

Case-assignment in Elliptical Comparatives

0. Introduction

elliptical comparatives:

- (1) a. I am taller than **Mary**.
b. I am taller than Mary is.
c. I am taller than ~~{x-tall}~~ Mary is ~~{x-tall}~~.

degree expression (QP) in (1c) obligatorily eliminated in English, optional ellipsis targeting further elements – Bresnan (1973), Kennedy (2002), Bacskai-Atkari (2014a)

ambiguity: remnant DP associated with various functions (cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2014b)

Type I constructions:

- (2) 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.’

Type II constructions:

- (3) 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.’

Bresnan (1973), Lechner (2004) – clausal analysis

Hankamer (1973) – phrasal analysis

possible explanations for ambiguity:

- case-syncretic remnants do not overtly show underlying structural differences
- phrasal comparatives lack underlying structural differences

proposal: reduced clausal comparatives are NOT phrasal comparatives

- case distinction matters even in English
- similar patterns in German (phrasal analysis untenable)
- analysis supported by a cross-Germanic study
- languages with true phrasal comparatives behave differently from English

1. Case distinction in subject/object ambiguities

English and German

Type I ambiguities:

- (4) 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.'

- German: ambiguity depends on overt case distinction vs. case syncretism

- (5) a. Ich liebe dich mehr als **mein** **Bruder**.

I 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 love-1SG you.ACC more than my.M-ACC brother

'I love you more than I love my brother.'

- c. Ich liebe dich mehr als **meine** **Schwester**.

I love-1SG you.ACC more than my.F.NOM/ACC sister

'I love you more than my sister.'

pronominal pattern:

- (6) a. Ich liebe dich mehr als **er**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than he.NOM
 'I love you more than he loves you.'
- b. Ich liebe dich mehr als **ihn**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than he.ACC
 'I love you more than I love him.'
- c. Ich liebe dich mehr als **sie**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than she.NOM/ACC
 'I love you more than she loves you/than I love her.'

→ interpretation of the remnant DP in German *als*-clauses in Type I constructions predictable from general properties of structural case assignment

• English: some case distinction in the pronominal pattern:

- (7) 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/than I love him.'

accusative case ambiguous – (7b)

compatible with the direct analysis (e.g. Hankamer 1973) – but not (7a)

follows from the accusative being the default case (cf. Schütze 2001)

2. Case distinction with two predicates

English and German

Type II ambiguities:

- (8) 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.'

- German: ambiguity with feminine DP remnants (case-syncretic forms)

- (9) a. 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.'
- b. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **sie** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than she.NOM/ACC seen
 'I saw a taller woman than she saw/than she is.'

but: masculine remnants show case distinction:

- (10) 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.'
- c. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **er** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.NOM seen
 'I saw a taller man than he saw.'
- d. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **ihn** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC seen
 'I saw a taller man than he is.'

underlyingly all remnants in (10) are subjects

German does not have default accusative case (cf. Schütze 2001)

no accusative on subjects in Type I constructions either

→ appearance of the accusative case in Type II constructions tied to the particular properties of Type II constructions

- English: case distinction in pronominal pattern

- (11) 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.'

→ accusative in English cannot be merely explained by default case

• English gender mismatch patterns:

- (12) a. I saw a taller woman than **my father**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my father saw.’
- b. ?I saw a taller woman than **he**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’
- c. ??I saw a taller woman than **him**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’

(12a) not ambiguous ↔ (8)

subclause ‘than my father is an x-tall woman’ infelicitous

availability of (12c) with lexical reading: overwriting default predicative interpretation

→ markedness

• German gender mismatch patterns:

- (13) a. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **mein Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than my-M.NOM father seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my father saw.’
- b. *Ich habe eine größere Frau als **meinen Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than my-M.ACC father seen
 #‘I saw a taller woman than my father is.’
- c. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **er** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than he.NOM seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’
- d. *Ich habe eine größere Frau als **ihn** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than he.ACC seen
 #‘I saw a taller woman than he is.’

accusative remnants unacceptable: predicative reading infelicitous, accusative case cannot be default case (no overwriting)

3. The proposed analysis for English and German

various factors: semantics, syntax, syntax–prosody interface (cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2014b)

- Type I constructions: degree element a verbal modifier

→ only one lexical predicate (*love*)

