Completive all in English and the status of all

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Abstract
In this paper I discuss a novel construction in English, restricted to existentials and possessive have sentences, exemplified by sentences such as *There's all sand in my hair*. I argue that the syntax and the semantics of this construction, which I have labeled the completive all construction, can be explained only if all is understood to be modifying a silent element (in the sense of Kayne 2004). In particular, I propose that completive all sentences contain a silent SPACE element and a silent preposition *WITH*. *All* is the modifier of a PP headed by silent *WITH* and the nominal that accompanies all (e.g., sand in *There's all sand in my hair*) is the complement of silent *WITH*. Apart from providing an analysis for this construction, in this paper I also discuss a series of contrasts exhibited by all when it quantifies over nominals vs. when it modifies a syntactic predicate, such as the sensitivity of all to the individual- vs. the stage-level distinction and its tolerance to exceptions. I claim that these contrasts can help us gain a better understanding of the element all and thus help us choose between competing analyses.

Keywords
all — existentials — possession

1. Introduction
In this paper I investigate the properties of a novel construction with the element all in English, which I have labeled the COMPLETIVE ALL CONSTRUCTION. This construction, restricted to existentials and possessive have sentences, is available mainly in certain dialects of British English, Australian English, and Irish English. An example is shown in (1) below.

(1) There’s all water on the bathroom floor.

Sentence (1) describes a situation in which there is a surface (the bathroom floor), which is completely covered with a substance (water). Other examples like (1), taken from the web, are shown in (2)–(7).
As can be seen in the examples above, in all these sentences there is a mass (sand, dirt, water, blood) that covers a surface in all its extension. Sentences (2) and (3) involve the verb have and (4)–(7) are existential.

In this paper, I describe the properties of the construction illustrated in (1)–(7) and propose an analysis that explains them. In §2, I make a brief comment on the scope and methodology of this work and in §3, I raise the question of what element all is quantifying over/modifying in these sentences. After having determined that all is modifying a syntactic predicate, in §4 I look at the properties of the construction: (i) its stage-level interpretation; (ii) its constituency; (iii) its ability to allow exceptions; and (iv) the requirement that the pivot be a plural or a mass noun. In §5 I present my proposal and show how it can account for the properties outlined in §4. In §6 I turn to the question of why some varieties of English allow the completive all construction while others do not. To answer this question, I briefly discuss the work of Sailor and Griffiths (2019) on Preposition Object Gaps (POGs, for short), exemplified by sentences such as, This film has monsters in. These authors attribute the presence vs. the absence of POGs to whether speakers have in their lexicons a deficient possessive preposition with. Along the same lines, I claim that speakers will allow the completive all construction if they have in their lexical inventory a silent possessive P WITH; otherwise, they will not. Finally, in §7 I conclude.

2. A brief comment on scope and methodology

This work constitutes a first look at the properties of the completive all construction in English. Some of the examples in this paper come from the web or are adapted forms of web examples. When this is the case, I state it explicitly. The other examples come from my own work with Neil.

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1 As is standard in the semantic literature on existenials (for instance, McNally 2016) I use the term PIVOT to refer to the constituent that occurs immediately after the copula (e.g., a book in There’s a book on the table) and the term CODA to refer to any additional material after the pivot (e.g., on the table in There’s a book on the table.)
Myler, a British English speaker, more precisely from Ormskirk, Lancashire, in the Northwest of England originally, who has self-identified as a speaker of the completive all variety. When speaking of completive all judgments I refer to “the speakers” not sloppily but intentionally, as I take Neil to be a representative of a group of speakers. However, I know there may be aspects of variation with respect to this construction within British English and also across dialects of English (e.g., Australian English and Irish English). I hope to investigate them in future work.

3. Understanding the completive all construction: the status of all

3.1 Quantifier and adverb all

A good first step toward providing an analysis of completive all sentences would be to understand what element all is quantifying over in sentences like (1), repeated as (8) below.

(8) There’s all water on the bathroom floor.

To address this question, I first discuss the categorial status of all, which has received much attention in the literature, especially on the work on floating quantifiers.

At least at face value, there seem to be cases where all has the interpretation of a quantifier, roughly corresponding to ‘the totality of the members in a set’/‘the totality of the parts of a whole’, as shown in (9) and (10).

(9) The students are all tall.
(10) That house is all white.

The interpretation of (9) is that the totality of the members of the set of students (with the set defined by context) are tall, and the interpretation of (10) is that all the parts of the house are white. However, there are other cases in which the interpretation of all seems close in meaning to that of an adverb like completely, as in (11) and (12).

(11) John is all upset.
(12) I am all alone.

The difference between the sentences in (9)–(10), on the one hand, and (11)–(12), on the other, is clear. While all picks out the totality of the members in the set of students in (9) and all the parts of the house in (10), this is not the case in (11) and (12). The interpretation of (11) is not that ‘all the parts of John are upset’, and the interpretation of (12) is not that ‘all the parts of myself are alone’. Rather, these sentences mean that John is upset to a complete degree and that I am alone to a complete degree, something like ‘really upset/alone’ or ‘completely upset/alone’.

Larry Horn (p.c) points out that although it seems to be true that completive all is restricted to stage-level predicates, it can only combine with a subset of these. For instance, to him:

(i) * He is all drunk.

He also points out that to him:

(ii) ? I am all lonely.
(iii) I am all lonesome.
(iv) ? He was all tired.
difference between ‘totality’ all (as in (9) and (10)) and ‘completive’ all ((11) and (12)) is that totality all can appear with both stage-level and individual-level predicates, as shown in (13). In contrast, completive all is possible only with stage-level predicates, as illustrated in (14).

(13) a. The students are all tall. (individual-level predicate)
    b. The students are all upset.³ (stage-level predicate)

(14) a. *John is all tall. (individual-level predicate)
    b. John is all upset. (stage-level predicate)

Without going into the details of the different analyses given to all in the literature, I simply point out that ‘categorially’ speaking, the analyses fall into three groups: (i) those that have either assumed or defended the idea that there is only one element all that is always a quantifier (Sportiche 1988, among others), (ii) those that have either assumed or defended the idea that there is only one element all that is always an adverb (Bowers 1993, Brisson 1998, among others), and (iii) those that have assumed or defended the idea that there are two distinct elements all: one that is a quantifier ((9) and (10)), and one that is an adverb ((11) and (12)) (Cirillo 2009, among others).

