Equative elements in comparative constructions and in relative clauses in the history of German and English

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Equative Constructions
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Introduction

degree equatives in English:

(1) a. Ralph is as tall as Mary (is).
b. Ralph has as many cats as Mary (has).
c. Ralph has as fast a cat as Mary (has).
Equative elements

- matrix equative element *as* — takes a lexical AP or *many*, entire degree expression may be a predicate or a modifier of the NP

- equative complementiser *as* of the subclause

no surface identity requirement on the two – German:

(2) Ralf ist **so groß** wie Maria.
    Ralph is **so tall** as Mary
    ‘Ralph is as tall as Mary.’
Equative relative clauses

earlier stages and certain dialects of English (Kortmann & Wagner 2007)

(3) And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. 

(\textit{King James Bible}, Genesis 4:21)

similar constructions attested in the history of German

question: how the availability of equative elements in relative clauses can be accounted for
Proposal

- equative elements differ in terms of encoding
- lexical meaning of similarity associated with the equative element in the subclause, not the one in the matrix clause
- matrix equative element expresses equation, not specifically degree equation
- degree interpretation arises if the matrix degree element has a gradable predicate in its specifier, which is also mapped onto the degree operator in the subclause
- lack of gradable predicate produces an identificational interpretation – special case of (restrictive) relative clauses: “equative relative clauses”
- cross-linguistic differences depend on whether the equative head has to take a gradable argument
The syntax of comparatives

predicative comparatives:

(4)  a. Ralph is taller than Peter (is).
    b. Ralph is more intelligent than Peter (is).
Assumptions

(Bacskaï-Atkari 2014b, 45–53)

- element -er is a degree head
- the AP is in the specifier of the Deg head – Lechner (2004)
- the than-CP is the complement of the Deg head – Lechner (2004)
- a QP is generated above the DegP, the Deg moves to Q – cf. Bresnan (1973) and Corver (1997) on Q elements; see also Lechner (1999)
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Restrictions

Deg head imposes selectional restrictions on the complement
restrictions on the AP in the specifier, too – must be gradable (or
a gradable interpretation must be licensed contextually)

(6) \#Mary is more pregnant than Anne.
Degree operators

degree in the subclause: operator movement to the CP-periphery (comparative operator a relative operator – Chomsky 1977) – visible if the operator itself is visible (cf. the Overtness Requirement of Bacskai-Atkari 2014b)

(7) %Ralph is taller than how tall Peter is.
Semantics

(8) $\exists d \exists d' [TALL (r,d) \& TALL (p,d') \& (d \neq d') \& (d > d')]$

encoding of semantic properties (Bacskai-Atkari 2016b):

- degree $d$: matrix Deg head (-er)
- degree $d'$: operator in the subclause (how)
- degree inequality: comparative complementiser (than)
- superiority/inferiority: matrix Deg head
Properties of comparatives

- the degree element -er is often a bound morpheme, and it cannot stand alone as a proform – (9a)
- the than-CP is licensed only if the matrix degree element is present – (9b)

(9) a. Peter is indeed tall, but Ralph is more *(so).
   b. *Ralph is tall than Peter.

→ comparatives seem to be tied to a degree interpretation, the DegP is an integer part of the construction
Degree interpretation

some APs may be lexically specified as comparative (Bacskai-Atkari 2014b, 53)

(10) a. %University life is **different** than I expected.
    b. I don’t want to be anything **other** than what I’ve been trying to be lately.
    c. Marzahn-Hellersdorf ist **anders** als man denkt. Marzahn-Hellersdorf is other than one thinks ‘Marzahn-Hellersdorf is different from what one thinks it it.’

but: (10) attested with only a small set of adjectives, not across the board with all gradable adjectives
The syntax of equatives

question: whether equatives have the same structure as comparatives

(11) Ralph is as tall as Peter (is).
Possible structure

(12) QP
    |
    Q’
    |
    Q
    |
    as
    |
    AP
    |
    tall
    |
    DegP
    |
    Deg’
    |
    Deg
    |
    CP
    |
    as Peter (is)
(13)   \( \exists d \exists d'[\text{TALL}(r,d) \& \text{TALL}(p,d') \& (d=d')] \)
Differences from comparatives

- equatives periphrastic – matrix element not a suffix
- matrix equative element may function as a proform – (14b), (14c)
- as-CP available without the matrix equative element, too, possible across the board with all gradable adjectives (cf. Jäger 2010, Thurmair 2001, 165–182) – (14d), (15b)
German

(14)  

a. Sie ist so nett, wie ihre Mutter.  
She is so kind as her mother  
‘She is as kind as her mother.’

b. Sie ist so wie ihre Mutter.  
She is so as her mother  
‘She is like her mother.’

c. Sie ist halt so.  
She is PRT so  
‘She is like that.’

