

REDUCING ATTRIBUTIVE COMPARATIVE DELETION

0. The problem

Various kinds of deletion structures in comparatives – different phenomena?

Comparative Deletion:

- (1) Mary is taller than Peter is ~~tall~~. (*predicative*)
 (2) Mary saw bigger cats than Peter saw ~~big cats~~. (*attributive*)

Comparative Subdeletion:

- (3) The dog is bigger than the doghouse is wide. (*predicative*)
 (4) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~see big~~ doghouses. (*attributive*)

Constraints:

- (5) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter bought (wide) doghouses.

Proposal: all of these are reducible to the single process Comparative Deletion – differences due to more general settings

1. Constraints on deletion

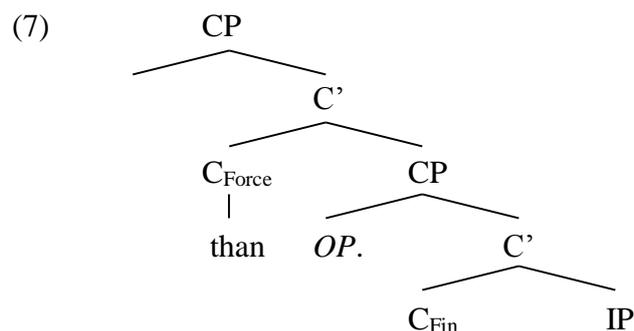
GIVENNESS: elements are either GIVEN or F-marked (Merchant 2001, Selkirk 2005)

- (6) Louise was reading a novel and Peter ~~was reading~~ / *~~writing~~ an epic.

Recoverability: a constituent α can be deleted iff α is e-GIVEN (Merchant 2001: 38) \rightarrow α has to have a salient antecedent in the discourse (recoverability)

2. Comparative Deletion

Comparative Deletion (CD) deletes the QP DP the subclause if it is logically identical to its antecedent in the matrix clause (Bacskai-Atkari 2010)



Predicatives: AP contained within a QP headed by a zero operator $x \rightarrow$ operator movement: the QP moves up to the lower [Spec; CP], where CD deletes it (Bacskai-Atkari 2010)

- the AP has to move together with the Q head:

(8a) *Mary is taller than *Op.* Peter is tall.

(8b) *How is Mary tall?

↕

(8c) How tall is Mary?

- copy theory of movement: the lower copy of the QP is deleted regularly by PF (see Bošković and Nunes 2007: 44–48; Chomsky 2005; Bobaljik 2002); the QP is e-GIVEN

(9) Mary is taller [_{CP} than [_{CP} ~~{QP x-tall}~~ Peter is ~~{QP x-tall}~~]].

Attributives: QP adjunct within a DP (Kántor 2008; Kennedy and Merchant 2000) → operator movement: the entire DP containing the QP moves up to the lower [Spec; CP], where CD deletes it (Bacskai-Atkari 2010)

- the QP cannot be extracted from the DP (← DP-islands; see Kántor 2008: 148–149; Izvorski 1995: 217; Bošković 2005; Grebenyova 2004; Kayne 1983; Ross 1986):

(10a) *Mary saw bigger cats than *Op*. Peter saw cats.

(10b) *How big did Mary see cats?

↓

(10c) How big cats did Mary see?

- again, the lower copy of the DP is deleted regularly by PF; the DP is again e-GIVEN:

(11) Mary saw bigger cats [_{CP} than [_{CP} ~~{DP x-big cats}~~ Peter saw ~~{DP x-big cats}~~]].

- the deletion of the entire DP in attributive comparatives is a result of other constraints
- deletion is permitted under logical identity with the quantified element in the matrix clause

3. Comparative Subdeletion

Subcomparatives: the relative quantities of different properties or entities are compared (Kennedy 2000):

(12a) The dog is bigger than the doghouse is wide.

(12b) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~see big~~ doghouses.

the QP and the DP remain → are the sentences in (12) exceptions?

but recall the definition of CD: deletion takes place in the lower [Spec; CP] position and is licensed under identity with the quantified element in the matrix clause

→ the QPs *big* and *wide* in (12a) and the DPs *dogs* and *doghouses* in (12b) are not logically identical

→ the QP *wide* and the DP *doghouses* are not in the lower [Spec; CP] position of the comparative subclause

CD takes place in the lower [Spec; CP] regularly – Bacskai-Atkari (2010)

lower copy: cannot be deleted because it is F-marked

Bošković and Nunes (2007: 48): lower copies may be phonologically realised if the pronunciation of the highest copy causes the derivation to crash at PF

Derivation:

(13) The dog is bigger [_{CP} than [_{CP} ~~{QP x-wide}~~_F the doghouse is [QP x-wide]_F]].

