

The syntactic category of comparative complements cross-linguistically

Julia Bacskai-Atkari

University of Potsdam

julia.bacskai-atkari@uni-potsdam.de

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Introduction

comparative constructions: *than*-XP expressing the standard value of comparison:

(1) Ralph is taller **than** Mary.

question: category of the element THAN

PP and CP complements

THAN can be a C or a P head:

- (2) a. Ralph is taller **than** she is.
- b. Raulo è più alto **di** te.
 Ralph is more tall.M of you.ACC
 'Ralph is taller than you.'

(2a): *than* a C head

(2b): *di* a P head

Question

status of surface-ambiguous cases like (1):

- reduced full (tensed) CP – Bresnan (1973); Lechner (2004)
- PP, *than* having two separate lexical entries as C and P – Hankamer (1973)
- CP without tense specification, no proper ellipsis – following Bacskai-Atkari (2014b)

Proposal

cross-linguistically also intermediate types between prototypical C and P, types can be put on a cline, grammaticalisation possible

- C heads always taking full (tensed) clauses – e.g. Afrikaans
- C heads taking either a full (tensed) clause or a small (tenseless) clause, small clause option restricted to constructions where an external case assigner is available – e.g. German
- C heads taking either a full (tensed) clause or a small (tenseless) clause, small clause option available across the board – e.g. English
- P heads – e.g. Italian *di*

Phrasal comparatives

Italian *di* takes a DP complement:

- (3) Raulo è più alto **di** te.
 Ralph is more tall.M of you.ACC
 'Ralph is taller than you.'

structure cannot be expanded:

- (4) a. *Raulo è più alto **di** tu sei.
 Ralph is more tall.M of you.NOM be.2SG
 'Ralph is taller than you.'
- b. *Maria ama Giorgio più **di** Anna Pietro.
 Mary loves George more of Anna Peter
 'Mary loves George more than Anna loves Peter.'

Italian

compare *che* 'that' (cf. Napoli & Nespor 1986, Bacskai-Atkari 2010, Bacskai-Atkari 2014c):

- (5) a. Maria ama Giorgio più **che** Anna Pietro.
Mary loves George more that Anna Peter
'Mary loves George more than Anna loves Peter.'
- b. Maria è più intelligente **che** divertente.
Mary is more intelligent that entertaining
'Mary is more intelligent than entertaining.'

hence: *di* is a P element taking a regular DP complement

Polish

od 'from' + DP in the genitive

(Borsley & Jaworska 1981, 80, ex. 8; cf. also Stolz 2013):

- (6) Jan jest wyższy **od** Piotra.
John is taller from Peter.GEN
'John is taller than Peter.'

Types of PPs

P element may be the head of a lexical Kase projection (KP)
cross-linguistically

lexical cases: instances of PP (see Asbury 2005, 2008)

KP the lowest PP layer, immediately above the DP; KP tops off
the nominal projection, projections of higher P constitute a
different extended projection (Den Dikken 2010, cf. also
Dékány & Hegedűs 2014 on Hungarian)

Russian

genitive case (cf. the discussion in Bacskai-Atkari 2014c):

- (7) Ona vyše **svoix** **odnoklassnikov**.
she taller her.PL.GEN classmates.GEN
'She is taller than her classmates.'

Greek

genitive case (dated; see Bacskai-Atkari 2015a):

- (8) Eida mia gynaika psiloteri **tis miteras mou.**
saw.1SG a woman taller the.GEN mother.GEN my
'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

Hungarian

adessive case (cf. Wunderlich 2001, Bacskai-Atkari 2014c):

- (9) Mari magasabb **Péternél**.
Mary taller Peter.ADE
'Mary is taller than Peter.'

Distribution of phrasal comparatives

importantly: PP-comparatives available across the board – not linked to a specific position in the clause

Clausal comparatives – tensed clauses

two indicators:

- full clause recoverable with a tensed verb
- remnant DP bears underlying structural case – nominative subjects

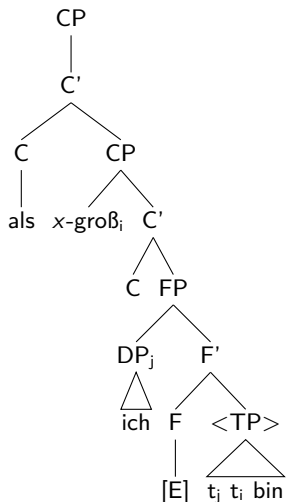
German

- (10) a. Der Tisch ist länger **als** das Büro breit ist.
 the table is longer than the office wide is
 'The table is longer than the office is wide.'
- b. Ralf ist größer **als** ich/*mich.
 Ralph is taller than I.NOM/I.ACC
 'Ralph is taller than I am.'

