Comparative Deletion and Comparative Clause Formation Cross-Linguistically

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Cambridge Comparative Syntax 3 (CamCoS 3)
Cambridge
8-10 May 2014
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 ± 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


(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].
Overtness 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 overtness 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 *NEUT* 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 overtness requirement


two different operator positions in the extended projection of the AP operator: a Deg head or a QP modifier (Bacskaï-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 *amennyire* **magas** Peter **volt**.
‘Mary is taller than Peter was.’

b. #Mari magasabb, mint **amennyire** Péter **magas** volt.
Mary taller than *amennyire* Peter **magas** volt.
‘Mary is taller than Peter was.’

c. Mari magasabb, mint amennyire Péter volt **magas**.
Mary taller than *amennyire* Peter **volt** **magas**.
‘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.’
(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

       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
(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)
(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):

     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 (↔ English):

   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
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

operator extractable?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

operator extractable?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

operator extractable?

YES

Hungarian (amennyire)  Czech (jak)
A short guide

operator overt?

operator extractable?

YES

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

operator extractable?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

operator extractable?

NO

English (how)  Dutch (hoe)  Hungarian (amennyire)
A short guide

operator overt?

YES

NO
A short guide
A short guide

operator overt?

operator extractable?

YES

NO

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

NO

operator extractable?

YES

German (Ø)  Dutch (Ø)  Estonian (Ø)
A short guide

operator overt?

operator extractable?

YES

NO

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

NO

operator extractable?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

 NO

operator extractable?

 NO

lower copies available?

 YES

 NO
A short guide

operator overt?

NO

operator extractable?

NO

lower copies available?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

   NO

operator extractable?

   NO

lower copies available?

   YES

   English (Ø)
A short guide

operator overt?
  NO
  operator extractable?
    NO
    NO
    lower copies available?
      YES
      NO
A short guide

operator overt?

NO

operator extractable?

NO

lower copies available?

YES

NO
A short guide

operator overt?

NO

operator extractable?

NO

lower copies available?

NO

Czech (Ø ) Polish (Ø)
Conclusion

Standard English pattern far from being universal

Comparative Deletion: result of various 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
Thank you!
References

References

References