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Structural case and ambiguity in reduced comparative subclauses in English and German

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Abstract: The paper argues that structural case assignment properties of English and German reduced comparative subclauses arise from syntactic requirements as well as processes holding at the syntax–phonology interface. I show that constructions involving both an adjectival and a verbal predicate require the subject remnant of the adjectival predicate to be marked for the accusative case both in English and German, which cannot be explained by the notion of default accusative case, especially because German has no default accusative case. I argue that a phonologically defective subclause is reanalysed as part of the matrix clausal object, and hence receives accusative morphological case.

Keywords: case syncretism; comparative subclause; ellipsis; structural ambiguity; structural case

1. Introduction

The aim of the present article is to investigate the issue of structural case in reduced clausal comparatives, and to show that the properties of structural case assignment in English are quite similar to what is attested in German, and hence the distribution of accusative case cannot merely be attributed to the fact that accusative case is the default case in English. Instead, I will show that the use of accusative case for subjects is an important means of disambiguation in both languages, and is in line with the assumption that English *than*-XPs are invariably clausal.

I will concentrate on two kinds of constructions. In Type I constructions, English shows ambiguity between a subject reading and an object reading (that is, the remnant DP in the subclause is interpreted as a subject or an object), as illustrated in (1) below:

- (1) I love you more than **my brother**.

Subject reading: ‘I love you more than my brother loves you.’

Object reading: ‘I love you more than I love my brother.’

The main research question in connection with Type I constructions is whether ambiguity in cases like (1) follows from the fact that there is no overt case distinction between the nominative and the accusative, or whether *than* is rather a preposition that takes accusative-marked DPs (which is again not necessarily shown overtly). If the former assumption is valid, there must be some case distinction for DPs that are not syncretic by default.

In Type II constructions, ambiguity holds between subjects of two possible underlying structures: one where the remnant DP is the subject of a lexical verb (lexical reading), and one where the remnant DP is the subject of a copula (predicative reading), as in (2) below:

- (2) I saw a taller woman than **my mother**.
 Lexical reading: 'I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.'
 Predicative reading: 'I saw a taller woman than my mother is.'

In these cases, the remnant DP is invariably a subject, and one might think that case assignment plays no role here. However, the question still arises what case a DP like *my mother*, which is case-syncretic, is assigned. If *than* is a PP, it should invariably assign accusative case, while a clausal analysis would predict that the nominative case should be available.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 will discuss the distribution of overt case-marking in Type I constructions in English and German, while section 3 will be devoted to the presentation of Type II paradigms. Finally, section 4 will provide a theoretical analysis for the data, with special focus on the appearance of subjects marked for accusative case, showing that the notion of default case is not applicable to all instances, and an explanation relying on mechanisms holding at the syntax–prosody interface and the properties of copular clauses is favourable.

2. Case distinction in subject/object ambiguities

As pointed out in section 1, Type I ambiguities arise when the remnant DP can be interpreted both as a subject and as an object of the subclause: this observation has been made already in analyses based on syntactic isomorphism (e.g., Lechner 2004) and more recently by analyses making use of the [E] feature underlying clausal ellipsis (Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 229–270), in the sense of Merchant (2001).

Let us first discuss the relevant German data here. The basic pattern for DPs with visible determiner/demonstrative elements is that there is

overt case distinction in masculine (singular) DPs, and case syncretism in feminine, neuter and plural DPs. Hence remnants involving the DP *my brother* are unambiguous, as shown in (3a) and (3b), while a remnant corresponding to *my sister* is ambiguous, as shown by (3c):

- (3) a. Ich liebe dich mehr als **mein Bruder**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than my.M.NOM brother
 'I love you more than my brother loves you.'
- b. Ich liebe dich mehr als **meinen Bruder**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than my.M-ACC brother
 'I love you more than I love my brother.'
- c. Ich liebe dich mehr als **meine Schwester**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than my.F.NOM/ACC sister
 'I love you more than my sister.'

