

More than a small clause

Russian adverbial comparatives

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ConSOLE XXXI

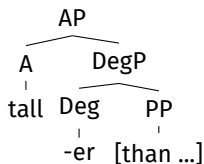
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Structure of comparatives

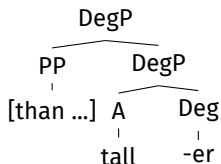
A comparative consists of several parts:

- i. **Adjective/adverb:** *tall*
- ii. **Comparative head (Deg):** *more/less/-er/etc.;*
- iii. **Comparative preposition:** *than* (optional)
- iv. **Standard of comparison (SoC)**

The standard and the adjective/adverb can occupy different positions relative to the comparative head. In accordance with Bresnan (1973), I will assume the structure on the left.



Classical analysis



Alternative analysis

The complement of DegP

There are two kinds of structures commonly supposed for the complement of DegP: **phrasal** (1a) and **clausal** (1b-1c).

(1) Mary is taller than John.

a. **Direct Analysis**

LF and PF: Mary is taller [_{PP} than [_{DP} John]]

b. **Reduced full clause analysis**

LF: Mary is taller [_{PP} than [_{CP} wh₁ John is d₁-tall]]

PF: Mary is taller [_{PP} than [_{CP} \emptyset John is d_T-tall]]

c. **Reduced small clause analysis**

LF: Mary is taller than [_{SC} wh₁ John d₁-tall]

PF: Mary is taller than [_{SC} John wh_T d_T-tall]

Different structures for different comparatives

It is advantageous to have a variety of possible structures, since the syntactic properties of comparatives differ across languages and within languages.

- Comparative structures can be mono- as well as biclausal (Merchant 2009)
- Comparatives that look phrasal may actually have a clausal source (Overfelt 2021)
- Comparatives that look clausal may actually be phrasal (Sudo 2015)

Russian comparatives

Russian comparatives can be divided into two types:

(2) 'Phrasal'

Ja vyše Antona.

I taller Anton.GEN

'I am taller than Anton.'

(3) 'Clausal'

Ja vyše, čem (byl) Anton.

I taller WH (was) Anton.NOM

'I am taller than Anton (was).'

Similar constructions occur in other Slavic languages: Polish, Bulgarian, BCMS ([Pancheva 2006](#)). Phrasal comparatives will be the focus of this talk.

Adverbial comparatives

Phrasal comparatives can be adverbial as well as adjectival (4).

(4) *Ja prygaju vyše Ani.*
I jump higher Anya.GEN

'I jump higher than Anya.'

The non-uniform analysis of Pancheva (2006)

Pancheva (2006) suggests two distinct structures for the two types, where the phrasal comparative consists of a reduced small clause (therefore both are clausal but one is smaller).

- (5) a. Phrasal comparative
than [_{SC} John Δ] →
LF: [_{IP} [_{IP} Mary is d₁-tall] [_{DegP} -er₁ [_{PP} than [_{SC} John d₁-tall]]]]
- b. Clausal comparative
than [_{CP} wh₁ John is d₁-tall] → LF: than [_{CP} d₁ John is d₁-tall]

The problem: adverbs

Phrasal adverbial comparatives can be ambiguous (6), which requires the presence of a richer structure.

(6) *Ja ljublju tebjā bol'she Nikity.*
I love you.ACC more Nikita.GEN

'I love you more than Nikita loves you.'

'I love you more than I love Nikita.'

A solution?

The account by Pancheva (2006) relies on A'-movement in the matrix clause and subsequent LF-copying of what is left of the clause:

(7) *Ja ljublju Ivana bol'she Borisa.* 'I love Ivan more than Boris'

- a. $[_{IP} I [_{VP} \text{love Ivan } d_1\text{-much}]] -er_1 [_{Boris} [_{VP} \text{love Ivan } d_1\text{-much}]]$
- b. $[_{IP} \text{Ivan}_2 [_{IP} I \text{love } t_2 d_1\text{-much}]] -er_1 [_{Boris} [_{IP} I \text{love } t_2 d_1\text{-much}]]$ (adapted from Pancheva 2006)

- » One of the participants is topicalised and moves out of the matrix clause
- » The clause is LF-copied into the embedded clause
- » SoC saturates the missing argument

Not strict enough

Not every position is available for the SoC:

(8) a. **Subject:** accessible

b. **Direct object:** accessible

*Ja narisovala **trapeciju** bystree treugol'nika.*
I drew **trapezoid.ACC** faster triangle.GEN

'I drew a trapezoid faster than (I drew) a triangle.'

c. **Oblique:** inaccessible

Liza xočet stat' **medsestroj bol'she modeli.*
Liza wants to become **nurse.INS** more model.GEN

Expected: 'Liza wants to be a nurse more than (she wants to be) a model.'

Not strict enough

(9) *Roditelji dajut Maše den'gi čašče menja.*
parents give Masha.DAT money more often I.GEN

'(Our) parents give Masha money...

- a. ^{OK}...more often than I give Masha money.'
- b. #more often than our parents give me to Masha.'
- c. ??more often that our parents give me money.'

The constraint prohibits any positions other than subject or direct object.

Not strict enough

In Russian, other kinds of A'-movement can proceed from more syntactic positions than in phrasal comparatives (e.g. obliques).

- (10) a.^{OK} **Komu_i** *roditeli otdali* *t_i kofevarku?*
who.DAT parents gave away coffee machine
'Who did (our) parents give the coffee machine to?'
- b.^{OK} **Kem_i** *xočet stat'* *t_i Liza?*
who.INS wants to become Liza
'Who does Liza want to be (when she grows up)?'

