

Information Structure and Clausal Comparatives in Czech and Polish

0. Introduction

Comparative Deletion: attested in English (cf. Bresnan 1973)

descriptively: deletion of a non-contrastive AP or NP from the comparative subclause

- predicative structures:

- (1) a. Mary is taller than Charles is **tall**.
b. *Mary is taller than Charles is **tall**.
c. The desk is longer than the office is **wide**.

- Czech:

- (2) a. *Marie je vyšší, než je **vysoký** Karel.
Mary is taller than is tall Charles
'Mary is taller than Charles.'
b. *Ten stůl je delší, než je ta kancelář **široká**.
that desk is longer than is that office wide
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

- Polish:

- (3) a. *Maria jest wyższa niż Karol jest **wysoki**.
Mary is taller than Charles is tall
'Mary is taller than Charles.'
b. */?? Stół jest dłuższy niż biuro jest **szerokie**.
desk is longer than office is wide
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

→ question: why Czech and Polish lack predicative subcomparatives in the English way

→ proposal: constructions in (2) and (3) ruled out for slightly different reasons

- Comparative Deletion linked to an overttness requirement on the operator
- realisation of the lower copy licensed if *wh*-in-situ is also allowed

1. Comparative Deletion

comparative subclause: operator movement of the quantified expression

cf. Chomsky (1977), Kennedy and Merchant (2000)

→ two copies: higher copy in a [Spec,CP] position, lower copy in the base position

operator: zero (*x*) in Standard English

- (4) a. Mary is taller than [**x-tall**] Charles is [**x-tall**].
b. The desk is longer than [**x-wide**] the office is [**x-wide**].

overtness requirement: a lexical AP (or NP) is licensed in an operator position such as [Spec,CP] if the operator itself is overt

→ higher copies of the QPs in (4) deleted

lower copy of the movement chain: realised only if contrastive (Bacskai-Atkari 2012, 2013b)

possible if the higher copy cannot be pronounced (cf. Bošković and Nunes 2007)

otherwise regularly deleted (Bobaljik 2002; Chomsky 2005; Bošković and Nunes 2007)

→ final string:

- (5) a. Mary is taller than [~~x-tall~~] Charles is [~~x-tall~~].
 b. The desk is longer than [~~x-wide~~] the office is [~~x-wide~~].

- movement of the entire QP (including the AP): operator cannot be extracted

similarly: *how* in interrogatives

- (6) a. **How tall** is Mary?
 b. ***How** is Mary **tall**?

- higher copy of the QP licensed with an overt operator

how in certain dialects of English

- (7) a. % Mary is taller than [**how tall**] Charles is [~~how tall~~].
 b. % The desk is longer than [**how wide**] the office is [~~how wide~~].

role of information structure: only contrastive lower copies remain

deletion itself is not tied to information structural properties

2. *Predicative comparatives in Czech*

AP in the base position + zero operator ruled out:

- (8) a. *Marie je vyšší, než je vysoký Karel.
 Mary is taller than is tall Charles
 ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’
 b. *Ten stůl je delší, než je ta kancelář široká.
 that desk is longer than is that office wide
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

- interrogatives: overt operator *jak* ‘how’ available – extractable

- (9) a. **Jak vysoký** jest Karel?
 how tall is Charles
 ‘How tall is Charles?’
 b. **Jak** jest Karel **vysoký**?
 how is Charles tall
 ‘How tall is Charles?’

↔ *how* in English

different positions within the functionally extended AP (Bacskai-Atkari 2013a, 2013b)

how: in a head position → cannot be extracted

jak: modifier → can be extracted as a phrase to a phrasal position

- *jak* also available in comparatives – extractable

jak + non-contrastive AP:

- (10) a. ?? Marie je vyšší, než **jak** vysoký je Karel.
 Marie is taller than how tall is Karel
 ‘Marie is taller than Karel.’
- b. ? Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je vysoký Karel.
 Marie is taller than how is tall Karel
 ‘Marie is taller than Karel.’
- c. #Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je Karel vysoký.
 Marie is taller than how is Karel tall
 ‘Marie is taller than Karel.’

jak + contrastive AP:

- (11) a. ?? Ten stůl je delší, než **jak** široká je ta kancelář.
 that desk is longer than how wide is that office
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’
- b. #Ten stůl je delší, než **jak** je široká ta kancelář.
 that desk is longer than wide is wide that office
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’
- c. Ten stůl je delší, než **jak** je ta kancelář široká.
 that desk is longer than wide is that office wide
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