Proper names are not marked for case, hence they are ambiguous in the same way (3c) is, while personal pronouns show the same full paradigm as given in (3):

- (4) a. Ich liebe dich mehr als **er**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than he.NOM
 'I love you more than he loves you.'
- b. Ich liebe dich mehr als **ihn**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than he.ACC
 'I love you more than I love him.'
- c. Ich liebe dich mehr als **sie**.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than she.NOM/ACC
 'I love you more than she loves you/than I love her.'

Hence the interpretation of the remnant DP in German *als*-clauses in Type I constructions is fully predictable from the general properties of structural case assignment.

English, on the other hand, has overt case distinction in the pronoun system but not in full DPs like *my brother*; still, accusative-marked remnant DPs are not unambiguous in Type I constructions, as shown by (5) below:

- (5) a. ?I love you more than **he**.
 'I love you more than he loves you.'
- b. I love you more than **him**.
 'I love you more than he loves you/than I love him.'

While the nominative in (5a) is slightly marked, it is far from being impossible, and it is unambiguously associated with the subject reading. The accusative case, as in (5b), is ambiguous: it can be associated with the object reading, but since the accusative case appears as the default case in the absence of an overt case-assigner (cf. Schütze 2001), it can also be associated with the subject reading. The use of the accusative in (5b) would be compatible with a direct analysis, where *than* is analysed as a preposition (as in Hankamer 1973); however, the availability of (5a) shows that a single DP following *than* is not necessarily in the accusative case, hence the availability of clausal ellipsis leaving a single DP remnant is already there in the grammar, in essentially the same way as it is in German.

3. Case distinction with two predicates

Unlike in Type I constructions, Type II ambiguities result from the surface identity between two possible subjects: the subject of a lexical verb (“lexical reading”), and the subject of a copular construction (“predicative reading”), as was given in section 1 for English. Since German displays a strict correspondence between nominative DP-remnants and subject interpretation on the one hand, and between accusative DP-remnants and object interpretation on the other hand, one might think that remnants in Type II constructions must be invariably in the nominative, given that they are underlyingly subjects, and ambiguity should arise, just as in (2) for English.

When there is no overt distinction between the nominative and the accusative, ambiguity is indeed attested, as demonstrated by the feminine remnants in (6):

- (6) a. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **meine** **Mutter** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than my-F.NOM/ACC mother seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother.’
- b. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **sie** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than she.NOM/ACC seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than she saw/than she is.’

Note that the verb is in the perfect form in (6) above (*habe gesehen* ‘have seen’) and not in the imperfect (*sah* ‘saw’), which would morphologically be closer to the English past simple: the reason for this is that the use of the imperfect is quite limited in modern German, and speakers find (6) a more natural way of expressing the intended meaning (there being

no perfectivity implied). However, the same ambiguities would arise with the imperfect as well (and all the data presented in this section for German would have the same interpretations with the imperfect as with the perfect). I will return to the question of tense once more in section 4.

However, case distinction can be observed in non-case syncretic masculine forms, as shown in (7), where the predicative reading is associated with accusative case on the remnant DP, while nominative case renders the lexical reading:

- (7) a. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **mein Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.NOM father seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father saw.’
- b. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **meinen Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.ACC father seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father is.’
- c. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **er** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.NOM seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’
- d. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **ihn** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

As can be seen, unambiguously nominative-marked remnant DPs following *als* ‘than’ are interpreted as subjects of the lexical verb *sehen* ‘see’, as in (7a) and (7c), while accusative-marked remnants are associated with the predicative reading, as in (7b) and (7d). The data in (7) suggest that the sentences in (6) are ambiguous precisely because overt case distinction is not possible. However, it is highly unlikely that the accusative case in (7) would be a random way of disambiguation between two possible readings, since there is no ban on structural ambiguity in general, or else (6) would not be possible. In other words, there must be a structural reason for the appearance of the accusative in (7b) and (7d), and the same conditions ought to be present in the derivation of constructions like (6). Note also that German does not have default accusative case (cf. Schütze 2001), as also demonstrated by the data in section 2, hence the appearance of the accusative case must be tied to the particular properties of Type 2 constructions.

