Towards a Cross-Linguistic Typology of Marking Polarity in Embedded Degree Clauses

Julia Bacskaï-Atkari
University of Potsdam

julia.bacskaï-atkari@uni-potsdam.de

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Introduction

embedded degree clauses: *as*-clauses and *than*-clauses

(1)  a. Ralph is as tall **as** Mary is.
    b. Ralph is taller **than** Mary is.
Negative polarity

THAN-clauses: negative polarity environment (Seuren 1973)

negative polarity items, *any* licensed

(2) a. He would rather continue complaining than *lift a finger* to improve his life.

b. Ralph has spent more time travelling than *any* other professor (has).
Comparative semantics

- **AS-clauses**: degree equality \((d=d')\)
- **THAN-clauses**: degree inequality \((d\neq d')\)

\[(3)\]

a. \(x\) is as tall as \(y\): \(\exists d\exists d'[\text{TALL}(x,d) \& \text{TALL}(y,d') \& (d=d')]\)

b. \(x\) is taller than \(y\): \(\exists d\exists d'[\text{TALL}(x,d) \& \text{TALL}(y,d') \& (d>d')]\)

c. \(x\) is less tall than \(y\): \(\exists d\exists d'[\text{TALL}(x,d) \& \text{TALL}(y,d') \& (d<d')]\)
Proposal

- question: which head can be responsible for marking negative polarity
- proposal: either a separate Pol head or a comparative C head (various subtypes)

even overt comparative operators cannot take over this function

→ operators first have to acquire head status - doubling or radical replacement
Negative polarity heads

Italian (Seuren 1973: 535, exx. 45 and 46):

(4) a. Giovanni è più alto che non pensassi.
   ‘John is taller than I thought.’

   Giovanni è più alto che pensavo.
   ‘John is taller than I thought.’
French

*ne* appears with finite verbs (Seuren 1973: 535, ex. 44):

(5) Jean est plus grand que je *ne* pensais.
    John is more tall. that I not thought.1sg
    ‘John is taller than I thought.’

Negative polarity not the same as clausal negation

French: polarity marker is *ne*, but negation carried rather by *pas* otherwise
Old Hungarian
C head *hogy* ‘that’ + polarity marker *nem* ‘not’

(6) Zōṅekmīg te meltatlākedatod mv’èllènōć mět iob cease.PRT you indignance.POSS we against because better hog èluènèn zolgallonc Nabuhodonozor nag kiralnac & that alive serve.1PL Nebuchadnezzar great king.DAT and alazkoggonc te nèkèd *hog nē* meghaluāc mv’ cringe.1PL you you.DAT that not PRT.dying.1PL we vèzèdelmōčbèn mv’nmagonc mv’ zolgalatōknac peril.POSS.INE ourselves we service.POSS.DAT karat zènuègguc damage.POSS.ACC suffer.1PL

‘cease to be indignant towards us because it is better for us to serve the great king Nebuchadnezzar alive and to cringe before you that not (=than) to suffer the damages of our service dying’
Later Old Hungarian configuration

mint ‘as’ also appears as an overt operator (later lower C head):

(7) Te igyekezeted az isteny zolgalatban jnkab légen arra
you diligence.POSS the divine service.INE rather be.SBJV that.SUB
hog az zent irasnak igy ebevl lelky ertelmet
that the sacred writing.DAT thus this.ELA spiritual sense.ACC
vegy es aytatossagnak keuansagat hog nem mynt
take and prayer.DAT desire.POSS.ACC that not than
vduarlokeppen eneklesnek mogyat tegyed
courting singing.DAT mode.POSS.ACC do.SBJV.2SG
‘your diligence in serving God should be directed at gaining a
spiritual understanding of the Scripture and a desire for prayer,
rather than at taking the opportunity to sing for courting’
Structure

(8)  

CP

C’

C_{[\text{sub}],[\text{compr}]}

hogy

PolP

Pol’

Pol_{[\text{pol:neg}]}

nem

CP

C’

C_{[\text{compr}],[\text{rel}]}

mint

…
Features

- [sub]: marking finite subordination; does not have to be overt; encoded by a functional C head
- [compr]: marking the comparative nature of the clause; has to be overt; encoded either by a functional C head or by an operator (operator movement to the specifier of the lower CP)
- [rel]: marking the relative nature of the clause; does not have to be overt (language-specific); encoded either by a functional head or an operator; ensures that the comparative operator moves to the left periphery (cf. Chomsky 1977, Kennedy 2002 on comparative operators being relative operators)
- [pol:neg]: marking the negative polarity of the clause in the absence of clausal negation; has to be overt; encoded by a functional head
The overtness of comparative C heads

possible patterns in Modern Hungarian AS-clauses:

(9)  a. Mari olyan magas, mint amilyen (magas) Péter.
    Mary so tall as how.REL tall Peter
    ‘Mary is as tall as Peter.’

b. Mari olyan magas, mint Péter.
    Mary so tall as Peter
    ‘Mary is as tall as Peter.’

c. Mari olyan magas, amilyen (magas) Péter.
    Mary so tall how.REL tall Peter
    ‘Mary is as tall as Peter.’
Hungarian comparative subclauses

*mint* cannot be absent in THAN-clauses:

  Mary taller as how.REL tall Peter
  ‘Mary is taller than Peter.’

