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На тему Больше малой клаузы: синтаксис сравнительных конструкций в русском языке
Тема на английском More Than a Small Clause: the Syntax of Russian Phrasal Comparatives

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More than a small clause: Russian phrasal comparatives

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Russian comparatives, particularly those commonly referred to as phrasal and argued to contain a smaller amount of elided structure than the clausal comparatives. I investigate the restrictions on the syntactic position of the standard of comparison (SoC) in Russian phrasal comparatives and show that the existing analyses of this type of comparatives (Pancheva 2006, Philippova 2017) are not satisfactory. The proposed alternative is the direct analysis, which denies the phrasal comparative any clausal source. This claim is supported by patterns of behaviour such as the uniform case marking of the SoC and its mandatory nominal status, which the Russian phrasal comparative shares with other comparative constructions that have been argued to be genuinely phrasal (Bhatt & Takahashi 2007, 2011, Vaikšnoraitė 2021, Potsdam 2017), as well as by the interaction between scrambling and the SoC's available position is investigated, which is handled well by the direct analysis.

1 Introduction

Comparative constructions vary considerably between languages as well as within languages. One significant parameter of variation is the amount of structure that comes with the standard of comparison (SoC), which is often reduced to how much is elided. Comparative structures can thus be roughly divided into two groups: *phrasal* comparatives that have no elided material (1a), and the *clausal* ones, where a full elided clause (1b) or a small clause (1c) is present. An analysis that claims that a comparative is phrasal can also be referred to as a direct analysis.

(1) Mary is taller than John.

a. **direct analysis**
LF and PF: Mary is taller [$_{PP}$ than [$_{DP}$ John]]

b. **Reduced full clause analysis**
LF: Mary is taller [$_{PP}$ than [$_{CP}$ wh$_1$ John is d$_1$-tall]]
PF: Mary is taller [$_{PP}$ than [$_{CP}$ Ø John ~~is d$_1$-tall~~]]

c. **Reduced small clause analysis**
LF: Mary is taller than [$_{SC}$ wh$_1$ John d$_1$-tall]
PF: Mary is taller than [$_{SC}$ John ~~wh$_1$ d$_1$-tall~~]

The distinction between phrasal and clausal comparatives is not exactly clear-cut. Some seemingly phrasal comparatives have been argued to actually have a clausal source, for instance, the phrasal temporal adverbial constructions (TACs) in English, which involve the connectives *before* and *after* (Overfelt 2021). Also, some clausal comparatives have received a phrasal analysis, like the Japanese comparatives in Sudo (2015).

The Slavic languages in particular have been an interesting case study, when it comes to phrasal and clausal comparatives. In this paper, I focus on Russian comparative constructions, of which there exist two types: one featuring the wh-word *čem* 'what-INS' and a fully recoverable elided clause (2) and the other with the SoC in the genitive case (3).[1] For the sake of simplicity and with no theoretical claim in mind yet, I will refer to them as phrasal and clausal respectively.

(2) 'Clausal'
Ja vyše, čem (byl) Anton.
I taller WH (was) Anton.NOM
'I am taller than Anton (was).'

(3) 'Phrasal'
Ja vyše Antona.
I taller Anton.GEN
'I am taller than Anton.'

I am going to focus on the phrasal comparative, whose phrasal status has been questioned in existing work but will be defended in this paper. After presenting the relevant data in Section 2, I discuss the existing analyses of Russian comparatives in Section 3: I show Pancheva's (2006) and Philippova's (2017) proposals to be too restrictive. Next, I develop an alternative in Section 4 – a direct analysis, where the phrasal comparative is truly phrasal. The arguments follow in Section 5, concluding with Section 6.

2 Description of the phrasal comparative in Russian

The phrasal comparative is in many ways opposed to the clausal one, which has an unambiguously clausal source: the subordinate clause is fully recoverable and the remnant SoC bears the case that it would be assigned in this clause (4–5).

(4) *Ja risuju krasivee, čem Alisa (risuet).*
I draw more beautiful WH Alisa draws
'I draw more beautifully than Alisa (draws).'

(5) *Ja ljublju piccu bol'še, čem (ja ljublju) pastu.*
I like pizza.ACC more WH I like pasta.ACC
'I like pizza more than (I like) pasta.'