Before turning to the analysis of why the accusative case appears in German, let us first examine whether there is case disambiguation in English pronouns. The answer is positive, as demonstrated by the examples in (8):

- (8) a. ?I saw a taller woman than **she**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than she saw.’
 b. I saw a taller woman than **her**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than she is.’

Again, just as with (5a), the nominative in (8a) is slightly marked as the overt presence of the auxiliary *do* (in the relevant form) would be preferred. Still, both sentences in (8) are grammatical, and both are unambiguous. The fact that (8b) with the accusative case is also unambiguous, unlike (5b) in Type I constructions, shows that the appearance of the accusative in Type II constructions is not due to the appearance of default accusative case, and the reason for the use of the accusative in (8b) is most probably similar to the reasons underlying the appearance of accusative subject remnants in German Type II structures.

Finally, it is worth examining what happens if there is a gender mismatch between the quantified object of the matrix clause and the remnant DP of the subclause. Consider the following data from English:

- (9) a. I saw a taller woman than **my father**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my father saw.’
 b. ?I saw a taller woman than **he**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’
 c. ??I saw a taller woman than **him**.
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’

The predicative reading in these cases is not available because it would be infelicitous: the quantified AP in the matrix clause (*taller*) is in an attributive position, and a non-overt quantified expression in the subordinate clause is also interpreted as an attribute, hence the subclause would be interpreted as ‘than my father is an *x*-tall woman’, which is infelicitous due to gender mismatch. This can be particularly well observed in cases where the lexical reading is not available (without there being a very specific context), such as in (10) below:

- (10) #I have never seen a taller woman than **my father**.

Similar structures were ruled out already in Bresnan (1973) relying on syntactic parallelism, and while strict syntactic identity is by no means a necessary condition for recoverability (see the arguments given in Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 69–129), it is certainly true that the modified noun is part of

the predicate and hence the predicative reading requires matching genders also in constructions like (9).

Apart from (9a), (9b) showing a nominative remnant is also acceptable, which is in line with the assumption that the nominative-marked remnant DPs are associated with the lexical reading. Finally, (9c) is marginally acceptable too, but it is more marked than (9b): this follows from the hypothesis that the natural interpretation of an overtly accusative-marked DP remnant in Type II constructions is the predicative reading, as in (8b). Hence *him* in (9c) would imply a predicative reading, which leads to gender mismatch; however, *him* may also be interpreted as the subject of the verb *see* and marked for the default accusative case in the absence of an overt case-assigner, therefore the sentence can ultimately be assigned a valid interpretation by way of overwriting the interpretation that would follow from the morphophonological properties of the remnant. Such overwriting is not possible in (8b), where the canonical meaning is available (there being no gender mismatch).

German gender mismatch patterns are illustrated in (11) below:

- (11) a. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **mein Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than my-M.NOM father seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my father saw.’
- b. *Ich habe eine größere Frau als **meinen Vater** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than my-M.ACC father seen
 ‘#I saw a taller woman than my father is.’
- c. Ich habe eine größere Frau als **er** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than he.NOM seen
 ‘I saw a taller woman than he saw.’
- d. *Ich habe eine größere Frau als **ihn** gesehen.
 I have-1SG a-F.ACC taller-F.ACC woman than he.ACC seen
 ‘#I saw a taller woman than he is.’

Just as in English, the sentences where the remnant DP conveys a predicative reading are fully acceptable, see (11a) and (11c). However, the accusative remnants in (11b) and (11d) are unacceptable: the predicative reading in these cases is not available due to gender mismatch, and hence the DPs should be assigned nominative case (for the lexical reading to be available), as there is no default accusative case in German.