(10c) and (11b) infelicitous

- clause-final position: sentential stress position (Šimík and Wierzbica 2012)
- main contrast expressed by *Karel* in (10) ↔ in (11): by the AP *široká* ‘wide’

AP may move together with the operator to [Spec,CP] but this is not the preferred position

not sensitive to information structural properties

role of information structure: determines the preferred position of the AP

condition: the operator is separable

- ungrammaticality of (8)

zero operator → higher copy has to be deleted (overtness requirement)

but: lower copy cannot remain even if it is contrastive ↔ English

possible reason: no zero operator in Czech? (~Hungarian, cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2013a, 2013b)

3. Predicative comparatives in Polish

AP in the base position + zero operator unacceptable for most speakers:

- (12) a. *Maria jest wyższa niż Karol jest **wysoki**.
 Mary is taller than Charles is tall
 ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’
- b. */?? Stół jest dłuższy niż biuro jest **szerokie**.
 desk is longer than office is wide
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

• interrogatives: overt operator *jak* ‘how’ available – not extractable

- (13) a. **Jak wysoki** jest Karol?
 how tall is Charles
 ‘How tall is Charles?’
- b. */?? **Jak** jest Karol **wysoki**?
 how is Charles tall
 ‘How tall is Charles?’

• but: *jak* not available in comparatives (with any word order, separate/non-separate)

- (14) a. *Maria jest wyższa niż **jak wysoki** jest Karol.
 Mary is taller than how tall is Charles
 ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’
- b. *Stół jest dłuższy niż **jak szerokie** jest biuro.
 desk is longer than how wide is office
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

• ungrammaticality of (12)

zero operator → higher copy has to be deleted (overtness requirement)

but: lower copy cannot remain even if it is contrastive ↔ English

possible reason: no zero operator in Polish at all? (~Czech?)

but: there is no overt operator either

→ different reason – operator must be zero

if there is an extractable zero operator, then both sentences in (12) should be fine

~ zero in German, Dutch (cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2013a, 2013b)

→ the zero operator is not extractable (~English)

→ question: why a contrastive lower copy cannot be realised in Polish (and Czech?)

4. Attributive comparatives

attributive comparatives in English:

- (15) a. Mary bought a bigger dog than Peter did.
 b. Mary bought a bigger dog than Peter did a cat.

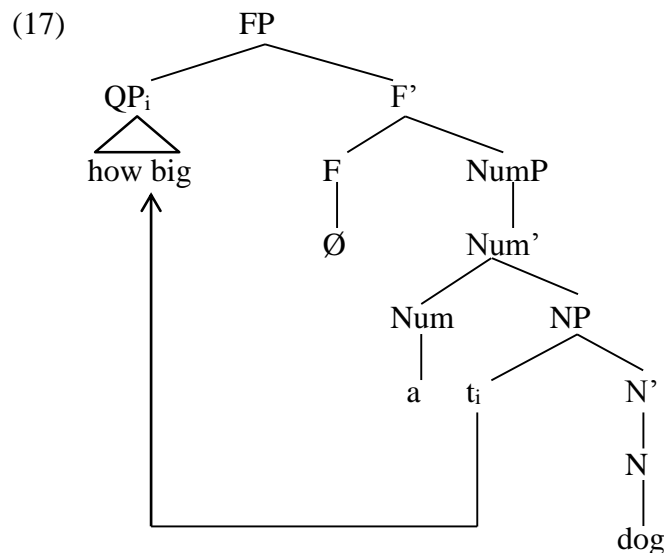
syntax of attributive modification in English (cf. Kennedy and Merchant 2000)

- QP modifier cannot be extracted from within the nominal expression
- QP modifier moves to a left peripheral position within the nominal expression

interrogatives:

- (16) **How big a dog** did Mary buy?

structure (Bacskai-Atkari 2013a, based on Kennedy and Merchant 2000):



same inversion in comparatives like (15):

- (18) Mary bought a bigger dog than [x-big a cat] Peter did buy [x-big a cat].

entire nominal expression (FP) moves up ← QP cannot be extracted

DP-island constraint (Kayne 1983; Ross 1986; Grebenyova 2004; Bošković 2005)

higher copy of the FP deleted (← overttness requirement):

- (19) Mary bought a bigger dog than [~~x-big a cat~~] Peter did buy [x-big a cat].