[1] More variants of these constructions exist than presented in examples (2–3), some of which have been mentioned by Matushansky (2002), Pancheva (2006) or Philippova (2017). This paper is dedicated to the two most common ones mentioned above.

The SoC bears the nominative case in example (4) and is thus compared to the matrix subject: the correlate *ja* 'I' is someone who draws, and so is *Alisa* – the SoC. In example (5), however, the SoC is in the accusative and interpreted as a direct object: both *piccu* 'pizza.ACC' and *pastu* 'pasta.ACC' are something that the speaker likes to some degree.

There are not many restrictions on the categorial status of the SoC in clausal comparatives: for instance, the SoC can be an adverb, which is illustrated by example (6), where the SoC is *včera* 'yesterday' and the state of the subject today is compared to her state yesterday. There is no need to recover anything else – the adverb is a legitimate remnant SoC.

(6) *Segodnja Nina čuvstvuet sebja lučše, čem včera.*
today Nina is.feeling herself better WH yesterday
'Today Nina is feeling better than yesterday.'

In the phrasal comparative, however, the SoC is always nominal. It can be a noun as well as an adjective such as, for instance, *želtogo* 'yellow.GEN' in example (7). The head noun of the SoC – *plat'e* 'dress' – can be elided.

(7) *Krasnoe plat'e mne nravitsja bol'še želtogo*
red dress I.DAT pleases more yellow.GEN
'I like the red dress more than the yellow one.'

The SoC in the phrasal comparative cannot be an adverb: see how example (8) contrasts with example (6). The adverb *včera* 'yesterday' cannot be the genitive SoC of the phrasal comparative, which is expected, since adverbs cannot bear case. Also, as indicated in example (8), the necessary meaning analogous to that of example (6) can be conveyed if the adverb is adjectivised and able to bear the genitive case.

(8) *Segodnja Nina čuvstvuet sebja lučše *včera / ^{OK}včerašnego.*
today Nina is.feeling herself better yesterday yesterday.ADJ.GEN
'Nina is feeling better today than yesterday.'

Several other differences have been noted by Philippova (2017) and argued to point to the fact that the SoC and its correlate are clausemates in the phrasal comparative, but not in the clausal one. The first diagnostic is binding a reflexive in the SoC by the matrix subject, which can only happen in the phrasal comparative (9–10).

The possessive reflexive *svoego* 'self's.GEN', whose binding domain is the finite clause (see Rappaport (1986) on the properties of Russian reflexives), is preferred in the SoC over the pronominal *eë* 'her' (9), which means that the comparative PP does not constitute a separate binding domain and therefore its complement is unlikely to be a clause.

(9) *Maša ljubit sebja bol'še {^{OK}svoego; *eë} otca.*
Masha loves self.ACC more self's.GEN her father.GEN
'Masha$_j$ loves herself more than her$_j$ father.' (Philippova 2017: p. 5)

Example (10), in contrast to example (9) featuring a clausal comparative exhibits the reverse pattern: the reflexive cannot be bound, and the pronominal possessor is preferred. This is consistent with the assumption that the clausal comparative includes a reduced finite clause, whose boundary is opaque for reflexive binding.

(10) *Maša ljubit sebja bol'še čem {*svoj; OKeë} otec.*
Masha.NOM loves self.ACC more WH self's.NOM her father.NOM
'Masha$_j$ loves herself more than her$_j$ father (does).' (Philippova 2017: p. 5)

Next, Philippova (2017) cites wh-extraction out of the SoC (11) and licensing of negative concord items (NCIs; 12), which supposedly does not happen across a finite clause boundary (e.g. Giannakidou 2000).

Example (11a) demonstrates that a wh-word can be moved out of the SoC position of the phrasal comparative: *kogo* 'who.GEN' is felicitously wh-extracted. Note that the extraction is possible in the adjectival comparative, where the predicate is *vyše* 'taller' and in the adverbial comparative, where *vyše* is an adverb that has the meaning 'higher' and modifies the verbal predicate *prygnul* 'jumped'. In the clausal comparative, however, wh-movement of the SoC is not possible with either the adjectival or the adverbial comparative (11b). The unacceptability of such movement, as Philippova (2017) suggests, is due to the SoC being a remnant of a fully recoverable finite clause, which she assumes to be an island for wh-extraction in Russian.

