

Comparative Deletion and Comparative Clause Formation Cross-Linguistically

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Introduction

- predicative structures:

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

- attributive structures:

- (2) a. *Mary bought a smarter dog than Liz did **a dog/a smart dog**.
b. Mary bought a smarter dog than Liz did **a (*smart) cat**.

Cross-linguistic variation

- languages that allow both (1a) and (1b)
- languages that prohibit both (1a) and (1b)
- languages that allow (2) but not (1)

→ Comparative Deletion is subject to parametric variation

→ Comparative Deletion cannot be conditioned in a \pm fashion

Proposal

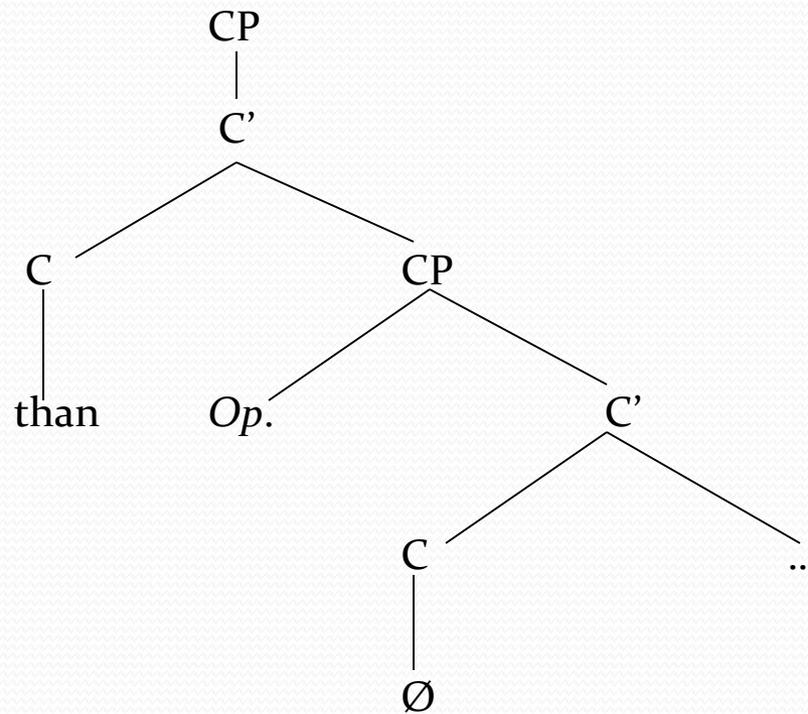
comparative clause formation is dependent on several factors

- overtness of the comparative operator
- extractability of the operator from the quantified degree expression
- properties of movement chains – realisation of lower copies
- information structure

The Standard English pattern

left periphery (on multiple CPs, cf. Rizzi 1997, 1999, 2004):

(3)



Operator movement

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**].

Overttness requirement

a lexical XP is licensed in an operator position such as [Spec,CP] if the operator itself is overt

Copies

→ higher copies of the QPs in (4) deleted

lower copy: realised only if contrastive (Bacskai-Atkari 2012, 2013a, 2014)

- 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]**.

Non-extractability

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**?

Contrastiveness

contrastive lower copy remains

it can be GIVEN (Kennedy 2002, quoting Chomsky 1977):

- (7) A: This desk is **higher** than that one is **wide**.
B: What is more, this desk is **higher** than that one is **HIGH**.

Standard English pattern

contingent upon three factors:

- the operator is zero
- the operator is not extractable
- the overt realisation of contrastive lower copies is licensed

The overttness requirement

Standard English: zero operator

but: overt operators in other languages and certain dialects of English

how in English

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

Dutch *hoe* 'how'

(9) a. % Maria is groter dan **hoe groot** Jan is.
Mary is taller than how tall John is
'Mary is taller than John.'

b. % De tafel is langer dan **hoe breed** het kantoor is.
the table is longer than how wide the.NEUT office is
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

Hungarian *amilyen* ‘how’

(10) a. Mari magasabb volt, mint **amilyen magas** Zsuzsa volt.
Mary taller was than how tall Susan was
‘Mary was taller than Susan.’

b. Az asztal hosszabb volt, mint **amilyen széles** az iroda volt.
the table longer was than how wide the office was
‘The table was longer than the office was wide.’

Hungarian *amennyire* ‘how much’

(11) a. Mari magasabb volt, mint **amennyire magas** Zsuzsa volt.
Mary taller was than how.much tall Susan was
‘Mary was taller than Susan.’

b. Az asztal hosszabb volt, mint **amennyire széles** az iroda volt.
the table longer was than how.much wide the office was
‘The table was longer than the office was wide.’

Czech *jak* ‘how’

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

b. ?? 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.’

Extractable and non-extractable operators

Standard English: zero operator not extractable – AP cannot be stranded

same holds for *how* in comparatives (and in interrogatives):

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

Extractability

possibility of overt operator without a lexical AP/NP: not excluded by overttness requirement

Dutch *hoe* 'how', Hungarian *amilyen* 'how' not extractable
(cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 2013a)

two different operator positions in the extended projection of the AP

operator: a Deg head or a QP modifier (Bacskai-Atkari 2014)

- Deg heads not extractable (Hungarian *amilyen*, English *how*)
- QP modifiers extractable if the entire QP is in a predicative position
e.g. Hungarian *amennyire* 'how much', Czech *jak* 'how'

Hungarian: *amennyire* + non-contrastive AP

- (14) a. Mari magasabb, mint **amennyire** **magas** Péter volt.
Mary taller than how.much tall Peter was
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'
- b. #Mari magasabb, mint **amennyire** Péter **magas** volt.
Mary taller than how.much Peter tall was
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'
- c. Mari magasabb, mint **amennyire** Péter volt **magas**.
Mary taller than how.much Peter was tall
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'

Hungarian: *amennyire* + contrastive AP

(15) A macska kövérebb,
the cat fatter

a. ?mint **amennyire széles** a macskaajtó volt.
than how.much wide the cat flap was.3SG

b. mint **amennyire** a macskaajtó **széles** volt.
than how.much the cat flap wide was.3SG

c. ?mint **amennyire** a macskaajtó volt **széles**.
than how.much the cat flap was.3SG wide

‘The cat is fatter than the cat flap was wide.’

Czech: *jak* + non-contrastive AP

(16) a. ?? Marie je vyšší, než **jak vysoký** je Karel.
Mary is taller than how tall is Charles
'Mary is taller than Charles.'

b. ? Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je **vysoký** Karel.
Mary is taller than how is tall Charles
'Mary is taller than Charles.'

c. #Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je Karel **vysoký**.
Mary is taller than how is Charles tall
'Mary is taller than Charles.'

Czech: *jak* + contrastive AP

- (17) 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 how 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 how is that office wide
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

Typology of operators

→ operators can be overt/covert, extractable/non-extractable

- overt, non-extractable: e.g. English *how*
- overt, extractable: e.g. Czech *jak*
- covert, non-extractable: e.g. English zero
- covert, extractable: ???

stranded AP should be acceptable irrespectively of whether it is contrastive or not

Zero operator in German

(18) a. ?Maria ist größer als Michael **groß** ist.
Mary is taller than Michael tall is
'Mary is taller than Michael.'

b. Der Tisch ist länger als das Büro **breit** ist.
the.MASC table is longer than the.NEUT office wide is
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

Zero operator in Dutch

(19) a. ^{?!??}Maria is groter dan Jan **groot** is.
Mary is taller than John tall is
'Mary is taller than John.'

b. De tafel is langer dan het kantoor **breed** is.
the table is longer than the.NEUT office wide is
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

Zero operator in Estonian

(20) a. ?Jaan on pikem kui Mari on **pikk**.

John is taller than Mary is tall

‘John is taller than Mary is.’

b. ?Vastuvõtulaud on pikem kui kontor on **lai**.

desk is longer than office is wide

‘The desk is longer than the office is wide.’

Predicative comparatives in Czech and Polish

- Czech: AP in the base position + zero operator ruled out

(21) 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.’

Predicative comparatives in Czech and Polish

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

- (22) 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.'

