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ARGUMENTS OF ADJECTIVES IN DEGREE EXPRESSIONS[*]

0. The problem
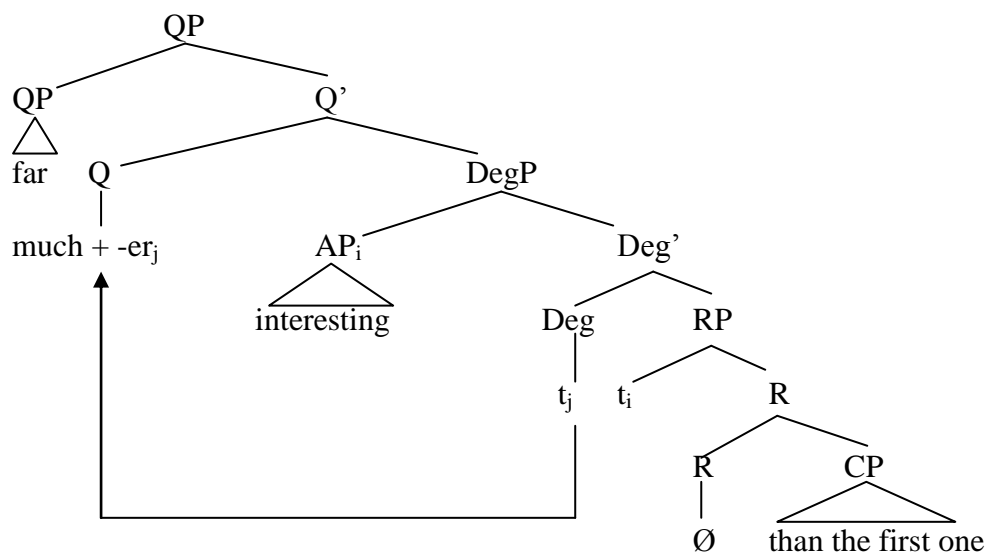
● Where are arguments of adjectives located?

(1) Liz is proud [PP of her husband].

● How do predicative and attributive degree expressions differ?

(2) Liz is a proud woman.
(3) *Liz is a proud [PP of her husband] woman.

● How are PP arguments located with respect to other obligatory elements?

(4) Liz is prouder [PP of her husband] [CP than Mary is].
(5) *Liz is prouder [CP than Mary is] [PP of her husband].

● How can the right dislocation of PP arguments be explained?

(6) Liz is proud enough [PP of her husband].
(7) Liz is prouder [PP of George] than Mary is ___ [PP of Peter]. (___ = x-proud)

→ proposal: a unified analysis for the structure of degree expressions that may accommodate PP arguments

1. The syntax of degree expressions

general assumption for comparatives: the AP and the CP are the arguments of the degree head (cf. Lechner 2004)

predicative relationship between the AP and the CP established within an RP (similarly to the RP in den Dikken 2006; cf. also Adger and Ramchand 2003):

(8) far more interesting than the first one

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selectional restrictions on the CP/PP complement of the R head:

(9a) Mary is tall [PP for a schoolgirl].

(9b) Mary is taller [CP than her classmates].

(9c) Mary is the tallest [PP of the girls].

movement of the AP: agreement with the degree head

(10a) *Liz is more pregnant than Mary.

(10b) * This instalment is more impossible than the previous one.

Icelandic: gender agreement between the AP and the Deg head:

(11) rík-ur
      rich-Masc.
      'rich'

(12) rík-ast-ur
      rich-Sup.Masc.-Masc.
      'richest'

(13) *rík-ust-ur
      rich-Sup.Fem.-Masc.
      'richest'

top layer: QP

periphrastic comparatives/superlatives: merge of *much* and *-er* /*-est* gives *more* / *most*
      (cf. Bresnan 1973; Corver 1997; Lechner 1999, 2004; Beck 2011; Kántor 2008)

morphological comparatives: *-er* / *-est* moved to a zero Q head
      → morphological merge with the AP in PF
      irregular forms: *good + -er → better*

agreement between the Q head and the QP modifier:

(14) Mary is very tall / *far tall.

(15) Mary is *very taller / far taller.

2. Predicative and attributive adjectives

inherently predicative adjectives:

(16a) The girl was afraid.

(16b) *I saw an afraid girl.

inherently non-predicative adjectives:

(17a) *The reason is main.

(17b) That is the main reason.

lexically underspecified adjectives:

(18a) Liz is proud.

