



A Non-Source for Comparatives

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- (2) *Punch is more responsible than Judy is not responsible.
- (3) *Punch is more responsible than Judy isn't responsible.

Presumably (3) follows from (2). Similarly, whatever the reason is for the difference between (1) and (2) is also the reason why (4) is acceptable, but (5) is not:

- (4) Punch is more responsible than Judy is irresponsible.
- (5) *Punch is more responsible than Judy is irresponsible.

But if this is the case, why do we get (7) and not (6)?

- (6) *Punch is more careful than Judy is carelæss.
- (7) Punch is more careful than Judy is cáreless.

A NON-SOURCE FOR
COMPARATIVES

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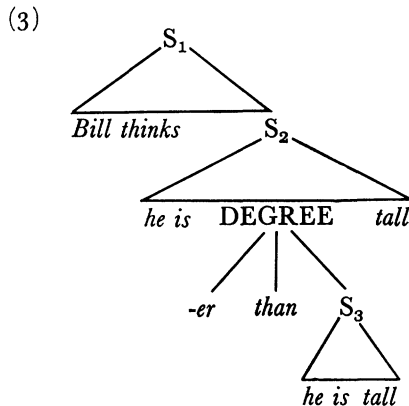
The following sentence, pointed out to us by Charles Fillmore (we have heard that it was independently discovered by Bertrand Russell, but have not been able to find a reference), shows clearly that one class of plausible sources for comparatives must be rejected.

- (1) Bill thinks that he is taller than he is.

If people can have contradictory thoughts, (1) can mean that the content of Bill's thought is "I am taller than I am." There is, however, a noncontradictory reading of (1), roughly (2).

- (2) The height Bill thinks he has exceeds the height he (actually) has.

This reading cannot be plausibly derived from any deep structure like (3).



The *than*-clause of (1), superficially a part of the object of *think*, must appear *outside* the object of *think* in underlying structure if the reading of (1) that is roughly paraphrased by (2) is to be accounted for.

Corroborating evidence comes from the fact that tenses can show up in the *than*-clause that cannot appear in the object of *think*. After the past tense of such verbs as *think*, present tenses are in general impossible, as the contrast between (4a) and (4b) shows.

- (4) a. I thought that I was tall.
b. *I thought that I am tall.

Thus the fact that either tense is possible in

- (5) a. Bill thought that he was taller than he was.
b. Bill thought that he was taller than he is.

suggests that the *than*-clause is not in the object of *think* at whatever stage in derivations the condition on possible sequences of tenses is stated.

Finally, certain constituents which cannot generally occur in embedded complements can occur in *than*-clauses. One such constituent is the parenthetical *it seems to me*:

- (6) *Bill thinks that Jane, it seems to me, is tall.
(7) Bill thinks that he is taller than Jane, it seems to me, has ever been.

While these facts do not support any previously proposed analysis of comparatives, they do, in our opinion, serve to disqualify such structures as (3), which would otherwise seem reasonable.

ANOTHER NON-SOURCE FOR COMPARATIVES

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It might be thought that sentences like

- (1) John thinks he is taller than he is.

derive from structures underlying sentences like

- (2) The extent to which John thinks he is tall exceeds the extent to which John is tall.

Then the structure underlying (1) would not contain

- (3) *John is taller than he is.

However, such a solution is not sufficiently general. (4) is as bad as (3).

- (4) *John is as tall as he is.

However, sentences like (5) contain clauses like (4), but cannot be analyzed in the same way as (2).

- (5) The fact that John is as tall as he is disturbs me.