→ subcomparatives are not exceptional in terms of CD → it is enough to have CD in the grammar, no need for a separate subcomparative deletion process (the operator is phonologically null anyway)

4. Attributive Comparative Deletion

Not the entire lower copy remains (↔predicative comparatives):

(14a) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~buy big~~ doghouses.

(14b) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~buy~~ big doghouses.

possible reason: the QP (*x-big*) is e-GIVEN, so it should be subject to deletion ↔ the NP *dogs* is F-marked

But rather a positional problem:

(15a) % The dog is bigger than the doghouse is big.

(15b) The dog is bigger than the doghouse is WIDE.

(15c) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did big DOGHOUSES.

(15d) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did WIDE DOGHOUSES.

- in (15a), *big* has to be unstressed – it violates the constraint that the lower copy should be deleted
- however, (15c) and (15d) are not unacceptable

→ (15d) is underivable in English: either illicit configuration or deletion of an F-marked constituent:

(16) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~buy~~ [_{DP} [_{QP} wide]_F doghouses]].

→ is Attributive CD a special process? – QP only part of a lower copy, not the lower copy itself

Attributive CD involves deletion of the lexical verb:

(17a) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter bought ~~x big dogs~~.

(17b) *Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter bought ~~x big~~ doghouses.

(17c) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter ~~bought x big~~ doghouses.

(17d) Mary bought bigger dogs than Peter did ~~buy x big~~ doghouses.

→ is Attributive CD carried out by some verb deletion process?

But deletion seems to target discontinuous constituents:

(18a) *Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter did ~~see a x big~~ dog.

(18b) Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter did ~~see a x big~~ dog.

5. The syntax of attributive modification

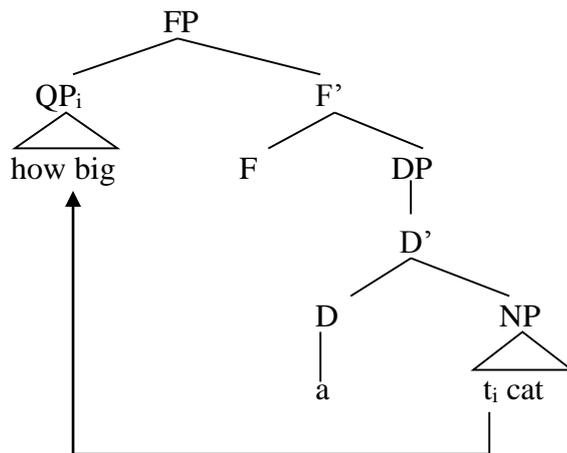
In the case of attributive modification involving an operator, the QP moves up to the specifier of a functional projection (FP), a functional extension of the DP (cf. Kennedy and Merchant 2000)

(19a) *[A how big] cat did you see?



(19b) [How big a cat] did you see?

(20)



Similarly (cf. Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 124):

(21a) Mary saw [too big a cat].

(21b) Peter didn't see [as big a cat] as Mary did.

(21c) Mary saw [so big a cat] that she couldn't believe it.

The F head can sometimes be filled (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 125–126):

(22) [How big of a cat] did Mary see?

Structural ambiguities (Kennedy and Merchant 2000: 127–130):

(23) Mary saw a big cat but Peter did ~~see~~ a dog.

'Mary saw a big cat but Peter ~~saw~~ a dog. / 'Mary saw a big cat but Peter ~~saw~~ big a dog.'

6. Conclusions

The QP modifier of the DP in the subclause moves up in attributive comparatives

→ string in (18) explained:

(24) Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter did see ~~[FP [QP ~~big~~] a ___i dog].~~

Kennedy and Merchant (2000): the QP moving to [Spec; FP] equips the F head with a [+wh] feature, which is PF-uninterpretable on the F head (↔ D heads like *which*): this can be checked off only if the entire FP moves to [Spec; CP]

higher copy: remains in (19) but elided by CD in comparatives like (24)

lower copy: can be deleted in (19) but not in (24) as the DP within it is F-marked; but the F head bears the PF-uninterpretable [+rel] feature on it and should be deleted (cf. Bošković and Nunes 2007)

→ how is it possible that the lexical verb has to be deleted alongside with the QP but the DP can remain?