(14) a. LOVE (x,y)

b. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x,y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x,d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w,z) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w,d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$

elliptical comparatives:

- remnant DP in the subclause contrasted with one of the DPs in the matrix clause
- other DP in the matrix clause identical with an elided DP

(15) a. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x,y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x,d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w,y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w,d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$

b. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x,y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x,d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x,z) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x,d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$

- Type II constructions: degree element an attribute within a nominal expression

→ two predicates

lexical AP (*tall*) taken by the degree morpheme

lexical verb (*see*)

(16) a. SEE (x,y)

b. $\exists x [\text{WOMAN}(x) \ \& \ \exists d (\text{TALL}(x,d))]$

lexical readings: two seeing events – remnant DP in the subclause is the subject of one

predicative readings: only one seeing event – remnant DP is not available as the subject of *see*

(17) a. $\exists x \exists y \exists w \exists z [\text{SEE}(x,y) \ \& \ \text{WOMAN}(x) \ \& \ \exists d (\text{TALL}(x,d)) \ \& \ \text{SEE}(w,z) \ \& \ \text{WOMAN}(w) \ \& \ \exists d' (\text{TALL}(w,d')) \ \& \ (d > d')]$

b. $\exists x \exists y \exists w [\text{SEE}(x,y) \ \& \ \text{WOMAN}(x) \ \& \ \exists d (\text{TALL}(x,d)) \ \& \ \text{WOMAN}(w) \ \& \ \exists d' (\text{TALL}(w,d)) \ \& \ (d > d')]$

absence of lexical verb: result of ellipsis

(18) I love you more than **he** ~~loves you~~ [x-much].

→ tensed lexical verb available at PF → nominative case is licensed to appear

but: finite inflection is absent from the final string

verbal domain containing the lexical verb marked for ellipsis

ellipsis carried out by [E] feature – inserted already in the syntax, see Merchant (2001)

[E] feature instructs PF to elide the complement of the functional head

→ overt nominative case assigner absent → default accusative case may be inserted

(19) I love you more than **him** [E] ~~loves you~~ [x-much].

ambiguity ← underlying object would be assigned the accusative case anyway

process outlined in (19): not ruled out in Type II constructions either

→ unavailability of *her* as a remnant linked to the lexical reading not a derivational problem, but an interpretational one

surface accusative DP favours the reconstruction of a simpler predicative structure

available predicative reading (no gender mismatch) blocks the lexical reading

infelicitous predicative reading (gender mismatch) makes lexical reading possible

→ derivation must allow for it

question: why predicative reading always associated with accusative case, never nominative

nominative available for subjects otherwise – Type I, simple predicative comparatives:

(20) a. ?Mary is taller than **he**.

b. Mary is taller than **him**.

in (20): nominative case-assigner absent – default accusative case available

↔ Type II predicative readings only with the accusative:

(21) I saw a taller woman than **her**.

in (21): nominative case-assigner absent and presence of an accusative case-assigner

difference in ellipsis when there is a lexical verb and when there is a copula

copula not the predicate itself

copula not inserted – no true ellipsis required

than-clause phonologically defective if copula not realised overtly

phrased together with the matrix clause

main stress normally falling on right edge of the IntP in English and German

see e.g. Selkirk (1984, 1986), Nespor and Vogel (1986), Truckenbrodt (1999)

non-elliptical subclause would constitute an IntP

elliptical structures: right edge elided

phrasing remnant into preceding IntP: it appears on a right edge

remnant: focussed

remnant DP part of the matrix clause also in terms of morphological case assignment

(22) {I saw a taller woman than **her**} COP [an x-tall woman].

→ Type I and Type II constructions in English compatible with clausal analysis

German: unproblematic cases

subject remnants of lexical predicates show the nominative case (~ English)

object remnants in Type I constructions naturally assigned accusative case

seemingly problematic construction: accusative in Type II

- (23) a. 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.’
- b. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **ihn** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

no accusative case-marking in simple predicative comparatives:

- (24) a. Maria ist größer als **er**.
 Mary is taller than he.NOM
 ‘Mary is taller than he is.’
- b. *Maria ist größer als **ihn**.
 Mary is taller than he.ACC
 ‘Mary is taller than he is.’

accusative in (23b):