It is not clear that attaching the label ‘quantifier’ or ‘adverb’ to all really matters, but what does matter is the issue that these analyses seem to raise: whether all always quantifies over a nominal (analyses of type (i)), whether it modifies a syntactic predicate (analyses of type (ii)), or whether it quantifies over/modify either (analyses of type (iii)). In other words, it is precisely because we are trying to answer the question of what element all quantifies over/modify in (1), There’s all water on the bathroom floor, that these previous analyses are relevant.

We turn next to the predictions made by analyses like those in group (i).

3.2 Does all quantify over a nominal in (1)?

It is clear that all is not quantifying over the higher nominal in sentences like (15) and (16) (sentences (1)–(7) from §1).⁴

(15) There’s all water on the bathroom floor.
(16) There’s all sand in my hair!

The interpretation of these sentences is not that all the water/all the sand in a given context are on the bathroom floor/on my hair, respectively. Rather, as pointed out earlier, what these sentences mean is that the bathroom floor and my hair are completely covered with water/sand.

³This sentence is ambiguous. It can be interpreted either as ‘The totality of the members of the set of students are upset’ or as ‘The students are completely/very upset’. A plural subject with a stage-level predicate will often result in this double reading. The relevant reading is the first one: the one under which all refers to the totality of the members of the set. The fact that this reading is possible in both (13a) and (13b) shows that this all (unlike completive all) is not sensitive to the individual- vs. stage-level distinction.

⁴I use the term higher nominal to refer to the nominal that accompanies all and appears immediately after it (e.g., water in There’s all water on the bathroom floor) and the term lower nominal to refer to the nominal in PP coda (e.g., the bathroom floor in There’s all water on the bathroom floor).
Furthermore, another piece of evidence that all does not make up an ordinary QP constituent with the higher nominal comes from the fact that it is not possible to ask a what question and answer with the all + NP string, as shown below.

(17) A: What is there on the bathroom floor?5
    B: #All water.

Note that sentences such as (15) and (16) contrast with the sentences below, which feature a lot instead of all.

(15’) There’s a lot of water on the bathroom floor.
(16’) There’s a lot of sand in my hair.

In (15’) and (16’) a lot is clearly quantifying over water and sand (i.e., it is specifying that there is a large amount of the mass in question). Furthermore, the a lot + NP string can serve as an answer to a what question, as shown in (18) (cf. (17)).

(18) A: What is there on the bathroom floor?
    B: A lot of water.

From this, we can conclude quite safely that all is not quantifying over the higher nominal in sentences like (15) and (16).

Another possibility would be to think that all is quantifying over the lower nominal, the bathroom floor and my hair in these sentences. Under this account, a sentence like (1), repeated below as (19a), would have the structure in (19b). To derive the linear order we see in (19a), it would be necessary to postulate that all somehow "splits" from the QP all the bathroom floor to end up being positioned where we find it in (19a).

(19) a. There’s all water on the bathroom floor.
    b. There’s water on [all the bathroom floor].

However, this does not seem to be right either. I present two arguments below.

One argument comes from the type of nominals that all can quantify over. Although speakers of English typically allow all to quantify over mass nouns (20a) and plural count nouns (20b), many speakers do not allow all to quantify over singular count nouns (20c), or at least find these sentences marginal. For singular count nouns English speakers require the adjective whole, as shown in (20d).

(20) a. He ate all the jam.
    b. He ate all the biscuits.

5Neil Myler points out that although he finds the question-answer pair in (i) unacceptable, sentence (ii) sounds perfect to his ears.

(i) A: What was there behind you?
    B: #All water.

(ii) Guess what there was behind her—all water, that’s what!

I have no explanation for this fact.
c. *He ate all the biscuit.  
d. He ate the whole biscuit.

The speakers who exhibit the restriction in (20) find sentences like (21) marginal, as expected, floor and table being singular count nouns. However, they allow sentences like those in (22).

(21)  
a. ??There’s water on all the bathroom floor. (cf. There’s water on the whole floor.)  
b. ??There was dust on all the table. (cf. There was dust on the whole table.)

(22)  
a. There’s all water on the bathroom floor.  
b. There was all dust on the table.

This fact is at best hard to explain under an analysis that posits that in sentences like (22) the all element is quantifying over the bathroom floor and the table, respectively, as proposed under (19b).

Another argument against the proposal that all is quantifying over the lower nominal (i.e., the bathroom floor in There’s all water on the bathroom floor) comes from quantification over two. Let us consider a sentence like (23).

(23) You have all chocolate between your eyes.

Under an analysis in which all originates with the lower nominal and subsequently splits away from it, as proposed in (19b), all in (23) would first combine with the nominal your eyes: all your eyes. However, we know that the interpretation of (23) is not ‘There’s chocolate between all your eyes’, (i.e., all is not quantifying over eyes). An interpretation under which all quantifies over your eyes results in an anomaly. The reason for this is that English all cannot quantify over two. Note that it is because of this restriction that sentences like (24) and (25), where all quantifies over a nominal that picks out two entities, feel anomalous, too.

(24) #All my hands are dirty.

(25) #All my parents are at home right now.

Since people have no more than two hands and no more than two parents, (24) and (25) feel infelicitous.

In sum, we have seen two arguments why all cannot be quantifying over the lower nominal in the completive all construction. First, all can quantify over mass nouns (all the jam, 20a) and

6Neil Myler (p.c) points out that (20c) is possible if it refers to "a mass of crushed or broken biscuit-stuff". In other words, it is possible if biscuit is interpreted as a mass noun, as mentioned in the main text. It is also worth mentioning that although (20c) is out for most speakers, if of appears between all and the DP, as shown below, the sentence becomes available to most speakers.

(i) He ate all of the biscuit.

Another example that shows the same point is given in (ii).

(ii) **Context**: from an Amazon review of a tie dyed T-shirt.

Tie-Dye shark shirt: The sharks are on all of the shirt _front and back_ it looks really great.

