Structural Ambiguity and Case Assignment in Hungarian Clausal and Phrasal Comparatives

Julia Bacskai-Atkari

This paper presents a contrastive analysis of comparative degree complements in Germanic (English, German) and Hungarian, focussing on two particular types of constructions that are potentially ambiguous in isolation. I argue that Hungarian has both clausal and phrasal comparatives. In clausal comparatives, the morphological case of the single remnant always corresponds to its underlying function (subject or object), hence ambiguities arise only if both interpretations involve subjects, but there are no subject/object ambiguities. This differs from Germanic, where subject/object ambiguities arise due to case syncretism, and where subjects of small clauses can be marked by the accusative case. In Hungarian phrasal comparatives, case distinction does not play a role, and the interpretation is governed by semantic rules.

Keywords: ambiguity, case assignment, clausal comparative, comparative subclause, degree semantics, ellipsis, phrasal comparative, tense projection, small clause

1. Introduction

The aim of the present article is to provide a contrastive analysis for certain ambiguity phenomena in elliptical and phrasal comparatives[1] in Hungarian and in Germanic languages. The term "elliptical comparative" refers to the configuration represented by (1a):

(1) a. *I am taller than **Mary**.*
b. *I am taller than ~~[x-tall]~~ Mary is ~~[x-tall]~~.*

[1] Note that while the term "phrasal comparative" is sometimes used for elliptical comparatives like (1a) in the literature, the present paper refrains from this, as constructions should be distinguished according to their (underlying) syntactic structure. In short, clausal comparatives are constructions where the degree complement is headed by a complementiser (which in turn may select for a full TP or a tenseless small clause, as will be shown, and ellipsis may reduce the structure in either case). On the other hand, phrasal comparatives are constructions where the degree complement is headed by a P element (which can either be a proper preposition as *di* 'of' in Italian or a lexical case head).

As can be seen, the DP *Mary* in (1a) is a single remnant following the element *than* in (1a); nevertheless, (1b) shows that a full clause can be reconstructed, containing a tensed copula, hence (1a) can be regarded as the result of ellipsis rather than a base-generated phrasal comparative. Note that the degree expression (a quantifier phrase, QP), which is *x-tall* in (1b), is obligatorily eliminated in English anyway: this phenomenon has been referred to as "Comparative Deletion" by Bresnan (1973); see also Kennedy (2002), and for a more recent account, Bacskai-Atkari (2014a). In the present paper, I will not address the issue of Comparative Deletion, since it is not a specific property of the particular constructions I am going to examine in more detail.

Generally, in comparatives expressing inequality, comparative semantics ensures that a degree in the matrix clause (*d*) binds another degree (*d'*). For instance, in a comparative relation *taller than x-tall*, see (1b) above, the degree carried by the morpheme *-er* (*d*) is higher than the degree (*d'*) carried by *x* (*d* > *d*') (see Chomsky (1977), Kennedy (2002), Lechner (2004), Bacskai-Atkari (2014a) on the relation between degree semantics and the syntactic structure of comparatives).

Hungarian is particularly interesting in terms of comparatives because it has both clausal and phrasal constructions, as shown by Wunderlich (2001). This is demonstrated in (2) below:[2]

(2) a. *Magasabb* *vagyok,* ***mint*** *(amilyen* *magas)* *Mari* *(volt).*
taller am than how tall Mary was.3SG
'I am taller than Mary (was).

b. *Magasabb* *vagyok* *Mari-**nál**.*
taller am Mary-ADE
'I am taller than Mary.'

In (2a), the clause headed by the complementiser *mint* 'as/than' can be elliptical or fully overt; in (2b), the adessive case suffix (*-nál*/*-nél*) takes a single DP, and no clause can be recovered.[3]

[2] The article conforms to the Leipzig Glossing Rules; in addition, the abbreviations ADE is used for adessive case.

[3] As mentioned previously, the clausal/phrasal distinction is primarily related to the category of the element corresponding to *than*, and whether this element allows non-elliptical clauses in its complement. While *mint*, as shown by (2a), allows a full clause, the adessive lexical case suffix P element never does so, it only attaches to a single DP (and it is present as an adessive P in the language anyway). Apart from this, there are several empirical differences between the two types given in (2) that indicate that the adessive in (2b) cannot be clausal, and that the *mint*-XP in (2a) cannot be phrasal; see the analysis given by Wunderlich (2001). Essentially, Wunderlich (2001) suggests that as far as the universal structure of cases like (1a) is concerned, there is no single analysis

The matrix degree head (*-er* in English and *-bb* in Hungarian) may hence take either a CP or a PP complement. The CP itself is often reduced to the string of the C head and one single XP remnant. Regarding PP complements, I assume that lexical cases are instances of PP structures as well (see, for instance, É. Kiss 2002; Asbury 2005, 2008a, 2008b).
Ambiguity arises when the (single) remnant DP (within a CP complement that has been elided except for the DP in question) or the DP in the PP complement can be contrasted with multiple DPs in the matrix clause: this can also be observed in Germanic languages (Bacskai-Atkari 2014b). In the present article, I will examine two kinds of ambiguous constructions. In both cases, ambiguity arises with sentences in isolation; note, however, that it is possible to provide contexts in which only one reading is salient.
Type I is illustrated for English in (3) below:[4]

(3) *Alex loves Sam more than **Jay**.*
SUBJECT READING: 'Alex loves Sam more than Jay loves Sam.'
OBJECT READING: 'Alex loves Sam more than he loves Jay.'

The sentence in (3) has two different readings,[5] depending on whether the remnant DP (*Jay*) is interpreted as a subject and hence contrasted with the matrix subject ("subject reading"), or

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covering all possibilities, and the separation of clausal comparatives (allowing of course for ellipsis) from true phrasal comparatives is necessary. A similar point is made by Merchant (2009), who shows that reduced clausal comparatives differ from phrasal comparatives; note also that he argues that there may be more structure in a PP underlyingly than a single DP, at least in Greek. In this paper, I will assume that the (functionally extended) PP is similar to a subclause in itself (hence not as the complement of a further *than*-like element), and a degree (*d'*) bound by the comparative degree (*d*) is present, responsible for certain semantic restrictions. Note that Merchant (2009) examines a peculiar phrasal construction in Greek (with the preposition *apo*), which behaves differently from the proper phrasal constructions in Hungarian to be discussed here, hence the analysis given by Merchant (2009) does not hold for Hungarian. For a recent discussion concerning the behaviour of Greek comparatives in the two types discussed here, see Bacskai-Atkari (2015b).

[4] Note that (3) has to be maximally elliptical for the ambiguity to hold (cf. i): in VP ellipsis contexts, only the subject reading is available, as *Jay* can only be interpreted as the subject of the clause.

(i) *Alex loves Sam more than Jay does*.

[5] As mentioned above, the sentence in (3) is ambiguous in isolation, yet it is possible to construct contexts which single out one of the readings. (Note also that all the three proper names are gender-ambiguous; naturally, a person uttering (3) is more than likely to know the gender of the referents.) Consider:

(i) *Mary has two brothers, Alex and Jay. They are both fond of Mary's 5-year-old son, Sam. However, Mary has the impression that Alex loves Sam more than Jay*.

as an object and contrasted with the matrix object ("object reading"). For the semantic representation of the underlying predicates in the two clauses in Type I, consider (4):[6]

(4) *Alex loves Sam more* *than* ***Jay***.
LOVE(a,s) (i) LOVE(**j**,s)
(ii) LOVE(a,**j**)

As can be seen, there are two arguments of a single predicate in the matrix clause: the predicate itself is the lexical verb *love*, and the two DP arguments are the subject *Alex* and the object *Sam*. One of the argument DPs is contrasted with the remnant (*Jay*) in the subclause, while the other one has a corresponding DP in the elided part of the subclause (due to a recoverability condition on elided material, the DP affected by ellipsis must be e-GIVEN; see Merchant 2001: 38 on e-GIVENness, a modified version of GIVENness by Schwarzschild 1999). Type II constructions are illustrated in (5):[7]

(5) *Alex saw a taller woman than* ***Mary***.
LEXICAL READING: 'Alex saw a taller woman than Mary saw.'
PREDICATIVE READING: 'Alex saw a taller woman than Mary is.'