Attributive comparatives

lexical verb cannot be overt in English (Kennedy and Merchant 2000):

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

condition for the grammaticality of structures like (23): 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)

Czech and Polish: QP extractable from the nominal expression – visible in interrogatives (Kennedy and Merchant 2000)

in comparatives: lexical verb + remnant NP licensed

Czech

- (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.'

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

Polish

(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.'

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

Predicative comparatives in Czech and Polish – a second attempt

zero operator + AP → unacceptability of lower copies of non-contrastive 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.'

Contrastiveness

but: contrastiveness does not license contrastive 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.'

Movement chains

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

no multiple *wh*-fronting in English ↔ Czech, Polish: multiple *wh*-fronting (cf. Rudin 1988)

languages with non-extractable zero comparative operator

↔ German, Dutch, Estonian: extractable zero operator – availability of (26)

Estonian: allows multiple *wh*-fronting (preferred option)

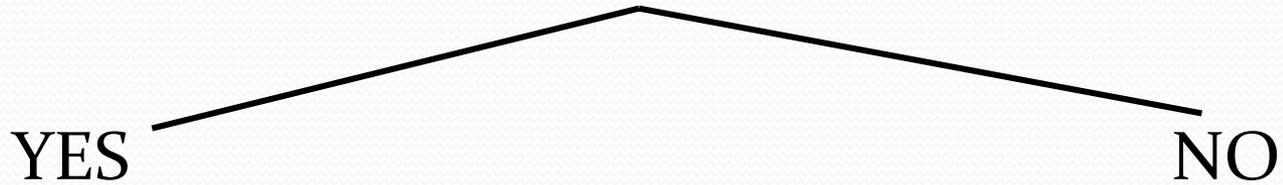
→ proposal: (27) unacceptable because the realisation of lower copies is generally not preferred in the given languages (↔ English)

A short guide

operator overt?

YES

NO



A short guide

operator overt?

YES

NO

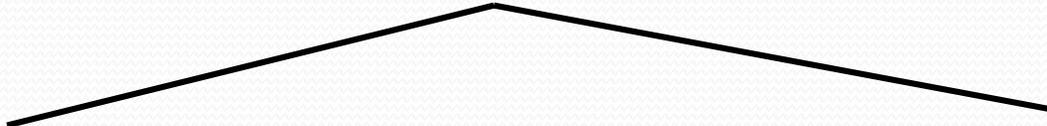


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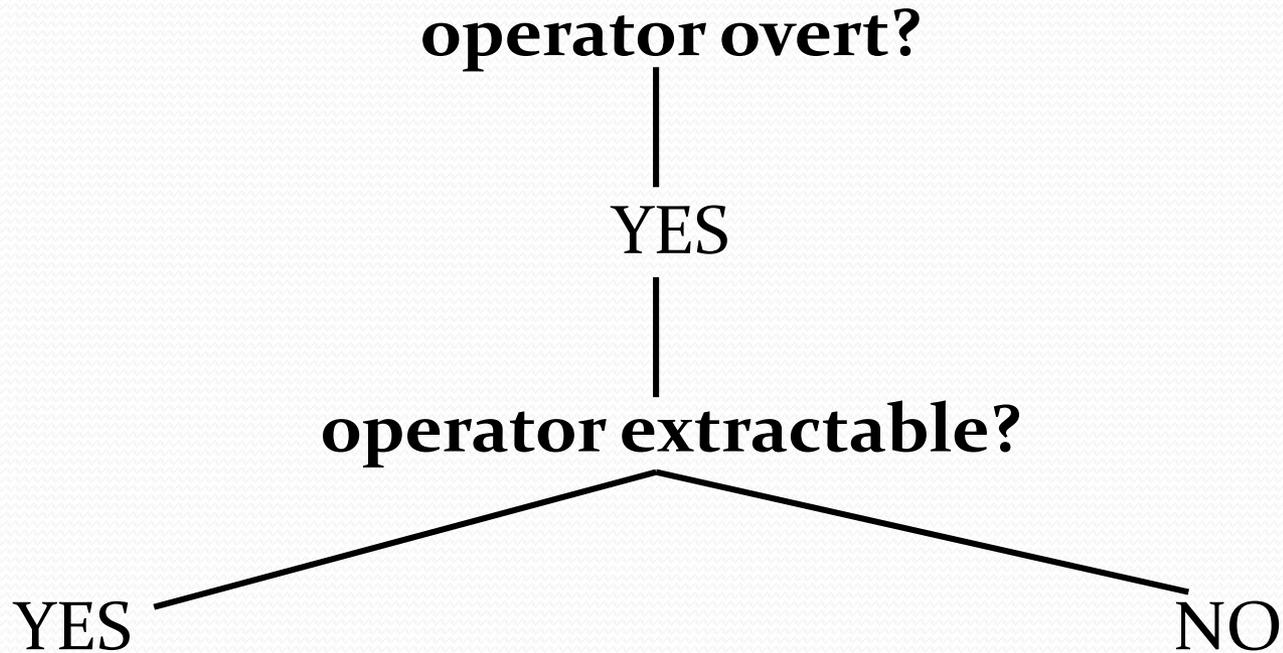
operator overt?