structure of elliptical clauses like (10b): FP (functional projection) generated above TP, remnant moves to [Spec,FP], F head carries the ellipsis feature [E], complement of F elided, see Merchant (2001)

Structure

(11)



Properties

case assignment: regularly in TP (Bacskai-Atkari 2014b)

lower CP: hosts the operator (cf. Chomsky 1977; Kennedy 2002 on relative operator movement in comparatives); no overt material in [Spec,CP] if the operator itself is zero (marked here as “x”; see the “Overtness Requirement” of Bacskai-Atkari 2014c)

Icelandic

nominative/accusative system (see Hróarsdóttir 2001)
↔ Mainland Scandinavian nominative/oblique system:

- (12) Egill er hærrí **en** þú.
Egill is taller than you.NOM
'Egill is taller than you.'

Afrikaans

- (13) Sy is langer **as** ek.
she is taller than I.NOM
'She is taller than I am.'

Greek

Giannakidou & Yoon (2011, 627, ex. 10):

- (14) I Kiki ine psiloteri **apoti** i Ariadhni.
the.NOM Kiki is taller than the.NOM Ariadne
'Kiki is taller than Ariadne.'

Hungarian

- (15) Mari magasabb, **mint** Péter.
Mary taller than Peter.NOM
'Mary is taller than Peter.'

Czech

- (16) Marie jest vyšší **než** já.
Mary is taller than I.NOM
'Mary is taller than I am.'

So...

elliptical structures like (10b) can be derived from full clauses,
pattern attested cross-linguistically

Dutch

- (17) Ik ben langer **dan** hij/%hem.
I am taller than he.NOM/he.ACC
'I am taller than he is.'

English

(18) Ralph is taller **than** ?I/me.

So...

a general ellipsis mechanism is not sufficient for the analysis of all reduced comparatives

Clausal comparatives – tenseless clauses

so far: two types of clausal comparatives:

- languages with regular clausal patterns (German, Afrikaans)
- languages that show deviation (English, colloquial Dutch)

Afrikaans

case of remnant DP always matches underlying case
(Bacskai-Atkari 2014a):

- (19) 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.'

German

unexpected pattern (Bacskai-Atkari 2014b):

- (20) Ich habe einen größeren Mann **als** meinen
 I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man than my.M.ACC
 Vater gesehen.
 father seen
 'I saw a taller man than my father is.'

nominative remnant associated with a different meaning:

- (21) Ich habe einen größeren Mann **als** mein
 I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man than my.M.NOM
 Vater gesehen.
 father seen
 'I saw a taller man than my father saw.'

Icelandic

- (22) a. 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.'
- b. 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.'

Core idea

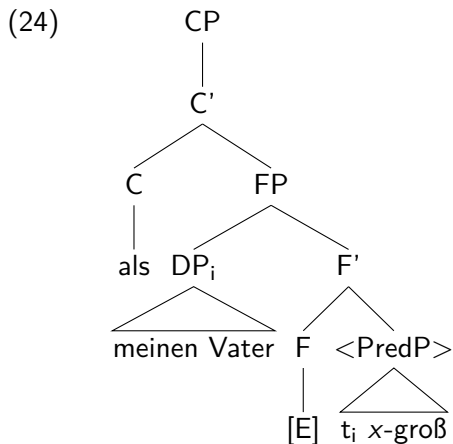
- cf. Bacskai-Atkari (2014b): no full tensed clause in (20)
- PredP generated below FP instead of TP – phenomenon restricted to predicative clauses in German
 - no nominative case assignment in base-generation position of the subject
 - case assignment from matrix transitive verb – phenomenon restricted to cases where there is a potential case assigner, unlike simple predicative clauses like (10b)

Adjacency

reduced, tenseless THAN-XP has to be adjacent to the matrix object (constituency):

- (23) *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen **als**
I have.1SG a.M.ACC taller.M.ACC man seen than
meinen Vater.
my.M.ACC father
'I saw a taller man than my father is.'

Structure



Properties

lower CP absent – no operator movement → ellipsis takes place to eliminate an ungrammatical relative operator in its base position (no relative in situ, see Bacskai-Atkari 2014c; see also the analysis of Bacskai-Atkari & Kántor 2012 for similar phenomena in Finno-Ugric) → FP layer generated regularly, tenseless clauses always contain only a single remnant but no adjectival predicate, unlike tensed clauses

Greek

only nominative available but no predicative reading
(Bacskai-Atkari 2015a):

- (25) Eida mia gynaike psiloteri **ap'oti** i/*ti
saw.1SG a woman taller than the.NOM/the.ACC
mitera mou.
mother my
'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'

Hungarian

only nominative, ambiguous (Bacskai-Atkari 2015b):

- (26) Láttam egy magasabb nőt, **mint** Liza/*Lizát.
saw.1SG a taller woman.ACC than Liz.NOM/Liz.ACC
'I saw a taller woman than Liz.'