I am grateful to Richie Kayne and to Larry Horn for making this observation independently. I thank Larry Horn for drawing my attention to the example in (ii).
over plural count nouns (all the biscuits, 20b) but not typically over singular count nouns (*all the biscuit, 20c, cf. the whole biscuit, 20d). The fact that a singular count noun like the bathroom floor is allowed in the completive all construction (There’s all water on the bathroom floor) tells us that all cannot be quantifying over this nominal (note the anomaly of ?There’s water on all the bathroom, cf. There’s water on the whole bathroom floor). Second, the completive all construction is perfectly felicitous when the lower nominal picks out two entities, such as eyes in You have all chocolate between your eyes. However, all cannot normally quantify over two, as shown by the anomalous status of #all your eyes. This is another piece of evidence that tells us that completive all sentences cannot have a structure in which all quantifies over the lower nominal (e.g., [have chocolate between [all your eyes]]) and then splits away from it in the course of the derivation.

In sum, we have just seen that all is not quantifying over the higher nominal, and we have also seen that it is not quantifying over the lower nominal. However, if we wanted to maintain the radical position that all always quantifies over a nominal, it might be possible to posit that it quantifies over a silent one. Because completive all sentences involve a space covered with a substance, it might be possible to hypothesize that in completive all sentences, all quantifies over a silent noun SPACE, in the spirit of Kayne (2004), along the lines of what is sketched in (26).

(26)  There is [sc [np water] [pp on [qp all [dp THE SPACE [pp OF the bathroom floor]]]]].

In the existential sentence in (26), the verb to be selects as its complement a constituent akin to a small clause. The subject of the small clause is the NP water, and its predicate is the PP on all THE SPACE OF the bathroom floor. The complement of the P on is a QP headed by the Q all. The complement of all is a DP constituent featuring a silent D THE and a silent noun SPACE. The PP OF the bathroom, headed by silent OF, acts as a postmodifier of silent SPACE. Under this other analysis, sentences like (22), repeated below as (27), are predicted to be felicitous.

(27)  a. There’s all water on the bathroom floor.
    b. There was all dust on the table.

Under (27) all would combine with THE SPACE OF the table/ THE SPACE OF the floor. We have seen above that all cannot combine with singular count nouns (*all the biscuit); it can only combine with mass nouns (all the jam) or count nouns in the plural (all the biscuits). As under this interpretation SPACE is not count, all is expected to be able to quantify over it. Note also that the completive all construction is expected to be possible when the lower nominal refers to two entities, as in (23), repeated below, as under this analysis all is not quantifying over the lower nominal but over silent SPACE (all THE SPACE OF your eyes).

(28)  You have all chocolate between your eyes.

In the section that follows, I go over the properties of the completive all construction. A study of these properties will lead to my analysis, which I spell out in §5.

4. The properties of the completive all construction

4.1 The stage-level/temporary interpretation of completive all sentences

As mentioned in §3, when all quantifies over nominals it serves to pick out ‘the totality of the parts of a whole’ or ‘the totality of the members of a set.’ However, there are other contexts in which all has an interpretation closer to completely. The relevant examples given in §3 are repeated below ((29) and (30) are examples (9) and (10), and (31) and (32) are examples (11) and (12)).
As also mentioned in §3, a difference between totality all ((29) and (30)) and completive all ((31) and (32)) is that totality all can appear with both stage-level and individual-level predicates. In contrast, completive all is possible only with stage-level predicates. Examples (13) and (14) are repeated below.

(33) a. The students are all tall. (individual-level predicate)
    b. The students are all upset. (stage-level predicate)

(34) a. *John is all tall. (individual-level predicate)
    b. John is all upset. (stage-level predicate)

It is important to point out that the completive all sentences we are analyzing in this paper (i.e., "There’s all water on the bathroom floor") are also subject to this restriction. In the following paragraphs, I first go over a diagnostic for distinguishing stage-level from individual-level predicates. I then apply this diagnostic to the completive all construction and show its compatibility with stage-level predicates exclusively. Finally, I claim that all’s sensitivity to the stage-level/individual-level distinction in the completive all construction should be taken as evidence that it is modifying a syntactic predicate.

Note first that a temporal expression such as every morning can modify stage-level predicates but not individual-level predicates, as shown below.\(^7\)

(35) John was scared every morning. (stage-level)
(36) Mary was excited every morning. (stage-level)
(37) *John was tall every morning. (individual-level)
(38) *Mary was English every morning. (individual-level)

\(^7\)Kratzer (1995) claims that a spatiotemporal expression such as this morning can modify stage-level predicates but not individual-level predicates. However, individual-level predicates seem to allow this adverbial under specific scenarios.

(i) I was blond this morning.
(ii) I was single this morning.

Although being blond and being single are individual-level properties, the sentences in (i) and (ii) are felicitous under the interpretation that the state ceased to hold during the course of the day (e.g., during the day, the speaker dyed their hair in (i) and got married in (ii)). In contrast, an adverbial such as every morning seems to be incompatible with individual-level predicates quite independently of the context, as shown below.

(iii) *I was blond every morning.
(iv) *I was single every morning.

For this reason, the adverbial every morning (instead of this morning) has been used to determine the stage-level vs. individual-level status of the predicates in the text.
The predicates scared (35) and excited (36) are stage-level predicates and allow modification by every morning. In contrast, the predicates tall (37) and English (38) are individual-level and disallow this modifier. In a similar fashion, these stage-level predicates allow modification by all ((39) and (40)), whereas the individual-level predicates do not ((41) and (42)).

(39) John was all scared. (stage-level)
(40) Mary was all excited. (stage-level)
(41) #John was all tall. (individual-level)
(42) #Mary is all English. (individual-level)

The examples above show that completive all, just like every morning, is restricted to stage-level predicates. I now go over the data that is the focus of this work in the light of the stage-level vs. individual-level distinction. Note first the sentences below (without all).

(43) There was water on the kitchen floor every morning. (stage-level)
(44) #There were gray floor tiles on the kitchen floor every morning. (individual-level)

The property assigned to the kitchen in (43) is a stage-level property. The fact that there is water on the kitchen floor is transitory, and a situation that could repeat itself every morning if, for example, there is a leak in the ceiling. Thus, modification by the adverbial every morning is possible. In contrast, the property in (44) is individual-level. The fact that the kitchen floor is covered with gray floor tiles is permanent; it is part of its design. As a consequence, modification by every morning is disallowed.

As expected, the first situation is perfectly compatible with all, as shown in (45), whereas the second one is not (46).