YES

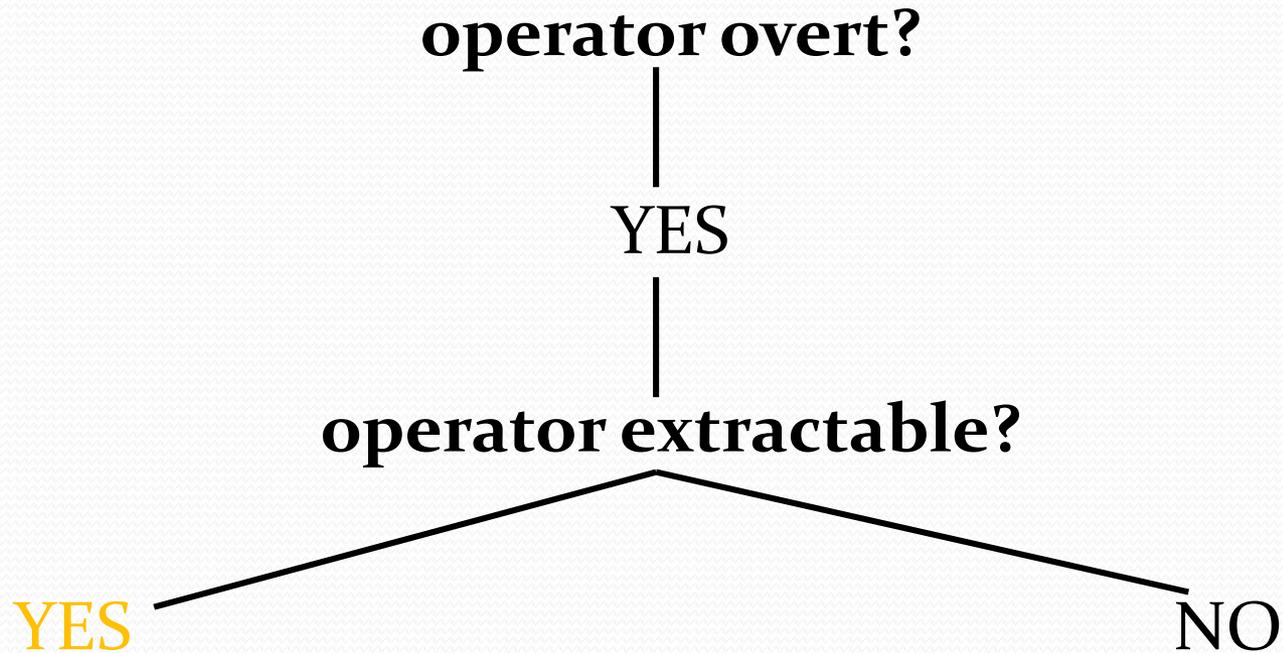
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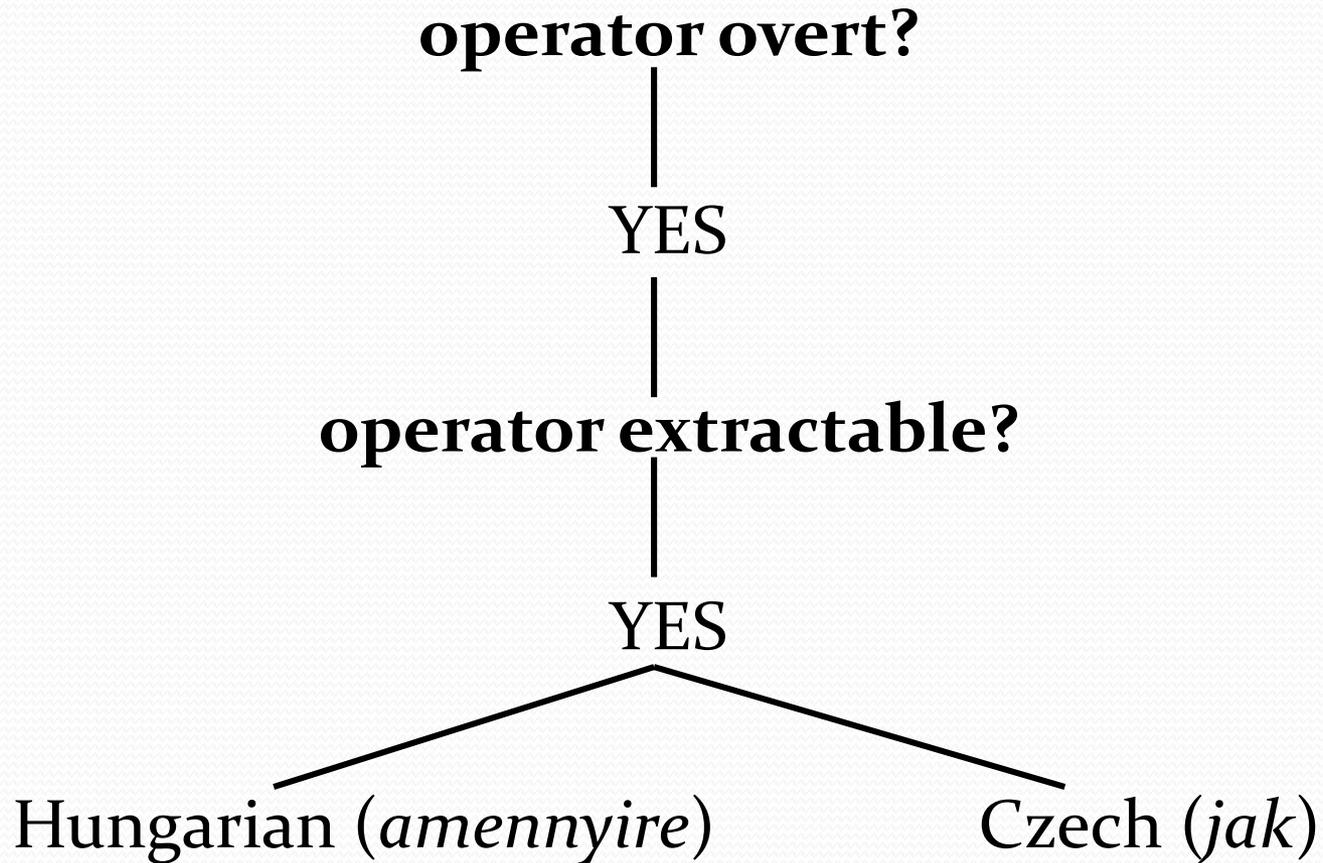
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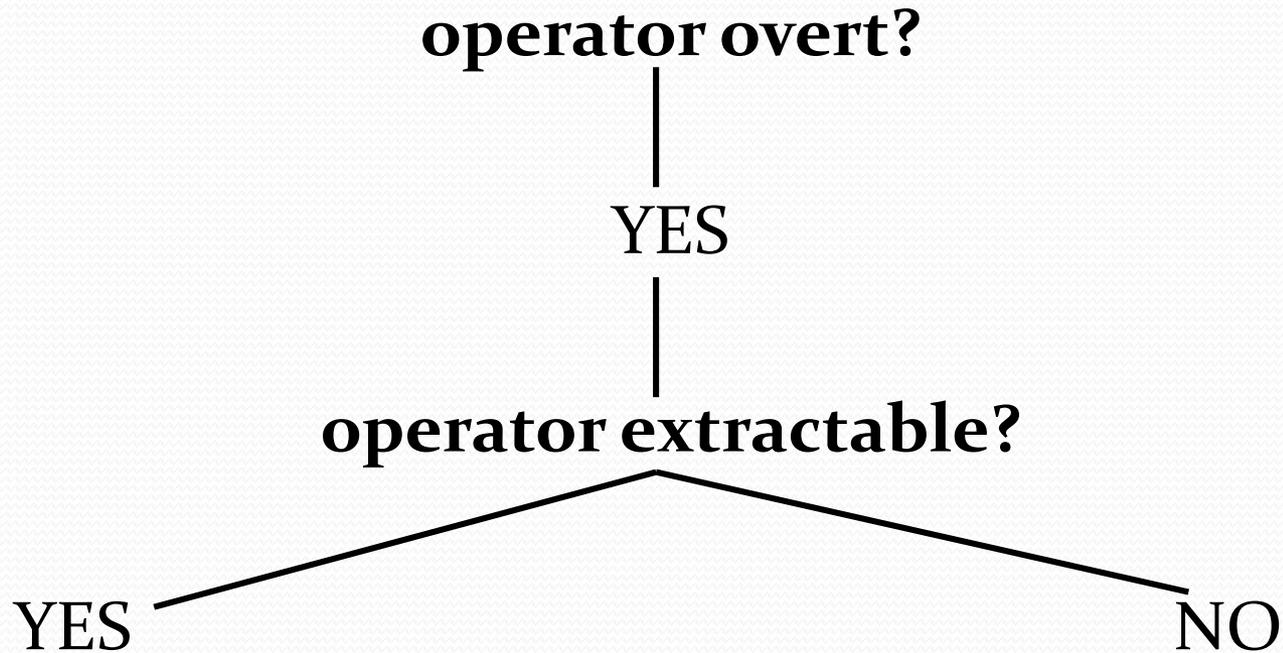
