

# Comparative Deletion and the Overtness Requirement

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# Dissertation project

- ◉ structure of degree expressions
- ◉ Comparative Deletion
- ◉ Attributive Comparative Deletion
- ◉ diachronic changes (left periphery)
- ◉ optional ellipsis processes (subclause)

# Introduction

## ◉ Comparative Deletion:

- (1) a. Ralph is more qualified than Jason is **x-qualified**.
- b. Ralph has more qualifications than Jason has **x-many-qualifications**.
- c. Ralph has better qualifications than Jason has **x-good-qualifications**.

# Subcomparatives

- (2) a. The table is longer  
than the desk is **wide**.
- b. Ralph has more books  
than Jason has **manuscripts**.
- c. Ralph wrote a longer book  
than Jason did a **manuscript**.

# Previous analyses

- ◉ Bresnan (1973)
- ◉ Lechner (1999, 2004)  
problems (Bacskai-Atkari 2010a)
- ◉ Kennedy (2002)

# Hungarian

- (3) a. Mari magasabb, mint **amilyen magas** Peti.  
Mary taller than how tall Peter  
'Mary is taller than Peter.'
- b. Marinak több macskája van,  
Mary-DAT more cat-POSS.3SG is  
mint **ahány macskája** Petinek van.  
than how.many cat-POSS.3SG Peter-DAT is  
'Mary has more cats than Peter has.'
- c. Marinak nagyobb macskája van,  
Mary-DAT bigger cat-POSS.3SG is  
mint **amilyen nagy macskája** Petinek van.  
than how big cat-POSS.3SG Peter-DAT is  
'Mary has a bigger cat than Peter has.'

# Attributive Comparative Deletion

- (4)
- a. Ralph bought a bigger cat than George did ~~buy~~ a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - b. Ralph bought a bigger cat than George ~~bought~~ a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - c. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George bought a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - d. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George bought a big cat flap.
  - e. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George ~~bought~~ a big cat flap.
  - f. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George did ~~buy~~ a big cat flap.

Kennedy and Merchant (2000)

# Questions

- the site of deletion (base position or left periphery)
- why Comparative Deletion seems to be obligatory in English
- obligatory verb deletion in attributive comparatives
- the ungrammaticality of an overt quantified AP in attributive comparatives (English)

# Comparative Deletion

descriptively: a process which eliminates the QP or the quantified DP from the subclause, if it is logically identical with its antecedent in the matrix clause  
(Bacskai-Atkari 2010b, 2012)

# Deletion

- (5) a. Ralph was reading a novel  
and Peter ~~was reading~~ an epic.
- b. \*Ralph was reading a novel  
and Peter ~~was writing~~ an epic.

# Operator movement

moved constituent: entire quantified AP (QP) or entire quantified DP in English

- ◉ operator cannot be extracted from within the QP
- ◉ QP cannot be extracted from within the DP (cf. Kayne 1983; Ross 1986; Izvorski 1995; Grebenyova 2004; Bošković 2005; Kántor 2008)

# Interrogatives

- (6) a. \***How** is Ralph **qualified**?  
b. **How qualified** is Ralph?  
c. \***How big** did Ralph see **cats**?  
d. **How big cats** did Ralph see?  
e. \***How many** did Ralph see **cats**?  
f. **How many cats** did Ralph see?

# Copies

- (7) a. Ralph is more qualified  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> **x-qualified**] Jason is [<sub>QP</sub> **x-qualified**]]].
- b. Ralph has more qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> **x-many qualifications**] Jason has  
[<sub>DP</sub> **x-many qualifications**]]].
- c. Ralph has better qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> **x-good qualifications**] Jason has  
[<sub>DP</sub> **x-good qualifications**]]].

# Copies

- (7) a. Ralph is more qualified  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> ~~x-qualified~~] Jason is [<sub>QP</sub> ~~x-qualified~~]]].
- b. Ralph has more qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-many qualifications~~] Jason has  
[<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-many qualifications~~]]].
- c. Ralph has better qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-good qualifications~~] Jason has  
[<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-good qualifications~~]]].