(45) There was all water on the kitchen floor. (stage-level)
(46) #There were all gray floor tiles on the kitchen floor. (individual-level)

The following example serves to illustrate the same point. Having mosquito bites is a stage-level property, whereas having birthmarks is individual-level. Just as was the case in (43) and (44), this

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8The case of adverbials like permanently and all the time is particularly noteworthy (I am grateful to Richie Kayne for discussion). Although one might tend to think that because of their meaning these adverbials are compatible with individual-level/permanent properties, this is not the case.

(i) # John is tall/30 years old all the time.
(ii) John is permanently tall/30 years old.

Rather, they combine with stage-level/temporary properties, as shown below:

(iii) John is permanently angry.
(iv) John is angry all the time.

As expected, permanently and all the time can appear with the all-sentences discussed in this work.

(v) There was all water on the kitchen floor all the time.
(vi) There was permanently all water on the kitchen floor.
is confirmed by the availability of the temporal adverbial *every morning* with the former (47) but not with the latter (48).

(47) Mary had mosquito bites on her back *every morning*. (stage-level)
(48) #Mary had birthmarks on her back *every morning*. (individual-level)

As expected, completive *all* is possible with a predicate like the one in (47), but not with a predicate like the one in (48).

(49) Mary had *all* mosquito bites on her back. (stage-level)
(50) #Mary had *all* birthmarks on her back. (individual-level)

In this subsection, I have briefly shown that adverb *all* is sensitive to the individual- vs. stage-level distinction and is compatible only with the latter. In contrast, when *all* quantifies over a nominal, both individual- and stage-level predicates are possible. The fact that the *all* element in the construction we are analyzing patterns with adverb *all* in this respect confirms the superiority of an analysis that posits that in this construction *all* modifies a syntactic predicate over the two alternative analyses presented in this subsection (i) that *all* is quantifying over the lower nominal, and (ii) that *all* is quantifying over silent SPACE. This observation will be taken up when I present my proposal in §5.

### 4.2 Completive *all* sentences and exceptions

In her work on quantifiers, Brisson (1998)\(^9\) points out that when *all* is added to a sentence, as in (51b) and (52b) below, it has "a strengthening effect" (examples 51b and 52b adapted from Brisson).

(51) a. The boys jumped in the lake.
    b. *All* the boys jumped in the lake.

(52) a. The students gathered in the hallway.
    b. *All* the students gathered in the hallway. \(\text{(Brisson 1998:23)}\)

She argues that although (51a) can be judged true even if one or two boys stayed behind on the shore, (51b) more strictly requires that every boy jumped in the lake. In a parallel fashion, (52a) can still be judged true if one or two students did not join the group in the gathering, but (52b) much more strongly requires that every single one of them joined the group. She goes on to say that Link (1983) called this strengthening effect of *all* ‘the totality effect,’ and Dowty (1987) labeled it ‘the maximizing effect.’

Interestingly, the sentences that are the object of this work, which also contain *all* (examples (10) and (11) repeated as (53) and (54) below), do not exhibit this totality or maximality effect. Two examples are given below.

(53) There’s *all* water on the bathroom floor.
(54) There’s *all* sand in my hair!

\(^9\)In this subsection I do not intend to go into the details of Brisson’s analysis of quantifiers. My goal is to build on her observations about *all* and exceptions to reinforce the claim that *all* is not quantifying over a nominal in the structures that are the object of this work.
Sentence (53) claims that the surface of the bathroom floor is completely covered with water, and (54) asserts that the speaker’s hair is completely covered with sand. However, there is an important contrast between sentences (51b) and (52b) on the one hand and sentences (53) and (54) on the other. In the case of (51b), felicity conditions required every single boy to jump in the lake, and (52b) was only felicitous if every single student gathered in the hallway. In contrast, a sentence like (53) is still felicitous in a scenario in which it is not the case that every single millimeter of the bathroom floor is covered with water, and a sentence like (54) is perfectly possible even if it is not the case that every single millimeter of the speaker’s hair is covered with sand. That this is indeed so is confirmed by continuations to the sentences in (55) and (56) below.10

(55)  
**Context:** Water covers the kitchen floor except for a spot under the kitchen table, which happens to be dry.

There was all water on the kitchen floor, but under the table, it was dry but not under the table. (exceptions allowed)

(56)  
**Context:** John’s T-shirt is completely covered in mud, except for his T-shirt pockets, which happen to be clean.

John had all mud over his T-shirt, but his T-shirt pockets were clean. (exceptions allowed)

The continuations in (55) but under the table it was dry but not under the table and (56) but his T-shirt pockets were clean introduce an exception to what was stated in the first clause: that the kitchen floor was completely covered with water and that John’s T-shirt was completely covered with mud.11

Note, in contrast, that sentences in which all quantifies over the noun phrase the space are infelicitous in the same contexts as those in (55) and (56).12

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10Richie Kayne (p.c.) points out that in his English There’s sand all over the floor clearly does not require that every square millimeter of the floor be covered by sand, and that the same holds true for the similar There’s sand everywhere in this house. Everywhere seems to share its tolerance to exceptions with everyone/everybody and every NP in general, as shown by the examples below [cf. all NPs], though not all speakers exhibit the contrast between (ii) and (iii).

11Note incidentally that the order of the clauses in sentences such as (55) and (56) matters. Sentence (55’) is clearly less felicitous that (55) in the main text.

12Except phrases (contra the but coordinate clauses like (57) and (58) in the main text) do not result in an anomaly in the presence of Q all, as shown below.

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Onto the role of salience in the acceptability of generalizations and their exceptions see Horn (2021).

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\begin{enumerate}
\item There was water over all the space of the kitchen floor except for a spot under the table, which was dry.
\item # Under the table it was dry but there was all water on the kitchen floor.
\end{enumerate}
(57) There was water over all the space of the kitchen floor, #but under the table, it was dry. 
(No exceptions allowed)

(58) John had mud over all the space of his T-shirt, #but his T-shirt pockets were clean. (No exceptions allowed)

To recap this section, we have seen that sometimes all is tolerant to exceptions and sometimes it is not. Although it is true that as speakers we may exaggerate, there are contexts in which all necessarily has a total/maximal interpretation, which leaves no room for exceptions: that is when all quantifies over a nominal, as in (51b), (52b), (57) and (58). In contrast, when all has what is traditionally known as an adverbial use (i.e., when all modifies a syntactic predicate), it seems to be more flexible and tolerant to exceptions, as we have seen in the felicitous interpretations for the sentences in (55) and (56). This novel observation has allowed us once more to support an analysis under which all is a completive adverb modifying a syntactic predicate. An analysis that postulates that all is a quantifier quantifying over a nominal would need to explain why sentences like (55) and (56) are perfectly felicitous, whereas sentences like (57) and (58) are not. A fundamental question of course remains, and that is why it is that all in its “adverbial guise” (and also English everywhere, everyone/everybody, see n. 10) should be more tolerant to exceptions than its nominal kin. I have no answer to offer to this question at this point and can only leave it for future work.