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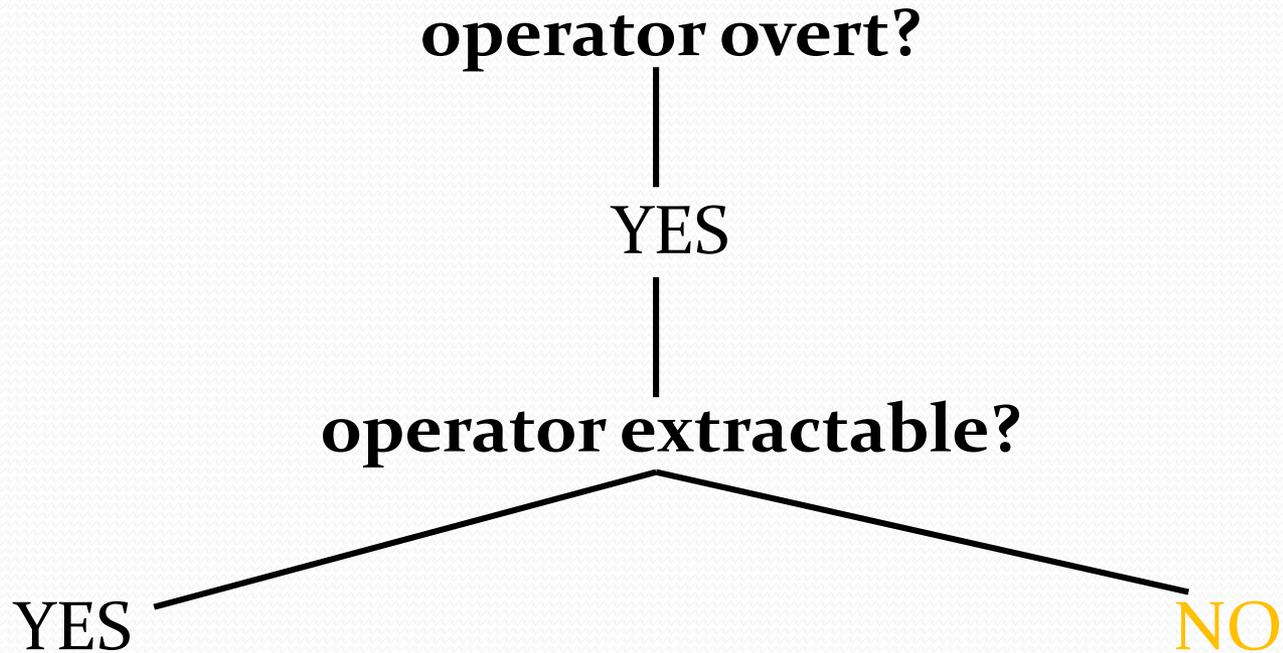
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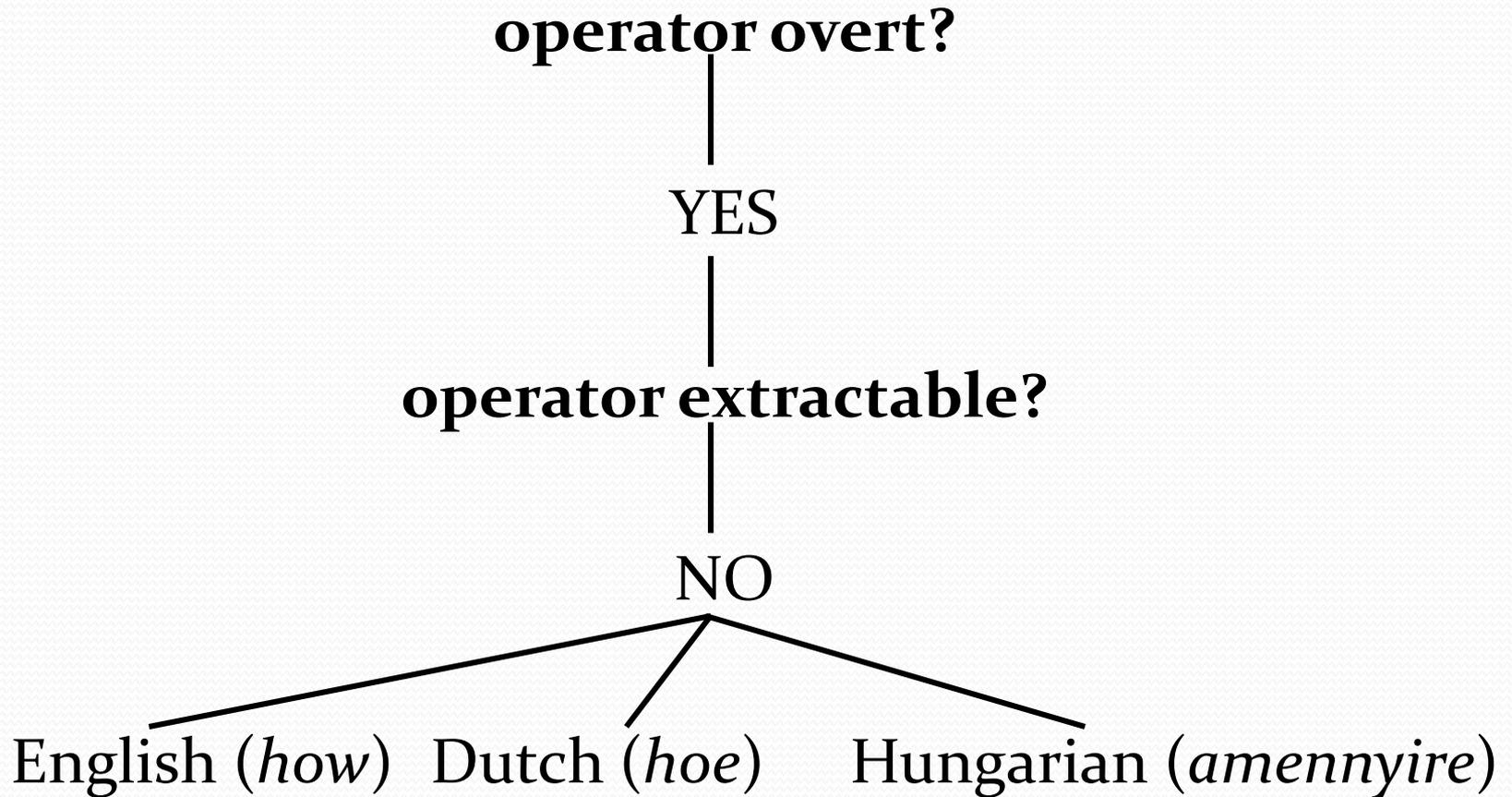
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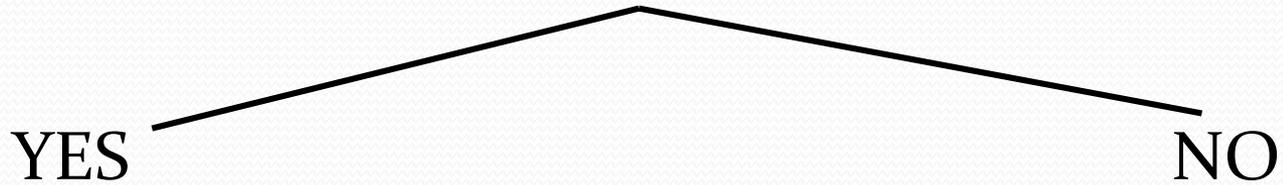