- (25) {Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **ihn** [ein großer
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC a.M.NOM tall-M.NOM
 Mann] COP gesehen.}
 man COP seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

in (25): *als*-XP in a clause-internal position – one IntP with the matrix clause

accusative with the imperfect too (~ English):

- (26) a. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **mein Vater**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.NOM father
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father saw.’
- b. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **meinen Vater**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.ACC father
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father is.’
- c. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **er**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’
- d. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **ihn**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

accusative case in (26b):

- (27) {Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **ihn**} [ein großer
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC a.M.NOM tall-M.NOM
 Mann] COP.
 man COP
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

extraposition of *als*-clause from within the DP ~ *than*-clause in English

but: German VP head-final (see e.g. Haider 1993)

→ extraposed *als*-XP not necessarily after the verb, see (27)

als-clause can be extraposed to the right of the non-finite verb:

- (28) a. 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.’
- b. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **meinen Vater**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than my-M.ACC father
 #‘I saw a taller man than my father is.’
- c. Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **er**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than he.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’
- d. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **ihn**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than he.ACC
 #‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

analysis: *als*-XP spelt out separately (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014a: 65–68)

object has to be to the left of the non-finite verb

4. Reduced clausal comparatives in Germanic

case distinction vs. case syncretism varies across Germanic

case distinction mostly in pronoun system – variation, changes

- Icelandic: nominative and accusative case (cf. e.g. Hróarsdóttir 2001: 115–116)

case distinction and syncretism both in pronouns and full DPs (also proper names)

predicative comparatives:

- (29) Egill er hærri en þú.
 Egill is taller than you.NOM
 ‘Egill is taller than you.’

Type I constructions:

- (30) a. Ég elska þig meira en hann.
 I love.1SG you.ACC more than he.NOM/ACC
 ‘I love you more than he loves you/than I love him.’
- b. Ég elska þig meira en hún.
 I love.1SG you.ACC more than she.NOM
 ‘I love you more than she loves you.’
- c. Ég elska þig meira en hana.
 I love.1SG you.ACC more than she.ACC
 ‘I love you more than I love her.’

→ Type I predictable on the basis of case distinction vs. syncretism (~ German)

Type II constructions:

- (31) a. *Ég sá hærru konu en móðir mín.*
 I saw.1SG taller woman than mother.NOM my.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.’
- b. *Ég sá hærru konu en móður mína.*
 I saw.1SG taller woman than mother.ACC my.ACC
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother is.’

→ Type II constructions show the reanalysis effect (~ English, German)

- Dutch: nominative and accusative case

case distinction in pronoun system – also: variation

predicative comparatives:

- (32) a. *Ik ben langer dan hij.*
 I am taller than he.NOM
 ‘I am taller than him.’
- b. % *Ik ben langer dan hem.*
 I am taller than he.ACC
 ‘I am taller than him.’

Type I constructions:

- (33) a. *Ik vind jou leuker dan Mark.*
 I find.1SG you.ACC better than Mark.NOM/ACC
 ‘I like you more than Mark.’
- b. *Ik vind jou leuker dan hij.*
 I find.1SG you.ACC better than he.NOM
 ‘I like you more than he likes you.’
- c. *Ik vind jou leuker dan hem.*
 I find.1SG you.ACC better than he.ACC
 ‘I like you more than I like him/^{%/????} than he likes you.’

→ Type I mostly predictable on the basis of case distinction vs. syncretism (~ German) but also variation in the accusative (~ English?)

Type II constructions:

- (34) a. Ik zag een langere vrouw dan **mijn moeder**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than my mother.NOM/ACC
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother saw/? than my mother is.’
- b. Ik zag een langere vrouw dan **jij**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller woman than you saw/???? than you are.’
- c. %/??? Ik zag een langere vrouw dan **jou**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.ACC
 ‘I saw a taller woman than you are.’

lexical reading generally preferred in Type II (also in German) – varying degrees

distribution in (34) similar to German

accusative generally available for subjects but substandard – (32)

(34c) may be marked for speakers because of prescriptive pressure

compare extraposed *dan*-XPs:

- (35) a. Ik heb nog nooit een langere vrouw gezien dan **mijn moeder**.
 I have.1SG yet not a taller woman seen than my mother.NOM/ACC
 ‘I have never seen a taller woman than my mother saw/than my mother is.’
- b. Ik heb nog nooit een langere vrouw gezien dan **jij**.
 I have.1SG yet not a taller woman seen than you.NOM
 ‘I have never seen a taller woman than you saw.’
- c. *Ik heb nog nooit een langere vrouw gezien dan **jou**.
 I have.1SG yet not a taller woman seen than you.ACC
 ‘I have never seen a taller woman than you are.’

accusative in (35c) unavailable even for speakers who marginally accept (34c)

→ Type II in Dutch to some extent similar to English and German, but predicative readings generally less preferred + prescriptive pressure, variation

- Afrikaans: nominative and accusative case

case distinction in pronominal system

Type I predictable on the basis of case distinction vs. syncretism (~ German)

- (36) a. Ek ken jou beter as **my broer**.
 I know.1SG you.ACC better than my brother.NOM/ACC
 'I know you better than my brother.'
- b. Ek ken jou beter as **hy**.
 I know.1SG you.ACC better than he.NOM
 'I know you better than he knows you.'
- c. Ek ken jou beter as **hom**.
 I know.1SG you.ACC better than he.ACC
 'I know you better than I know him.'

Type II constructions: accusative remnants unavailable

disambiguation: word order

- (37) a. Ek het 'n langer vrou as **sy** gesien.
 I have.1SG a taller woman than she.NOM seen
 'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'
- b. Ek het 'n vrou langer as **sy** gesien.
 I have.1SG a woman taller than she.NOM seen
 'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'
- c. Ek het 'n langer vrou gesien as **sy**.
 I have.1SG a taller woman seen than she.NOM
 'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'

in (37b): AP postmodifier of the DP

compare English:

- (38) I saw a woman **taller than my mother**.

postmodifier QPs generally predicative (reduced relative clauses, cf. Larson 1998)

→ Type II in Afrikaans behaves differently from the German (and English) pattern

- Norwegian: nominative and oblique case

Oslo dialect

nominative: in the presence of a finite inflection

nominative/oblique distinction overtly in the pronoun system (also syncretism)

predicative comparatives:

- (39) a. *Jeg er høyere enn **du**.
 I am taller than you.NOM
 'I am taller than you.'
- b. Jeg er høyere enn **deg**.
 I am taller than you.OBL
 'I am taller than you.'

recall: copula does not have to be elided (not inserted)

Norwegian: finite inflection must be overtly realised for the nominative at some point

↔ English: looser requirement

Type I constructions:

- (40) a. Jeg elsker deg mer enn **min bror**.
 I love.1SG you.OBL more than my brother.NOM/OBL
 'I love you more than my brother.'
- b. Jeg elsker ham mer enn **du**.
 I love.1SG he.OBL more than you.NOM
 'I love him more than you love him.'
- c. Jeg elsker ham mer enn **deg**.
 I love.1SG he.OBL more than you.OBL
 'I love him more than you love him/than I love you.'

ambiguity in (40c): oblique case may arise if the lexical verb is elided

↔ copulas: not inserted, hence oblique case must appear

Type II constructions:

- (41) a. Jeg så en høyere kvinne enn **min mor**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than my mother.NOM/OBL
 'I saw a taller woman than my mother.'
- b. Jeg så en høyere kvinne enn **du**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.NOM
 'I saw a taller woman than you saw.'
- c. Jeg så en høyere kvinne enn **deg**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.OBL
 'I saw a taller woman than you.'

(41b): nominative not ambiguous

follows from the oblique case requirement on subjects of non-overt copulas

→ post-syntactic reinterpretation not necessary (↔ German)

postmodifier QP: only predicative reading available – nominative ungrammatical:

- (42) a. Jeg har aldri sett en kvinne høyere enn **min mor**.
 I have.1SG never seen a woman taller than my mother.NOM/OBL
 'I have never seen a woman taller than my mother.'
- b. *Jeg har aldri sett en kvinne høyere enn **du**.
 I have.1SG never seen a woman taller than you.NOM
 'I have never seen a woman taller than you.'
- c. Jeg har aldri sett en kvinne høyere enn **deg**.
 I have.1SG never seen a woman taller than you.OBL
 'I have never seen a woman taller than you.'