QP not licensed in the [Spec,FP] position in the lower copy (cf. Kennedy and Merchant 2000)

reason: overttness requirement – operator position (Bacskai-Atkari 2013a)

QP cannot be eliminated on its own (no separate mechanism)

→ VP-ellipsis applies (Kennedy and Merchant 2000; see also Bacskai-Atkari 2013a)

- (20) Mary bought a bigger dog than [~~x-big a cat~~] Peter did buy [~~x-big a cat~~].

lexical verb cannot be overt:

(21) *Mary bought a bigger dog than Peter bought a cat.

condition for the grammaticality of structures like (21): QP can move out on its own

→ can be used as a test for the extractability of the QP (even if the QP is not visible)

5. *Attributive comparatives in Czech and Polish*

QP extractable from the nominal expression – visible in interrogatives

- Czech (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 104, ex. 30):

(22) a. **Jak velké auto** Václav koupil?
 how big car Václav bought
 ‘How big a car did Václav buy?’

b. **Jak velké** Václav koupil **auto**?
 how big Václav bought car
 ‘How big a car did Václav buy?’

- Polish (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 104, ex. 29):

(23) a. **Jak długą sztukę** napisał Paweł?
 how long play wrote Paweł
 ‘How long a play did Paweł write?’

b. **Jak długą** napisał Paweł **sztukę**?
 how long wrote Paweł play
 ‘How long a play did Paweł write?’

in comparatives: lexical verb + remnant NP licensed

- Czech (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 105, ex. 32b):

(24) Václav koupil větší auto než Tomáš ztratil loď.
 Václav bought bigger car than Tomáš lost boat.
 ‘Václav bought a bigger car than the boat that Tomáš lost.’

- Polish (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 104, ex. 31a):

(25) Jan napisał dłuższy list, niż Paweł napisał sztukę.
 Jan wrote longer letter than Paweł wrote play
 ‘Jan wrote a longer letter than Paweł did a play.’

higher copy of the QP: deleted in [Spec,CP] – overttness requirement

remnant NP not affected – not a lower copy itself

→ there is a zero comparative operator both in Czech and in Polish

6. Predicative comparatives revisited

zero operator taking APs → unacceptability of lower copies of APs (~English):

(26) a. *Marie je vyšší, než je **vysoký** Karel.
 Mary is taller than is tall Charles
 ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’

b. *Maria jest wyższa niż Karol jest **wysoki**.
 Mary is taller than Charles is tall
 ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’

but: contrastiveness does not license the realisation of lower copies either (↔ English):

(27) a. *Ten stůl je delší, než je ta kancelář **široká**.
 that desk is longer than is that office wide
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

b. */?? Stół jest dłuższy niż biuro jest **szerokie**.
 desk is longer than office is wide
 ‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

→ difference in the overt realisation of copies of a movement chain

difference in *wh*-questions: English licenses *wh*-in-situ – multiple *wh*-questions

(28) **Who** saw **what**?

↔ Czech, Polish: multiple *wh*-fronting

• Czech (Rudin 1988: 498, ex. 105):

(29) a. **Kdo** **koho** viděl?
 who whom saw
 ‘Who saw whom?’

b. ***Kdo** viděl **koho**?
 who saw whom
 ‘Who saw whom?’

• Polish (Rudin 1988: 497, ex. 104):

(30) a. **Kto** **kiedy** wyjechał?
 who when left
 ‘Who left when?’

b. ***Kto** wyjechał **kiedy**?
 who left when
 ‘Who left when?’

→ proposal: (27) unacceptable because the realisation of lower copies is generally prohibited in the given languages (↔ English)

Conclusion

comparative clause formation differs from the Standard English pattern in Czech and Polish

- overtness requirement: higher copy of the moved quantified expression overt only if the operator is overt – available in Czech but not in Polish
- extractability of the overt operator *jak* ‘how’ in Czech → AP may occupy a preferred position according to its information structural status
- zero operators – QP deleted in [Spec,CP] – a lexical NP may be left behind (attributives)
- overt realisation of lower copies not enforced by contrastiveness (↔ English)

more general property of movement chains in the respective languages

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