(11) a. *Kogo ty vyše (prygnul)?*
Who.GEN you.NOM higher jumped
'Who are you taller; did you jump higher than?'

b. **Kto ty (prygnul) vyše čem?*
Who.NOM you.NOM (jumped) taller WH
Expected: 'Who are you taller; did you jump higher than?'
(Philippova 2017: p. 4)

A parallel contrast can be observed with NCIs, which can be licensed by the matrix negation in the SoC position in the phrasal comparative (12a) but not in the clausal comparative: *nikto* 'nobody' is acceptable as the SoC in example (12a) and unacceptable in example (12b).

(12) a. *Maša *(ne) vyše nikogo.*
Masha.NOM NEG taller nobody.GEN
'Masha isn't taller than anyone.'

b. **Maša ne vyše, čem nikto.*
Masha.NOM NEG taller WH nobody.NOM
Expected: 'Masha isn't taller than anyone.' (Philippova 2017: p. 4)

I take these tests to be less reliable than reflexive binding, since wh-extraction has been shown to be able to cross finite clause boundaries in Russian (Bailyn 2020). NCIs too can be scrambled from their base-generation site in the embedded clause to be licensed by matrix negation (Rudnev 2022).

A curious property of the phrasal comparative is that not every position is readily available for the SoC.[2] One position is always accessible: the nominative subject (13).

[2]The source of the data in the rest of this section is an informal survey of 13 native speakers of Russian, which involved multiple choice questions aimed at gathering possible interpretations of suggested sentences, as well as acceptability judgement questions, where the judgement was on a scale from 1 (most acceptable)

(13) *Ja (prygaju) vyše Ani.*
I jump higher Anya.GEN
'I jump higher than Anya.'

In a sentence with a transitive (14) or a ditransitive predicate (15), an ambiguity may arise, where both the subject and an object, direct or indirect, can be the correlate. Since the case on the SoC is always genitive, its structural position cannot be inferred from its morphological case, as is possible in the clausal comparative, where the original case is preserved. Therefore the sentence in example (14) can receive two readings: the subject reading, where the SoC is construed to be the subject of the elided clause, and the object reading, where it is the direct object.[3]

(14) *Ja ljublju tebja bol'še Nikity.*
I love you.ACC more Nikita.GEN
Subject reading: 'I love you more than Nikita does.'
Object reading: 'I love you more than I love Nikita.'

(15) *Mama poručaet mne brata čašče babuški.*
mum entrusts I.DAT brother.ACC more often grandma.GEN
'Mum entrusts my brother to me more often...'
Subject reading: '...than grandma does.'
Object reading: '...than she entrusts grandma to me.'
Dative reading: '...than she entrusts him to grandma.'

Non-dative oblique participants, as well as complements of prepositions, are judged the least acceptable as correlates: examples (16–17) only have the subject reading.

(16) *Anja stala aktrisoj ran'še studentki.*
Anya became actress.INS earlier student.INS
Subject reading: 'Anya became an actress earlier than a student did.'
Instrumental reading, unavailable: 'Anya became an actress earlier than she became a student.'

(17) *Djadja Petja rugaetsja na kota gromče Barbosa.*
uncle Petya swears on cat.ACC louder Barbos.GEN
Subject reading: 'Uncle Petya scolds the cat louder than Barbos does.'
PP reading, unavailable: 'Uncle Petya scolds the cat louder than he scolds Barbos.'

The speakers I have asked have varying tolerance for non-subject readings, but the following generalisation, also noted by Philippova (2017), holds: non-subject readings are decidedly easier to obtain if the correlate is topicalised (18) or focalised (19–20).

to 5 (least acceptable).

[3] I will refer to the reading where the correlate occupies a certain position X or is marked by a certain case X as the *X reading*, for instance, a subject reading is the interpretation where the correlate is in the subject position.

(18) *Maše načal'nik platit bol'še Antona.*
Masha.DAT boss pays more Anton.GEN
Subject reading, unavailable: 'The boss pays Masha more than Anton does.'
Dative reading, preferred: 'The boss pays Masha more than he pays Anton.'