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operator overt?

YES

NO



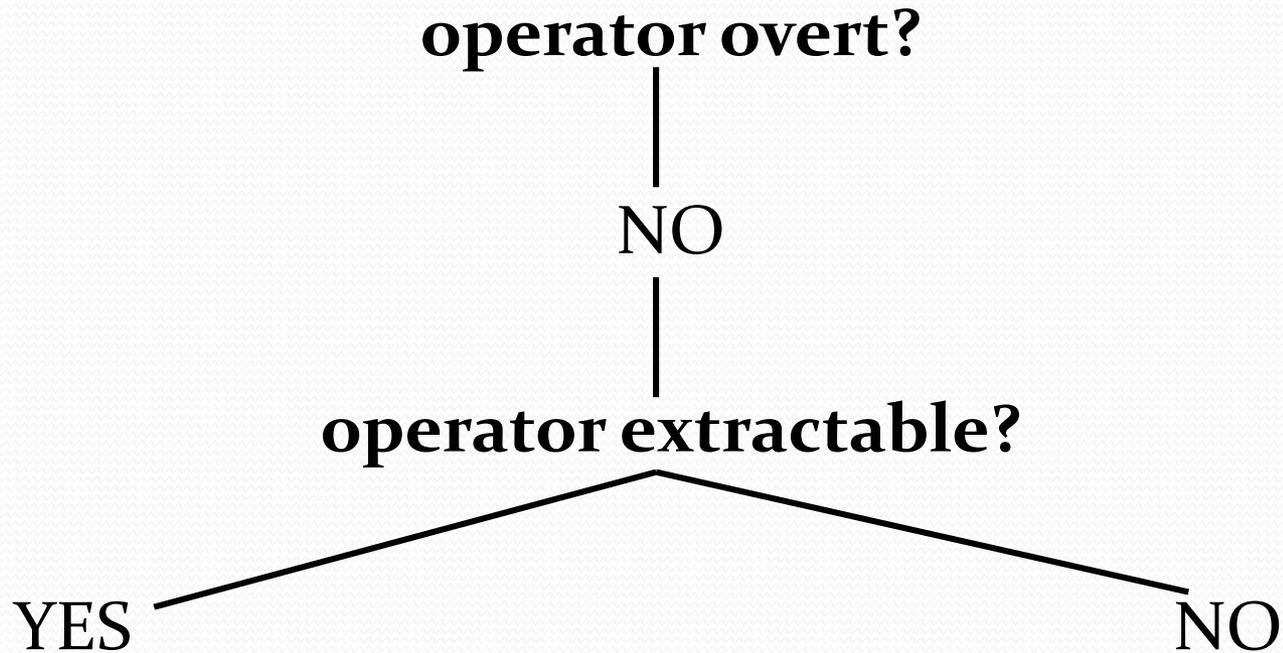
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operator overt?