The process of deletion:

Reich (2007: 472–472): when deletion applies at PF, it does not (and cannot) affect F-marked material

Verb Gapping:

(25a) Mary likes cats and Peter [_{VP} likes [_{DP} dogs]_F].

(25b) Mary likes cats and Peter ~~{_{VP} likes [_{DP} dogs]_F}~~.

(25c) *Mary likes cats and Peter ~~{_{VP} likes [_{DP} dogs]_F}~~ too.

→ Verb Gapping is an instance of VP-deletion; deletion targets the e-GIVEN VP, within which there is an F-marked DP – linear PF application stops

if no F-marked DP, there is nothing to prevent deletion of the DP:

(26a) Mary likes cats and Peter [_{VP} likes [_{DP} cats]].

(26b) *Mary likes cats and Peter ~~{_{VP} likes [_{DP} cats]}~~.

(26c) Mary likes cats and Peter ~~{_{VP} likes [_{DP} cats]}~~ too.

→ target of gapping not the V head but the VP

VP-deletion takes place in the case of attributive comparatives: the F-marked constituent is the DP, not the FP

(27a) *Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter [_{VP} saw [_{FP} x-big [_{DP} a dog]_F]].

(27b) *Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter ~~{_{VP} saw [_{FP} x-big [_{DP} a dog]_F]}~~.

(27c) Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter ~~{_{VP} saw [_{FP} x-big [_{DP} a dog]_F]}~~.

(27d) *Mary saw a bigger cat than Peter ~~{_{VP} saw [_{FP} x-big [_{DP} a dog]_F]}~~.

VP-deletion: optional process that may save the construction from being ill-formed (cf. sluicing)

→ Attributive Comparative Deletion is reducible to Comparative Deletion and VP-deletion

References

- Bacskai-Atkari, Julia (2010) Parametric Variation and Comparative Deletion. *The Even Yearbook* 9. 1–21.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David (2002) A-chains at the PF-interface: Copies and ‘Covert’ Movement. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 20.2. 197–267.
- Bošković, Željko (2005) On the Locality of Left Branch Extraction and the Structure of NP. *Studia Linguistica* 59 (1). 1–45.
- Bošković, Željko and Jairo Nunes (2007) The Copy Theory of Movement: A View from PF. In: Norbert Corver and Jairo Nunes (eds.) *The Copy Theory of Movement*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 13–74.
- Chomsky, Noam (2005) On Phases. Ms. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Grebenyova, Lydia (2004) Sluicing and Left-Branch Extraction out of Islands. In Vineeta Chand et al. (eds.) *WCCFL 23: The Proceedings of the 23rd West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*. Somerville, Mass.: Cascadilla Press. 164–172.
- Izvorski, Roumyana (1995) A Solution to the Subcomparative Paradox. In Jose Camacho et al. (eds.), *WCCFL 14: The Proceedings of the 14th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, Stanford: CSLI Publications. 203–219.
- Kántor, Gergely (2008) Komparatív korrelatív szerkezetek a magyarban. *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 105. 134–163.
- Kayne, Richard (1983) Connectedness. *Linguistic Inquiry* 14. 223–250.
- Kennedy, Christopher (2000) Comparative (Sub)deletion and Ranked, Violable Constraints in Syntax. In *Proceedings of NELS 30*, Amherst, Massachusetts, GLSA.
- Kennedy, Christopher and Jason Merchant (2000) Attributive Comparative Deletion. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 18: 89–146.
- Merchant, Jason (2001) *The Syntax of Silence: Sluicing, Islands, and the Theory of Ellipsis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reich, Ingo (2007) Toward a Uniform Analysis of Short Answers and Gapping. In: Kerstin Schwabe and Susanne Winkler (eds.) *On Information Structure: Meaning and Form*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 467–484.
- Ross, John Robert (1986) *Infinite syntax*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing.
- Selkirk, Elisabeth (2005) Comments on the Intonational Phrasing in English. In: Sonia Frota et al. (eds.) *Prosodies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.