The dative reading of example (18) is obtained by topicalising the dative correlate *Maše* 'Masha.DAT'. If the dative correlate is topicalised, the subject reading is not available and the dative reading is preferred. Focus improves the acceptability of instrumental readings in the same way: the instrumental correlate *model'ju* 'model.INS' can only be interpreted as a correlate if it is in a focus position: example (19) demonstrates how focus with the particle *tol'ko* 'only' feeds an instrumental reading.

(19) *Bol'še medsestry Eva xočet stat' tol'ko model'ju.*
More nurse.GEN Eva wants to become only model.INS
'It is only a model that Eva wants to become more than a nurse.'
Subject reading, unavailable: 'Eva wants to become a model more than a nurse does.'
Instrumental reading, preferred: 'Eva wants to become a model more than she wants to become a nurse.'

Finally, focus can even make PP correlates possible. In example (20), the focused PP *u menja* 'by I.GEN' is interpreted as the correlate, while the subject reading is unavailable.

(20) *Lučše Leny ocenki tol'ko u menja.*
better Lena.GEN grades only by I.GEN
Subject reading, unavailable: 'Only my grades are better than Lena.'
PP reading, preferred: 'Only my grades are better than Lena's.'

The characteristic properties of the phrasal comparative can be summarised as follows: (a) the SoC always bears genitive case and is strictly nominal; (b) apart from the subject reading, other readings are unacceptable to variable degrees; (c) the acceptability of non-subject readings is improved by topicalisation or focalisation of the correlate. I proceed to examine two existing analyses of Russian comparatives and how they fare in regard to the phrasal comparative.

3 Existing approaches

3.1 A semantics-oriented analysis

Pancheva (2006), which covers the phrasal-clausal distinction in a number of Slavic languages (Polish, Bulgarian, BCMS), presents a clausal analysis for the phrasal comparative in Russian. The gist of her proposal is that both phrasal and clausal comparatives are underlyingly clausal, but the structures are nevertheless divergent. Pancheva contends that the clausal comparative contains a full clause, part of which is deleted by ellipsis (21a), whereas the phrasal comparative features a small clause made up of the SoC and an anaphoric predicate (21b).

(21) a. Clausal comparative
than [$_{CP}$ wh$_1$ John is d$_1$-tall] → LF: than [$_{CP}$ d$_1$ John is ~~d$_1$-tall~~]

b. Phrasal comparative
than [$_{SC}$ John Δ] →
LF: [$_{IP}$ [$_{IP}$ Mary is d$_1$-tall] [$_{DegP}$ -er$_1$ [$_{PP}$ than [$_{SC}$ John ~~d-tall~~]]]]
(adapted from Pancheva 2006)

In the clausal comparative, the complement of the comparative preposition, which is null in Russian but non-null in Polish, for example, is a CP – a finite embedded clause. This clause contains a degree variable, which is bound by an operator occupying Spec, CP, similarly to a wh-word. The comparative preposition, according to Pancheva (2006), is "a partitive preposition in the domain of degrees", so it receives an argument of the degree type. The parallel between partitive prepositions and the comparative *than*-preposition is important here: while the clausal comparative is analogous to the *referential partitive*, where the preposition scopes over a definite description (*a glass of* [*the water*]), the phrasal comparative is like the *predicative partitive*, or a pseudo-partitive (*a glass of* [*water*]).

The degree is definite and determined by the elided clause in the clausal comparative; the referential partitive preposition ($\lambda d_1 \lambda d_2$ [d_2 is part of d_1]) receives a definite degree and returns a predicate of degrees. The phrasal comparative, however, is similar to a pseudo-partitive in that the comparative preposition can receive a set of degrees as input: see the contrast in examples (23–24), where a measure phrase can be the SoC in a phrasal comparative but not in a clausal one. The lambda-abstraction of the degree proceeds out of the main clause, and this degree is subsequently passed as an argument to the Deg head, as well as the value of the PP headed by *than* (see example (22) for the lexical entry of the Deg head). Recall that *than* returns a predicate of degrees, that is, a set of degrees, which is a suitable argument for the predicative partitive comparative preposition. Under this analysis, both measure phrases and individuals are felicitous SoCs in the phrasal comparative.