Having determined that in completive all sentences all modifies a syntactic predicate, I move on to the fundamental question of what syntactic predicate all modifies. To this end, I describe the constituency of the construction (§4.3) and make some comments on the restriction on the nominal in the pivot of completive all sentences (§4.4) before presenting my proposal in §5.

4.3 The constituency of completive all sentences

The all + NP string in the completive all construction can be coordinated with another string and clefted, as shown below.

(59) I had all sand and all mud in my hair.
(60) ??It was all ink that she had on her hand, not all blood.13

The facts above show that the all + NP string is a constituent. Note that this serves as an argument (among others) to discard three alternative analyses (sketched below): (i) one that posits that all is quantifying over the lower nominal (61), which we discussed in §3.2; (ii) one that posits that all is an adverb on the clausal spine (62); and (iii) one that posits that all is a modifier of the PP coda (63). In none of these analyses do all and the higher NP make up a constituent.

(61) [SC [QP water] [PP on [QP all the bathroom floor]]].
(62) [VP all [SC water on the bathroom floor]].
(63) [SC [QP water] [PP all [PP on the bathroom floor]]].

13 Though not impossible, the cleft sentence in (60) is felt to be degraded by the English speaker consulted. It has been shown (Collins 2005) that cleft sentences (unlike pseudo-clefts) are in general more typically found in written than in spoken language (among other reasons, due to their dense information-packing and similarity to impersonal constructions). As the completive all construction is part of informal vernacular speech, this may lead to a clash in registers, which may be the reason why speakers find (60) degraded.
However, it is important to point out that although this string is a constituent, it does not seem to be a constituent of the nominal kind. As mentioned in §3.2, it is not possible to ask a what question and answer with the all + NP, as shown in (64) (example (17) repeated below).

\[(64)\]  
A: What was there behind you?  
B: #All water.

This fact, that the all + NP makes up a non-nominal constituent, will be taken up in the discussion of my proposal in §5.

### 4.4 In completive all sentences the pivot must be a bare plural or a mass noun

In English completive all sentences the pivot is restricted to nouns that are bare plurals or mass.\(^{14}\) Examples that illustrate this restriction are given below.

\[(65)\]  
a. There’s all water on the bathroom floor.  
b. There are all toys on the kitchen table.

\[(66)\]  
a. #There’s all a stain on the tablecloth.  
b. #John has all many spots on his left arm.  
c. #There are all four socks under the bed.

Interestingly, Rapoport (2014) points out that this same restriction is found in the (b) variant of the Locative Alternation. Because a look at the Locative Alternation can shed light on the completive all construction, I discuss it briefly in the paragraphs that follow.

The classic example of the Locative Alternation of Rappaport and Levin (1988) is given in (67) below.

\[(67)\]  
a. Bill loaded cartons onto the truck. \((\text{LOCATIVE variant}\_ (a) \text{ variant})\)  
b. Bill loaded the truck with cartons. \((\text{WITH variant}\_ (b) \text{ variant})\)

In (67a), the DP cartons is the direct object of the verb load, and the DP the truck is the complement of the locative P onto. Sentence (67b) contains the same participants as (67a), but they are realized in different argument slots: the truck is now the direct object of the verb load, and the DP cartons is the complement of the P with. The meanings of (67a) and (67b) are not identical: while (67a) stresses the change of location of the hay, (67b) describes a possessive relation: the truck comes to possess the cartons as a result of the loading event.

Rapoport (2014) notes that the (b) variant of the alternation poses restrictions on the nominals it allows. Only bare plurals and mass nouns are allowed (69a), all other nominals are banned (69b). This restriction is absent in the (a) variant, as shown in (68).

\[(68)\]  
a. They loaded boxes/hay onto the truck.

\(^{14}\)By bare plural here, I mean "determinerless". Note that these nominals do allow modifiers such as adjectives, as shown in (i) and (ii).

\[(i)\]  
There’s all muddy water on the bathroom floor.

\[(ii)\]  
There are all broken toys on the kitchen table.
b. They loaded the boxes/a box/three boxes onto the truck.  
(69) a. They loaded the truck with boxes/hay.  
b. They loaded the truck with ?the boxes/*a box/*three boxes.  
(example 69b from Rapoport 2014:165)

Other examples that illustrate the same point are given below.

(70) a. He crammed/stuffed/wadded pencils into the suitcase.  
b. He crammed/stuffed/wadded a pencil into the suitcase.  
((a) variant)
(71) a. He crammed/stuffed/wadded the suitcase with pencils.  
b. He crammed/stuffed/wadded the suitcase with *a pencil.  
((b) variant)
(72) a. The girl planted trees in the garden.  
b. The girl planted a tree/three trees in the garden.  
((a) variant)
(73) a. The girl planted the garden with trees.  
b. The girl planted the garden with (?the) trees/*a tree/*three trees.  
(examples 70b, 71b, 72b, 73b from Rapoport 2014:165)

Another construction that, according to Rapoport, exhibits the same restriction on nominals described above (i.e., a restriction to bare plurals and mass nouns) is the Swarm Alternation. This alternation is shown in (74) and the restriction on nominals it exhibits is given in (75).

