



Another Non-Source for Comparatives

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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.

Yet the same thing seems to be going on here as in (1). A similar example is (6).

- (6) If Wilt weren't as tall as he is, he'd be a lousy basketball player.

All such sentences seem to be making comparisons of states of affairs in two different possible worlds, the real world and some other related world. What are the correct syntactic and semantic representations of (1), (5), and (6)? How can such an analysis reflect the fact that states of affairs in different possible worlds are being compared?

Other examples:

- (7) a. The fact that John is as tall as he is disturbs me.
 b. *The claim that John is as tall as he is disturbs me.
 (8) a. *The fact that John isn't as tall as he is disturbs me.
 b. The claim that John isn't as tall as he is disturbs me.
 (9) John is as tall as he is because his mother fed him blintzes.
 (Compare with (4))

SEQUENCES OF VOWELS IN SPANISH

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1. *Introduction.* In "Simplicity, Descriptive Adequacy, and Binary Features," *Language* 45, 1-8, Heles Contreras argues that the binary features [\pm high] and [\pm low] for vocalic tongue-height should be replaced by the single multivalued feature [nhigh]. I shall contend here that neither the factual basis of Contreras's arguments nor the conclusions he draws therefrom can be accepted uncritically: lacunae in the data prevent any conclusions from being drawn at all, and when these lacunae are filled, a picture emerges which is rather different from the one presented by Contreras. More importantly, certain fundamental issues which are passed over in silence by Contreras must be exposed for discussion.¹

2. *The data.* Contreras presents no primary data at all. Rather, the following statement is given, which is said to be a "rule for vowel sandhi in Spanish":

- (1) An unstressed vowel becomes a glide if followed, across a word boundary, by a nonidentical vowel which is not higher.

The information is supplied in a footnote that "the second

¹ I will repeat very little of the argument here, since the article is short and readily available. I shall also have nothing to say about parts of the article not directly related to Spanish.