both pre- and postnominal adjectives to be acceptable. Unfortunately, this does not happen to be the case. Sentences like (27a) and (27b) where NPs with prenominal adjectives are coordinated are ungrammatical:

- (27) a. **Escucha las desafinadas canciones y las armoniosas* __
 listen-Imp the untuned songs and the harmonic
Escucha las canciones desafinadas y las armoniosas
 listen-Imp the songs untuned and the harmonic
 "Listen to the untuned songs and the harmonic ones"
- b. **Come las sabrosas uvas y las agrias* __
 eat-Imp the tasty/sweet grapes and the sour
 "Eat the tasty/sweet grapes and the sour ones"

Now if prenominal qualitative adjectives are heads adjoined to a Deg head taking NP as a complement, as I have proposed in (13), the possibility of licensing in (27a) and (27b) will be excluded by Minimality (or the HMC): Deg being an X^0 , prevents government from a possible antecedent in D; alternatively the WM head, if present, will not be able to move up to its possible D host since an intervening lexical head would block head movement.

Since there are cases like (26a), the argument I have just developed could imply that adjectives like *mero* "mere", *supuesto* "supposed", *posible* "possible" and similar adjectives (namely modal and privative adjectives) should not be considered as adjuncts, as I have assumed in (14). If they are adjuncts, violation

of relativized minimality cannot be invoked to explain the ungrammaticality of (26a) and (26b): WM is a head and it may cross over an adjunct. The facts are not really clear, though. The examples in (28) show sentences with coordination of modal and restrictive adjectives which are almost completely grammatical, as predicted by my analysis:

- (28) a. *No distingues a los verdaderos culpables de los presuntos*
 not distinguish-2sg to the real guilty-persons of the alleged-ones
 “You do not distinguish between truly guilty persons and alleged ones”
- b. *?Me encontré con su actual novio y con el antiguo*
 Refl met with her present boyfriend and with the old-one
 “I met her present boy friend as well as the old one”

1.2.2.5. *An asymmetry regarding agreement of pre- and postnominal adjectives modifying series of coordinated nouns.* It is a common observation in Spanish grammars that adjectives preceding a series of singular coordinated nouns to which they modify “agree [in gender and number] with the immediately following adjective”, as in (29a), while “the adjective specifying various preceding singular (nouns), all of the same gender, should show plural agreement”, as in (29b). Moreover, if the adjective specifies preceding nouns of diverse gender and number, agreement in masculine gender is usual (Bello 1847:§839, §844):

- (29) a. *Su distinguido mérito y servicio* (From Bello:281)
 his-sg distinguished-sg merit and service
 **Sus distinguidos mérito y servicio*
 his-pl distinguished-pl merit and service
Con ferviente devoción y cariño (RAE:391)
 with fervent-sg devotion and affection
 **Con fervientes devoción y cariño*
 with fervent-pl devotion and affection
- b. *Presunción y osadía inexcusables* (RAE:391)
 vanity and audacity unforgivable
Talentos y habilidades raros (Bello:281)
 gifts and skills strange

In addition, there are sequences of preceding adjectives in which gender agreement is not required, contrasting in this sense with postnominal adjectives:

- (30) *El gran buen rey — El rey grande (y) bueno*
 the great good king the king big and good
 “the great good king” “the big and good king”

These facts are extremely revealing, in my view. They indicate that agreement between adjectives and nouns, similarly to what happens with subjects and verbs,²⁴ is strict only when the adjective follows N. Secondly, it suggests that the agreement features of preceding adjectives are to a certain extent independent of the nouns which they modify. The descriptive generalization under (29) is the one in (31):

- (31) Adjective - Noun agreement is exhaustive when the adjective is postnominal, it is partial when the adjective precedes N.