(22) P, Q are degree predicates (sets of degrees)
a. -er(P)(Q) ↔ $\exists d\,[Q(d) \wedge \neg P(d)]$
b. -er [λd. Bill is d-tall] [λd. John is d-tall] (Bhatt & Takahashi 2011: p. 584)

(23) *Anja vyše Antona / dvux metrov.*
Anya taller Anton.GEN two.GEN metres.GEN
Anya is taller than Anton/two metres.

(24) *Anja vyše, čem Anton / #dva metra.*
Anya taller WH Anton two metres
'Anya is taller than Anton is/#two metres are.'

How the value of the *than*-PP is determined here is of particular interest: the *than*-preposition complement is a small clause containing the SoC and a phonologically null anaphoric predicate marked by Δ in example (21b). This predicate is supposed to pick up reference from the matrix clause at LF – it expects a predicate that would accept the SoC as an argument and would produce a predicate of degrees. The matrix predicate answers this requirement and is therefore copied into the small clause at LF in the process of *LF-copying*

(Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey 1995). This mechanism is the vulnerable place of this analysis, which makes several wrong predictions and which I will now focus on.

As mentioned during the exposition of the data, phrasal adverbial comparatives can give rise to ambiguities, as, for instance, in example (14) repeated below, which has two readings: a subject reading, where the SoC (Nikita) is the lover, and an object reading, where it is the loved one.

(25) *Ja ljublju tebja bol'še Nikity.*
I love you.ACC more Nikita.GEN
'I love you more than Nikita loves you.'
'I love you more than I love Nikita.'

The explanation within Pancheva's model is as follows: a part of the matrix clause is LF-copied to the embedded small clause in order to derive the necessary reading (26). What structure the embedded clause would have thus depends on which participant is moved out of the VP pre-copying.

(26) *Ja lublju Ivana bol'še Borisa.* 'I love Ivan more than Boris'

a. $[_{IP}$ I $[_{VP}$ love Ivan d_1-much]] -er$_1$ [Boris $[_{VP}$ love Ivan d_1-much]]

b. $[_{IP}$ Ivan$_2$ $[_{IP}$ I love t_2 d_1-much]] -er$_1$ [Boris $[_{IP}$ I love t_2 d_1-much]]

(adapted from Pancheva 2006)

The subject reading is derived when the matrix subject leaves VP to occupy the subject position. The object reading results from A-bar movement: *Ivan* undergoes topicalisation, so that the IP *I love t d_1-much* could be copied to the embedded clause and Boris could "saturate the internal argument of *love*".

This analysis predicts that in the absence of A-bar movement of the correlate, the only available reading should be the subject one. If the correlate *is* moved, however, this very participant should dictate the preferred reading. This is empirically accurate, except for the case where the correlate is inside a prepositional phrase, see example (20) repeated below in example (27), which is problematic, since movement of complements of prepositions is impossible in Russian.

(27) *Lučše Leny ocenki tol'ko u menja.*
better Lena.GEN grades only by I.GEN
Subject reading, unavailable: 'Only my grades are better than Lena.'
PP reading, preferred: 'Only my grades are better than Lena's.'

Another hidden drawback of the analysis via LF-copying after topicalisation comes from the premise that topicalisation can (and must, in the case of Russian phrasal comparatives), be visible at LF: the predicate with a gap to be saturated by the SoC is created via A-bar movement of the correlate. This movement is supposedly unrecoverable: the lower copy of the correlate has to be absent at LF, so that the LF-copied predicate had a missing argument, which would be saturated by the SoC. The absence of the lower copy of the correlate excludes, for example, reflexive binding in the topicalised correlate, which is, nevertheless, completely acceptable (28).

(28) *Svoej$_i$* *sekretarše* *načal'nik$_i$* *platit* *bol'še* *Anny.*
self's.GEN secretary.DAT boss pays more Anna.GEN
'The boss$_i$ pays Anna more than he$_i$ pays his$_i$ secretary.'

