Clause size in German elliptical comparatives

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Introduction

comparative subclauses regularly elliptical (Bacskai-Atkari 2018):

(1) a. Mary is taller than Peter (is).
b. The table is longer than the office is wide.

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Ambiguity

ellipsis can lead to ambiguity (Bacskai-Atkari 2018, 168–173):

(2) I love you more than **Peter**.
     Subject reading: 'I love you more than Peter loves you.'
     Object reading: 'I love you more than I love Peter.'

subclause is apparently isomorphic with the matrix clause –
     different underlying functions of the remnant (case ambiguity)

Attributive comparatives

special case of potentially ambiguous structures: attributive
   comparatives – DP-external and DP internal readings (Lerner &
   Pinkal 1995)

(3)   I saw a taller man than **my father**.
       External reading: 'I saw a taller man than my father saw.'
       Internal reading: 'I saw a taller man than my father is.'

subject remnants in both cases – but: underlying clause with a
   lexical verb or a predicative clause

$\rightarrow$ isomorphism apparently not adhered to

question: whether this affects clause size

Proposal

German attributive comparatives: the remnant in constructions like (3) shows morphological case distinctions (for masculine remnants) between the two readings

proposal: case assignment in German attributive comparatives provides evidence that elliptical predicative clauses are smaller than TP

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Ellipsis

prototypical case of ellipsis: sluicing

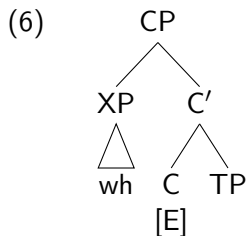(4) Someone did the laundry but I don't remember **WHO** ~~did the laundry~~.

elided elements should be e-GIVEN (ellipsis-GIVEN) in the discourse (Merchant 2001, 26):

(5) e-GIVENness
     An expression E counts as e-GIVEN iff E has a salient antecedent A and, modulo ∃-type shifting,
     (i)   A entails F-clo(E), and
     (ii) E entails F-clo(A).

e-GIVENness more restrictive than GIVENness (Merchant 2001, 25–36)

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Sluicing

remnant *wh*-element in [Spec,CP] – [E] feature for ellipsis in C,
complement of C (the TP) elided (Merchant 2001)

(6)   CP
        / \
      XP   C′
      /\   /\
     wh   C TP
         [E]

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Fragment answers

clausal ellipsis also beyond sluicing – fragment answers:

(7) A: Who phoned grandma?
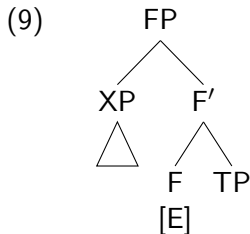   B: **Liz** ~~phoned grandma~~.

(8) A: Who did Liz phone?
     B: ~~Liz phoned~~ **grandma**.

Structure

analysis of Merchant (2001, 675): fragments involve an FP
(functional projection), which hosts the [E] feature in its head

(9)

```
            FP
           /  \
         XP    F'
        /\    /  \
       /  \  F    TP
            [E]
```

$\rightarrow$ also fragment answers like in (8) conform to the general
template

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Word order

word order in the elliptical clause not attested in a non-elliptical
counterpart:

(10)   a. *Grandma$_i$ Liz phoned t$_i$.
       b.   Grandma$_i$ ~~Liz phoned t$_i$~~.

but: ellipsis not "saving" the structure – movement motivated by
the [E] feature

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Ellipsis and isomorphism

island violations:

(11) a. [$_{DP}$ How diligent a worker]$_i$ did they hire t$_i$?
      b. *[How diligent]$_i$ did they hire [$_{DP}$ t$_i$ a worker]?

wh-based degree expression cannot be extracted out of the
DP-island (see Kennedy & Merchant 2000 and Bacskai-Atkari
2018, 132–139 on inversion within the DP)

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The repair approach

apparent repair effect (based on Vicente 2018, 484, ex. 11):

(12) a. *They hired a diligent worker, but I don't know [how
           diligent]$_i$ they hired [$_{DP}$ t$_i$ a worker].
      b. They hired a diligent worker, but I don't know how
          diligent [ ].

repair approach (see Merchant 2001): the underlying structure of
(12b) is the same as in (12a)

Alternative approach

Barros et al. (2014) and Vicente (2018): *how diligent* originates as
the predicate of the clause