# Copies

- (7) a. Ralph is more qualified  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> ~~x-qualified~~] Jason is [<sub>QP</sub> ~~x-qualified~~]]].
- b. Ralph has more qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-many qualifications~~] Jason has [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-many qualifications~~]]].
- c. Ralph has better qualifications  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-good qualifications~~] Jason has [<sub>DP</sub> ~~x-good qualifications~~]]].

# Subdeletion structures

- (8) The table is longer  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> **x-wide**]<sub>F</sub> the desk is [<sub>QP</sub> **x-wide**]<sub>F</sub>]].

# Subdeletion structures

- (8) The table is longer  
[<sub>CP</sub> than [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> ~~x-wide~~]<sub>F</sub> the desk is [<sub>QP</sub> x-wide]<sub>F</sub>]].

# Contrastiveness

- (9) a. ??/\*The table is longer than the desk is **long**.
- b. A: The table is longer than the desk is wide.  
B: No, the table is longer than the desk is **LONG**.

# Hungarian

## ◉ *amilyen* 'how' + non-contrastive AP:

- (10) a. Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint **amilyen magas** Péter volt.  
than how tall Peter was.3SG  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'
- b. \*Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint **amilyen** Péter volt **magas.**  
than how Peter was.3SG tall  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'

# Hungarian

- ◉ *amennyire* 'how much' + non-contrastive AP:

- (11) a. Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint **amennyire magas** Péter volt.  
than how.much tall Peter was.3SG  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'
- b. Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint **amennyire** Péter volt **magas.**  
than how.much Peter was.3SG tall  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'

# Hungarian

- no zero operator (+ non-contrastive AP):

- (12) a. \*Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint **magas** Péter volt.  
than tall Peter was.3SG  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'
- b. \*Mari magasabb,  
Mary taller  
mint Péter volt **magas**.  
than Peter was.3SG tall  
'Mary is taller than Peter was.'

# Hungarian

- ◉ *amilyen* 'how' + contrastive AP:

- (13) a. Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint **amilyen széles** az iroda.  
than how wide the office  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'
- b. \*Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint **amilyen** az iroda **széles**.  
than how the office wide  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

# Hungarian

- ◉ *amennyire* 'how.much' + contrastive AP:

- (14) a. Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint **amennyire széles** az iroda.  
than how.much wide the office  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'
- b. \*Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint **amennyire** az iroda **széles**.  
than how.much the office wide  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

# Hungarian

- no zero operator (+ contrastive AP):

- (15) a. Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint **széles** az iroda.  
than wide the office  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'
- b. \*Az asztal hosszabb,  
the desk longer  
mint az iroda **széles**.  
than the office wide  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

# Interrogatives

◉ *milyen* 'how':

(16) a. **Milyen magas** volt Péter?  
how tall was.3SG Peter  
'How tall was Peter?'

b. \***Milyen** volt Péter **magas**?  
how was.3SG Peter tall  
'How tall was Peter?'