d. Sie ist nett, wie (auch) ihre Mutter.  
She is kind as too her mother  
‘She is kind, as is her mother.’
(15) a. Peter is nice and Mary is so, too.
b. Peter is nice, as is Mary.
So...

lack of degree interpretation: lack of matrix equative element or of matrix gradable AP

→ degree interpretation is not contingent upon the equative head of the subclause (in line with the assumption that $d'$ is encoded by the operator)

→ degree interpretation is contingent upon the presence of the matrix equative element (in line with the assumption that $d$ is encoded by the matrix Deg)

→ but: the presence of the matrix equative element is not sufficient, a gradable argument in the specifier has to be present for the degree interpretation to arise
Similarity

equative elements in various similative constructions – historical connections
Degree equatives

(16)   a. Ralph is as tall as Peter.

   b. Ralf ist so groß wie Peter.
      Ralph is so tall as Peter
      ‘Ralph is as tall as Peter.’
Non-degree equatives

(17)    a. Ralph is tall, **as** is Peter.

         b. Ralf ist groß, **wie** (auch) Peter.
         Ralph is tall as **too** Peter
         ‘Ralph is tall, as is Peter.’
Parenthetical constructions

(cf. Bacskaï-Atkari 2014a)

(18)   a. Peter, tall as he is, will hit his head.

b. Peter, groß wie er ist, wird sich den Kopf anschlagen.

‘Peter, tall as he is, will hit his head.’
Hypothetical comparatives

(19) a. My daughter is shouting, as if she were at the dentist’s.

b. Meine Tochter schreit, wie wenn sie beim my.F daughter shouts as if she at.the.DAT.M Zahnarzt wäre. dentist would.be
‘My daughter is shouting, as if she were at the dentist’s.’
Matrix degree elements

(20)  

a. She is so diligent!

b. Sie ist so fleißig!

She is so diligent
‘She is so diligent!’

c. She is so tall that she will hit her head.

d. Sie ist so groß, dass sie sich den Kopf anschlagen wird.

‘She is so tall that she will hit her head.’
like (cf. the data in Pulgram 1983, 124, Pfeffer 1985):

(21) a. *Ralph is as tall like Peter.
b. Ralph is tall, like Peter.
c. %My daughter is shouting like she were at the dentist’s.
German

*als* in hypothetical comparatives (cf. Jäger 2010; Eggs 2006):

(22) a. Sie schreit, *als* wäre sie beim Zahnarzt.
    she shouts than be.SBJV.3SG she at.the dentist
    ‘She is shouting as if she were at the dentist’s.’

b. Sie schreit, *als* ob sie beim Zahnarzt wäre.
    she shouts than if she at.the dentist be.SBJV.3SG
    ‘She is shouting as if she were at the dentist’s.’

c. Sie schreit, *als* wenn sie beim Zahnarzt
    she shouts than if she at.the dentist wäre.
    be.SBJV.3SG
    ‘She is shouting as if she were at the dentist’s.’
West-Germanic pattern

reason: *als* ((al)so) the original equative complementiser – present in Old High German equatives already, replaced by *wie* during Early New High German (from the second half of the 16th century onwards), see Jäger (2010); the patterns in (22) show the grammaticalisation of an earlier form (Bacskai-Atkari 2016a)

regular West-Germanic pattern: cognates of *as* as equative/similative markers – German *wie* innovative, as is English *like* and Dutch *gelijk* (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998)
So...

→ complementiser in equatives more grammaticalised than in similatives (innovative patterns start in non-degree equatives, cf. Jäger 2010)
→ hypothetical comparatives represent an independent path – complementiser taken from similatives
→ similative clauses have a lexical meaning without there being a matrix equative element; the lexical meaning may be weakened in equatives (grammaticalisation), which do not straightforwardly allow any similative complementiser
→ the complementiser of the subclause in itself does not encode degree equality, degree is present if the degree operator is present, too; equation encoded by the matrix equative element, which selects for a particular C head (e.g. as) and does not allow all similative complementisers (e.g. like)
Historical developments affecting equative elements

regular West-Germanic pattern:

- *as* in degree equative and ordinary similative subclauses
- matrix equative element *so*
Present-day patterns

(23) a. Ralph is \textbf{as} tall \textbf{as} Peter.

b. Sophie is \textbf{zo} groot \textbf{als} Lieke.
   \hspace{1cm} ‘Sophie is as tall as Lieke.’

c. Ralf \textbf{ist} \textbf{so} groß \textbf{wie} Peter.
   \hspace{1cm} ‘Ralph is as tall as Peter.’
German

examples from Eggs (2006, 22–23)

(24)  

(a) wart aber ie so werder man geborn [...] so von 
    was but ever so noble man born as from 
    Norwege Gâwân 
    Norway Gawain

(b) [...] waer er so milt als lanc, er hete tugende 
    be he so generous as tall he have virtues 
    vil besezzen 
    many possess