In (5), the remnant DP (*Mary*) is interpreted as a subject in both readings:[8] in the "lexical reading", a clause containing a lexical verb is reconstructed, while in the "predicate reading"

(ii) *Mary has two brothers, Sam and Jay. Her 5-year-old son, Alex, is fond of them both. However, Mary has the impression that Alex loves Sam more than Jay*.

In (i), only the subject reading of *Jay* is salient, while (ii) gives rise to the object reading only. The same would hold for the German equivalent of the sentence in (3).

[6] The representation follows from the basic semantic properties of the verbal predicate, which is independent from degree semantics. Note that since the degree expression in the matrix clause (*more*) is a verbal adjunct, it does not (and cannot) be an argument of the lexical verb, hence it is not represented in (4). For a syntactic analysis of the ambiguity in (4), see Bacskai-Atkari (2014a: 238–243).

[7] Again, note that (5) has to be maximally elliptical for the ambiguity to hold: if an overt nominative case assigner in T is left intact, it is unambiguous whether there is a copula, as in the paraphrase in the predicative reading in (5), or whether there is a lexical verb, as in the paraphrase in the lexical reading in (5) or in (i) below:

(i) *Alex saw a taller woman than Mary did*.

[8] Again, the sentence in (5) is ambiguous in isolation, yet it is possible to construct contexts which allow only for one of the readings. Consider:

(i) *Last year, when she was in Iceland, Mary saw a woman who was 220 cm tall. We thought she must have been the tallest woman in the world, but last week Alex saw a taller woman than Mary*.

the predicate is an adjective and a corresponding predicative relation is reconstructed. For the semantics of Type II, consider the representation in (6):[9]

(6)	*Alex saw a taller woman*		*than*	***Mary***.
	SEE(a,woman) & TALL(woman,d)		(i)	SEE(**m**,woman) & TALL(woman,d')
			(ii)	TALL(**m**,d')

In this configuration, there are two predicates in the matrix clause: a verbal (*see*) and an adjectival one (*tall*). Hence, either both predicates are reconstructed in the subclause or just the adjectival predicate is reconstructed; in either case, the remnant DP (*Mary*) is a subject. The verbal predicate is necessarily accompanied by the adjectival predicate, since the degree is associated with the adjectival predicate, contrary to Type I; the adjectival predicate, on the other hand, does not require the presence of an underlying verbal predicate.

In principle, there are two major ways of accounting for the ambiguities mentioned above. Under a strict clausal analysis, ambiguity arises when remnants are case-syncretic (or have the same case anyway), while the underlying structures may be different; such an analysis would essentially follow Bresnan (1973) and Lechner (2004). On the other hand, a strictly phrasal analysis, such as the one given by Hankamer (1973), would assume that there are no underlying structural differences at all, and the single DP taken by a preposition element can be associated with multiple DPs in the matrix clause.

Hungarian is hence crucially important for the general theory of comparatives as well, since it is a language that has both clausal and phrasal comparatives, and hence may cast light upon what actually happens in languages like English in constructions such as (3) and (5) above. I am going to show that Hungarian provides evidence for the *than*-XP being clausal (rather than phrasal) in English (and German); in particular, ambiguity in (5) cannot arise in true phrasal comparatives at all.

(ii) *Mary is 220 cm tall. We always thought she must have been the tallest woman in the world, but last week Alex saw a taller woman than Mary*.

In (i), only the lexical reading is salient, while (ii) gives rise to the predicative reading only. Again, the same would hold for the German equivalent of the sentence in (5).

[9] The representation follows from the basic semantic properties of the verbal and adjectival predicates, and from general degree semantics (see above); further, note that the degree expression is an attribute, unlike in (1): the adjective is a gradable predicate within the nominal expression. Regarding the syntax and the semantics of attributive comparatives, see Kennedy & Merchant (2000), Bacskai-Atkari (2014a: 131–173).

The novelty of the present proposal lies in the recognition of the diversity of comparative complements (CPs versus PPs) as well as of the variation within the CPs (whether there is a TP or not, and what the relationship between TP and PredP is). In particular, the proposal shows that ambiguity may stem from the surface-identity of underlyingly different syntactic structures (in clausal comparatives) and also from the fact that minimal structures rely primarily on the semantics (and not on the syntax) of antecedent clauses to receive their interpretation (in phrasal comparatives). The analysis relies on the general case assignment properties of the respective languages, as well as on the basic semantics of comparatives sketched above in this section. As will be shown, the kind of available reading correlates with the morphosyntactic case of the remnant in clausal comparatives both in Type I and in Type II, in Germanic as well as in Hungarian; in phrasal comparatives (Hungarian), the availability of the various readings is dependent on semantic factors.

2. Ambiguity and case assignment with single predicates (Type I)

In this section, I am going to discuss the properties of Type I constructions. Recall that English regularly exhibits ambiguity in sentences like (3); another example is given in (7):

(7) *I love you more than **my brother***.
SUBJECT READING: 'I love you more than my brother loves you.'
OBJECT READING: 'I love you more than I love my brother.'

The two readings correspond to the underlying position of the remnant DP, that is, whether it is interpreted as a subject or as an object. As shown by Bacskai-Atkari (2014b), ambiguity in English in (7) arises because the DP *my brother* is case-ambiguous, hence a subject in the nominative case and an object in the accusative case regularly have the same morphophonological form. On the other hand, in English subjects may surface in the default accusative case if there is no overt case assigner, hence the accusative is not necessarily restricted to object DPs either. The case assignment properties can be better examined in the pronominal pattern, where there is morphophonological distinction between subject and object pronouns, as shown by the examples in (8):

(8) a. ?*I love you more than **he***.
'I love you more than he loves you.'

b. *I love you more than **him***.
'I love you more than he loves you. / I love you more than I love him.'

In (8a), the nominative pronoun can only be interpreted as a subject: the construction is marked (but not ungrammatical) because nominative pronominal remnants are not optimal as stressed remnants. In (8b), the accusative pronoun can be interpreted either as a subject bearing the default accusative case, or as an object that receives accusative case from the transitive verb.[10]

While the availability of the default accusative case makes the picture comparatively complex in English, German exhibits a much clearer pattern: ambiguity is attested with case-syncretic remnants only, and there is no default accusative case available. Ambiguous, case-syncretic patterns arise with feminine (and neuter) remnant DPs (including pronouns), as shown in (9):

(9) *Ich* *liebe* *dich* *mehr* *als* ***meine*** ***Schwester***.
I.NOM love.1SG you.ACC more than my.F.NOM/ACC sister
'I love your more than my sister.'

By contrast, masculine DPs show case distinction and hence no ambiguity arises, see (10):

(10) a. *Ich* *liebe* *dich* *mehr* *als* ***mein*** ***Bruder***.
I.NOM love.1SG you.ACC more than my.M.NOM brother
'I love you more than my brother loves you.'

b. *Ich* *liebe* *dich* *mehr* *als* ***meinen*** ***Bruder***.
I.NOM love.1SG you.ACC more than my.M.ACC brother
'I love you more than I love my brother.'

The German pattern is hence fully predictable based on whether there is overt case distinction or not; similar patterns regarding Type I constructions are attested across Germanic.

In Hungarian, clausal comparatives show case distinction on the remnant, and no ambiguity arises; this is demonstrated in (11) below:

[10] As was pointed out in section 1, the patterns discussed here hold for maximally elliptical comparative subclauses, and not for cases of VP ellipsis as (i), where the nominative DP is clearly the subject of the clause:

(i) *I love you more than he/*him does*.