The data concerning Type II constructions, as presented in this section, suggest that the conditions on the appearance of the accusative case in English reduced comparative subclauses is not merely due to the fact

that the accusative case is the default case: rather, the accusative is in some instances not available at all, and even when it is, it is not necessarily ambiguous. The accusative case has a similar distribution in German too, where the *als*-XP is generally taken to be clause-sized and the accusative case cannot be taken as a default case. All this implies that there must be a particular reason for the application of the accusative case in Type II constructions with the predicative reading, and this must be conditioned in such a way that the data in Type I constructions are not affected.

4. The proposed analysis

Type I and Type II constructions crucially differ in their semantics. In Type I constructions, the degree element is a verbal modifier, and hence there is only one lexical predicate (*love*). The representation in (12a) shows the argument structure of *see*, while (12b) gives the representation for comparison:

- (12) a. $\text{LOVE}(x, y)$
 b. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x, y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x, d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w, z) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w, d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$

In elliptical comparatives, the remnant DP in the subclause is contrasted with one of the DPs in the matrix clause, and is identical with the other one. Since either argument of the predicate *love* can be identical to its matrix clausal counterpart, this gives rise to the subject reading, as in (13a), or the object reading, as in (13b) below:

- (13) a. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x, y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x, d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w, y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(w, d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$
 b. $\exists d \exists d' [\text{LOVE}(x, y) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x, d) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x, z) \ \& \ \text{LOVE}(x, d') \ \& \ (d > d')]$

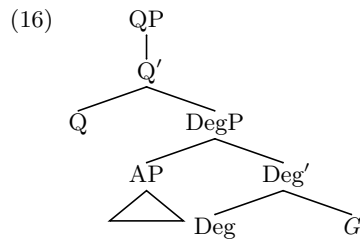
By contrast, in Type I constructions the degree element is an attribute within a nominal expression, and the degree morpheme itself takes a lexical AP (*tall*), which constitutes one predicate, and the lexical verb (*see*) is another one. The predicate *see*, as illustrated in (14a), is similar to *love* in that it takes two arguments: the crucial difference is that the degree element is associated with a different predicate, which happens to be the adjective *tall*, as given in (14b). Note that the degree expression is an attribute, and hence the nominal predicate is also specified in the semantics of attributive degree elements (which is ultimately responsible for gender mismatches), as shown in (14b).

- (14) a. $SEE(x, y)$
 b. $\exists x[WOMAN(x) \ \& \ \exists d(TALL(x, d))]$

While in lexical readings there are two seeing events, and the remnant DP in the subclause is the subject of one, as in (15a), in predicative readings there is only one seeing event, and hence the remnant DP is not available as the subject of the verb *see*, as in (15b). This also results in a difference in the number of arguments.

- (15) a. $\exists x \exists y \exists w \exists z [SEE(x, y) \ \& \ WOMAN(x) \ \& \ \exists d(TALL(x, d)) \ \& \ SEE(w, z) \ \& \ WOMAN(w) \ \& \ \exists d'(TALL(w, d)) \ \& \ (d > d')]$
 b. $\exists x \exists y \exists w [SEE(x, y) \ \& \ WOMAN(x) \ \& \ \exists d(TALL(x, d)) \ \& \ WOMAN(w) \ \& \ \exists d'(TALL(w, d)) \ \& \ (d > d')]$

As far as the syntax of degree expressions is concerned, I assume the following structure (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 21–68):



The head of the entire degree expression is the Deg, which is filled by *-er* in the matrix clause (both in English and German) and by the comparative operator (*x*) in the subordinate clause. This degree head takes two arguments: the lexical AP (if there is one) and the grade argument (*G*), which is the comparative subclause (*than*-XP/*als*-XP) if the Deg is filled by *-er* (see also Lechner 2004). The QP (quantifier phrase) layer is necessary for hosting modifiers (e.g., *far*). In Type I constructions, there is no lexical AP, and the entire QP is a verbal modifier. In Type II constructions, there is a lexical AP, and the QP is a modifier within a lexical NP. The degree expression in the subordinate clause undergoes regular deletion (“Comparative Deletion”), and if the QP is an attribute, this affects the entire DP too (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 69–129). In other words, the non-overtness of the AP predicate in the subclause in Type II constructions happens irrespectively of whether there is clausal ellipsis or not.