→ Type II in Norwegian: fully predictable from general case assignment properties

- Swedish: nominative and oblique case

nominative: in the presence of a finite inflection (not necessarily overt)

nominative/oblique distinction overtly in the pronoun system (also syncretism)

predicative comparatives:

- (43) a. Jag är längre än **du**.
 I am taller than you.NOM
 'I am taller than you.'
- b. Jag är längre än **dig**.
 I am taller than you.OBL
 'I am taller than you.'

finite inflection available but not overt – both nominative and oblique case acceptable

Type I constructions:

- (44) a. Jag älskar dig mer än **min bror**.
 I love.1SG you.OBL more than my brother.NOM/OBL
 'I love you more than my brother.'
- b. Du älskar henne mer än **jag**.
 you love.2SG she.OBL more than I.NOM
 'You love her more than I love her.'
- c. Du älskar henne mer än **mig**.
 you love.2SG she.OBL more than I.OBL
 'You love her more than you love me.'

→ Type I: predictable from general case assignment properties of Swedish (~ German)

Type II constructions:

- (45) a. Jag såg en längre kvinna än **min mor**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than my mother.NOM/OBL
 'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw/than my mother is.'
- b. Jag såg en längre kvinna än **du**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.NOM
 'I saw a taller woman than you saw/than you are.'
- c. Jag såg en längre kvinna än **dig**.
 I saw.1SG a taller woman than you.OBL
 'I saw a taller woman than you saw/than you are.'

ambiguity of (45c): oblique case may appear on subjects

subject of a copular clause – as in (43b)

subject of a lexical verb: unlike (44c)

interpretational problem rather: object interpretation in (44c) stronger (~ English)

ambiguity of (45b): nominative case possible on subjects even if copula not overt – (43a)

↔ Norwegian

→ Type II in Swedish: effects of general case assignment properties – no reassignment

- Germanic patterns

case reassignment: German, English, Icelandic, (Dutch?)

no case reassignment: Norwegian, Swedish, Afrikaans, (Dutch?)

further questions

other Germanic languages

dialects (e.g. Alemannic)

diachrony (e.g. oblique case and lack of case reassignment)

5. Phrasal comparatives

initial question: English ambiguous patterns – reduced clauses or phrasal comparatives

Germanic ambiguous patterns: reduced clauses (invariably)

generally: in Type II constructions, lexical readings seem to be more prominent

languages with true phrasal comparatives (PPs instead of CPs)

Italian, Hungarian: both phrasal and clausal comparatives

- Italian: phrasal comparatives introduced by *di* ‘of’

Type I constructions ambiguous:

- (46) Ti amo più **di mio** fratello.
 you.ACC love.1SG more of my.M brother
 ‘I love you more than my brother.’

Type II constructions assigned the predicative reading:

- (47) Ho visto una donna più alta **di mia** madre.
 have.1SG seen a.F woman more tall.F of my.F mother
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother is.’

- Hungarian: clausal comparatives introduced by *mint* ‘than’, phrasal comparatives contain the P head *-nál/-nél* ‘at’ (inherent adessive case, analysed as PPs, see Asbury 2008)

Type I constructions ambiguous only for phrasal comparatives:

- (48) a. Jobban szeretlek, mint **Márk**.
 more love.you.1SG than Mark.NOM
 ‘I love you more than Mark loves you.’
- b. Jobban szeretlek, mint **Márkot**.
 more love.you.1SG than Mark-ACC
 ‘I love you more than I love Mark.’
- c. Jobban szeretlek, **Márknál**.
 more love.you.1SG Mark-ADE
 ‘I love you more than Mark.’

Type II constructions ambiguous for reduced clausal comparatives:

- (49) a. Láttam egy magasabb nőt, mint **az anyám**.
 saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC than the mother-POSS.1SG.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother.’
- b. Láttam egy magasabb nőt **az anyámnál**.
 saw.1SG a taller woman-ACC the mother-POSS.1SG-ADE
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother is.’

→ Type II phrasal comparatives assigned the predicative reading in Italian and Hungarian

true phrasal comparatives behave differently from reduced clausal comparatives

Conclusion

- English reduced clausal comparatives compatible with a clausal analysis

default case and case reassignment

- case reassignment can be observed in other Germanic languages too (e.g. German)

- ambiguity in Germanic contingent upon several factors

case syncretism

default case

case reassignment

requirements on oblique case

→ variation among Germanic languages

- true phrasal comparatives behave in a markedly different way

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