The A'-movement-and-LF-copying approach is **not restrictive enough**.

Modelling the constraint morphosyntactically

Philippova (2017) proposes an alternative analysis that relies on case assignment rather than A'-movement, which is more restrictive. Two key mechanisms at work:

- » **Overwrite** – assign a nominal the last case that it receives
- » **Match** – if the case is illicit but there is a syncretic licit form, assign the latter

The main line of reasoning:

- » Structural cases can be overwritten but inherent/lexical cases cannot
- » SoC is phrasal comparatives receives inherent case from the null preposition
- » What cannot be moved (PP complements, genitive possessors), cannot move ⇒ crash
- » What can be moved but has a non-overwritable case (obliques), cannot receive genitive ⇒ crash

Modelling the constraint morphosyntactically

The analysis by Philippova (2017) relies on:

- a predefined set of structural vs non-structural cases¹
- a possibly unnecessarily close link between surface forms and syntactic nature of certain cases

¹Dative, for instance, is controversial in this respect (Pereltsvaig 2007).

Some counterexamples from depictives

- (11) Instrumental case is accessible along with nominative (and syncretic with GEN)

Daša često prixodit domoj p'janaja / p'janoj
Dasha often comes home **drunk.NOM** **drunk.INS=GEN**

'Dasha often comes home drunk.'

- (12) Neither syncretism nor structuralness of NOM can help

**Daša prixodit domoj p'janaja / p'janoj*
Dasha comes home **drunk.NOM** **drunk.INS=GEN**
čašče trezvoj
more often **drunk.INS=GEN**

Expected: 'Dasha comes home drunk more often than sober.'

Depictives can be wh-fronted, so restrictions on movement do not apply²

²Source: personal judgement

Modelling the constraint morphosyntactically

Philippova (2017) concedes that the analysis is too restrictive, since the standard can be dative or the complement of a PP sometimes.

- (13) *Bol'she nix udalos' zarabotat' tol'ko PIFam.*
More they.GEN managed.NOM to earn only **open-end funds.DAT**

'Only open-end funds managed to earn more than them [bond funds].'

- (14) *Bol'she nego iz igrokov ... tol'ko u... Malkina.*
More he.GEN from players.GEN ... only **at Malkin.GEN**

'Of all the players, only Malkin has [scored] more than him.'
(adapted from Philippova 2017:12)

What a better suggestion can look like

- » less of a reliance on structural/non-structural cases
- » account for the dative/PP examples
- » explain the restrictions on the SoC's position

Proposal

Adverbial phrasal comparatives are half-phrasal and half-clausal.

The ambiguities and the constraints on the standard's position arise because of the **elided relative clause**.

The genitive case on SoC is assigned by a null comparative preposition (expressed in other languages, e.g. English)

Proposal

- » The comparative structure is **half-phrasal** because the PP is part of the matrix clause
- » Same-clause effects are detectable by diagnostics such as negative concord or anaphor binding (Philippova 2017)

- » The comparative structure is **half-clausal** because an elided relative clause is present
- » The elided clause is an island for wh-movement for both phrasal and clausal comparatives in Russian (ibid.)

- (15) a. I love you more [_{PP} P [_{NP} Nikita.GEN_i [~~čto I love t_i~~]]]
b. I love you more [_{PP} P [_{NP} Nikita.GEN_i [~~čto t_i love you~~]]]

Evidence

Relativisation strategies in Russian and restrictions along the accessibility hierarchy:

- » Participles (active/passive) **S** > DO > IO > Obl > Gen > OComp
- » *Čto*-relativisation **S** > **DO** > IO > Obl > Gen > OComp
- » *Kotoryj*-relativisation **S** > **DO** > **IO** > **Obl** > Gen > OComp³

Restrictions on the SoC's position mirror those of *čto*-clauses, which are derived via head noun movement, unlike other kinds of relative clauses in Russian ([Szczegielniak 2005](#)).

³Source: personal judgements

Accounting for the dative/PP examples

Some of the examples cited by Philippova (2017) as problematic:

- Non-finite embedded clause and a dative argument in the matrix clause: the PRO is the subject

(16) *Bol'she nix udalos' zarabotat' tol'ko PIFam.*
More they.GEN managed.NOM to earn only **open-end funds.DAT**

'Only open-end funds managed to earn more than them [bond funds].'

- External possessor (*u* N-GEN) moves to the subject position, according to Shushurin (2021)

(17) *Bol'she nego iz igrokov ... tol'ko u... Malkina.*
More he.GEN from players.GEN ... only **at Malkin.GEN**

'Of all the players, only Malkin has [scored] more than him.' (adapted from Philippova 2017:12)

Quantifier vse

Vse 'all, everyone' can be stranded as a complement of the null preposition in phrasal comparatives (18); not so easily in the clausal ones (19).

- (18) Èti pirožnye mne nravjatsja **bol'se vse_i**; [čto t_i mne nravjatsja]
these cakes I.DAT please **more all.GEN**

'I like these cakes more than any others.'

- (19) ?Èti pirožnye mne nravjatsja **bol'se, čem vse_i**;
these cakes I.DAT please **more WH all.GEN**
[t_i mne nravjatsja]









Expected: 'I like these cakes more than any others.'

The improved acceptability of (18) may be due to the presence of a restrictor – the relative clause.

Conclusions

- » Elided relative clause seems like a plausible structure for a comparative, at least in Russian

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