By contrast, if there is a lexical verb in the subordinate clause, this must be eliminated by clausal ellipsis: this happens in the case of Type I constructions, and for lexical readings in Type II constructions. Hence

in these instances PF receives a string that contains a lexical verb, as demonstrated schematically in (17) below:

- (17) a. I love you more than **he** ~~loves you~~ [*x*-much].
 b. I saw a taller woman than **she** ~~saw~~ [an *x*-tall woman].

Since a tensed lexical verb is available at PF, the nominative case is licensed to appear even though the finite inflection is absent from the final string. However, it is also true that the verbal domain containing the lexical verb is marked for ellipsis: in line with Merchant (2001), I assume that clausal ellipsis is carried out by an [E] feature, which is inserted already in the syntactic component, and can be placed on a functional *v* or a C head. The [E] feature instructs PF to elide the complement of the functional head in question; in this sense, the overt nominative case assigner is also absent, and default accusative case may be inserted, as illustrated in (18):

- (18) I love you more than **him** [E] ~~loves you~~ [*x*-much].

Since an underlying object would be assigned the accusative case anyway, this results in ambiguity. I assume that the process outlined in (18) is not ruled out in Type II constructions either: in this sense, the unavailability of *her* as a remnant linked to the lexical reading is not a derivational problem, but an interpretational one. A surface accusative DP in Type II constructions favours the reconstruction of a simpler predicative structure, compare (15b) to (15a), and if the predicative reading is indeed available (i.e., there is no gender mismatch either), this blocks the lexical reading. However, as was seen in connection with (9c), if the predicative reading is infelicitous, the lexical reading is made available, which would not be possible if the derivation did not allow for it.

The question arises why the predicative reading is always associated with the accusative case, and never the nominative: the nominative case seems to be available for subjects otherwise, as in (17) or in simple predicative comparatives, as demonstrated by (19) below:

- (19) a. [?]Ralph is taller than **he**.
 b. Ralph is taller than **him**.

While (19a) is slightly marked without an overt copula, it is by no means ungrammatical, and while (19b) is the preferred option, (19) shows that copular constructions in elliptical comparative subclauses do not necessarily require accusative case-marking on the remnant DP. Hence the accusative in Type II constructions is required by something else.

I propose that the reason why there is accusative case-marking on these remnants, such as *her* in (8b), but not on ones in (19a) is that while in structures like (19) there is only the absence of a nominative case assigner to be considered, in (8b) there is also the presence of an accusative case assigner (the verb in the matrix clause). Furthermore, I also assume that the kind of ellipsis underlying predicative readings is different from the one underlying lexical readings: the phonological content of the copula is simply not inserted at PF, and since the predicate (the quantified DP) is deleted anyway, there is no reason to assume that there would be true clausal ellipsis taking place, in the sense it does in (17).

In other words, the *than*-clause is phonologically defective if the copula is not realised overtly, and as such it does not constitute an Intonational Phrase of its own but is phrased together with the matrix clause: in English (and German), main sentential stress normally falls on the right edge of an Intonational Phrase (see Selkirk 1984; 1986; Nespor & Vogel 1986; McCarthy & Prince 1993; Neeleman & Weerman 1999; Truckenbrodt 1999 among others). A non-elliptical comparative subclause would constitute an IntP: however, in elliptical structures the right edge of this potential IntP is elided. By rephrasing the remnant into the preceding IntP, the remnant can appear at the right edge of an IntP; in turn, it is interpreted as part of the preceding (matrix) clause in terms of morphological case assignment, and is affected by the presence of an accusative case assigner in (8b), but not in (19). This is schematically illustrated in (20):

(20) {I saw a taller woman than **her**} COP [an *x*-tall woman].