Now, if adjective-noun agreement comes as a result of Spec-head agreement once N moves up through various functional projections on which specifier-adjectives are projected, the paradigm in (29a) is unexpected since the adjective preceding Ns would occupy the Spec of the last functional projection to which the coordination has moved up. Visible agreement, namely plural adjective agreement, should be expected if we assume that the features of coordinated nouns percolates up to the higher DP and if we think that in a Spec-head relation the features of the head (apart from entering into a checking relation with the F feature of the item moved and adjoined to such a head) are also checked against the features of the item in Spec. The facts in (29a) might then indicate that agreement between nouns and prenominal adjectives in Spanish is not a result of overt Spec-head agreement.

To be more precise, I would like to take the preceding contrasts as evidence that, in this case, movement in order to check agreement features takes place covertly. Since such a type of movement is only feature movement (attract features: Chomsky 1995), this allows the adjective to attract only the features of the first conjunct without requiring a specific configuration, such as Spec-head. The only thing which would be required is a local relation between the adjective and the noun. Note that the agreement facts in (29a) and (29b) are not instances of default agreement but of feature agreement with the first member of the conjunct. This is what Babyonyshev (1996) proposes for verbal agreement with

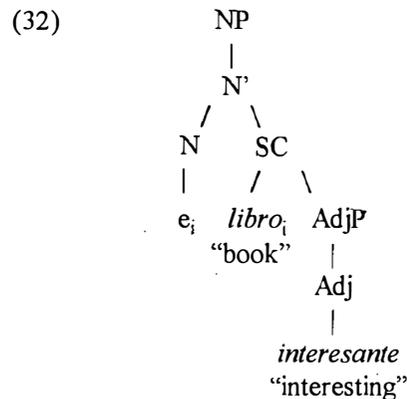
²⁴ In subject-verb constructions we find patterns like the following: (a) **Juan y los niños ha venido*, Lit. “Juan and the kids has come” vs. (b) *Ha venido Juan y los niños*, Lit. “Has come Juan and the kids”.

conjoined subjects in Russian. This author claims that this is the most economical way for the verb to have its features checked since covert movement of the features of the first conjunct does not involve any kind of pied-piping.

2. *On Adjective Movement from a small clause to a DEGP*

2.1 *A small clause structure for postnominal predicative adjectives*

As I have anticipated, I claim that postnominal qualitative adjectives have a different syntactic derivation than prenominal ones. I want to assert, more precisely, that the lexical domain in a nominal phrase structure in which adjectives follow a N is a representation in which a small clause (perhaps headed by A) is a sister of the head N. This nominal head is empty and it is coindexed with the NP subject of the small clause, as in (32):



I will not discuss here the motivation for (32) as a possible representation for qualitative adjectives;²⁵ what I want to explain is the reason why certain qualitative adjectives surface before the noun and the implications of the assumption that certain qualitative adjectives move while others remain in situ.

The hypothesis that movement is driven by the need to check morphological features carried by the lexical heads (Last resort, ultimately), as well as morphological properties of adjectives, dictates the way the derivation in (32) proceeds in order to give a final representation like the one in (13) above. Let us assume, first, that the degree feature is an optional feature of potentially gradable adjectives (this idea is also present in Corver 1997b). Let us assume, secondly, that when this feature is selected it is strong and it has to be checked. We can also hypothesize that formal features on adjectives are by default [-Int]. This is

²⁵ But see Demonte (1997). Kayne (1994:§8.4) also claims that all qualitative adjectives are originally postnominal predicates independent of their final position.

intuitively the case with their gender and number features, but their uninterpretability can also be a reflection of the fact that interpretation of adjectives is clearly dependent on the meaning of nouns.

Furthermore, if we want to provide substantial motivation for projection of checking domains, we can postulate –as in Nunes & Raposo (1997)– that the presence of [-Int] features induces the presence of functional heads (i.e., checking domains for given lexical categories) with other [-Int] features, a characteristic of functional heads assumed to be strict in Chomsky (1995). This second supposition makes projection of a DegP above NP a natural fact. The general assumption that [-Int] features have to be discharged, on the other hand, explains why the adjective has to raise and to adjoin to the Deg head. I leave as an open matter the exact mechanics of adjective movement but possibly the adjective in the SC adjoins first to the head of NP to avoid a violation of the Minimal Link Condition (Chomsky 1995) and the cluster moves then to Deg, adjoining to this head.