(11) a. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***Márk***.
better love.1SG than Mark.NOM
'I love you more than Mark loves you.'

b. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***Márk-ot***.
better love.1SG than Mark-ACC
'I love you more than I love Mark.'

As can be seen, the nominative remnant in (11a) gives rise to the subject reading, while the accusative remnant in (11b) is associated with the object reading. This is quite similar to German, except that Hungarian generally demonstrates no case ambiguities, as case is overtly marked on all kinds of DPs, including proper names. There is one exception, though: possessive objects (with 1st and 2nd person possessors only) may lack the otherwise obligatory accusative marker (*-t*), but only as long as they are still identifiable as an object.[11] Consider the examples in (12):

(12) a. *Látom Mari-****t****/*Mari-****Ø***.
see.1SG Mary-ACC
'I can see Mary.'

b. *Látom az anyám-****at****/anyám-****Ø***.
see.1SG the mother.POSS.1SG-ACC
'I can see my mother.'

In (12a), the DP *Mari* 'Mary' has no possessive suffix and functions as an object: the presence of the overt accusative marker *-t* is obligatory. In (12b), the DP *az anyám* 'my mother' is a possessive phrase (with a 1st person possessor): as an object, it may appear both with and without the overt accusative suffix *-t*. Interestingly, while in principle possessive DPs may hence be case-ambiguous, Type I elliptical comparatives demonstrate no ambiguity in isolation, as shown by (13):

[11] As pointed out by É. Kiss (2014: 23–25), this has historical reasons, and is primarily related to information structural properties: the accusative case marker was initially used only for object topics but not for focussed objects; in possessives, the possessive marker is sufficient for marking the referential properties of the object. Note that later the suffix *-t* was generalised to all objects; still, the absence of *-t* is fossilized in the system in some cases. This applies to nouns with 1st and 2nd person singular possessors, and somewhat marginally to nouns with 1st and 2nd person plural possessors (there is presumably some inter-speaker variation here: É. Kiss 2014: 24, ex. 42 indicates the latter as marked, but for some of my informants they are fully acceptable).

(13) a. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***a bátyám***.
better love.1SG than the brother.POSS.1SG.NOM
'I love you more than my brother loves you.'

b. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***a bátyám-at***.
better love.1SG than the brother.POSS.1SG-ACC
'I love you more than I love my brother.'

c. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***a bátyám-Ø***.
better love.1SG than the brother.POSS.1SG-ACC
i.'I love you more than my brother loves you.'
ii.'I love you more than I love my brother.' (#in isolation, good with appropriate context only)

I tested the Hungarian sentences presented in this article on 10 native speakers, and they reported a strict disambiguation pattern in Type I constructions in isolation. That is, a possessive remnant DP without any visible accusative marker is interpreted as nominative, see (13a), and associated with the subject reading only. A DP remnant with a visible accusative marker, as in (13b), was interpreted as an object. As (13c) indicates, though, the accusative could lack an overt case suffix with a possessive DP. If the sentence is uttered in isolation, the accusative reading is not available and the sentence is infelicitous for the intended reading, as shown by (i) in (13c). However, if there is a context that makes only the object reading felicitous and available (see the discussion concerning example (3) in section 1), the sentence is acceptable with the intended reading, as shown by (ii) in (13c). This is not specifically related to comparatives, but rather follows from the general properties concerning the absence of accusative *-t* in Hungarian (see the discussion above in footnote 11).
Hence, while there is indeed some case syncretism in Hungarian, this does not result in ambiguity, as it does in Germanic: the object reading for possessive DPs without overt case marking is available only if the subject reading is not (which is in fact similar to (12b), where a subject reading for the DP is likewise ruled out). In this sense, Hungarian does indeed represent a strict disambiguation pattern in Type I clausal comparatives.
Regarding phrasal comparatives, Hungarian shows ambiguity, as shown in (14):

(14) *Jobban szeretlek* ***Márk-nál***.
better love.1SG Mark-ADE
'I love you more than Mark loves you / than I love Mark.'

The sentence in (14) represents the most natural order for the elements under scrutiny: the adessive PP appears clause-finally. Nevertheless, it is possible for the PP to occupy various left-peripheral positions as well, as it may be fronted. Note that there is no fronting option

available for reduced *mint*-CPs, similarly to their English counterparts with *than*, but unlike German *als*-CPs, which may undergo certain types of fronting. The Hungarian adessive PP may be a focus, as in (15):

(15) ***MÁRK-NÁL*** *szeretlek jobban.*
Mark-ADE love.1SG better
'I love you more than MARK loves you / than I love MARK.'

In (16), the PP is a contrastive topic:[12]

(16) ***Márk-nál*** *jobban szeretlek.*
Mark-ADE better love.1SG
'As for Mark, I love you more than he loves you / than I love him.'

Finally, the PP may also be a distributive phrase, as in (17):

(17) ***Márk-nál*** *is jobban szeretlek.*
Mark-ADE too better love.1SG
'I love you even more than Mark loves you / than I love Mark.'

As the previous examples show, the constructions are available with both possible readings in the various left peripheral positions. This shows that information structure plays no decisive role in the interpretation of the PP in phrasal comparatives.

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[12] The sentence in (16) is the test sentence I used with my informants, who confirmed that (16) is fine if the PP *Márknál* is interpreted as a contrastive topic but not if the PP is an ordinary non-contrastive topic. Contrastive topics carry a contrastive implication and they have an intonation distinct from non-contrastive topics, as well as from foci; further, contrastive topics are syntactically different from foci in that contrastive topics do not have to be adjacent to the verb, as shown by (16), while foci are always verb-adjacent, as in (15). The kind of contrast carried by the contrastive topic in (16) is illustrated in (i):

(i) *Márk-nál jobban szeretlek, de Péter-nél nem.*
Mark-ADE better love.1SG but Peter-ADE not
'As for Mark, I love you more than he loves you but I don't love you more than Peter loves you.'
'As for Mark, I love you more than I love him but I don't love you more than I love Peter.'

The PP *Márknál* is contrasted with the PP *Péternél*; there is no exhaustive identification implied by a contrastive topic. Even if there is no overt *but*-clause, the interpretation of a sentence like (16) implies that there is such a contrast (that is normally recoverable from the context). There is ample literature on contrastive topics in Hungarian: see, for instance, Szabolcsi (1981), É. Kiss (1987, 2002), Molnár (1998), Gyuris (2004, 2009), Lipták (2010); for a concise overview and for further references, see especially Lipták (2010: 172–192).

To summarise the properties of Type I constructions, the following can be observed. In Germanic languages, the pattern is predictable from general case-assignment properties, and both ambiguity and disambiguation are attested: ambiguity occurs when the remnant DP is case-syncretic (and this syncretism is inherent to the relevant case systems). In Hungarian clausal comparatives, there is strict case distinction (and disambiguation), which is even slightly stricter than would be expected based on the general properties of case assignment. On the other hand, Hungarian phrasal comparatives display ambiguity.

3. Ambiguity and case assignment with two predicates (Type II)

Before turning to the question why Hungarian differs from Germanic in Type I constructions, let us examine Type II constructions in more detail. As was illustrated for English in (5) the remnant DP in these constructions can be interpreted as the subject argument of a verbal or of an adjectival predicate. Another example is given in (18):

(18) *I saw a taller woman than **my mother***.
LEXICAL READING: 'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'
PREDICATIVE READING: 'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

The question arises what causes the ambiguity in (18). One possible reason is that the DP *my mother* is case-ambiguous, as argued by Bacskai-Atkari (2014b). Another option is that the remnant DP is a subject either way, and thus it is in the nominative in both readings. While the latter option may seem more intuitive at first, there is evidence for the viability of the first option, at least for Germanic.
English shows case disambiguation in the pronominal pattern. Consider the examples in (19):

(19) a. ?*I saw a taller woman than **she***.
'I saw a taller woman than she saw.'

b. *I saw a taller woman than **her***.
'I saw a taller woman than she is.'