# Interrogatives

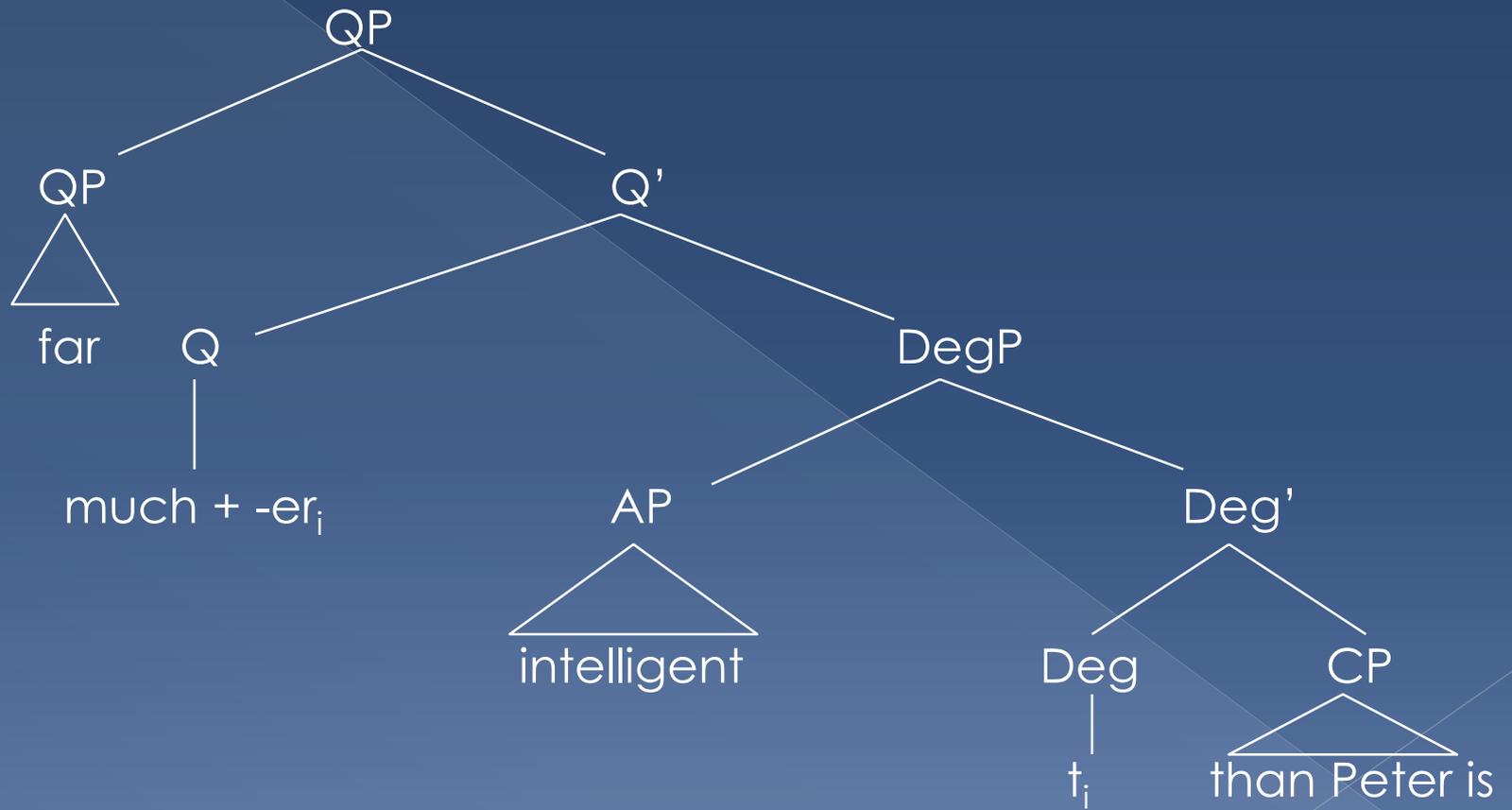
◎ *mennyire* 'how much':

(17) a. **Mennyire** **magas** volt Péter?  
how.much tall was.3sg Peter  
'How tall was Peter?'

b. **Mennyire** volt Péter **magas**?  
how.much was.3sg Peter tall  
'How tall was Peter?'