(13)   They hired a diligent worker, but I don't know [how
         diligent]$_i$ [$_{IP}$ that worker is t$_i$].
         (Vicente 2018, 485)

$\rightarrow$ no repair needed as there is no island violation

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Non-intersective adjectives

alleged repair effect does not arise with non-intersective adjectives:

(14)   *They hired a hard worker, but I don't know how hard [ ].
       (Vicente 2018, 485)

underlying structure in the repair analysis: non-intersective
   adjective an attribute

(15)   *They hired a hard worker, but I don't know [how hard]$_i$
       they hired [$_{DP}$ t$_i$ a worker].

intersective versus non-intersective adjectives as predicates
   (Vicente 2018, 485):

(16)   a.   The worker is diligent.
       b.   *The worker is hard.

So. . .

$\rightarrow$ (14) ruled out: either underlying island violation or *how hard* is a predicate

$\rightarrow$ the elliptical clause is not isomorphic to the antecedent clause

question regarding clause size still: the complement of the F head still a TP in Vicente (2018) and Merchant (2001)

Attributive comparatives in German

subject-object ambiguities in German comparatives with case-ambiguous remnants (e.g. feminine):

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

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Masculine remnants

no ambiguity:

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

$\rightarrow$ morphological case apparently a reliable indicator of underlying
function

Predicative comparatives

only nominative remnant possible – this is also the default case
(Schütze 2001)

(19) a. Ich bin schneller als **du**.
          I   am faster   as you.NOM
          'I am faster than you.'

      b. *Ich bin schneller als **dich**.
          I   am faster   as you.ACC
          'I am faster than you.'

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Attributive comparatives

attributive comparatives show case distinction – based on the
experimental data presented in Bacskai-Atkari (2023, 258–282):

- nominative remnant for the DP-external reading
- accusative remnant for the DP-internal reading

$\rightarrow$ ambiguity only with case syncretism (e.g. feminine remnants)

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DP-external reading

(20) a. Ich male ein schöneres Bild als **meine**
I paint a.N nicer.N picture as my.F.NOM/ACC
Schwester.
sister

b. Ich male ein schöneres Bild als **mein**
I paint a.N nicer.N picture as my.M.NOM
Bruder.
brother

c. *Ich male ein schöneres Bild als **meinen**
I paint a.N nicer.N picture as my.M.ACC
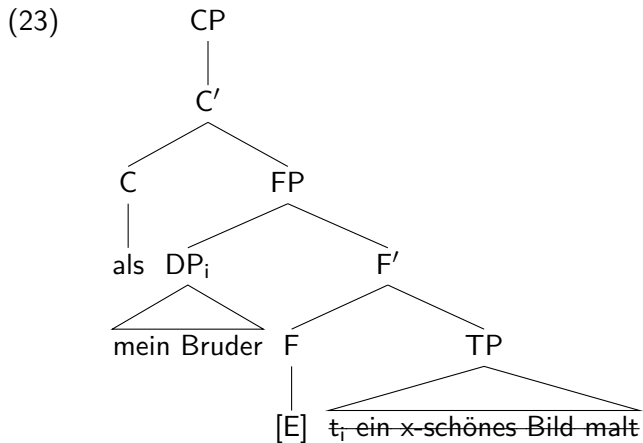**Bruder**.
brother

DP-internal reading

(21)   a.   Ich kenne eine größere Frau   als **deine**
            I   know a.F   taller.F woman as your.F.NOM/ACC
            Schwester.
            sister

       b.   *Ich kenne einen größeren Mann als **dein**
            I   know a.M   taller.M   man as your.M.NOM
            Bruder.
            brother

       c.   Ich kenne einen größeren Mann als **deinen**
            I   know a.M   taller.M   man as your.M.ACC
            Bruder.
            brother

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Derivation

derivation of the DP-external reading unproblematic (see
Bacskai-Atkari 2018, 2023):

(22) Ich male   ein schöneres Bild   [CP als [FP **mein**
      I   paint.1SG a.N nicer.N picture   as   my.M.NOM
      Bruder [TP ein x-schönes Bild   malt]]].
      brother   a x-nice   picture paints
      'I am painting a nicer picture than my brother.'