In (19a), the nominative remnant is associated with the lexical reading, while the accusative reading in (19b) renders a predicative reading. While case distinction in Type II constructions

may be unexpected, the appearance of an accusative remnant for subjects is not surprising for English in itself.[13]

The role of case distinction is even more evident in German. In German, ambiguity in Type II constructions arises with case-syncretic remnants; otherwise, whenever there is case distinction, the two meanings are also differentiated. With case-ambiguous feminine remnants, ambiguity can be observed, as in (20):[14]

(20) *Ich habe eine größere Frau als* ***meine*** ***Mutter*** *gesehen*.
I have.1SG a.F.ACC taller.F.ACC woman than my.F.NOM/ACC mother seen
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw / than my mother is.'

By contrast, masculine remnants show case distinction and no ambiguity, as in (21):[15]

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[13] As was pointed out in section 1, the patterns discussed here hold for maximally elliptical comparative subclauses. The insertion of *do* into T following the DP remnant unambiguously renders the lexical reading, as the nominative DP is clearly the subject of the clause:

(i) *I saw a taller woman than she/*her did*.

On the other hand, if the copula remains overt, as in the paraphrase in (19b), the reading is naturally predicative, but the case of the subject DP, unlike in the elliptical clause, is nominative, not accusative: this is because the overt nominative case assigner in T is present, unlike in the maximally elliptical version.

[14] Note that the ambiguity holds if the reduced *als*-clause is string-adjacent to the object DP of the matrix clause, hence preceding the clause-final participle verb (*gesehen* 'seen') of the matrix clause. In this case, the *als*-CP is postposed from the matrix QP (*größer*) only to adjoin to the right edge of the matrix DP, hence the *als*-CP forms a constituent with the matrix DP (that is, the string *eine größere Frau als meine Mutter* is a constituent). I will argue in section 5 that if the DP following *als* does not receive nominative case from T, it can be assigned accusative case by the matrix verb precisely because it is part of the constituent that happens to be the object DP of a transitive verb. As pointed out by Bacskai-Atkari (2014b: 370–377), postposing the *als*-CP to the right of the participle, as in (i) gives rise only to the lexical reading (regarding case, see the discussion regarding (21) below):

(i) *Ich habe eine größere Frau gesehen als* ***meine*** ***Mutter***.
I have.1SG a.F.ACC taller.F.ACC woman seen than my.F.NOM mother
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'

In this case the *als*-CP does not form a constituent with the matrix DP. It follows that accusative case cannot be assigned to the DP following *als* since it is not part of the object DP constituent.

[15] Again, the ambiguity holds if the reduced *als*-clause is string-adjacent to the object DP of the matrix clause, hence preceding the clause-final participle verb (*gesehen* 'seen') of the matrix clause.The *als*-CP forms a constituent with the matrix degree (hence both the string *einen größeren Mann als mein Vater* and the string *einen größeren Mann als meinen Vater* are constituents). Postposing the *als*-CP to the right of the participle is

(21) a. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann als* ***mein*** ***Vater*** *gesehen.*
I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man than my.M.NOM father seen
'I saw a taller man than my father saw.'

b. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann als* ***meinen*** ***Vater*** *gesehen.*
I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man than my.M.ACC father seen
'I saw a taller man than my father is.'

Case distinction in German, as well as the availability of the accusative case for a subject remnant, is surprising inasmuch as there is no default accusative case in German (cf. Schütze 2001), as opposed to English, where the default accusative case may appear in predicative structures. Consider the examples in (22):

(22) a. *Ralf ist größer als* ***er****.*
Ralph is taller than he.NOM
'Ralph is taller than he is.'

b. **Ralf ist größer als* ***ihn****.*
Ralph is taller than he.ACC
'Ralph is taller than he is.'

As shown by the ungrammaticality of (22b) as opposed to (22a), the accusative case is not allowed for subject remnants of simple predicative comparatives. This is not surprising since there is no accusative case assigner in (22a), and German has no default accusative case, that is, in the absence of an overt case assigner, a DP appears in the nominative by default (see

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available only with nominative remnant DPs, and gives rise only to the lexical reading (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014b: 370–377):

(i) *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als* ***mein*** ***Vater****.*
I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man seen than my.M.NOM father
'I saw a taller man than my father saw.'

(ii) **Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als* ***meinen*** ***Vater****.*
I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man seen than my.M.NOM father
'I saw a taller man than my father.'

Again, the *als*-CP in these cases does not form a constituent with the matrix object DP. The point is that the accusative in Type II German constructions is available if a reduced predicative clause (lacking a nominative case assigner) is located in a position where accusative case is normally assigned in the matrix clause, that is, together with the object in the matrix clause.

Schütze 2001). It follows that the accusative case on remnants in Type II constructions, as in (21b), is the consequence of there being an accusative case assigner (the matrix lexical verb). The behaviour of German in Type II is not even unique: Icelandic shows the same distribution.[16] Hence, it can be concluded that in Type II constructions, the predicative readings are marked by the accusative in English and German.

Turning now to Hungarian clausal comparatives, Type II constructions always exhibit ambiguity, as demonstrated in (23):

(23) a. *Láttam egy magasabb nő-t, mint **az anyám***.
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than the mother.POSS.1SG.NOM
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw / than my mother is.'

b. *Láttam egy magasabb nő-t, mint **Liza***.
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than Liz.NOM
'I saw a taller woman than Liz saw / than Liz is.'

As can be seen, the nominative remnant is compatible with both possible readings; while the possessive DP *az anyám* 'my mother' in (23a) may in principle be case-ambiguous (see the discussion in the previous section), the DP *Liza* in (23b) cannot, which indicates that the ambiguity in (23) cannot be the result of case syncretism. Furthermore, the accusative case is ruled out in these constructions, as shown in (24):

(24) a. **Láttam egy magasabb nő-t, mint **az anyám-at***.
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than the mother.POSS.1SG-ACC
'I saw a taller woman than my mother.'

b. **Láttam egy magasabb nő-t, mint **Lizát***.
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than Liz.ACC
'I saw a taller woman than Liz.'

[16] The Icelandic data are illustrated in (i)–(iii) below. I owe many thanks to Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson and to Einar Freyr Sigurðsson for their indispensable help with the data.

(i) *Ég sá hærri konu en Liz.*
I saw.1SG taller woman than Liz.NOM/ACC
'I saw a taller woman than Liz.'

(ii) *Ég sá hærri konu en móðir mín.*
I saw.1SG taller woman than my.NOM mother.NOM
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'

(iii) *Ég sá hærri konu en móður mína.*
I saw.1SG taller woman than my.ACC mother.ACC
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

In (i), the DP *Liz* is case-ambiguous and the sentence is ambiguous. The DP in (ii) and (iii), however, shows case distinction: the nominative in (ii) is associated with an underlying clause containing a lexical verb, and the accusative in (iii) is associated with an underlying predicative clause.