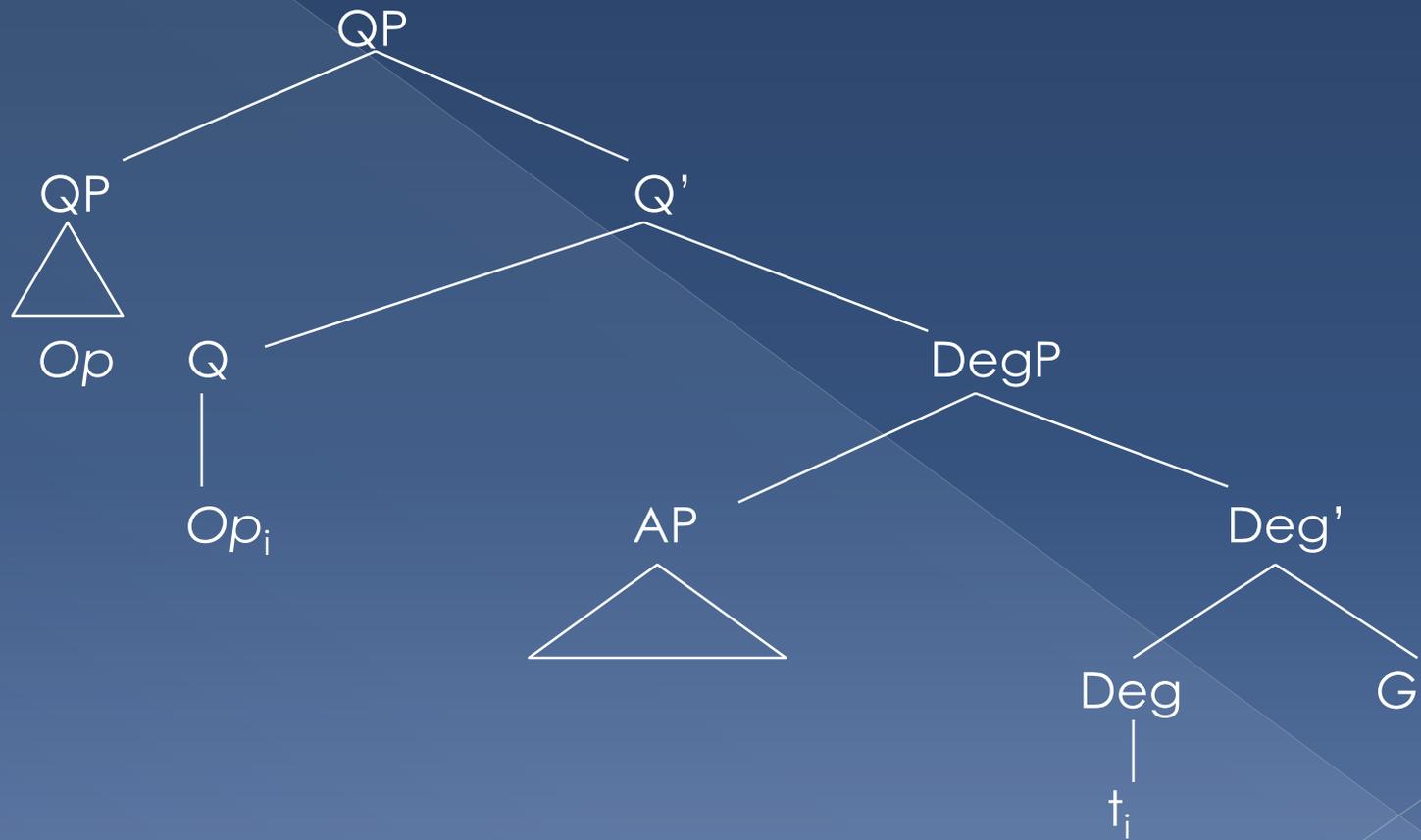
# Degree expressions

(18)



# Operator positions

(19)



# Hungarian operators

- ◉ *amilyen* 'how': a Deg head  
→ not extractable
- ◉ *amennyire* 'how much': a QP modifier  
→ extractable

# English

## ◉ *how*: a Deg head

- (20) a. <sup>OK</sup>/<sub>\*</sub>Mary is taller than **how tall** Peter is.
- b. <sub>\*</sub>Mary is taller than **how** Peter is **tall**.
- c. <sup>OK</sup>/<sub>\*</sub>The desk is longer than **how wide** the office is.
- d. <sub>\*</sub>The desk is longer than **how** the office is **wide**.

# English

- ◉ zero operator: Deg head

- (21) a. ??/\*Mary is taller than Peter is **tall**.
- b. The desk is longer than the office is **wide**.