(74) a. Ants crawled on the floor.  
b. The floor crawled with ants.  
((a) variant)
(75) The floor crawled with ants/*an ant/*three ants.  
(Rapoport 2014:167)

Apart from sharing the restriction on nominals just described, the (b) variant of the Locative Alternative and the (b) variant of the Swarm Alternation have both been claimed to have a holistic interpretation. Going back to Levin and Rappaport’s example in (67), the authors point out, with respect to the Locative Alternation that “when the goal is realized as a direct object, it is understood to be wholly affected by the action denoted by the verb. When this argument is realized as the object of a preposition, a partially affected interpretation is also possible. In [67b] the truck is full of cartons, but this is not necessarily so in [67a]." The same can be said about the Swarm Alternation. In the (b) variant of this alternation, for instance, The floor crawled with ants, the interpretation is that the floor is full of ants. This is not a requirement for the (a) variant, which allows sentences such as An ant crawled on the floor, which are clearly not holistic. I proposed in previous work on the completive all construction in Spanish (Fraga 2023) that the (b) variant of the Locative Alternation and the Swarm Alternation contain either a silent or an overt element all/ALL (e.g., Bill loaded the truck all/ALL with cartons/The gardens swarmed all/ALL with bees) which is responsible for the holistic interpretation of the construction. I claimed, furthermore, that the restriction on nominals that we find in these constructions is related to the presence of this all/ALL element. Following the work of Brisson (1998), Link (1983) and Dowty (1987), I propose that completive all must combine with a with PP whose complement can distribute on a surface. For instance, in a sentence such as The boys all jumped into the lake, Link proposes
that all introduces an operator which distributes the property of taking part in the action down to every individual in the subject of the predicate. What I would like to claim is that DPs like a box and three ants cannot distribute (thus, for instance, ∗all with a box for 69b and ∗all with three ants for 75). These nominals can combine with possessive with but these with PPs cannot combine with completive all and are therefore banned from the constructions discussed in this section. In contrast, plurals and mass nouns can combine with possessive with and, in turn, these with PPs can combine with completive all (thus, the availability of all with hay, all with boxes, for 68a) because these with-PPs can distribute. I leave the formalization of this account for future work. Going back to the completive all sentences that are the focus of this work, I propose that the holistic effect and the restriction on nominals that they share with the Locative Alternation and the Swarm Alternation stem from the fact that completive all sentences also contain a possessive with-PP modified by all (the difference being that in the completive all construction with is silent).

I outline my proposal in the following section.

5. The proposal

In this section I take stock of the evidence gathered and present an analysis that accounts for the properties of the completive all construction in English. The work on this construction has revealed that in completive all sentences such as There’s all sand in my hair, the element all is not quantifying over a nominal. It is not quantifying over the higher nominal (sand), it is not quantifying over the lower nominal (my hair), and it is not quantifying over a silent one (SPACE), either. We concluded that all must be a modifier of a syntactic predicate. We also arrived at the conclusion that all and the higher nominal were a constituent, as evinced by the coordination and the clefting facts, but not a constituent of a nominal kind, as revealed by the inability of the all + higher nominal string to serve as an answer to a what question. Furthermore, a look at the Locative Alternation (and the related Swarm Alternation) showed that the completive all construction and these other constructions (in particular, the (b) variant of these constructions) shared a holistic interpretation and the same restriction on nominals (a restriction to bare plurals and mass nouns). I claimed that these similarities were not accidental but due to the fact that these constructions (the Locative Alternation, the Swarm Alternation, the completive all construction) were structurally more similar than was apparent at first sight: they all contain a possessive preposition with and an element all, acting as a modifier of this with-PP (the difference being that in the completive all construction possessive P with is silent). The structure I propose for a sentence such as (76) is shown in (77).
(76) There’s all water on the bathroom floor.

(77) Structure of There’s all water on the bathroom floor.

In (77) the verb be selects a constituent akin to a small clause. The subject of this small clause is a nominal constituent which contains a silent determiner (THE/A) and a silent noun SPACE. The PP on the bathroom floor acts as a modifier of silent SPACE. The predicate of the small clause is the PP all WITH water. The head of the PP is the silent possessive P WITH, and its complement is the nominal water. All is a modifier of the WITH-PP. In the following paragraphs, I review how the structure in (77) can account for the interpretation, the constituency, and the restriction on nominals found in the construction.

For the sake of completeness, the structure of a completive all sentence with possessive have, which I propose is just like the structure of an existential like (77), is shown in (79).
(78) You have all chocolate on your face.

(79) Structure of You have all chocolate on your face.

5.1 WITH-PP and interpretation

Under the WITH-PP analysis proposed here, There’s all water on the bathroom floor contains as part of its structure a silent SPACE element. However, unlike the case with the analysis in §3, in this case all does not quantify over this nominal but, rather, modifies the PP WITH water. In other words, all modifies the PP predicate in a fashion parallel to how an adverb like completely modifies the predicates wet and destroyed in completely wet and completely destroyed. The interpretation that follows, then, is that there is a space (narrowed down by the PP in the bathroom) that is completely covered with a mass (water).

5.2 WITH-PP and constituency

As for constituency, we observed in §3 that all water could not be a suitable answer to a what question. The question-and-answer pair in (17) in §3 is repeated as (80).

(80) A: What is there in the bathroom?
   B: #All water.

   The structure in (77) provides us with a possible explanation for the unavailability of (80). The reason why all water fails as an answer to a what question is that all water is a prepositional phrase (and crucially not a nominal constituent), and prepositional phrases are not suitable answers to what questions, as shown in (81).

(81) A: What did you cook?
   B: *In the oven / *With butter / *For Mary. [*as an answer to A]

   A confirmation that this is indeed why (80) fails is that the all + NP string can pass other constituency tests that serve to pick out non-nominal constituents, such as coordination and clefting, as we saw in §4.3. These tests are repeated below.
I had all sand and all mud in my hair.

It was all ink that she had on her hand not all blood.

To conclude, we can say that the analysis proposed here nicely accounts for why all and the higher nominal cannot serve as an answer to a what question but can be clefted or coordinated with another string.

5.3 WITH-PP and the restriction on nominals
I mentioned in §4.4 that the pivot in the completive all construction had to be a bare plural or a mass noun. This, I argue, is the same restriction that we find in the (b) variant of the Locative Alternation and the Swarm Alternation. I claim that this restriction follows from the fact that all imposes on its complement the requirement that it should distribute. Only bare plurals and mass nouns can distribute. I claim that a uniform explanation for this restriction in the (b) variant of the Locative Alternation and the Swarm Alternation on the one hand, and the completive all construction on the other, follows straightforwardly if all these constructions have the same structure: they are all with-PPs modified by all.15

5.4 WITH-PP and the source of the stage-level interpretation
In §4.1 we showed that completive all was restricted to appearing with stage-level predicates. A good question to ask at this point is why this should be so. In other words, why is that the completive all construction should always have a stage-level flavor. I would like to claim that this follows from the fact that completive all sentences have in their structure a silent possessive preposition WITH which has the semantics of temporary possession. I discuss possessive P WITH and its status as a P of temporary possession next.