This again shows that (23a) cannot be case-ambiguous either, because a morphophonologically unmarked accusative DP is always replaceable with an accusative DP marked by the accusative suffix *-t*. Hence, Hungarian Type II clausal comparatives behave in accordance with general case assignment properties, in that subject remnants are always in the nominative. Therefore, rather the German (and English) accusative seems to be exceptional.
Let us now turn to phrasal comparatives. Type II phrasal comparatives in Hungarian are always unambiguous (as opposed to Type I phrasal comparatives), and they render a predicative reading. Consider the example in (25):

(25) *Láttam egy magasabb nő-t* ***az anyám-nál***.
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC the mother.POSS.1SG-ADE
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

The sentence in (25) represents the most natural order; in fact, both the DP and the PP can move to the left. While the structures resulting from such movement operations are also predicative, they are generally less preferred (some inter-speaker variation can also be observed in the acceptability of the individual sentences).[17]
Regarding the movement configurations, the DP (*a taller woman*) can be preposed to the left, as in (26):

(26) *Egy magasabb nő-t láttam* ***az anyám-nál***.
a taller woman-ACC saw.1SG the mother.POSS.1SG-ADE
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

A preposed PP can be a focus; in Type II constructions like (27), this option resulted in ungrammatical or very marked outputs:

[17] It is worth mentioning that Type II phrasal comparatives may in fact be ambiguous, yet not between a lexical and a predicative reading, as given in (18) for Germanic, but between the predicative reading and a locative reading, whereby the PP is not a comparative standard argument in the latter configuration. The locative reading arises especially in cases like (27) and (28) below, where the comparative reading of the structure is not preferred anyway; this shows considerable inter-speaker variation, too. The locative reading is available because adessive PPs are regularly used in the language in locatives; under this reading, the sentence in (25) would have the meaning 'I saw a taller woman at my mother's place'. Since the locative reading is not relevant for the present discussion (as I only consider cases where the PP is interpreted as a comparative complement of the matrix degree head), the judgements indicated in the examples (throughout) refer to the proper comparative readings.

(27) ??/*__Az anyám-nál__ *láttam egy magasabb nő-t.*
the mother.POSS.1SG-ADE saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

Furthermore, a preposed PP may function as a contrastive topic; while this configuration in Type II is not optimal, it is nevertheless possible and only marked, as shown on (28):

(28) ?__Az anyám-nál__ *láttam magasabb nő-t.*
the mother.POSS.1SG-ADE saw.1SG taller woman-ACC
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

While the acceptability of the PP in various left peripheral positions shows some variation, it is straightforward that it is still assigned a predicative reading, not a lexical one. The PP complement headed by the adessive suffix is uncontestably phrase-sized: that is, there is no ellipsis taking place in the course of their derivation. This is important for the theory of comparatives because the behaviour of Hungarian phrasal comparatives clearly indicates that the argument that Type II comparatives are ambiguous because they are phrasal cannot hold: true phrasal comparatives in Type II are actually not ambiguous. Note that Hungarian phrasal comparatives are not even unique in this respect: true phrasal comparatives in Italian (with the preposition *di* 'of'), Greek (with the genitive) and Russian (with the genitive) show exactly the same behaviour (Bacskai-Atkari 2015b). This indicates that ambiguity in Germanic Type II comparatives is really a consequence of case syncretism, and Germanic languages therefore do not have (true) phrasal comparatives.

4. The proposal: Semantics and underlying syntactic structures

Before turning to the actual analysis of ellipsis in clausal comparatives, let us review the most important semantic properties of Type I and Type II constructions, including the specification of tense in them. The semantic representations of the underlying predications were discussed in section 1; for the sake of convenience, the examples (4) and (6) are repeated here in (29):

(29) a. Type I

Alex loves Sam more	*than*	***Jay***.
LOVE(a,s)	(i)	LOVE(**j**,s)
	(ii)	LOVE(a,**j**)

b. Type II

Alex saw a taller woman	*than*	***Mary***.
SEE(a,woman) & TALL(woman,d)	(i)	SEE(**m**,woman) & TALL(woman,d')
	(ii)	TALL(**m**,d')

Recall that while in Type I, represented by (29a), there is a single predicate in the matrix clause (the lexical verb *love*), in Type II, represented by (29b), there are two predicates (the lexical verb *see* and the adjective *tall*).

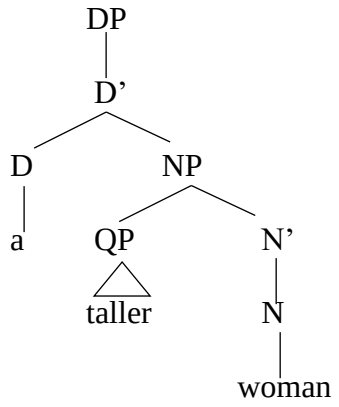
There are two main scenarios in Type I, depending on the type of the comparative complement. In clausal comparatives, the role of the remnant DP is determined by case-assignment properties: this can be observed both in Germanic and in Hungarian. In phrasal comparatives, the DP in the PP can be contrasted with either of the DPs in the antecedent, and there is no hierarchy making one of the DPs preferred (unless a given context or certain pragmatic factors interfere), hence the construction is ambiguous.

Regarding Type II, there are altogether three scenarios. In Hungarian clausal comparatives, the nominative remnant is compatible with both readings. In Germanic (English, German, Icelandic) clausal comparatives, the nominative remnant corresponds to the lexical readings, while predicate readings require the remnant to be in the accusative. Finally, in phrasal comparatives, only the simpler, predicative relation is reconstructed, that is, the one involving an adjectival predicate, since this is where the degree is established. Recall that the adjectival predicate is necessarily present even if there is a verbal predicate, since the degree is associated with the adjectival predicate, while the presence of an underlying verbal predicate is not necessary in terms of degree semantics.

The differences in predication are essential to my proposal, which aims at tracing back the differences between Type I and Type II constructions to differences between tensed and tenseless predication; hence, the presence/absence of tense is of key importance, too. Verbal predication (in both types) is tensed. Taking the English examples in (29), the matrix verb *loves* in (29a) is inflected for present tense, while the matrix verb *saw* in (29b) is in the past tense. In each case the tense of the matrix verb is mapped onto the reconstructed lexical verb in the subclause, hence *loves* in (29a) for either (i) or (ii), and *saw* in (29b) for (i). The same applies to German and Hungarian. By contrast, adjectival predication (relevant only in Type II) is tenseless. Taking the English example in (29b), the matrix adjectival predicate (*tall*) is

part of a degree phrase expressing *d* (rendering *taller*), which is located in the specifier of the NP (*woman*), whereby the noun expresses the subject of the adjectival predicate. This is illustrated in (31) below:

(31)



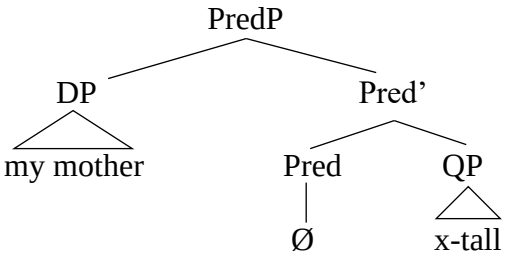
Given that the adjectival predicate is not tensed, if the remnant *Mary* is interpreted as the subject of a reconstructed adjectival predicate, as in reading (ii), no tense is mapped onto this predicate in the subclause.

The reconstructed clauses in Type I (in Germanic and in Hungarian) are also tensed, and case matches determine whether the remnant corresponds to a subject or an object. Regarding phrasal comparatives in Type I (relevant only for Hungarian), there is naturally no verbal predicate in the PP. The PP is a minimal structure that contains an overt DP and a covert degree argument expressing *d'* (the same carried by the comparative operator in clausal comparatives). Again, the degree phrase is in the specifier of the NP, and the P head (*-nál*/*-nél*) expresses the differentiation of the two degrees (just like the comparative complementiser *than* and its equivalents in comparative subclauses). As shown by Hegedűs (2013), the structure of the Hungarian PP involves various functional projections, and the entire PP is essentially a small clause. What is important for us here is that the PP can constitute a small clause on its own; this is different from the small clauses in Germanic Type II comparatives, where the remnant DP is not part of a PP but of a PredP, see the argumentation below.