# Czech interrogatives

- ◉ *jak* 'how': QP modifier

(22) a. **Jak vysoký** je Karel?  
how tall is Karel  
'How tall is Karel?'

b. **Jak** je Karel **vysoký**?  
how is Karel tall  
'How tall is Karel?'

# Czech comparatives

- *jak* 'how': QP modifier (+ non-contrastive AP)

(23) a. <sup>??</sup>Marie je vyšší, než **jak vysoký** je Karel.  
Marie is taller than how tall is Karel  
'Marie is taller than Karel.'

b. <sup>?</sup>Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je **vysoký** Karel.  
Marie is taller than how is tall Karel  
'Marie is taller than Karel.'

# Czech comparatives

- *jak* 'how': QP modifier (+ contrastive AP)

(23) c. <sup>??</sup>Ten stůl je delší,  
that desk is longer  
než **jak široká** je ta kancelář.  
than how wide is that office  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

d. Ten stůl je delší,  
that desk is longer  
než **jak** je ta kancelář **široká**.  
than how is that office wide  
'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

# Dutch interrogatives

- ◉ *hoe* 'how': Deg head

(24) a. **Hoe groot** is Jan?  
how tall is John  
'How tall is John?'

b. \***Hoe** is Jan **groot**?  
how is John tall  
'How tall is John?'

# Dutch comparatives

- hoe 'how': Deg head (+ non-contrastive AP)

(25) a. <sup>OK</sup>/\*Maria is groter  
Mary is taller  
dan hoe groot Jan is.  
than how tall John is  
'Mary is taller than John.'

b. \*Maria is groter  
Mary is taller  
dan hoe Jan groot is.  
than how John tall is  
'Mary is taller than John.'

# Dutch comparatives

- hoe 'how': Deg head (+ contrastive AP)

(25) c. <sup>OK</sup>/<sub>\*</sub>De tafel is langer  
the table is longer  
dan **hoe breed** het kantoor is.  
than how wide the.NEUT office is  
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

d. <sub>\*</sub>De tafel is langer  
the table is longer  
dan **hoe** het kantoor **breed** is  
than how the.NEUT office wide is  
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

# Dutch comparatives

- zero operator: QP modifier

- (26) a. ? Maria is groter  
Mary is taller  
dan Jan **groot** is.  
than John tall is  
'Mary is taller than John.'
- b. De tafel is langer  
the table is longer  
dan het kantoor **breed** is.  
than the.NEUToffice wide is  
'The table is longer than the office is wide.'

# German

- zero comparative operator: QP modifier

(27) a. <sup>?</sup>Maria ist größer als Johann **groß** ist.  
Mary is taller than John tall is  
'Mary is taller than John.'

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

# Operators cross-linguistically

(28)

	<b>overt</b>	<b>covert</b>
<b>Deg head</b>	<i>how</i> (English) <i>amilyen</i> (Hungarian) <i>hoe</i> (Dutch)	zero (English)
<b>QP modifier</b>	<i>amennyire</i> (Hungarian) <i>jak</i> (Czech)	zero (Dutch) zero (German) zero (Italian)

# Overttness requirement

a phonologically visible lexical XP may appear in an operator position only if it appears together with a phonologically visible operator

combinations in [Spec,CP]:

- HOW – licensed
- HOW long – licensed
- $\emptyset$  – licensed
- $\emptyset$  long – not licensed

# Czech

*jak* 'how' + non-contrastive AP

- (29) a. <sup>??</sup>Marie je vyšší, než **jak vysoký** je Karel.  
Marie is taller than how tall is Karel  
'Marie is taller than Karel.'
- b. <sup>?</sup>Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je **vysoký** Karel.  
Marie is taller than how is tall Karel  
'Marie is taller than Karel.'
- c. #Marie je vyšší, než **jak** je Karel **vysoký**.  
Marie is taller than how is Karel tall  
'Marie is taller than Karel.'