As pointed out by Levinson (2011) languages can express different types of possession, which are classified by Stassen (2009) into the following four types: (i) temporary possession, (ii) alienable possession, (iii) inalienable possession, and (iv) abstract possession. These different types of possession are illustrated by the examples below, which in English can all be expressed using the verb have (examples from Stassen 2009).

(84) a. That guy has a knife! (temporary possession) (Stassen 2009:19)
    b. John has a bicycle. (alienable possession) (Levinson 2011:258)
    c. He has brown eyes. (inalienable possession) (Levinson 2011:258)
    d. Bill has a cold. (abstract possession) (Stassen 2009:19)

Of the four types mentioned above, Levinson claims that the vera með construction in Icelandic, which is the focus of her study, expresses primarily temporary possession or control. Two of her examples are given below.

(85) a. Jón er með kvef.
    John.NOM is with cold.ACC
    ‘John has a cold.’

15There are of course differences with respect to pronunciation. In the (b) variant of the Locative Alternation and the Swarm Alternation, P with is always overt whereas all can be overt or silent, i.e., all/ALL. In contrast, in the completive all construction, P with is always silent, i.e., WITH, whereas all is always overt.
b. Jón er með glæraugu.
     John is with glasses.
     ‘John is wearing glasses.’ / ‘John has glasses.’ (Levinson 2011:360)

The examples in (85) express temporary possession and control: they do not involve permanent contact (thus, temporary possession) and they express an asymmetric relation between the possessor and the possessum (thus, control). However, although possession and control are true of the examples in (85), Levinson points out that the preposition með can also assign dative case instead of accusative, and it can appear in contexts in which there is no asymmetry of control. To show the contrast between the two interpretations which sentences with the preposition með can give rise to, she gives the minimal pair below.

(86) a. Jón er með barnið sitt.
     John is with child.the his
     ‘John has his child.’

b. Jón er með barninu sínu.
     John is with child.the his
     ‘John has his child.’ (Levinson 2011:360–361)

The contrast between (86a) and (86b) is the following: while sentence (86a) has a control interpretation, (86b) has a comitative or associative one. In (86a), where með assigns accusative case (i.e., the vera með construction in (85)), John is understood to be holding the child, leading him by the hand, or carrying a baby in a carriage. In contrast, in (86b), where með assigns dative case, the child is understood to be walking by John’s side but not under John’s control. Because með does not itself have a uniform meaning with respect to control (as shown by (86a) vs. (86b)), coupled with the fact that it sometimes assigns accusative and sometimes dative case (again, shown by (86a) vs. (86b)), it is not viable to propose that the lexical item með itself has the meaning of control (how would the absence of control be explained in (86b)?) nor that it assigns accusative case (how is the presence of dative case explained in (86a)?). Levinson thus proposes that the lexical item með itself only has the semantics of accompaniment, and it has no case to assign. This lexical item then combines with a little p functional head which serves two functions: (i) it completes the semantics of the lexical P and (ii) it is responsible for case assignment. Specifically, there are two little p’s með can combine with: (i) a little p head with the semantics of control/temporary possession which assigns accusative case (yielding the properties in (85) and (86a)) or (ii) a little p head with the semantics of symmetry/accompaniment which assigns dative case (yielding the properties in (86b)). Levinson’s motivation for placing the case feature on little p and some of the semantic features on this functional item, too, are clear: an analysis that attributes either symmetry or control and a specific case feature to með will fail to capture all the facts in (85)–(86). In the case of the silent P WITH in the completive all sentences that are the focus of this work, the situation is slightly different. For the time being, unlike what we have seen for the vera með sentences, we have only found silent WITH in the context of the completive all construction, where it always has the interpretation of temporary possession. Therefore, there would seem to be no immediate motivation for dissociating its semantic features. I would like to claim then, pending confirmation to the contrary, that it is silent possessive P WITH itself that has the semantics of temporary possession. This would then mean that it is the presence of this lexical item in completive all sentences that is responsible for their stage-level property.

16 Alternatively, if we wanted to claim that P WITH is the silent counterpart of P with and differs from it only in not
A proposal would not be complete without a final word about word order. Note that the linear order of these sentences is not the one shown in (87a) but the one shown in (87b).

(87)  
  a. "There’s on the bathroom floor all water.
  b. There’s all water on the bathroom floor.

In order to derive the right linear order of completive all sentences, it would be necessary to postulate that the all + NP string moves higher up in the structure, perhaps by means of Predicate Inversion à la Den Dikken and Næss (1993) and Den Dikken (2006) in the manner shown below.

(88)  **Predicate Inversion of all sand**

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### 6. Explaining variation and a possible link to another structure

An important question to ask at this point is why it is that some varieties of English allow the completive all construction while others do not. A possible answer to this question is that only some varieties of English have a silent possessive P WITH. As a matter of fact, the idea that varieties of English should differ with respect to the types of possessive P with’s they possess has been proposed in the literature before. In particular, it has been proposed by Sailor and Griffiths (2019) to explain why it is that while all varieties of English allow sentences like (89), only some varieties (according to their findings only some dialects of British English) allow sentences like those in (90), with a gap instead of a pronoun.¹⁷

¹⁷I am grateful to Richie Kayne for drawing my attention to the points of contact between Sailor and Griffiths’s work and my own, and for directing me to their research.
Sailor and Griffiths draw attention to the fact that the context in which the object gaps in (90) can appear is surprisingly narrow: they are only possible as the complement of prepositions that are themselves embedded under *have/with* possessives. The authors consider that the narrow distribution of P-object gaps in *have/with* environments must be evidence for two things: (i) that the syntax of *have* possessives and the syntax of *with* possessives must be similar, and (ii) that the derivation of P-object gaps must make use of some element of the syntax of *have/with* possessives. They state that the fact that *have* and *with* possessives have the same underlying structure has been defended by Levinson (2011), who argues that both types of possessives involve a possessive preposition, which she labels Pross. According to Levinson, if Pross merges with a *p*, the resulting structure will be attributive and *p* will be realized as *with* (as in *the man with a book*). In contrast, if Pross merges with a *v*, the resulting structure will be predicative and *p* will be spelled out as *have* (as in *Hans has a book*).