2.2 *Certain interesting consequences*

From the analysis just proposed the constraints on interpretation shown in 1.2.2.1 as well as the way licensing of null nominals proceed (1.2.2.4) —two cases in which violation of Relativized Minimality are at stake— now find direct explanation: it is merging of DegP which provokes such minimality effects. If we think, secondly, that there exists an Agr projection where agreement features are checked off, the fact that nominal adjectives escape the checking domain of postnominal ones could provide us with a reason for the agreement asymmetries discussed in 1.2.2.5.

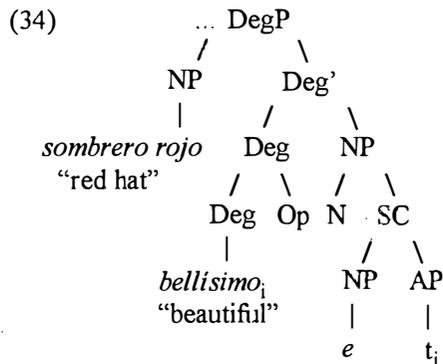
The facts of (23) (i.e., impossibility of postnominal relative adjectives in definite NPs) also follow straightforwardly from the adjective movement hypothesis if we assume that strength of Deg features is related to lexical properties of the adjectives, and we assert that inherently (lexically) and morphologically graded adjectives come from the lexicon with a strong Deg feature which induce the presence of a DegP above NP, to which the adjective will move. What is now the reason for the contrast between (23) and (24), namely, between *muy* “very” superlatives and lexically marked superlatives? I claim that when grading is made syntactically (through the presence of *muy*) the DegP projects as part of the adjective checking domain in order to host *muy* as the spell out of such a feature. It appears that in this situation the Deg feature of A is checked covertly through feature attraction (at LF) in a very local context. This would be the reason for the paradigm in (24).

It is interesting to note, finally, that another clear and interesting contrast (generally not mentioned in the literature on adjectives) finds an explanation

within our approach. The sentences in (23), partially reproduced in (33a), indicate—as we have just observed—that postnominal superlative adjectives are ungrammatical, as opposed to prenominal ones. What should be recalled now is that this situation holds only when we have one single superlative adjective. When there is another qualitative adjective the superlative adjective can appear postnominally, as shown in (33b) (recall also (11b)):

- (33) a. **Se puso el sombrero horrible/precioso/bell-isimo*
 Refl put-on/3sg. the hat horrible/beautiful/pretty-very
- b. *Dame el sombrero rojo bellisimo*
 give-me the hat red beautiful
 **Dame el sombrero bellisimo rojo*
 give-me the hat beautiful red
 “Give me the beautiful red hat”

I hypothesize that in (33b) we are in front of the representation (34), where the SC in its whole has moved to the Spec of DegP.²⁶



It would take us far away from the purposes of this work to explain why movement of SC is optional (we may actually have *Dame el bellisimo sombrero rojo*—no movement of SC— or *Dame el sombrero rojo bellisimo*) so we will simply assume that such a possibility holds. Finally, another interesting fact explained by our proposal is that superlative adjectives cannot license null nominals, as registered in the minimal pair in (35). The impossibility of *Tengo la ___ estupenda* indicates that the adjective is not in the position where null nominals are licensed, namely, after N, since such an adjective has moved up to DegP:

²⁶ I thank M. Teresa Espinal for helping me with these data and their analysis.

- (35) *Préstame la verde* vs **Tengo la estupenda*
 lend-me the green have-1sg the wonderful
 “Lend me the green one” “I have the wonderful one”

2.3 Final remarks

The analysis presented in this article has attempted to uncover a motivation for adjective position and interpretation taking as crucial (i) the fact that [+Deg] is a formal feature of the adjective lexical category, (ii) the idea that the way this feature expresses itself (lexico-morphologically or syntactically) determines feature checking and category projection and (iii) the observation that the final syntactic position of adjectives is relevant for the C-I interface to the extent that the syntactic derivation provides the arrangement necessary for Full Interpretation.

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