# Czech

*jak* 'how' + contrastive AP

(30) Ten stůl je delší,  
that desk is longer

- a. <sup>??</sup>než **jak široká** je ta kancelář.  
than how wide is that office
- b. #než **jak** je **široká** ta kancelář.  
than wide is wide that office
- c. než **jak** je ta kancelář **široká**.  
than wide is that office wide

'The desk is longer than the office is wide.'

# Hungarian

*amennyire* 'how much' + non-contrastive AP

(31) Mari            magasabb,  
Mary            taller

a.    mint    **amennyire**    **magas**    Péter    volt.  
      than    how.much    tall        Peter    was.3SG

b.    #mint    **amennyire**    Péter    **magas**    volt.  
      than    how.much    Peter    tall        was.3SG

c.    <sup>??</sup>mint    **amennyire**    Péter    volt        **magas.**  
      than    how.much    Peter    was.3SG    tall

'Mary is taller than Peter was.'

# Hungarian

*amennyire* 'how much' + contrastive AP

(32) 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.'

# The cat



# Hungarian

*amennyire* 'how much' + contrastive AP

(32) 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.'

# Attributive Comparative Deletion

- (33)
- a. Ralph bought a bigger cat than George did ~~buy~~ a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - b. Ralph bought a bigger cat than George ~~bought~~ a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - c. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George bought a ~~big~~ cat flap.
  - d. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George bought a big cat flap.
  - e. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George ~~bought~~ a big cat flap.
  - f. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George did ~~buy~~ a big cat flap.

# Positional problem

- (34) a. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George ~~bought~~ a wide cat flap.
- b. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat than George did ~~buy~~ a wide cat flap.

● related to the remnant NP:

- (35) Ralph bought a bigger cat than George bought ~~a big cat~~.

# Hungarian

- (36) Rudolf nagyobb macskát vett,  
Rudolph bigger cat-ACC bought.3SG  
mint **amilyen széles macskaajtót** Miklós vett.  
than how wide cat flap-ACC Mike bought.3SG  
'Rudolph bought a bigger cat than Mike did a cat flap.'

# Previous analyses

Kennedy and Merchant (2000): quantified AP not grammatical in a certain position within the nominal expression – deletion carried out by a more general process (VP-ellipsis)

(similar analysis by Reglero 2006 for Spanish)

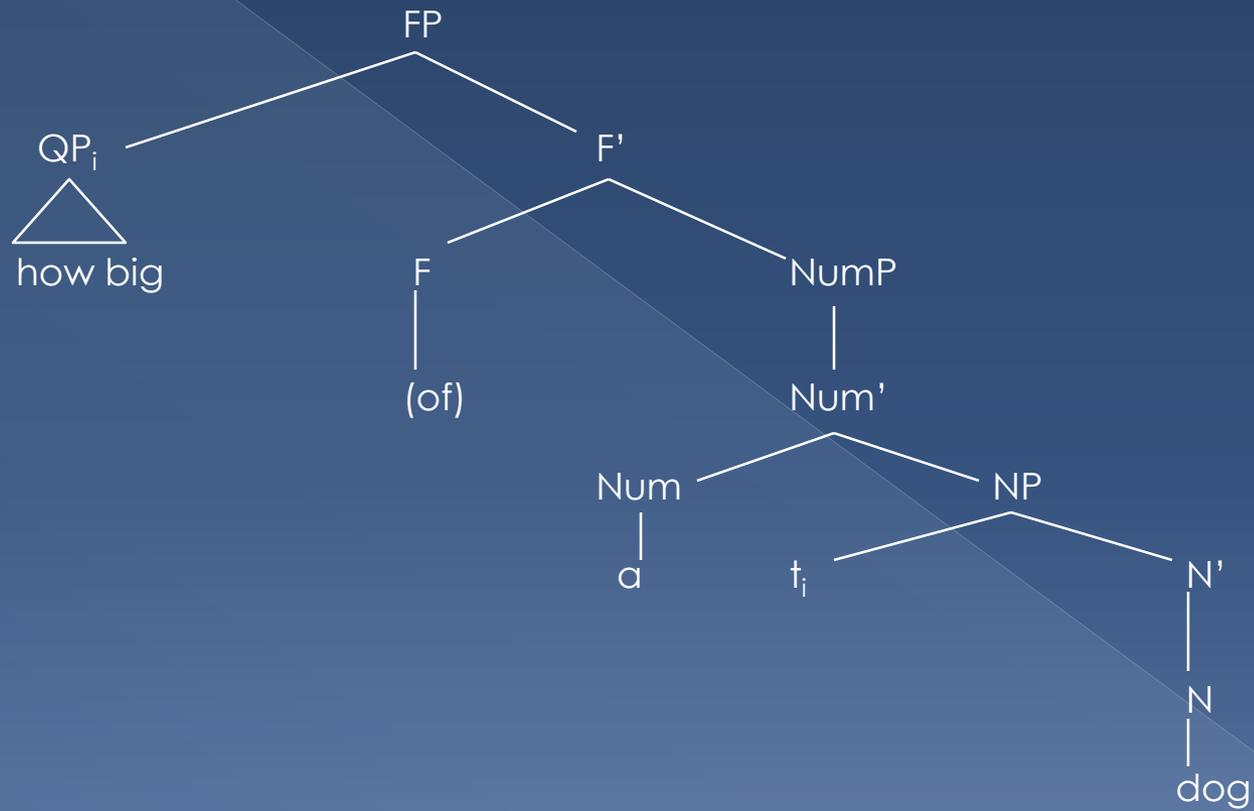
→ question: why the quantified AP is not grammatical

