The phrasal comparative: a novel argument for the reduced clause analysis

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Overview. This paper bears on the debate (cf. Lechner 2015) whether single DP-remnant comparatives are underlyingly clausal (reduced clause analysis, RCA) or base-generated as DPs (direct analysis, DA). Setting aside *čem*-comparatives, exhibiting clear CP-like behavior (see Pancheva 2006), I focus on *genitive* comparatives. No evidence for additional structure has been proposed for the Russian genitive comparative, which might invite the simpler DA. However, here I present a novel constraint and show how it falls out from RCA, but not DA. Among the two available versions of RCA, I argue for the small clause (Pancheva 2009) rather than the full clause (Merchant 2009) analysis, since it allows positing less structure (avoids unmotivated TP and CP layers) and does not involve DP-raising out of a finite clause, not independently reported for Russian.

Novel evidence for RCA. It is well known that sentences with adverbial comparatives modifying transitive predicates are ambiguous. This is true of Russian genitive comparatives as well:

(1) Ja   uvažaju Petrovu   bol'še {Ivanova;   Ivanovoj}
     I.NOM respect Petrova.ACC more   Ivanov.GEN/ACC Ivanova.GEN/DAT/INS/LOC
     'I respect Petrova more than Ivanov/Ivanova.'
     a. *NOM.Reading*: '**I** respect Petrov more than {√**Ivanov;** √**Ivanova}** does.
     b. *ACC.Reading*: 'I respect **Petrov** more than I respect {√**Ivanov;** √**Ivanova}**.'

The *standard of comparison* (SOC) in the genitive comparative bearing fixed GEN Case can thus freely have NOM-subjects or ACC-objects as *correlates*. However, indirect objects, inherently Case-marked objects or PPs are not always allowed as correlates:

(2) Ja   goržus' Petrovym   bol'še {Ivanova;   Ivanovoj}
     I.NOM proud Petrov.INS more   Ivanov.GEN/ACC Ivanova.GEN/DAT/INS/LOC
     'I am proud of Petrov more than Ivanov/Ivanova.'
     a. *NOM.Reading*: '**I** am proud of Petrov more than {√**Ivanov;** √**Ivanova}** is.
     b. *INS.Reading*: 'I am proud of **Petrov** more than I am of {*****Ivanov;** √**Ivanova}**.'

(3) Ja   govorju o   Petrove   bol'še {Ivanova;   Ivanovoj}
     I.NOM talk   about Petrov.LOC more   Ivanov.GEN/ACC Ivanova.GEN/DAT/INS/LOC
     'I talk about Petrov more than Ivanov/Ivanova.'
     a. *NOM.Reading*: '**I** talk about Petrov more than {√**Ivanov;** √**Ivanova}** does.
     b. *PP-Reading*: 'I talk **about Petrov** more than about {*****Ivanov; *Ivanova}**.'

(4) **Oblique Correlate Constraint:**
     a. Genitive SOC may not have an oblique (DAT, INS) correlate unless its morphological form is syncretic with DAT/INS.
     b. Genitive SOC may not have a PP-correlate, even if case syncretism is respected.

The constraint is straightforwardly derived under the small clause version of the RCA (Pancheva 2009, for Slavic) and the full clause RCA (Merchant 2009, for Greek). For reasons of space I only illustrate the former, which is preferable for reasons stated in the Overview. Pancheva would derive (2b) as in (5). A PredP underlies the genitive SOC. Pred takes as its complement a degree-predicate created from vP via movement of the *wh*-degree operator (wh) to Spec, vP from the position parallel to that of the matrix clause *more* morpheme (d_1). The resulting vP is predicated of a DP-argument, moved (for that purpose) to Spec, PredP from a position structurally parallel to its matrix clause correlate. vP is obligatorily elided at PF, as illustrated by shading.

(5) I proud Petrov [$_{\text{DegP}}$ more [$_{\text{PP}}$ P$_{\text{null}}$ [$_{\text{PredP}}$ Ivanova$_2$ [$_{vP}$ wh$_1$ [$_{vP}$ I proud t$_2$ d$_1$]]]]]

                    GEN   INS

Although Pancheva does not discuss it, the derivation in (5) involves Multiple Case Checking of the SOC DP: first, inherent instrumental Case is assigned to the DP by V and then it is exceptionally Case-marked genitive by the null P. SOCs that have ACC correlates (1b) will also be doubly Case-marked, first getting [ACC] from *v* and then [GEN] from P. Only SOCs having NOM correlates (1-3a) will receive just one Case, [GEN], assuming that [NOM] is assigned by T, absent from small clauses. We are now in a position to explain the constraint in (4a). Since for non-NOM-correlates the SOC DP ends up bearing two Case features and only one Case may be morphologically realized in Russian, some resolution mechanism must be available that derives the grammatical options. Assuming that [GEN] here is a structural Case (like other instances of ECM), I suggest that in Russian, like in Niuean, a DP assigned two structural Cases must morphologically realize the last assigned Case, whereas an inherent+structural Case-marked DP has to realize both values, like structural+structural DPs in Norwegian (Bejar & Massam 1999). In absence of the stacking/allomorphy options (cf. Assmann et al. 2014) in Russian, the only way to respect both values is to insert a syncretic form; otherwise the derivation will not converge. Thus (4a) almost directly falls out from the small clause analysis, due to the Multiple Case Checking it inherently involves.

As for (4b), the PP-reading of (3) would involve movement of a DP-complement of a preposition, ruled out in languages without preposition-stranding, like Russian. Unlike certain island violations, P-stranding violations are not repairable by ellipsis (Merchant 2001, Abels 2003), so the unavailability of the PP-reading in (3) is expected. Movement of the whole PP to Spec, PredP must be ruled out for the semantic reason that PPs are not of type <e>, so the formed predicate cannot take them as arguments.

DA and the Oblique Correlate Constraint. (4b) can also be explained under DA: a) a PP-standard is ruled out since Ps generally do not take PP complements; b) a DP probably cannot stand for a PP if we assume that the phrasal comparative involves a comparison between individuals, rather than degrees. On the other hand, (4a) is totally unexpected under DA, presented in (6): the SOC DP is base-generated in the P-complement position and receives just [GEN] from its selecting head. Simply imposing (4a) ad hoc is not a desirable move.

(6) I proud Petrov [$_{\text{DegP}}$ more [$_{\text{PP}}$ P$_{\text{null}}$ [$_{\text{DP}}$ Ivanova]]

                        GEN
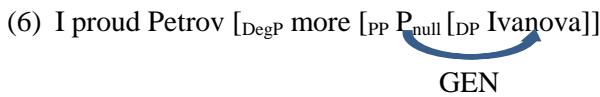
Obviously, (4a) might follow from a more general yet unknown principle applying to truly phrasal comparatives. If so, we would expect it to be cross-linguistically valid. Interestingly, data from the Hindi-Urdu comparative, uniformly considered to involve a DP-structure (Bhatt & Takahashi 2011, Lechner 2015) suggest that there is no such principle: Hindi-Urdu freely allows SOCs to correlate with oblique DPs and PPs. RCA thus remains a more viable alternative.

Finally, if the presented analysis is on the right track, the presence of asymmetries like (4) may be used as a diagnostic for a clausal structure of phrasal comparatives across languages. Especially interesting would be to look at Hungarian and Finnish phrasal comparatives, also marking their SOCs with case (Stassen 1985): Finno-Ugric case systems radically differ from the Indo-European ones and may employ distinct multiple case resolution strategies (cf. Assmann et al. 2014 for case allomorphy in Udmurt).

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