If the movement were irrecoverable, Principle A of binding theory would not be satisfied at LF: the expression containing a possessive reflexive *svoej* 'self's.DAT' in the subject position has no c-commanding antecedent in its binding domain, that is, the finite clause. The supposed LF structure of example (28) is shown in example (29): the lower copy of the scrambled correlate is not visible, but it needs to be visible, so that the reflexive could be bound by the subject. The correlate has to be c-commanded by the subject and moved out of its domain of c-command. However, if it is assumed that reflexive binding occurs as soon as it becomes possible in the course of the derivation (see Belletti & Rizzi 1988, Bailyn 2003, 1988 on the derivational approach to binding), the problem is eliminated: the reflexive is bound while the correlate is still c-commanded by the subject and only then it is moved (see the revised structure in 30)

(29) The reflexive-containing DP is not c-commanded by the antecedent
[$_{IP}$ self's$_i$ secretary$_2$ [$_{IP}$ boss$_i$ pays t_2 d_1-much]] -er$_1$ [Anna [$_{IP}$ secretary pays t_2 d_1-much]]

(30) Binding occurs before movement of the reflexive-containing DP
[$_{IP}$ self's$_i$ secretary [$_{IP}$ boss$_i$ pays ~~self's$_i$ secretary~~ d_1-much]] -er$_1$ [Anna [$_{IP}$ secretary pays t_2 d_1-much]]

Another problematic example – (31) – has two readings, as expected: a subject reading and an object reading. The reflexive *sebja* 'self.ACC', as well as *svoej* 'self's.GEN' are bound by the subject – *Petja* 'Petya' – before LF-copying. Therefore, the subject reading, where *sebja* 'self.ACC' is bound by the SoC – *svoej tëšči* 'self's.GEN mother-in-law.GEN' – is not derivable, since it would require the re-binding of the possessive reflexive after LF-copying. Recall that we cannot abandon the derivational approach to binding, because otherwise Principle A would be violated in oblique readings.

(31) *Petja$_i$* *ljubit* *sebja* *bol'še* *svoej$_i$* *tëšči.*
Petya loves self.ACC more self's.GEN mother-in-law.GEN
Subject reading: 'Petya$_i$ loves himself more than his$_i$ mother-in-law loves herself.'
Object reading: 'Petya$_i$ loves himself more than he$_i$ loves his$_i$ mother-in-law.'

The fact that the subject reading of example (31) exists may be due to vehicle change – a phenomenon of copied names being interpreted as pronouns, which makes it possible to circumvent principles of Binding theory (Fiengo & May 1994) and is applicable to the LF-copying analysis of the phrasal comparative. It may well be that the reflexive-containing nominal is substituted by a pronoun during LF-copying any time that Principle A is violated, but if there is a simpler alternative that does not require vehicle change, it is to be preferred. I will return to how Pancheva's (2006) approach compares to the alternative view that I propose in the following sections.

Finally, it needs to be addressed that, contrary to Pancheva (2006), measure phrases as SoCs in clausal comparatives can be semantically felicitous if the correlate is taken to be a measure as well (Pavel Rudnev, p.c.). Example (24) is greatly improved by the addition of

rostom 'height.INS' (32).

(32) *Anja vyše rostom, čem Anton / ^{OK}dva metra.*
Anya taller height.INS WH Anton two metres
'Anya is taller than Anton is/^{OK}two metres are.'

As soon as *dva metra* 'two metres' is not interpreted as the subject of the elided clause, that is, an individual, the infelicity is lifted. Pancheva's generalisation about phrasal comparatives being able to take measure phrases as SoCs as opposed to the clausal ones can be reformulated in a way that is favourable to the direct analysis, to which I return in Section 5.1.

On the whole, the LF-copying analysis of the phrasal comparative is relatively empirically accurate, but its commitment to semantic compositionality both with measure phrases and individuals as SoCs leads it to lose coverage of other data points such as the reflexive binding facts and the availability of PP correlates.

3.2 The morphological alternative: too restrictive

A radically different analysis of the phrasal comparative by Philippova (2017) relies on case marking of the correlate and is more restrictive than the analysis by Pancheva (2006) reviewed above. It turns out to be too restrictive.

In Dependent Case theory (DCT), case can be assigned in certain structural configurations within the domain of case assignment, as well as by functional or lexical heads (Marantz 2000). Cases are therefore divided into two groups: structural, i.e. determined by the syntactic position, and non-structural, which are assigned by specific heads. The restriction on the SoC is Russian phrasal comparatives is, according to Philippova (2017), affected by this distinction.