English

- (27) a. I saw a taller woman **than** her.
'I saw a taller woman than she saw. / I saw a taller woman than she is.'
- b. Ralph is taller **than** me.

So...

English accusative case not restricted to cases where the matrix verb can assign accusative

a general ellipsis mechanism and small clauses dependent on the matrix transitive verb are not sufficient for the analysis of all reduced comparatives

Clausal comparatives – grammaticalised small clauses

so far: three types of clausal comparatives:

- languages with regular clausal patterns involving tensed clauses (Afrikaans, Greek)
- languages with predictable clausal patterns involving tensed and tenseless clauses (German, Icelandic)
- languages that show deviation (English, Dutch)

Question

THAN-XP in the third type always a CP, or CP/PP variation (two lexical elements of different categories for THAN)

potential sources of accusative case:

- default case accusative in English, appears in the absence of an overt case assigner (see Schütze 2001)
- assigned by THAN as a preposition (Hankamer 1973)

Wh-extraction

argument of Hankamer (1973) for P status: asymmetry in
wh-extraction

- (28) a. Who_i are you taller **than** t_i?
b. *Who_i are you taller **than** t_i is?

Prepositions in English

both stranding and pied-piping:

- (29) a. **What**_i did you open the bottle [with t_i]?
b. [**With what**]_i did you open the bottle t_i?

no pied-piping with *than*:

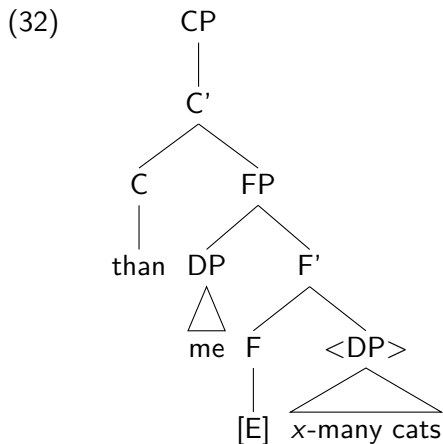
- (30) ***[Than who(m)]**_i are you taller t_i?

Accusative in English

default case (Schütze 2001) – generally available for DP remnants
– no PredP necessary

(31) Ralph has more cats **than** me.

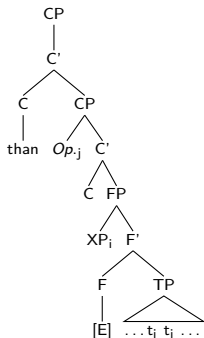
Structure



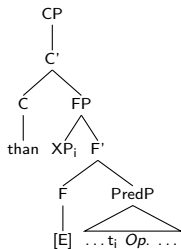
Grammaticalisation

(33)

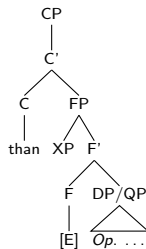
a.



b.



c.



Reanalysis

- reanalysis involving the loss of PredP: grammaticalisation into a more functional projection (no predication proper, general predicative relation more similar to the Relator Phrase of Den Dikken 2006)
- no reanalysis of FP into PP – would be less structure (DP complement of P head) but would be degrammaticalisation; also: structures in (33a) and (33b) have not disappeared, full, non-elliptical clauses exist, hence ample input for the learner for *than* as a proper C head
- status of English *than*: still a C head, complement types vary

Conclusion

various types of comparatives cross-linguistically:

- phrasal comparatives
- clausal comparatives with typical clausal surface pattern
- clausal comparatives with mixed surface pattern

Overview

phrasal comparatives (PPs)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italian <i>di</i> Polish <i>od</i> Hungarian <i>-nál/-nél</i>
clausal comparatives (CPs)	both tensed and tenseless complements	tenseless complement available across the board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English <i>than</i> Dutch <i>dan/als</i> (substandard)
		tenseless complement only if licensed by a matrix transitive verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German <i>als</i> Icelandic <i>en</i>
	only tensed complements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afrikaans <i>as</i> Greek <i>apoti</i> Hungarian <i>mint</i> 	

So...

- no universal phrasal (PP) analysis for structures with a single DP following THAN – clausal reduction attested in several languages
- no universal TP-deletion analysis (ellipsis of full clauses) – even CPs can be minimal

Thank you!

Danke!

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