# Inversion

- (37) a. **[How interesting a play]** did Brio write?  
b. I ate **[too big a piece]**.  
c. Bob didn't write **[as detailed a proposal]** as Sheila did.

# Structure

(38)



# Linear ellipsis

- (39) a. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than Mike [<sub>VP</sub> bought [<sub>FP</sub> x-big [<sub>NUMP</sub> a cat flap]<sub>F</sub>]].
- b. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than Mike [<sub>VP</sub> ~~bought~~ [<sub>FP</sub> x-big [<sub>NUMP</sub> a cat flap]<sub>F</sub>]].
- c. Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than Mike [<sub>VP</sub> ~~bought~~ [<sub>FP</sub> ~~x-big~~ [<sub>NUMP</sub> a cat flap]<sub>F</sub>]].
- d. \*Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than Mike [<sub>VP</sub> ~~bought~~ [<sub>FP</sub> ~~x-big~~ [<sub>NUMP</sub> ~~a cat flap~~]<sub>F</sub>]].

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than  $[_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]$  Mike  
 $[_{VP} \text{ bought } [_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]]$ .

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than  ~~$[_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]$~~  Mike  
 $[_{VP} \text{ bought } [_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]]$ .

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than  ~~$[_{FP} x\text{-big} [_{NumP} a\text{ cat flap}]_F]$~~  Mike  
 $[_{VP} \text{bought} [_{FP} x\text{-big} [_{NumP} a\text{ cat flap}]_F]]$ .

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than  ~~$[_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]$~~  Mike  
 $[_{VP} \text{ bought } [_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]]$ .

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than  ~~$[_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]$~~  Mike  
 $[_{VP} \text{ bought } [_{FP} \text{ x-big } [_{NumP} \text{ a cat flap}]_F]]$ .

# Overttness requirement

(40) Ralph bought a bigger cat  
than Mike [<sub>NumP</sub> a cat flap]<sub>F</sub>].

# Generalised overttness requirement

- PF-interpretable configuration:

(41)  $X_{[EDGE]} Y$

- PF-uninterpretable configuration:

(42)  $[EDGE] Y$

# Conclusion

Comparative Deletion: result of more general rules

- overtness and extractability of operators
- overtness requirement on left-peripheral elements
- same overtness requirement attested in the nominal domain

→ no separate mechanism for Comparative Deletion /  
Attributive Comparative Deletion

Thank you!  
Danke!



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