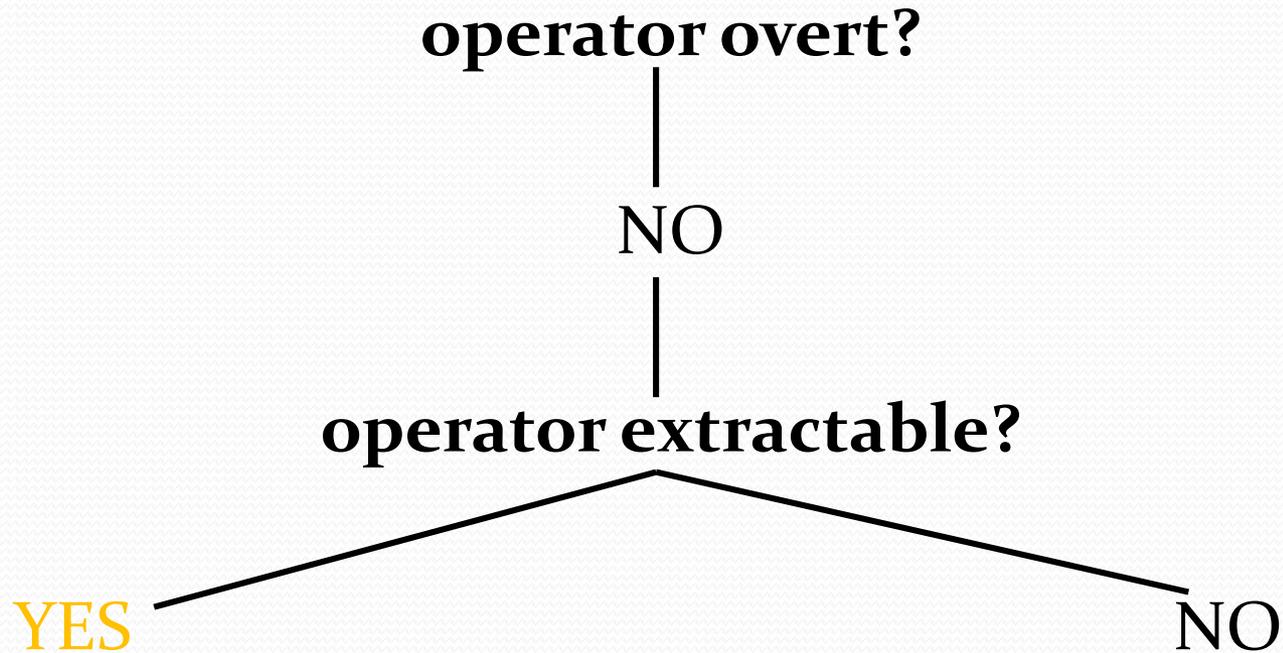
YES

NO

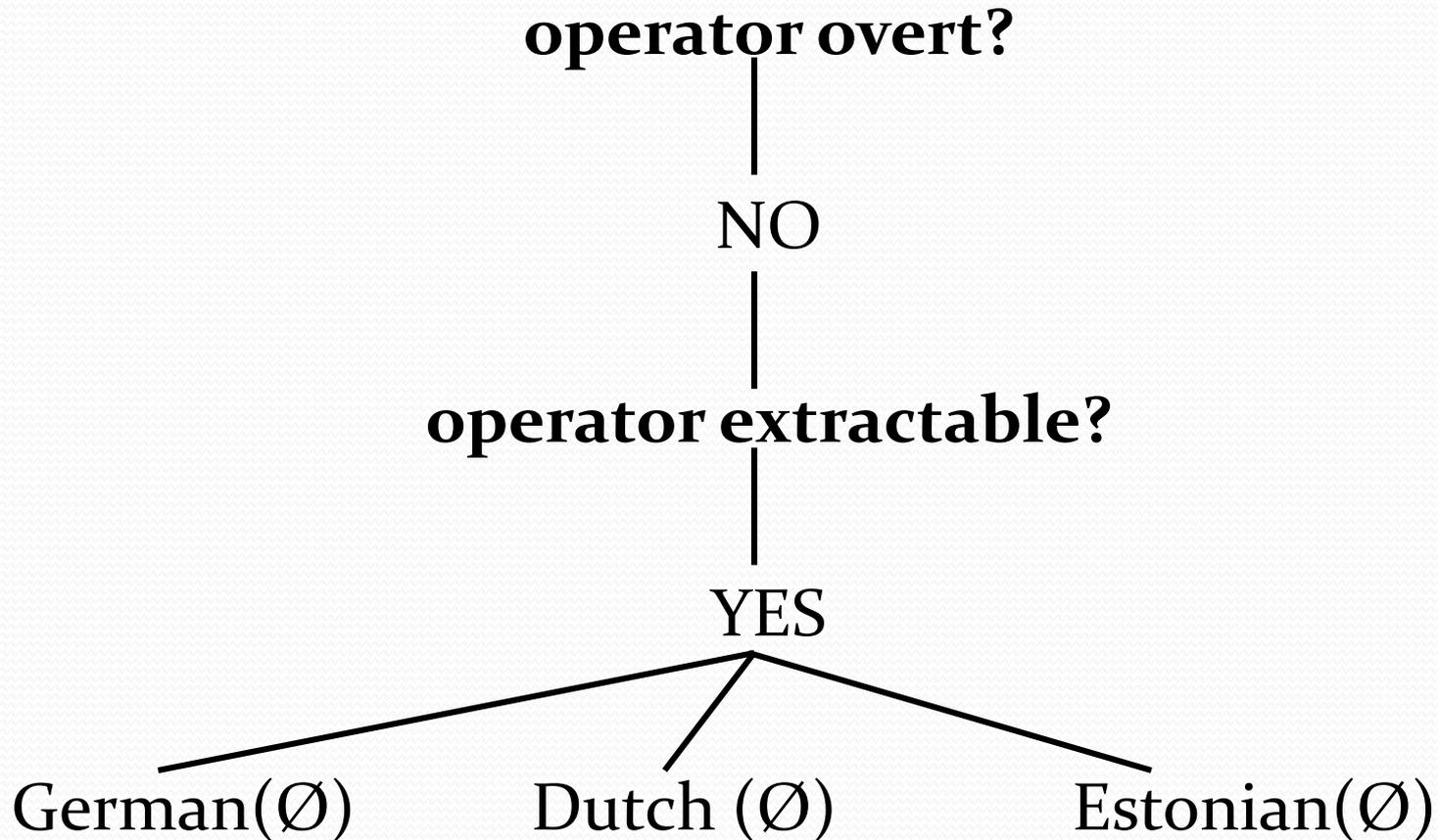
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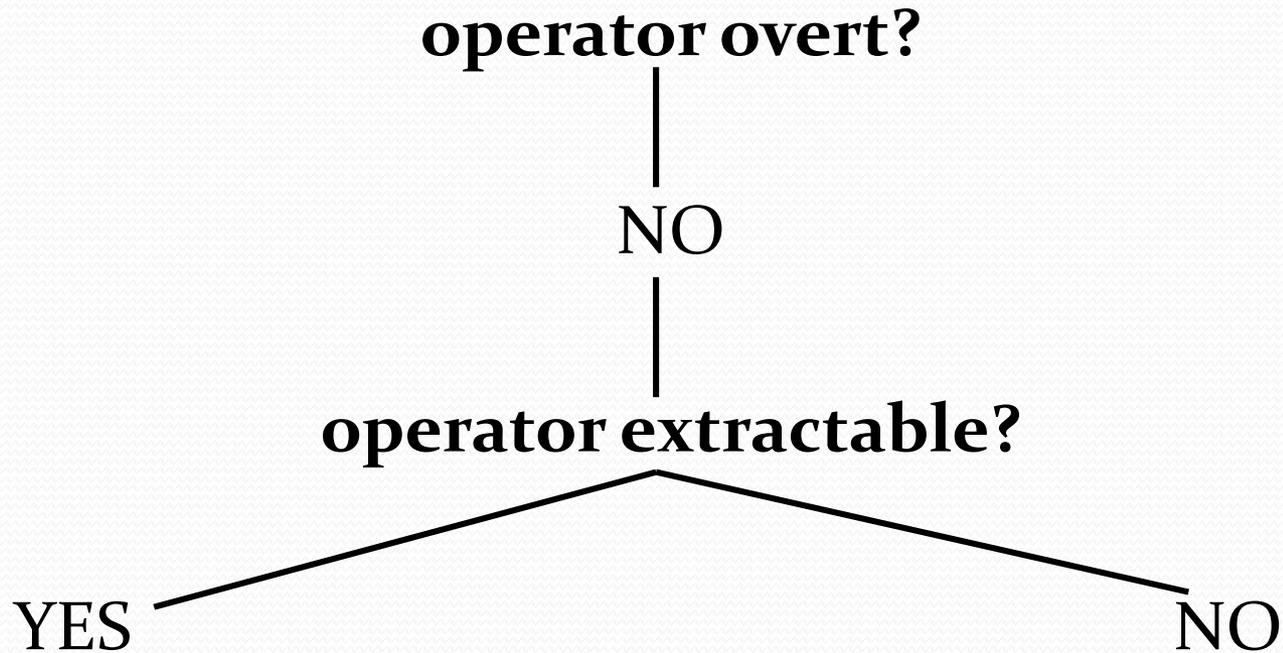
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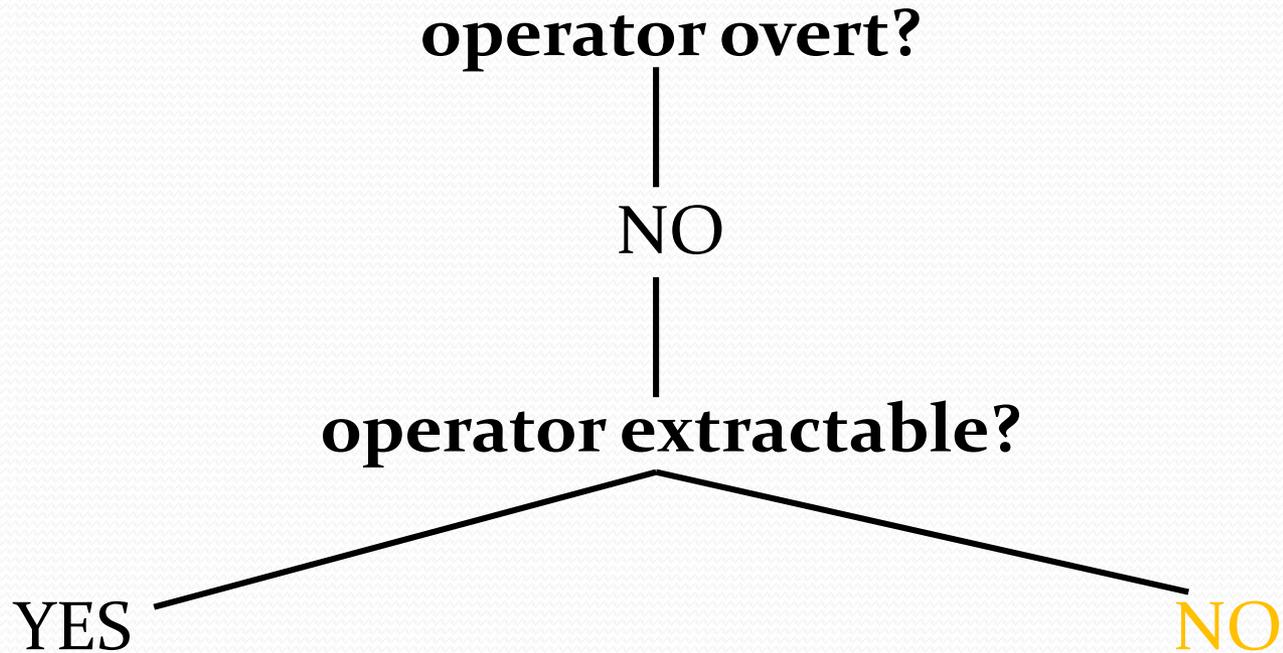
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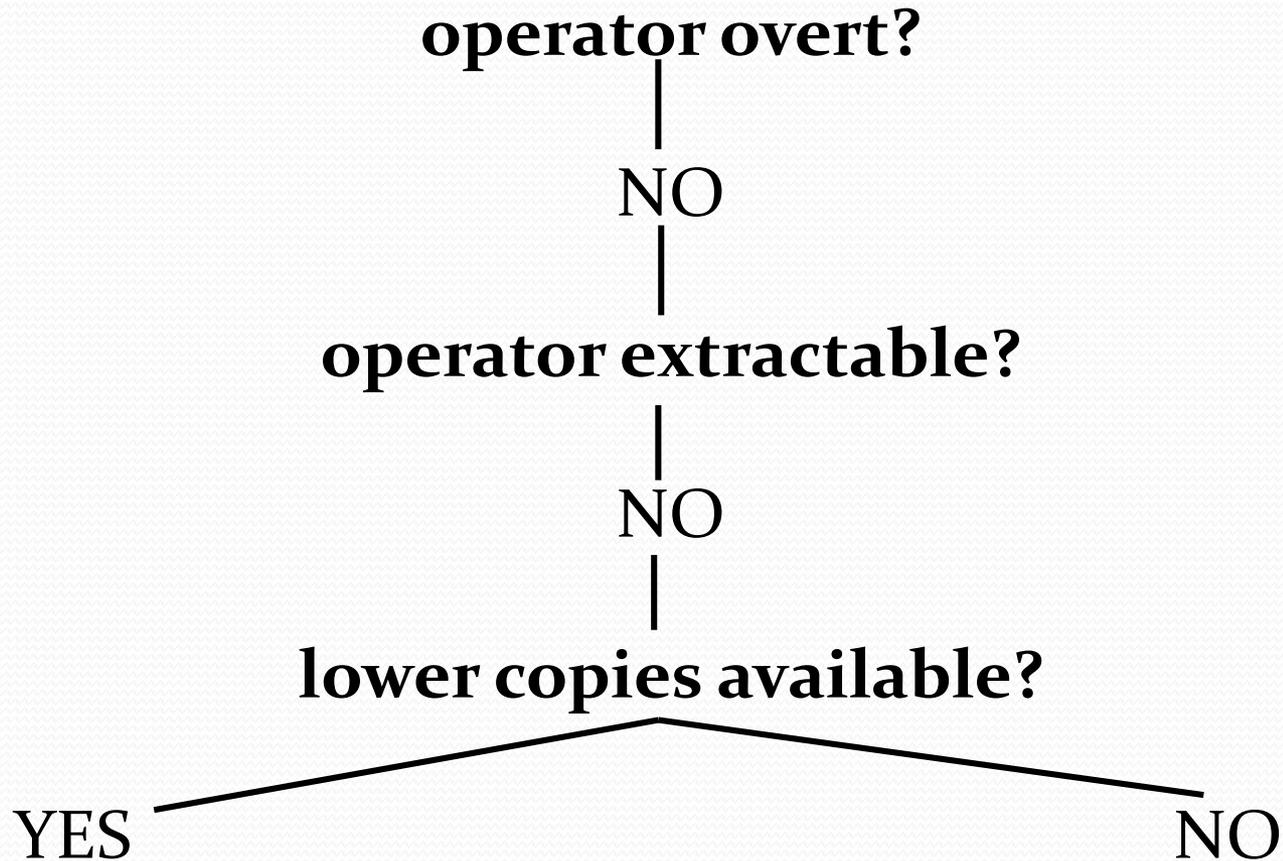
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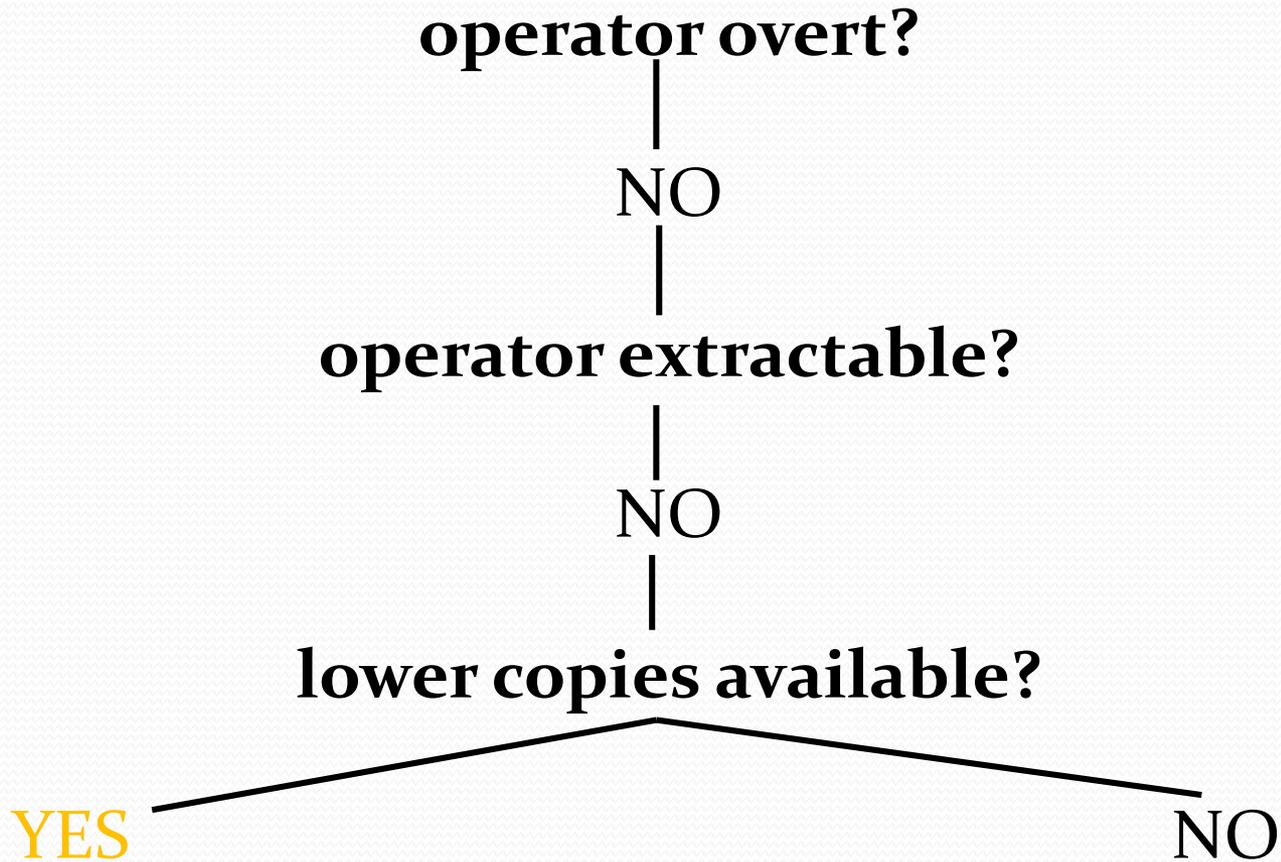
