

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 overtness 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 (Bacskaï-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?’

\leftrightarrow how in English

different positions within the functionally extended AP (Bacskaï-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 Wierzba 2012)
- main contrast expressed by *Karel* in (10) \leftrightarrow 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 \leftrightarrow English

possible reason: no zero operator in Czech? (~Hungarian, cf. Bacskaï-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. Bacskaia-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.

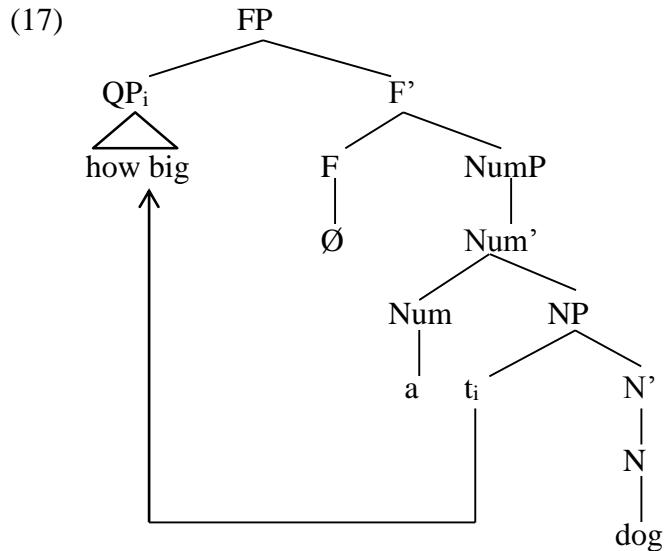
syntax of attributive modification in English (cf. Kennedy and Merchant 2000)

- 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 (Bacskaia-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 (← overtness 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: overtness requirement – operator position (Bacskaia-Atkari 2013a)

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

→ VP-ellipsis applies (Kennedy and Merchant 2000; see also Bacskaia-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] – overtness 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 (\leftrightarrow 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?

\leftrightarrow 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 (\leftrightarrow 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 (\leftrightarrow English)
- more general property of movement chains in the respective languages

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