(18b) Liz is a proud woman.

possibility of prenominal appearance not dependent on the Deg:

(19a) Liz is [too proud].

(19b) *Liz is a [too proud] woman.

(19c) Liz is [too proud] a woman.

Kennedy and Merchant (2000), Bresnan (1973): degree expressions may require (*too*, *as*, *so*), allow (*more*) or prohibit (absolute degree) inversion within the nominal expression

predicative features [+pred] and [−pred]
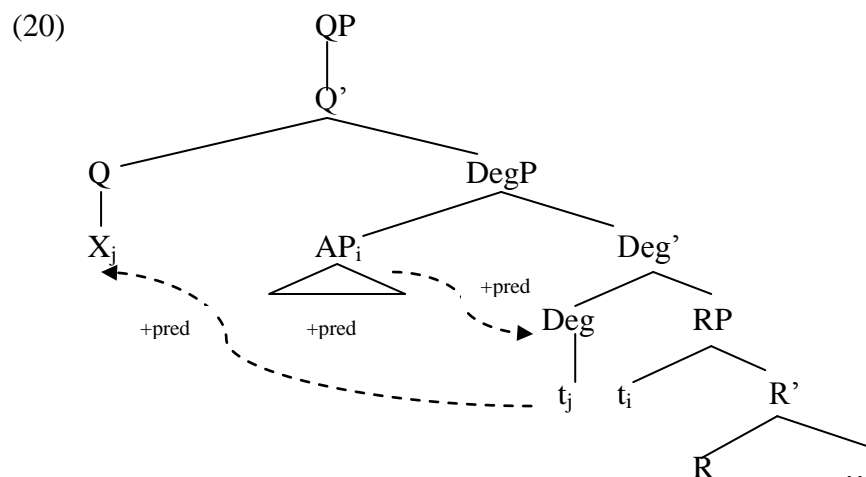   part of the lexical entry of inherently [+pred] and [−pred] adjectives
    all other adjectives lexically underspecified for the feature [±pred]

feature percolation within the QP
    the [±pred] feature of the AP may percolate up to the DegP via specifier–head
        agreement (cf. Yoon 2001; Urbina 1993; Horvath 1997)
    movement of Deg head to Q head: percolation to Q
    [±pred] interpretable on the QP

(20)

predicative QPs can function as predicates in the clause or as postnominal modifiers

> RP: responsible for establishing a predicative relationship between the AP and the PP/CP complement

> head of RP: [+pred]
> > agrees with an inherently [+pred] adjective
> > feature mismatch with inherently [–pred] adjectives
> > equips a lexically underspecified adjective with a [+pred] feature

attributive QPs: agreement with an N head

> head of RP: [–pred]
> > agrees with an inherently [–pred] adjective
> > feature mismatch with inherently [+pred] adjectives
> > equips a lexically underspecified adjective with a [–pred] feature

role of RP: establishing a predicative relationship which ultimately determines the [±pred] nature of the QP

> → this determines the combinability potential of the QP

3. Arguments of adjectives

adjectives having arguments of their own:

(21) Liz is proud [PP of her husband].

(22) Mary is afraid [PP of snakes].

adjectives with PP complements not allowed in attributive position:

(23) *Liz is a proud [PP of her husband] woman.

(24) Liz is a proud woman.

(25) Liz is a woman proud [PP of her husband].

same pattern for inherently [+pred] adjectives:

(26) *Mary is an afraid [PP of snakes] girl.

(27) Mary is a girl afraid [PP of snakes].

PPs: invariably [+pred] in English – they cannot be attributes

(28) The ladder is [PP behind the house].

(29) *The [PP behind the house] ladder is green.

(30) The ladder [PP behind the house] is green.

↔ Hungarian postpositional phrases:

(31)　A　létra　[PP a　　ház　　mögött] van.
　　　the ladder　　　the house behind　is.
　　　'The ladder is behind the house.'

(32)　*A [PP ház　　mögött]　　létra　　zöld.
　　　the　house behind-Aff. ladder　green
　　　'The ladder behind the house is green.'

(33)　A　[XP [PP ház　　mögött] **-i**] létra　　zöld.
　　　the　　　house behind　Aff. ladder　green
　　　'The ladder behind the house is green.'

German: word order differences (cf. Haider 1983: 202)

(34)　Lisa ist stolz [PP auf ihren　　Mann].
　　　Liz　is　proud　　of her-Acc. husband
　　　'Liz is proud of her husband.'