  Mary taller as Peter
  ‘Mary is taller than Peter.’

  c. *Mari magasabb, amilyen (magas)* Péter.
  Mary taller how.REL tall Peter
  ‘Mary is than Peter.’
Structure

(11)    CP
     C'
    /   \
C[sub],[compr],[pol:neg]  CP
     amilyen[rel],[compr]
   /  \
mint[sub],[compr],[pol:neg]  C'
       /    \ 
      C[rel],[sub]  ...
AS-clauses in Czech with the operator *jak*:

    the table is same long as wide is the office
    ‘The table is as long as the office is wide.’

b. Ten stůl je stejně dlouhý, *jak* je ta kancelář *siroká*.
    the table is same long how is the office wide
    ‘The table is long as long as the office is wide.’
Comparatives in Czech

    the table is longer than how wide is the office
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’

b. *Ten stůl je delší, než jak je ta kancelář široká.
    the table is longer than how is the office wide
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’

c. *Ten stůl je delší, jak široká je ta kancelář.
    the table is longer how wide is the office
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’

d. *Ten stůl je delší, jak je ta kancelář široká.
    the table is longer wide is the office wide
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’
So...

Overtness of comparative C heads follows from marking [pol:neg]

- but the C head does not have to be negative-like, though it can be
- negative C heads differ from Pol heads: Pol heads co-occur with a real C head
Multiple C heads

double CPs attested in Hungarian comparatives historically - *hogy* ‘that’ + *mint* ‘as’

lower C head taking over: passing on features, including [pol:neg]


- Standard German/northern dialects: *als* ‘than’
- certain dialects (e.g. Alemannic, Hessian): *als wie* ‘than as’
- southern dialects (e.g. Bavarian): *wie* ‘as’
Patterns in German

(14) a. Ralf ist größer als Peter.
   Ralph is taller than Peter
   ‘Ralph is taller than Peter.’

b. % Ralf ist größer als wie Peter.
   Ralph is taller than as Peter
   ‘Ralph is taller than Peter.’

c. % Ralf ist größer wie Peter.
   Ralph is taller as Peter
   ‘Ralph is taller than Peter.’
Structure

(15)    CP

          C'

        C[sub],[compr],[pol:neg]

      als[sub],[compr],[pol:neg]

    Op.[rel],[compr]

          C'

        C[rel],[sub]

      wie[sub],[compr]

...
Comparatives in Serbo-Croatian

basic pattern with *nego* ‘than’ or *no* ‘than’:

(16) a. Pavao je viši *nego* Petar.
Paul is taller than Peter
‘Paul is taller than Peter.’

b. Pavao je viši *no* Petar.
Paul is taller than Peter
‘Paul is taller than Peter.’
Multiple C heads in Serbo-Croatian

lower C heads:

(17) a. Pavao je viši nego što je Petar.
Paul is taller than what is Peter
‘Paul is taller than Peter.’

b. Pavao je viši nego koliko je Petar.
Paul is taller than as is Peter
‘Paul is taller than Peter.’
Radical replacement and Chain Uniformity

recall: Czech *jak* ‘how’ cannot replace *než* ‘than’ as an operator:

(18) a. ‘Ten stůl je delší, *(než) jak široká* je ta kancelář.
    the table is longer than how wide is the office
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’

b. Ten stůl je delší, *(než) jak* je ta kancelář široká.
    the table is longer than how is the office wide
    ‘The table is longer than the office is wide.’
Elliptical clauses in Czech

jak is possible in THAN-clauses as a C head iff the clause is elliptical:

   Mary is taller how is Charles
   ‘Mary is taller than Charles.’

   b. Renault stojí více jak (*stojí) Dacia.
   Renault costs more how costs Dacia
   ‘A Renault costs more than a Dacia.’
Embedded *wh*-questions in Alemannic and Bavarian

regular pattern in Alemannic/Bavarian: *wh*-phrase + *dass* ‘that’ in the C head position

Doubly Filled COMP effect

but: not with head-sized *wh*-element - complementary distribution with *dass*

(20) *I* woass aa ned, *wer* (*dass*) allas am Sunndoch in *I* know too not who that all at Sunday in da Kiach gwen is.

the church been is

‘I don’t know either who all has been to church on Sunday.’
Chain Uniformity

question of Chain Uniformity (cf. Chomsky 1995)

phrase moving to a head position

Bayer and Brandner (2008): dual status of head-sized phrases

but: in embedded questions the operator moves to a head position of the same CP that hosts operators otherwise
Comparatives

jak has to move to a C head responsible for [pol: neg] not for [rel]

otherwise jak would be preceded by a separate head (než)

reason: lower CP not generated (similar to Hungarian elliptical comparatives)

but: the [pol: neg] CP not filled by merging než but by moving jak

ellipsis: the visible base-generation site of jak would cause an operator interpretation

mismatch, [rel] not available in situ (↔ wh)

radical replacement of complementiser by operator: dual status, not grammaticalisation
Conclusion

cross-linguistic typology of polarity marking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) separate Pol head</td>
<td>● Old Hungarian <em>nem/sem</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Italian <em>non</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● French <em>ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(II) incorporated negative C head</td>
<td>● English dialectal <em>nor</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Old/Middle High German <em>wan</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Swiss German dialectal <em>wan/weder</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Czech <em>než</em></td>
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<td>● Polish <em>niz</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Serbo-Croatian <em>nego/no</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(III) THAN-C head</td>
<td>● English <em>than</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● German <em>als</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Old High German <em>denn</em></td>
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<td>● Dutch <em>dan</em></td>
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<td>● Russian <em>chem</em></td>
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<td>(IV) comparative C head</td>
<td>● German dialectal <em>wie</em></td>
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<td>● Hungarian <em>mint</em></td>
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<td>(V) more general C head</td>
<td>● Italian <em>che</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● French <em>que</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thank you!
Danke!
😊
References


- Bacskai-Atkari, Julia (2014b) Structural Case and Ambiguity in Reduced Comparative Subclauses in English and German. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 61.4. 363-378.


References

References