In this way, the DP within the PP can be contrasted with either of the DP arguments of the verbal predicate modified by the degree element *more*, and can hence be interpreted either as a subject or an object (without a de facto reconstruction of a clause with a verbal predicate). In clausal comparatives, the reconstructed clause is tensed, while in phrasal comparatives the

PP is not tensed; in either case, the antecedent predicative relation is tensed, irrespective of whether the remnant DP (or the DP in the PP) receives a subject or an object interpretation. Regarding Type II, the following can be established. The reconstructed clauses with a nominative subject (in Germanic and in Hungarian) are tensed. However, clausal comparatives with an accusative remnant (relevant only for Germanic), the clauses are defective in the sense that there is no TP (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014b): they are small clauses, and case is assigned by the matrix verb since there is no underlying T head. The small clause structure is illustrated in (32) below:

(32)



The small clause option is available with the adjectival predicative relationship, which likewise does not involve a TP in itself: in this sense, there is a tenseless–tenseless match between the adjectival predication in the matrix clause and the reduced subclause. When comparing (31) and (32), it is obvious that while there is a degree predicate (*taller* and *x-tall*) and a subject (*woman* and *my mother*) in each case, there is no TP in either of the constructions, and hence these predicative relations are tenseless.

In phrasal comparatives in Type II (relevant only for Hungarian), the PP again represents a minimal structure involving an unpronounced degree element carrying *d'* and the subject DP: this essentially matches the adjectival predication relationship, where the gradable adjective (associated with *d*) has a DP subject. The DP subject of the verb is not available as an antecedent in this case, since it is not an argument of the predicate associated with the degree element; hence, there is no ambiguity in true phrasal comparatives in Type II either.

5. Ellipsis

Having established this, let us now turn to the analysis of ellipsis in the comparative constructions under scrutiny. In Type I, regular ellipsis mechanisms take place (cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2014a: 229–266). As far as Hungarian is concerned, the remnant is located in a [Spec,FP] position, where FP refers to a functional projection (not specifically "Focus

projection") located lower than the CP-domain. I assume that this FP is primarily related to the marking of clause-typing and it inherits the relevant features from the CP itself (see Bacskai-Atkari 2015a on the marking of [wh] here). While the [Spec,FP] position is not reserved for focussed constituents only, it is true that focussed constituents undergoing leftward movement also end up in this position, in line with Van Craenenbroeck & Lipták (2008), who also argue that ellipsis is the result of an [E] feature inserted into the F head (which is a designated Focus head for them), based on Merchant (2001). Regarding further relevant projections, I adopt the analysis given by É. Kiss (2008a), who argues that focussed elements move from within the VP first to a PredP, then to the TP, and finally to an FP, while the verb moves to the heads of the same projections. (But see also Surányi 2011 on the relation between TP and focussing; cf. Brody 1990, Kenesei 1989, Surányi 2009 on the role of TP regarding finite verb movement and elements such as verb modifiers appearing in [Spec,TP], showing that [Spec,TP] is not a canonical subject position). Note that for É. Kiss 2008a, the FP is a designated FocP; see also É. Kiss 2008b on focus as an instance of predication. For the present investigation, what matters is that the PredP is generated in tensed clauses as well, and that both the PredP and the FP are generated irrespective of whether there is ellipsis or not.

Consider the examples in (33) showing ellipsis in Type I:[18]

[18] Note that (33) represents the maximally elliptical structure: in the non-elliptical full variants, the comparative relative operator (here: *amennyire* 'how much') would move up to a left-peripheral position. Consider:

(i) *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***amennyire*** *Márk szeret (téged).*
better love.1SG than how.much Mark.NOM loves you.ACC
'I love you more than Mark loves you.'

(ii) *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***amennyire*** *Márkot szeretem.*
better love.1SG than how.much Mark.ACC love.1SG
'I love you more than I love Mark.'

In order to derive the maximally elliptical structure in (33), both the comparative relative operator and the verb have to be eliminated. As observed by Kenesei & Vago & Fenyvesi (1998: 153–154), Bacskai-Atkari & Kántor (2012) and by Bacskai-Atkari (2014a: 244–266), while the verb can be eliminated without affecting the relative operator, the elimination of the relative operator obligatorily triggers the elimination of the verb, unless it is contrastive, see (35) below. Consider:

(iii) **Jobban szeretlek, mint Márk* ***szeret*** *(téged).*
better love.1SG than Mark.NOM loves you.ACC
'I love you more than Mark loves you.'

(iv) **Jobban szeretlek, mint Márkot* ***szeretem****.*
better love.1SG than Mark.ACC love.1SG
'I love you more than I love Mark.'

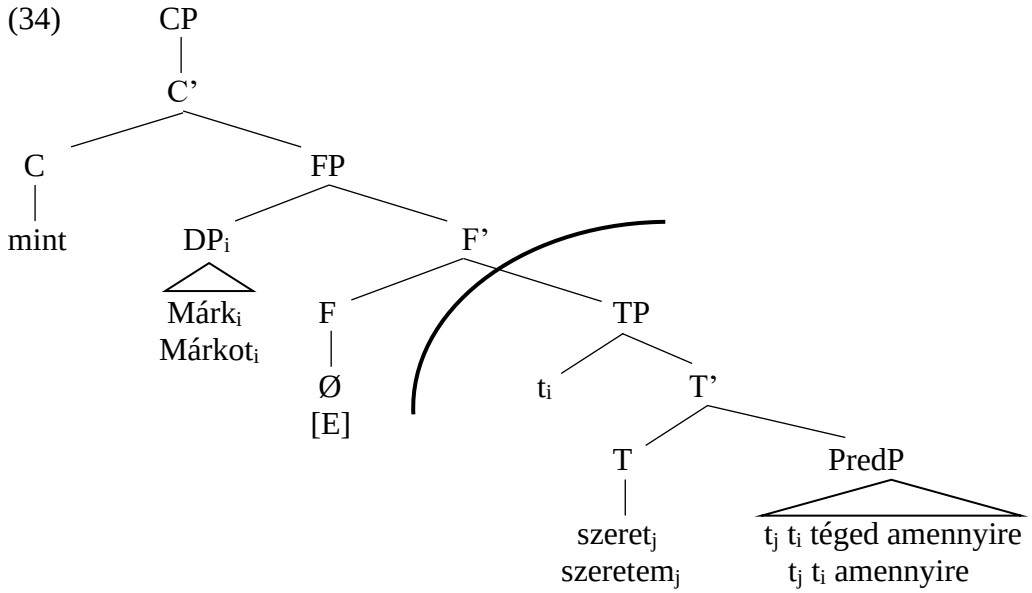
In other words, regular ellipsis does not affect the relative operator in [Spec,CP], and there is generally no deletion affecting Hungarian relative operators in [Spec,CP] either (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014a: 98–129). Hence,

(33) a. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***Márk*** ~~*szeret téged amennyire*~~.
better love.1SG than Mark.NOM loves you.ACC how.much
'I love you more than Mark loves you.'

b. *Jobban szeretlek, mint* ***Márk-ot*** ~~*szeretem amennyire*~~.
better love.1SG than Mark-ACC love.1SG how.much
'I love you more than I love Mark.'

The relevant structure is shown in (34) below:

(34)



In both cases, the remnant moves to the same position, hence there is no structural difference in the final position of the subject and the object: the only way to distinguish between the two is morphological case. The [E] feature is located on the F head itself: the complement of the F head is the ellipsis domain. Note that while the verb normally moves up in non-elliptical clauses, there is no movement in elliptical clauses when the [E] feature is inserted into F (the same can be observed in interrogatives, see Bacskai-Atkari 2015a).

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as Bacskai-Atkari & Kántor (2012) and Bacskai-Atkari (2014a) argue, the absence of the relative operator is not due to deletion in [Spec,CP] but to the lack of movement to [Spec,CP]. This configuration (see the representation in (33) above) is not licensed as there is no relative pronoun in situ (Bacskai-Atkari 2014a: 122), but ellipsis may save the construction, which naturally affects the verb as well. As proposed recently by Bacskai-Atkari (2015c), the reason for the lack or relative operator movement is that the C head with the [rel] feature is absent. The discussion of this question, however, falls outside the scope of the present paper.