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Structure

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Case assignment

nominative case regularly assigned in [Spec,TP] to the subject
remnant

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Derivation

derivation of the DP-internal reading: accusative subject remnant
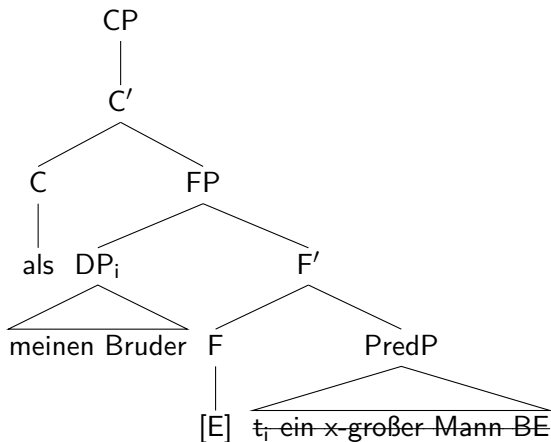only possible if it is not on [Spec,TP] before

$\rightarrow$ no TP in the underlying predicative clause – instead: PredP (in
the sense of Bowers 1993, 2010 and den Dikken 2006, in that
predication is not tied to tense)

(24)   Ich kenne   einen größeren Mann [$_{CP}$ als [$_{FP}$ **deinen**
        I   know.1SG a.M taller.M man   as   your.M.ACC
        Bruder [$_{PredP}$ ein x-großer Mann BE]]].
        brother   a x-tall   man   BE
        'I know a taller man than your brother is.'

"BE": the phonologically empty Pred head

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Structure

(25)

Tree diagram:

```
                        CP
                        |
                        C′
              ┌─────────┴─────────┐
              C                   FP
              |          ┌────────┴────────┐
             als       DP_i               F′
                    ┌───┴───┐       ┌──────┴──────┐
               meinen Bruder F              PredP
                              |        ┌─────────┴─────────┐
                             [E]   t_i ein x-großer Mann BE
```

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Case assignment

no nominative case assigned from T as there is no TP

source of the accusative case:

- not a default case in German (Schütze 2001)
- cannot come from *als* (C) – accusative on subject remnants only allowed in attributive comparatives
- only possible source: matrix verb – accusative assigned to the entire object DP in the matrix clause (also adjacency effect, see Bacskai-Atkari 2023)

Default nominative case

evidence from predicative comparatives: default nominative case

(26)　　Ich bin schneller als **du**.
　　　　I　am faster　　as you.NOM
　　　　'I am faster than you.'

Further evidence

further evidence from the lack of tense: tense interpretation not
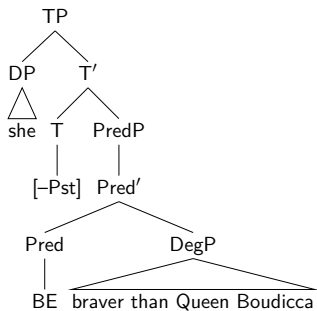 always matching the matrix clause

(27)   She is braver than Queen Boudicca.

only recoverable information can be deleted (see Merchant 2001) –
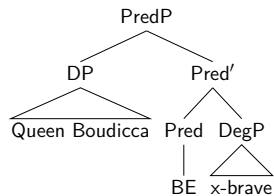 past tense not recoverable from the matrix clause in (27)

$\rightarrow$ lack of TP in the subclause: interpretation governed by
  pragmatic factors

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Structure

(28) a.   b.

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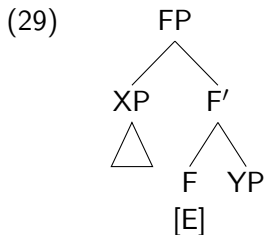00000

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Template

→ template of Merchant (2001, 675) in (9) to be revised:
   complement of F not always a TP (see Bacskai-Atkari 2023)

(29)
```
          FP
         /  \
       XP    F′
       /\   /  \
      /  \ F   YP
           |
          [E]
```

→ ellipsis can affect clause size

Conclusion

clause size and clause structure in elliptical comparatives

- isomorphism problematic in several elliptical constructions – predicative clauses recoverable
- attributive comparatives: DP-external and DP-internal readings – predicative reading non-isomorphic
- German attributive comparatives: accusative case on subject remnants with the DP-internal reading: only if TP is missing

$\rightarrow$ ellipsis can not only lead to non-isomorphic underlying clauses but also to a smaller clause size

Thank you!

Danke!

Mulțumesc!

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