(35)　Lisa ist [PP auf ihren　　Mann]　(wirklich) stolz.
　　　Liz　is　　of her-Acc. husband really　　proud
　　　'Liz is (really) proud of her husband.'

(36)　Die　　[PP auf ihren　　Mann]　stolze　　Frau　　ist Lisa.
　　　the-Fem.　of her-Acc. husband proud-Fem. woman is　Liz
　　　'The woman proud of her husband is Liz.'

(37)　*Die　stolze　　[PP auf　ihren　　Mann]　Frau　ist Liz.
　　　the-Fem. proud-Fem.　of　her-Acc. husband　woman is　Liz
　　　'The woman proud of her husband is Liz.'

head-complement agreement rules out a feature mismatch between the head and the PP

> inherently [–pred] adjectives do not take PP complements

> lexically underspecified adjectives: may take a PP complement, but if the QP functions as an attribute, the PP has to escape from this position prior to PF transfer

German: PP moved to the left → lower copy (complement of A) can be deleted

English: no such movement available → PPs cannot be taken by attributive adjectives

4. Phases and deletion

● PP complement not adjacent to the adjective head:

(38) Liz is proud enough [PP of her husband].

(39) *Liz is proud [PP of her husband] enough.

phases: derived syntactic objects, transferred to the interfaces (Chomsky 2005: 9)

phases may be spelt out separately

→ phases spelt out earliest appear last in PF order (Kántor 2008)

→ already spelt out phases become opaque, i.e. invisible for syntax
(Chomsky 2001, 2004; Nissenbaum 2000; Svenonius 2004; Kántor 2008)

CP complement in comparatives (cf. Kántor 2008: 106–109):

(40) *I saw a taller [CP than John] man.

(41) I saw a taller man [CP than John].

(42) I saw [DP a [QP taller [CP *opaque*] man]] [CP than John].

PPs: can be considered phases (Lee-Schoenfeld 2007; Drummond et al. 2010; Gallego 2010; Fowlie 2010)

→ can be spelt out separately

(43) Liz is proud [PP *opaque*] enough [PP of her husband].

PP can be spelt out only if its features are checked off

[+pred] features cannot be checked off in an attributive construction

(44) *Liz is a proud woman [PP of her husband].

→ separate spell-out is not an escape hatch

● deletion of the QP does not affect the PP:

(45) Liz is prouder [PP of George] than Mary is ___ [PP of Peter]. (___ = x-proud)

deletion of the QP: regular Comparative Deletion (cf. Bácskai-Atkári 2010, 2012):

(46) Liz is prouder than Mary is.

(47) *Liz is prouder than Mary is proud.

separate spell-out:

(48a) … than Mary is [$_{QP}$ x-proud [$_{PP}$ *opaque*]] [$_{PP}$ of Peter].

(48b) … than Mary is ~~[$_{QP}$ x-proud [$_{PP}$ *opaque*]]~~ [$_{PP}$ of Peter].

→ no rightward movement needed for the PP to remain overt

5. Ordering

ordering: first spelt out phase appears last

> → fixed order of a comparative CP subclause and a PP argument of an adjective:

(49a) Liz is prouder [$_{PP}$ of her husband] [$_{CP}$ than Mary].

(49b) *Liz is prouder [$_{CP}$ than Mary] [$_{PP}$ of her husband].

→ PF ordering defined by syntax

multiple degrees (cf. also Escribano 2002):

(50a) It was so much more expensive than we expected that we rejected it.

(50b) *It was so much more expensive that we rejected it than we expected.

structure (cf. Kántor 2010):

(51) [[$_{FP}$ so [$_{QP}$ much [*opaque*]]] [$_{QP}$ more expensive [*opaque*]]] [$_{CP}$ than …] [$_{CP}$ that …]

so: determiner-like degree item (head) predicating over a variable in the *much*-QP

so much: a complex degree modifier in the specifier of the comparative QP, predicating over a variable in the comparative QP

structure-building: starts with the *much*-QP; insertion into further QPs: recursive

→ first the *that*-CP is spelt out, then the *than*-CP, and finally the entire QP is constructed

Conclusion

arguments of adjectives can be accommodated into structures containing arguments of degree heads

differences in predicative vs. attributive appearance reducible to more general constraints

ordering peculiarities can be handled by phases

feature-based approach – minimalist, flexible

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