There is evidence for the ellipsis triggered by [E] on F affecting the TP including the non-contrastive verb. Consider the examples in (35):

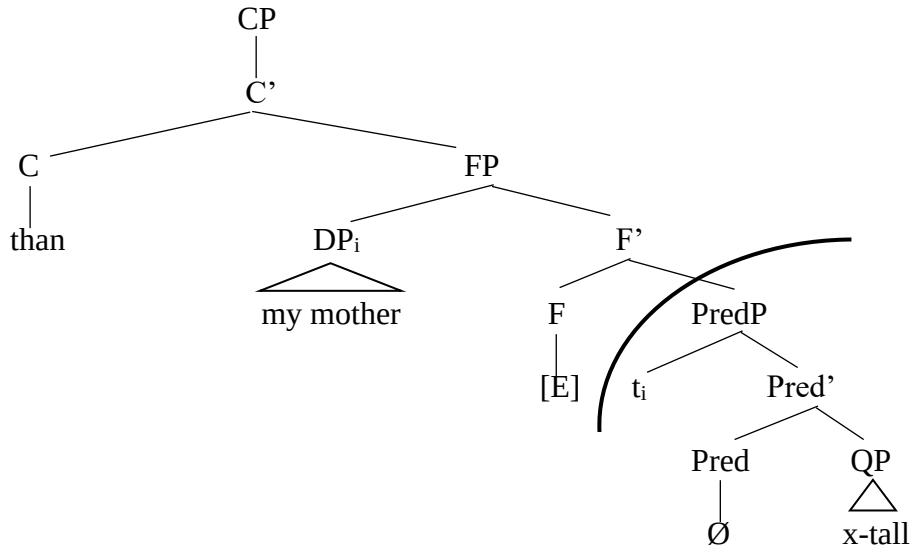
(35) a. **Mari magasabb **volt**, mint Márk **volt**.*
Mary taller was.3SG than Mark was.3SG
'Mary was taller than Mark was.'

b. *Mari magasabb, mint Márk **volt**.*
Mary taller than Mark was.3SG
'Mary is taller than Mark was.'

As observed by Bacskai-Atkari (2014a: 244–253), if the copula were in F, (35a) should be grammatical, since the F head is located right above the ellipsis domain and there would be no way to elide it. However, it is observed that a non-contrastive copula is regularly elided in the absence of an overt degree operator, hence the tensed copula must be part of the ellipsis domain, and therefore located lower than the F head. If the copula is contrastive, however, such as in (35b), where past tense is new information, the copula has to remain overt.[19]
The ellipsis process is similar in Germanic; adopting the idea of Merchant (2001) for the derivation of fragments, the remnant in Germanic moves likewise to a [Spec,FP] position, which is above the TP, and nominative and accusative are assigned regularly.
Let us turn to Type II ambiguities. In Germanic, as shown before, the lexical reading arises with nominative remnants. This is possible if regular ellipsis takes place with the subject remnant moving to [Spec,FP] after checking nominative case with the finite inflection in T. In predicative readings, however, only a predicative relation involving an adjectival predicate is reconstructed: this is not tensed, and there is no TP either, only a small clause, which I assume to be a PredP here (cf. Matushansky 2012, following Bowers 1993). The structure for the *than*-XP in (18) with a predicative reading (*than my mother Ø x-tall*, "Ø" referring to an abstract silent predicator head) is shown in (36) below:

[19] In this case, one possibility is that the copula moves up to F to adjoin the zero head; this extra movement is a last resort option ruled out otherwise. The other possibility, worked out in detail by Bacskai-Atkari (2014a) and Bacskai-Atkari & Kántor (2011), is that the copula remains in T and [E] is located lower; this option is not allowed otherwise because it would violate the principle that the maximal largest unit should be elided (see Merchant 2008). Under either analysis, the point is that the copula is normally located in T and if there is no contrastive copula, the entire TP is elided.

(36)



The subject is located in [Spec,PredP], where no case assignment takes place: moving up the a [Spec,FP] position is responsible for eliding the gradable predicate ("Comparative Deletion"), which is never pronounced in small clauses, but case assignment follows neither from F nor from C. In other words, the accusative is assigned by the matrix verb, provided that the reduced comparative CP is string-adjacent to the matrix clausal object (and hence forms a constituent with it, see the discussion in section 3 concerning German). Case assignment is illustrated in (37) below:

(37) [$_{VP}$ **saw** [$_{\mathbf{DP}}$ [$_{DP}$ a taller woman] [$_{CP}$ than my mother]]]
ACC

As can be seen, the matrix transitive verb assigns accusative case to its complement DP, which contains the matrix object and the adjoined CP, within which the DP remnant is located. Note that the lack of case on a subject DP in Germanic is contingent upon the absence of TP and upon the generation of PredP instead.[20]

[20] Note that the mechanisms described here refer to accusative case assignment in Type II constructions, that is, to cases where accusative case can be assigned by the verb from the matrix clause. As discussed in section 2, the accusative case in English can also be the result of default case, as in the counterpart of the German sentences in (22) shown below:

(i) *Ralph is taller than* ***he/him***.

In this case, the accusative is licensed (in fact, preferable), though there is no accusative case assigner. This is an instance of default case: the DP cannot get case via normal syntactic mechanisms, and the unmarked case appears, which happens to be the accusative in English (Schütze 2001).

Given the model in (34) for Hungarian, it should be obvious that the PredP is an integer part of tensed clauses in Hungarian as well. This is in line with the empirical data which show that Hungarian subject DPs cannot be assigned accusative case by the matrix verb. Further, there seems to be general consensus that in Hungarian, "the checking of nominative case does not involve subject movement" into a [Spec,TP] position: hence, [Spec,TP] "is available as a landing site" for any filler of the [Spec,PredP], including non-subjects (É. Kiss 2008a: 456). That is to say, the subjecthood of the DP is not contingent upon the presence of the TP. I assume that the surface nominative on the remnant in Type II predicative clauses is an instance of unmarked case (see Kornfilt & Preminger 2015 for arguments against nominative being necessarily assigned cross-linguistically; cf. also McFadden & Sundaresan 2011), as the nominative in Hungarian regularly appears on DPs that do not check their case features (see Matushansky 2012 on predicative nominals). The question is rather why the matrix verb cannot assign accusative case to the remnant DP in the Germanic way, see the ungrammatical examples in (24). I claim that this is so because in Hungarian the CP introduced by *mint* 'than' is only string-adjacent to the matrix DP but does not form a constituent with it. In examples like (23), adjacency arises because the matrix DP follows the verb; however, if the DP is preposed in the way shown in (26) for phrasal comparatives, the *mint*-CP cannot be adjacent to the DP any more. Consider the examples in (38) below:

(38) a. *Egy* *magasabb* *nő-t* *láttam,* *mint* ***az*** ***anyám***.
a taller woman-ACC saw.1SG than the mother.POSS.1SG.NOM
'I saw a taller woman than my mother.'

b. **Egy* *magasabb* *nő-t* *mint* ***az*** ***anyám*** *láttam.*
a taller woman-ACC than the mother.POSS.1SG.NOM saw.1SG
'I saw a taller woman than my mother.'

Hence, the *mint*-CP is extraposed to the right of the clause in Hungarian and is adjoined at a clausal level, while in German, as we saw in section 3, it can also be adjoined to the right of the matrix DP and hence the matrix verb can assign case to the remnant as well, since it is part of the object DP argument.