(c) dochn was da nieman also vrô also mîn her 
    but was there noone so glad as my lord 
    Gawein 
    Gawain
Etymology

- English: *as* derives from *eallswa* (*all* + *so*), forms *swelce* (*swilce*, *such*) and *so* (*swa*) also possible historically in *as*-constructions (see Kortmann 1997, 315–317; see also López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2014, 312–314 and references there)
- German: *als* derives from Old High German *also* (*all* + *so*), various forms of *so* possible historically in *as*-constructions (see Jäger 2010)
- Dutch: *als* derived from *also* (*al* + *so*)
→ elements *so* and *as* are essentially the same (either as matrix elements or as complementisers), later differentiation/changes naturally possible (e.g. English *as...as* vs. *so...that*, German *so...wie* vs. *so...dass*)
Equative relative clauses

equative elements in relative clauses attested in earlier periods in English and German

(25) And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

*(King James Bible, Genesis 4:21)*

partly attested in present-day English dialects

(traditional/conservative feature, Kortmann & Wagner 2007) – matrix element *all* (Herrmann 2005)

(26) [. . .] so *all as* he had to do were go round in a circle all the time [. . .]

*(Freiburg English Dialect Corpus Som_001; Herrmann 2005, 64, ex. 26d)*
Old High German

(27)   a. **sulike** gesidoe so he im selbo gecos
     such companions so he him self chose
     ‘such companions that he chose for himself’
     (*Heliand* 1280; Brandner & Bräuning 2013, 138, ex. 20)

     b. **So** ware so ich cherte minen zoum . . .
     so where so I guided my rein
     ‘Wherever I guided my rein . . .’
     (*Bairischer Psalm* 138; Brandner & Bräuning 2013, 143, ex. 30, quoting Lühr 1998)
Modal free relatives

(28) er bi unsih tod thulti, so wio so er selbo wolti
he by us death suffered as how as he self wanted
‘he suffered death by us, as he himself wished’
(\textit{Otfrid V}, 1, 7; \textit{Jäger} 2010, 488, ex. 46, quoting Schrödt 2004)
Grammaticalisation

note: *so*-relatives grammaticalised and *so* was a general relative marker in Early New High German (similarly to present-day *wo* in southern dialects, see Brandner & Bräuning 2013, and to *that* in English) $\rightarrow$ no matrix *so* needed

(29) hier das Geld *so* ich neulich nicht habe here the.M money *so* I recently not have mitschicken können with.send.INF can
‘Here the money that I recently could not send.’
(Schiller to Goethe 127; Brandner & Bräuning 2013, 132, ex. 4, quoting Paul 1920)
availability of equative elements in relative clauses: relative clauses also express equation (Brandner & Bräuning 2013, 147–150)

claim here: not all relative clauses are equative – but equative elements in relative clauses do render an equative reading, which is not tied to degree
The proposed structure

question: how the structure of equative relative clauses compares to degree equatives

drawing upon the idea of Brandner (2016): Equative Phrase (EquatP) – here: EquatP analogous to DegP, unlike the structure of Brandner (2016)
Structure for (degree) comparatives

(30)

QP

Q'

Q

DegP

-er_i + much AP

intelligent Deg CP

t_i than Peter (is)
Structure for degree equatives

(31) QP
    / \  
   Q'   Q
      /|
     / Q
    /  as_i
   /   AP
  /    EquatP
 /     /|
/     intelligent Equat' 
/     /   |
/     CP   t_i

as Peter (is)
Properties

- no DegP layer – absolute adjective combined with an equative marker
- degree present as a feature [deg] – not all equative elements can be associated with a degree (e.g. *all* in English dialects), these do not bind a degree variable in the subclause
- structure similar to comparatives; shared property: QP layer → comparatives and degree equatives demonstrate similar syntactic behaviour
Structure for equative relative clauses

(32) EquatP
     | Equat’
     
     Equat CP
     | such as handle the harp and organ

Equative elements in comparative constructions and in relative clauses in the history of German and English
Properties

- no DegP, no [deg] present
- EquatP similar to the one in degree equatives, but no lexical AP and no [deg]
- no QP generated
- structure applies to equative relative clauses, not to all relative clauses
So...

structure of equative relatives is essentially similar to that of degree equatives, which are in turn minimally different from comparatives

availability of degree equatives does not imply the availability of equative relatives: not all Equat heads allow the absence of a gradable argument
equative elements in relative clauses – attested in various periods of English and German

- degree equatives involve an EquatP and not a DegP, as opposed to comparatives – yet an AP in the specifier and a CP complement in both cases attested
- equative relatives involve an EquatP, just like degree equatives
- equative relatives do not have a gradable argument in the specifier of the Equat head → no gradable interpretation

equative relatives and their cross-linguistic differences can be accounted for in a principled way, involving minimal syntactic/semantic differences
Thank you!

Danke!
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References II


References IV


References


References VI