Hence the case-assignment properties of Type I and Type II constructions in English are fully compatible with a clausal analysis. German shows further arguments in favour of the phonological nature of accusatives in constructions like (20); before turning to that, let me first go through the basic data.

With subject remnants of lexical predicates, the nominative case arises, just as was shown in (17) for English:

- (21) a. Ich liebe dich mehr als **er** dich — [*x*-viel] liebt.
 I love-1SG you.ACC more than he.NOM you.ACC *x*-much loves
 ‘I love you more than he loves you.’
- b. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **er**
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.NOM
 [~~einen~~ — ~~*x*-großen~~ — Mann] gesehen hat gesehen.
 a-M.ACC *x*-tall-M.ACC man seen has seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’

Note that the quantified XPs (*x-viel* ‘*x*-much’ in (21a) and *einen x-große Mann* ‘an *x*-tall man’ in (21b) above) would be eliminated anyway, just as in English. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that in (21b) the perfect form of the verb requires the lexical verb (*gesehen*) to remain in its base position and appear clause-finally; in addition, the comparative subclause (*als er einen x-großen Mann gesehen hat*) is not extraposed to the right edge and hence appears to be interrupting the matrix clause: the point is that the overt *gesehen* ‘seen’ is part of the matrix clause.

Just as was argued in connection with (17), lexical verbs are present at some point at PF, and hence nominative case can be assigned. However, contrary to English, the fact that the rest of the subclause is elided does not license the underlyingly nominative remnant DP to be assigned accusative case in either (21a) or (21b), since there is no default accusative case in the absence of an overt nominative case assigner in German. Object remnants in Type I constructions are naturally assigned accusative case.

The seemingly problematic construction is the accusative in Type II, as in (7b) and (7d), where the subject of a copular clause is assigned accusative case. Note that German, unlike English, see (19), does not license accusative-marked subjects in predicative comparatives otherwise, as demonstrated by (22):

- (22) a. Ralf ist größer als **er**.
 Ralph is taller than he.NOM
 ‘Ralf is taller than he is.’
- b. *Ralf ist größer als **ihn**.
 Ralph is taller than he.ACC
 ‘Ralph is taller than he is.’

The ungrammaticality of (22b) is in line with the general assumption that the accusative case is not the default case in German. This again suggests that the appearance of the accusative in Type II predicative readings is indeed the result of different processes.

Adopting the analysis for English, see (20), I assume that the phonologically defective *als*-clause in German is phrased together with the matrix clause into one IntP, and the presence of an accusative case assigner in the absence of a nominative case assigner triggers the appearance of the accusative:

- (23) {Ich habe einen größeren Mann als **ihn**
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC
 [ein *x*-großer Mann] COP gesehen.}
 a.M.NOM *x*-tall-M.NOM man COP seen
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

In fact, in (23) the *als*-XP is in a clause-internal position (with respect to the matrix clause), and hence it seems particularly reasonable to assume that it forms one intonational unit with the matrix clause. However, the accusative case appears with the imperfect too, where the structure is more similar to English. The German imperfect syntactic paradigm for Type II constructions is shown in (24):

- (24) a. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **mein Vater**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.NOM father
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father saw.’
 b. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **meinen Vater**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than my-M.ACC father
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father is.’
 c. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **er**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’
 d. ?Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **ihn**.
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

As can be seen, the appearance of the nominative and the accusative and their interpretations are in line with what was seen in (7) for the perfect paradigm. The only difference is that the imperfect is slightly marked, which is, as has already been mentioned, an independent property from comparatives. The accusative appears in (24b) and (24d), and the assignment of accusative case is illustrated for (24d) below:

- (25) {Ich sah einen größeren Mann als **ihn**}
 I saw.1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man than he.ACC
 [ein *x*-großer Mann] COP.
 a.M.NOM *x*-tall-M.NOM man COP
 ‘I saw a taller man than he is.’