Consider now the examples in (39), showing the full structures of Type II elliptical clausal comparatives in Hungarian:[21]

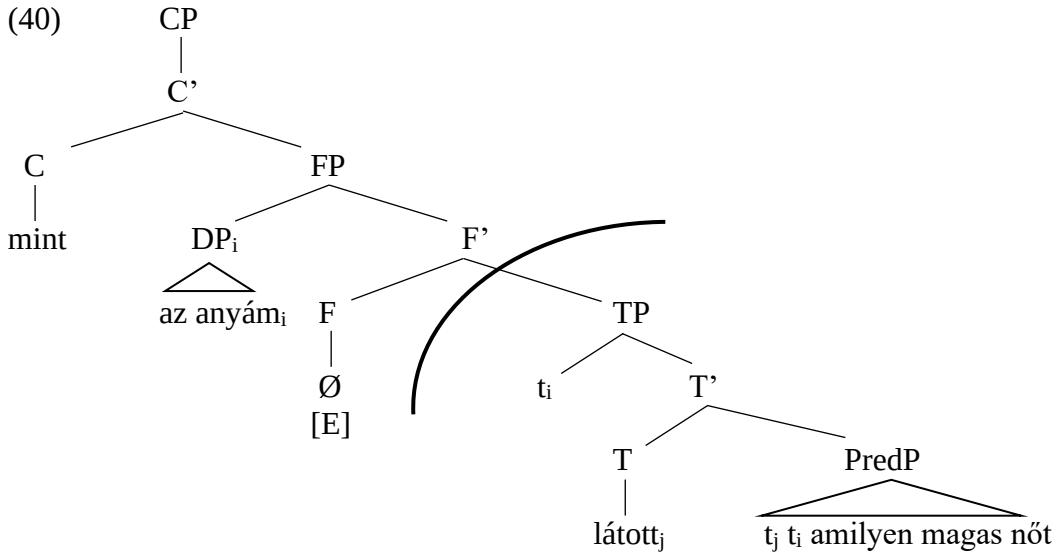
[21] Again, (39) represents the maximally elliptical structure, and is not equivalent to the full non-elliptical, grammatical structure, where the relative operator would move up; see the discussion concerning (33) above.

(39) a. *Láttam* *egy* *magasabb* *nő-t,* *mint* ***az*** ***anyám***
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than the mother.POSS.1SG.NOM
~~*látott* *amilyen* *magas* *nőt*~~.
saw.3SG how tall woman.ACC
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'

b. *Láttam* *egy* *magasabb* *nő-t,* *mint* ***az*** ***anyám***
saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than the mother.POSS.1SG.NOM
~~*amilyen* *magas*~~.
how tall
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

The structural representation of the subclause in (39a) is given in (40):

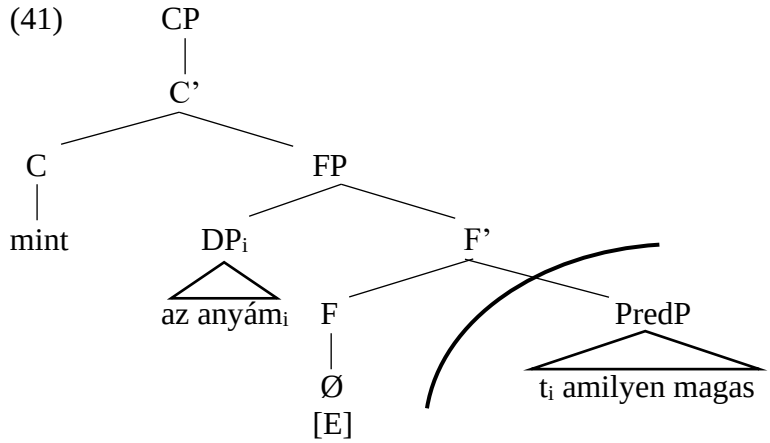
(40)



As the lexical predicate itself is a tensed verb, the complement of the F head is a TP; the subject (*az anyám* 'my mother') moves to the [Spec,FP] position and escapes ellipsis. Just as in (34), the verb does not move up to the F head containing the [E] feature.

The structure of the subclause in (39b) is shown in (41):

(41)



In this case, the predicate is an adjective, and there is no tensed verb; the complement of the F head is the PredP. The subject DP moves to the [Spec,FP] position, and is hence not elided.

The structures in (40) and (41) differ only in the complement of the F head, but not in the complement of the C head, which is FP in both. Further, the difference between TP and PredP do not constitute a difference in terms of case assignment in Hungarian, unlike in Germanic, since the nominative case of the subject does not have to be checked off in [Spec,TP]. Given this, the two structures result in the same phonological output, which leads to ambiguity.

By contrast, phrasal comparatives are PPs, hence tenseless; as was indicated in section 4, while there is no difference in the acceptability of either reading in subject/object ambiguities, there is indeed a clear choice of a tenseless reading over a tensed one in Type II constructions. This is because the PP represents a minimal structure involving an unpronounced degree element carrying *d'* and the subject DP, which matches the adjectival (tenseless) predication relationship, where the gradable adjective (associated with *d*) has a DP subject. The DP subject of the verb is not available as an antecedent in this case, since it is not an argument of the predicate associated with the degree element; hence, there is no ambiguity in true phrasal comparatives in Type II.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined structural ambiguities in clausal and phrasal comparatives in Hungarian and in selected Germanic languages. I showed that the availability of subject/object readings is in line with general case-assignment properties, while

lexical/predicative readings are also dependent on a tensed/tenseless distinction. The findings are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Ambiguity and case properties in Germanic and Hungarian

		Germanic (English, German, Icelandic)	**Hungarian**	
		CP	CP	PP
subject/object ambiguities (Type I)		ambiguous & unambiguous patterns	only unambiguous patterns	only ambiguous patterns
	subject reading	remnant DP nominative OR accusative if default accusative case	remnant DP nominative	inherent lexical case
	object reading	remnant DP accusative	remnant DP accusative	inherent lexical case
lexical/predicative ambiguities (Type II)		ambiguous & unambiguous patterns	only ambiguous patterns	only unambiguous patterns
	lexical reading	remnant DP nominative	remnant DP nominative	inherent lexical case
	predicative reading	remnant DP accusative	remnant DP nominative	inherent lexical case

As can be seen, while Germanic languages show both ambiguity and disambiguation patterns in both types of comparatives examined here, Hungarian shows a very clear distribution of these patterns along the lines of whether the comparative complement is a CP or a PP. In Germanic, nominative is associated with the subject in Type I and with the subject of the lexical verb of a tensed clause in Type II, while accusative is associated with the object in Type I and with the subject of the predicative small clause in Type II. Hence, ambiguities arise if nominative and accusative are not morphologically distinguished (in addition, default accusative in English may have an influence). In Hungarian clausal comparatives, all subjects are nominative both in Type I and Type II, regardless of whether the clause contains a TP or not, and the accusative appears on objects. In phrasal comparatives, there is obviously no structural case distinction. Type I phrasal comparatives are ambiguous because the unpronounced degree in the PP matches one that modifies a lexical verb with two arguments (subject and object), while Type II phrasal comparatives are not ambiguous because the unpronounced degree in the PP matches one that is associated with an adjectival predicate with a single argument.

The factors determining ambiguities are hence the following: the type of the degree complement (CP or PP), general case-assignment properties of the language (case distinction versus case syncretism), and general rules of tensed versus small clause formation. The type of the degree complement determines whether there is an underlying lexical predicate: there is none in PPs, there being merely an unpronounced degree element, hence the interpretation of the DP is dependent entirely on where the degree in anchored in the clause. In the case of CPs, however, a verbal or adjectival predicate can be reconstructed. Regarding tense, in Germanic the CP may select either a TP or a PredP (the latter being a tenseless small clause), while in Hungarian the PredP is present in tensed clauses as well (below the TP). Finally, the absence of TP has different consequences: in Germanic, nominative is not licensed, thus external case assignment (accusative from the matrix verb) is possible, while in Hungarian nominative is not contingent upon the presence of TP, hence the nominative is licensed on subjects even in clauses lacking a TP. The differences between the Germanic and the Hungarian pattern can thus be put down to general properties of the respective languages, and there is no need to assume these differences to stem from construction-specific phenomena.

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