The analysis Sailor and Griffiths propose for POGs is the following. The possessive P selects as its complement the *pP monsters in film*. However, this Pross has the lexical property that it selects a case-deficient complement. This portion of the structure is shown below.

Because the complement is case deficient, the possessor, *the film* cannot receive case in situ. As a result, it undergoes A-movement from a caseless P-object position across a higher argument, the possessum (*monsters*). This is shown in (92). For completeness, the derivation of a *have* possessive is shown in (93).
The analysis Sailor and Griffiths propose for POGs, then resembles that of a pseudo-passive, as the authors themselves acknowledge. Their own examples that show the resemblance between these derivations are shown below. Example (94a) is a POG, (94b) an English pseudo-passive, and (94c) a Swedish pseudo-passive.
Completive *all* in English and the status of *all* — 23/26

(94) English

a. The film [with/has] monsters [PP in it] . . .

b. This bed was slept [PP in it] by our kids.

(examples 94a and 94b from Sailor & Griffiths 2019:2)

Swedish

c. Den där ugnen [PP in it]

that there oven.DEF has baked.PASS buns in

Lit: ‘That oven has been baked buns in.’

(example 94c from Klingvall 2012:61)

What the authors propose in concrete is that the underlying representation of sentences with POGs (90) and those without them (89) is basically the same. The difference between them lies in the selectional properties of the possessive P: if the possessive P is not defective, the possessor is licensed in situ, as in (89). In contrast, if the possessive P is defective, the possessor will not be licensed in situ and it will need to undergo A-movement instead, resulting in the gapped structure in (90). In other words, this difference, which is lexical, leads to a syntactic difference that results in A-movement of the possessor from the P-object position across the possessum in one case (90) and in the realization of the possessor as a pronoun in the other (89). What this means is that the variation that we find across English varieties with respect to the availability of (90) will ultimately boil down to whether a given grammar has a certain lexical item in its lexical array: a defective PPOSS: a defective one that results in A-movement of the complement of the P, yielding the pseudo-passive structure we saw in (90) (e.g., *The film has monsters in* . . .), and a non-defective one that can license its complement in situ as a pronoun, resulting in the structure in (89) (e.g., *The film has monsters in it* . . .). Speakers that disallow POGs only have in their lexicons the second type of P (and thus their grammars only produce sentences like *The film has monsters in it* . . .).

Independently of the details of the analysis put forth by Sailor and Griffiths and their particular implementation, there are a series of points that are highly relevant to the completive *all* construction discussed in this paper. In the first place, POGs and completive *all* are both restricted to the complement of possessive have and P with. Below are some examples from the web that show completive *all* in the complement of P with.

(95)

a. The bed was tidied but with all sand on it.

b. I was creeping down in the swamp with all mud on my feet.

c. It’s difficult to enter the room with all mud on your legs.

d. I was found bundled in a small cloth with all blood on my body since they hadn’t even cleaned me after my birth.

18 The reader is referred to Stockwell and Schütze (2019) for a criticism of some of the points of the proposal put forth by Sailor and Griffiths.

19 A matter that still needs to be understood is why completive *all* can appear in existentials in English but POGs are not allowed in existentials. The example in (i) below from Sailor and Griffiths illustrates the impossibility of POGs in existentials. I leave the study of this contrast in the distribution of POGs and completive *all* for future work.

(i) Don’t watch that film, there’s a monster in *(it)! (Sailor & Griffiths 2019:2)
Under my analysis, just as Sailor and Griffith’s analysis, have sentences have an inner core that contains a possessive P with (in our case, silent P WITH), so the environments for POGs and completive all are one and the same: the complement of with. Sailor and Griffith explain the presence vs. the absence of POGs by claiming that some varieties of English simply do not have a case deficient P<sub>POSS</sub>. I would like to hypothesize that some varieties of English do not have the completive all construction because they lack a silent possessive P WITH. In other words, they simply do not have this lexical item in their vocabulary inventory. What we have seen then is that English grammars can have three different types of Ps: (i) a case assigning P<sub>POSS</sub>/with, (ii) a deficient one (resulting in a POG structure), and (iii) a silent one (resulting in the completive all construction). The existence of possessive P types (ii) and (iii) raises interesting questions. For instance, is there any implicational hierarchy between the types? In other words, do speakers who have a silent possessive P WITH necessarily also have a deficient possessive P with, or vice versa? Does this lead to an implication between the constructions (do speakers who exhibit the completive all construction also exhibit POGs?)? I leave answering these questions for future work.

### 7. Concluding remarks

In this paper I discussed the properties of the completive all construction in English, exemplified by sentences like There’s all water on the bathroom floor. I showed that (i) this construction has a stage-level interpretation; (ii) it allows exceptions; (iii) in this construction all and the higher nominal make up a non-nominal constituent; and (iv) in this construction the higher nominal must be a bare plural or a mass noun. I argued that properties (i) and (ii) provided evidence that all was modifying a syntactic predicate, and that properties (iii) and (iv) supported an analysis of these structures as WITH-PPs modified by all. I then addressed the question of why some varieties of English (for instance, some dialects of British English, Australian English, and Irish English) allowed the completive all construction and others did not (for instance, mainstream American English). To answer this question, I drew attention to another construction, studied by Sailor and Griffiths (2019), also subject to variation in English grammars: Preposition Object Gaps (POGs). These authors claim that the presence vs. the absence of this phenomenon in the grammars of English speakers boils down to the presence in the lexicon of these speakers of a defective P<sub>POSS</sub>. The presence of a defective P<sub>POSS</sub> triggers A-movement of the complement of the P resulting in a gap. If a speaker does not have this defective P<sub>POSS</sub> as part of their grammar, the complement of the P will always be realized in situ, and no gap will arise. Along similar lines, I hypothesized that it might be possible to think that only some English grammars have a silent possessive P WITH. If a given grammar does not have a silent P WITH, then this grammar will not exhibit the completive all construction. Otherwise, it will. I leave investigation of this hypothesis for future work.

### References


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