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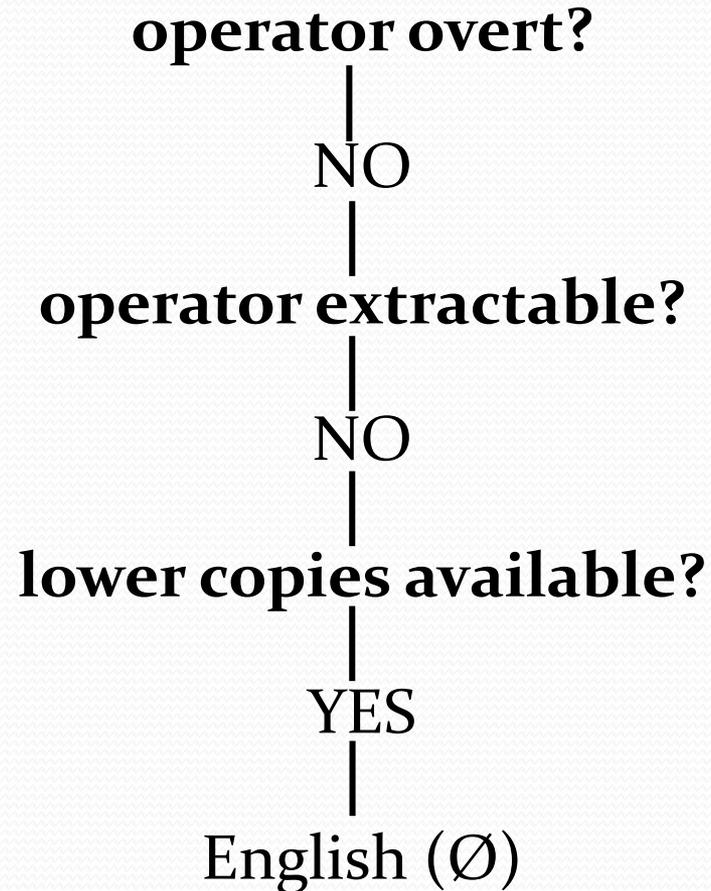
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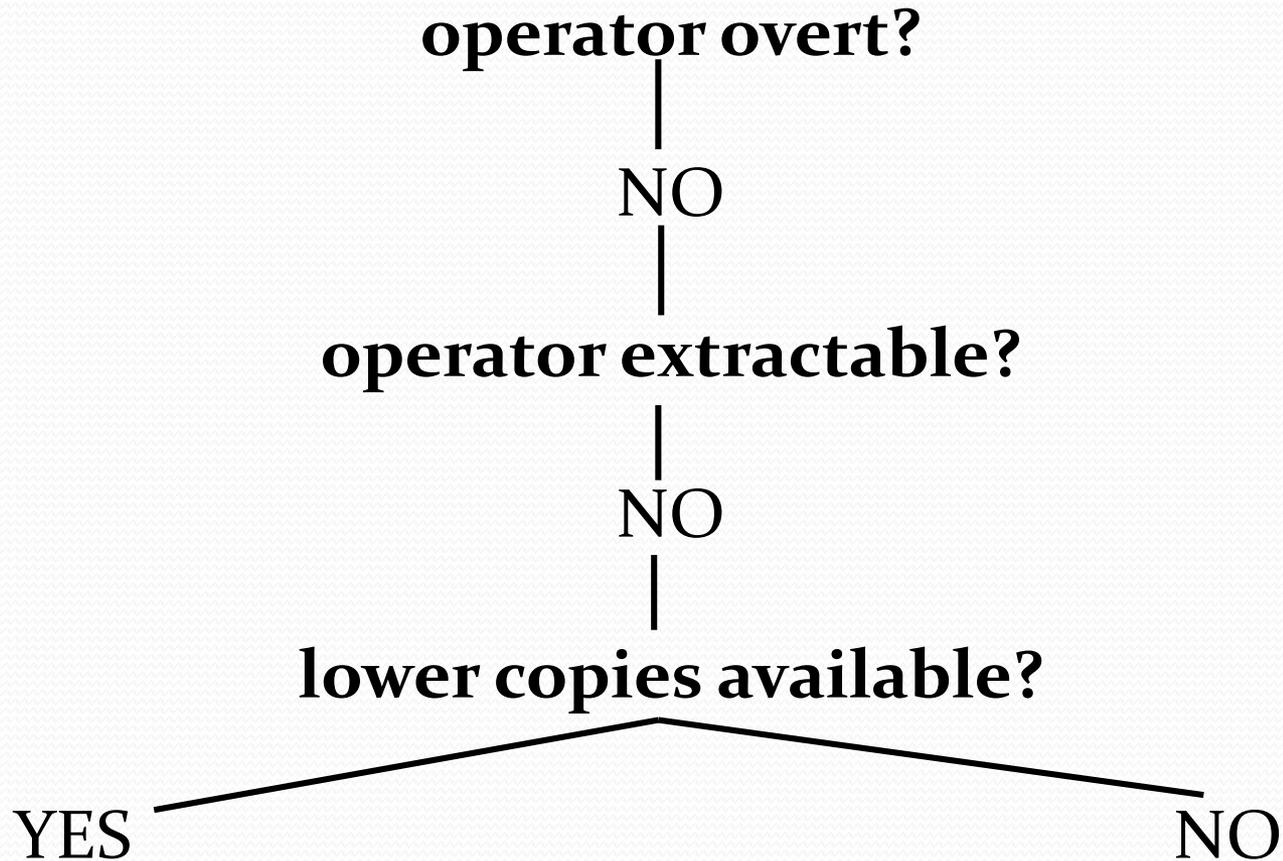
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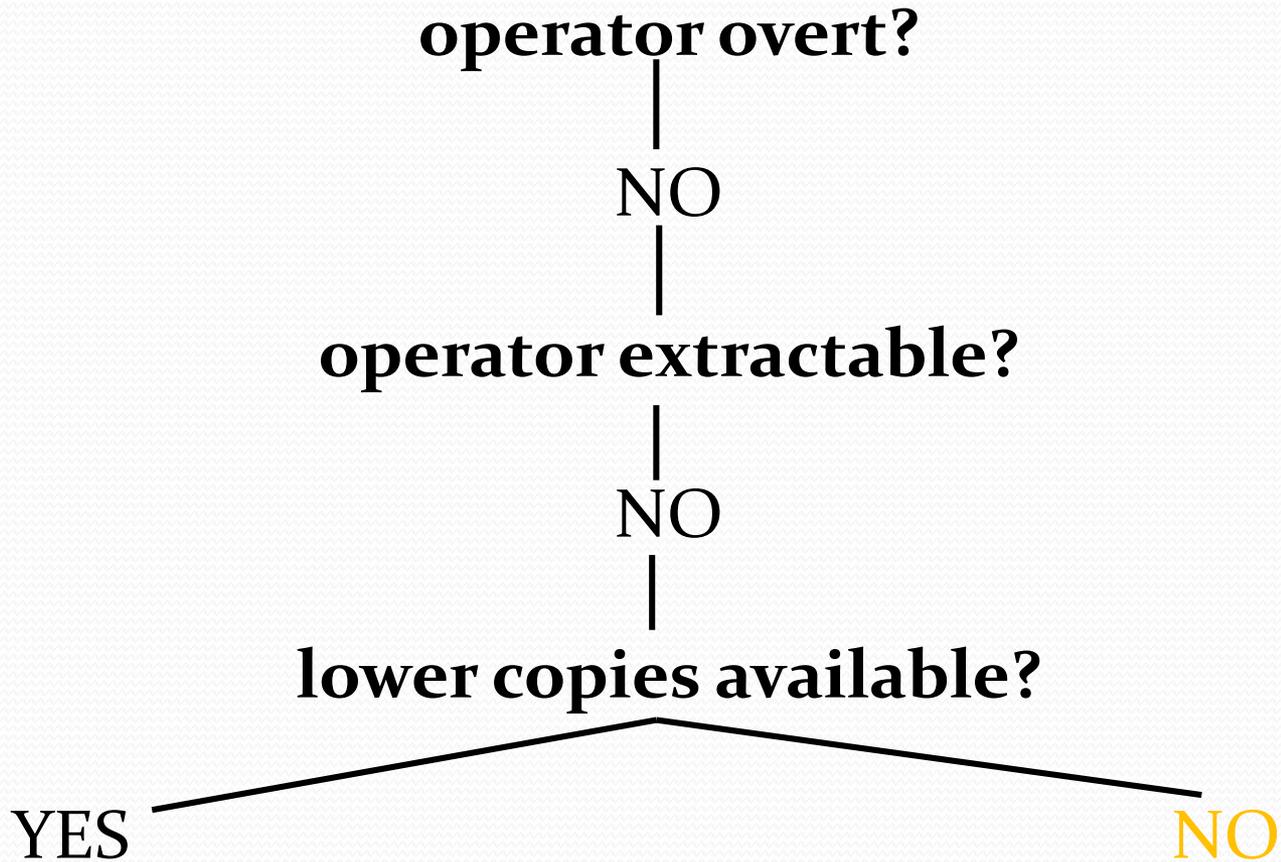
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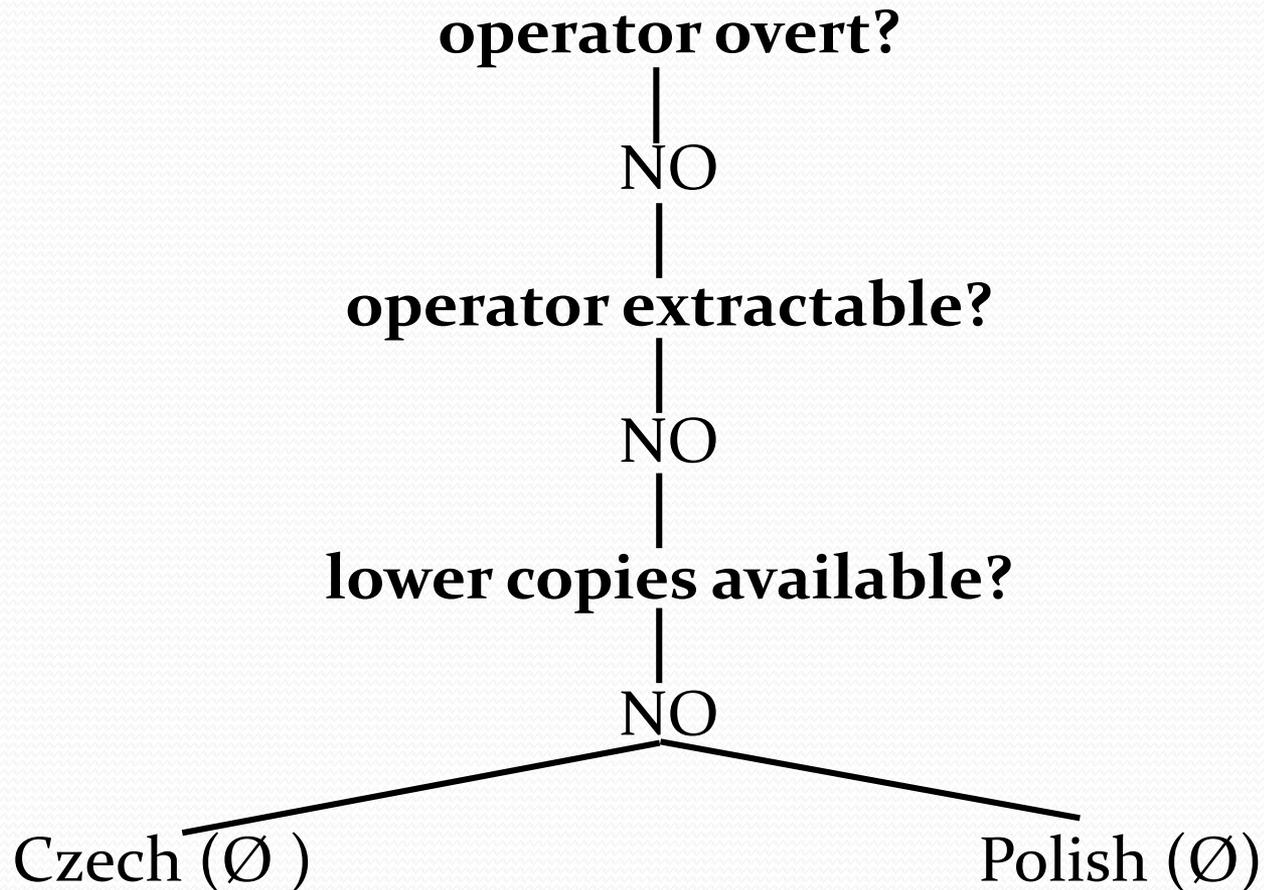
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Conclusion

Standard English pattern far from being universal

Comparative Deletion: result of various factors

- overttness of the comparative operator
- extractability of the operator from the quantified degree expression
- properties of movement chains – realisation of lower copies
- information structure

Thank you!



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