Just as in (23), the phonologically defective *als*-XP is phrased together with the matrix clause, and the quantified DP and the copula are not spelt

out; (25) is also similar to the PF-derivation of English Type II predicative readings in (20).

Finally, German also shows a further argument in favour of treating the appearance of accusative case-marking on subjects as a PF-phenomenon, and not as the manifestation of syntactically underlying accusative case. The *als*-clause, just like the *than*-clause, is extraposed from within the DP: in German, since VP-projections are head-final (cf. Haider 1993, 34), the extraposition of the *als*-clause from within the object DP does not cause it to appear after the non-finite verb (e.g., *gesehen* in (23) above) in itself. However, it is also possible to extrapose the *als*-clause to the right of the non-finite verb; this results in the following paradigm:

- (26) a. Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **mein Vater**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than my-M.NOM father
 ‘I saw a taller man than my father saw.’
- b. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **meinen Vater**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than my-M.ACC father
 ‘#I saw a taller man than my father is.’
- c. Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **er**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than he.NOM
 ‘I saw a taller man than he saw.’
- d. *Ich habe einen größeren Mann gesehen als **ihn**.
 I have-1SG a-M.ACC taller-M.ACC man seen than he.ACC
 ‘#I saw a taller man than he is.’

While nominative DP remnants are unproblematic (rendering the expected lexical meaning), as shown by (26a) and (26c), accusative-marked remnants are not possible, as shown by the unacceptability of (26b) and (26d). In order for the comparative subclause to appear in the position indicated in (26), it does not only have to be extraposed from within the DP but also from the entire matrix clause: this is possible if the subclause is spelt out on its own as a phase, and as the first spelt out phase it also appear right-most (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014, 65–68, based on Kántor 2008, 106–109). As an independent phase that appears outside the object constituent (the VP being head-final in German), it cannot be interpreted as part of the object and hence it falls outside the scope of accusative case assignment. Hence (26b) and (26d) are ungrammatical because the appearance of the accusative case is not licensed.

In sum, it seems reasonable to claim that the appearance of the accusative case in Type II constructions is tied to PF-mechanisms in both English and German, and cannot be explained either by the notion of default accusative case, or by assuming that the accusative case would be underlying.

5. Conclusion

The present paper argued that case assignment properties of English and German reduced comparative subclauses arise from syntactic requirements as well as certain constraints related to the syntax–phonology mapping. Predicative comparatives show that English may apply the default accusative case for underlying subjects in general, which is not available in German; in line with this, it was also shown that while subject/object ambiguities arise in German only with case-syncretic DPs, English may use accusative-marked subject remnants if the underlying predicate was a single lexical verb.

However, in constructions involving both an adjectival and a verbal predicate, the paper demonstrated that the nominative case is canonically associated with the lexical meaning (that is, the remnant DP is the subject of a lexical verb), while the accusative case is associated with the predicative meaning (whereby the remnant DP is the subject of a copular construction involving a lexical AP). The appearance of the accusative case in German subjects is unexpected; yet the non-availability of the accusative in English for lexical meanings also indicates that the processes underlying the derivation of the relevant English constructions are also more complex than what could be explained by the notion of default accusative case.

I argued that the accusative case in these constructions arises because the comparative subclause is phonologically defective, and the remnant DP is ultimately reinterpreted as part of the object in the matrix clause, and it hence receives accusative case-marking; evidence from German shows that this reinterpretation is indeed subject to certain ordering constraints. The similar properties of English and German also reinforce that a clausal analysis for reduced comparative subclauses is advantageous for English, too, and there is no need for supposing that there would be a prepositional *than* in English.

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