



---

More X than Not X

Author(s): Georgia M. Green

Source: *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan., 1970), pp. 126-127

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177534>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 19:49

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The MIT Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Linguistic Inquiry*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

lengthening the sentence. Compare the sentences below with the corresponding ones above:

- (16a) It was John's huge wire-haired terrier with three legs and one eye that he beat so viciously.
- (18a) He was scorned and attacked without mercy for over twenty dismal years before John was finally recognized as the greatest linguist of the century.
- (20a) What he kicked so viciously in the side was the dog John had warned Mary never to go near.
- (21a) ?What scared him more than anything else in the world was John's huge black rabbit with two five-inch fangs.
- (22a) \*What he scared more than anything else in the world was John's meek gentle rabbit with a pink nose.
- (23a) In John's brand new apartment on Scrac Street he smokes pot incessantly.
- (27) In  $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{his} \\ \text{John's} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$  rotting hovel of an apartment on Scrac Street Mary finally broke down and kissed  $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{John} \\ \text{him} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ .

We think that the relevant principle in these cases is that as the sentence becomes longer, the relative stress level of the NPs and pronouns decreases with respect to the clauses containing them. This would seem to relate to Case 1, where contrastive stress precluded coreferentiality. These cases suggest that reduced relative stress level on both the NP and the pronoun is essential for a coreferential interpretation. Of course, this is only part of the story, since examples (21a) and (22a) don't seem to be acceptable even when lengthened; furthermore, the examples in Case 2 show that contrastive stress is sometimes necessary for an acceptable reading.

#### COMPARATIVES AND (N)EVER

George Lakoff,

University of Michigan

John Robert Ross,

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Why can't *never* appear in the main clause of a comparative if *ever* is present in the *than*-clause?

- (1) \*Wilt was never taller than Big O ever was.

Note that if either of these words is missing, (1) becomes grammatical.

#### MORE X THAN NOT X

Georgia M. Green,

University of Chicago

Comparatives whose second member is negative seem to require stressed negatives:

- (1) Punch is more responsible than Judy is *nó*t responsible.

- (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 careless.
- (7) Punch is more careful than Judy is careless.

# A NON-SOURCE FOR COMPARATIVES

*John Robert Ross,  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology  
David M. Perlmutter,  
Brandeis University*

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).