Philippova (2017) claims that there are two processes at work, as summarised in example (33) below.

(33) Overwrite and Match (equivalent to Attraction and Matching in Assmann et al. 2014).

a. Overwrite instructs the morphology to realize the last assigned case

b. Match resolves the conflict via insertion of a syncretic morpheme.
Both can freely apply to all case value combinations, but the former will yield an ungrammatical result if the Case to be overwritten is inherent/lexical.
(Philippova 2017: p. 9)

Essentially, the genitive case received by the SoC is inherent and has to overwrite whatever case is received by the SoC in the elided clause. If its prior case is inherent or lexical, Overwrite fails, and the only way to prevent the crash of the derivation is Match. Match saves the day if the overwritten case is syncretic with the new one, in our case, the genitive. Match is called upon in order to account for the supposedly improved acceptability of the oblique reading in examples like example (34), where the instrumental reading is available in spite of the inherent nature of the case.[4]

[4]In Philippova's notation, which I adopt for other examples in this paper as well, the equals sign denotes

(34) *Ja goržus' Petrovym bol'še {Ivanova; Ivanovoj}.*
I.NOM proud Petrov.INS more Ivanov.GEN=ACC Ivanova.GEN=INS
'I am proud of Petrov more than Ivanov/Ivanova.'
'I am proud of Petrov more than {√Ivanov; √Ivanova} is.' NOM-reading
'I am proud of Petrov more than of {*Ivanov; √Ivanova}.' INS-reading

This analysis crucially relies on predefined sets of structural and non-structural cases, which are not universally agreed upon, for instance, the dative case is controversial in this respect (Pereltsvaig 2007). A bigger problem is the unnecessarily close link between the morphological form of some cases and their syntactic nature.

A counterexample to Philippova's (2017) analysis comes from depictives, which in Russian can copy their host's case as well as bear an oblique case: instrumental or dative. Assuming, following Bailyn (2001), that the case assigned to depictives is the same as what the arguments of verbs receive, the same effects of Overwrite and Match must be observable with either of them. Philippova (2017) agrees with Pancheva (2006) in that the SoC is A-bar moved out of a small clause, I suppose that depictives can be SoCs too, since they can be subject to wh-movement in Russian (35).

(35) Context: the sentence is a rhetorical question uttered as a comment on Dasha's drunken appearance the other night.
Kakaja / kakoj Daša včera prišla domoj?
how.NOM how.GEN=INS Dasha yesterday came home
'In what state did Dasha come home yesterday?'

Depictives, nevertheless, are not acceptable as SoCs. Note that both the nominative case, which should be overwritable as a structural case, and the instrumental, which is syncretic with the genitive in the feminine adjectival paradigm, are infelicitous (36). The former must be licensed by Overwrite and the latter by Match, but neither of them is.

(36) **Daša prixodit domoj p'janaja / p'janoj čašče trezvoj*
Dasha comes home drunk.NOM drunk.INS=GEN more often drunk.INS=GEN
Expected: 'Dasha comes home drunk more often than sober.'

Phrasal comparatives admit adjectival SoCs, as I have mentioned earlier in Section 2, so it is not the categorial status of the SoC that makes example (36) unacceptable.

The analysis that employs the structural versus inherent/lexical contrast is therefore too reliant on the cases themselves and less on what exactly affects their assignment. Structural cases can be borne by non-arguments, so there is, once again, not enough restriction.

It is acknowledged by Philippova (2017) herself that the analysis is too restrictive at the same time, since there exist acceptable examples that Overwrite and Match rule out. All of them exhibit the familiar pattern of scrambled SoCs that are either in non-structural cases (37–39) or PPs (39).

syncretism rather than a clitic boundary.

(37) *Bol'še nix udalos' zarabotat' tol'ko PIFam.*
More they.GEN managed.NOM to earn only open-end funds.DAT
'Only open-end funds managed to earn more than them [bond funds].'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

(38) *Bol'še nego krasnuju kartočku pokazyvali tol'ko Juriju Kovtunu.*
More he.GEN red.ACC card.ACC showed.PL only Yury.DAT Kovtun.DAT
'Only Yury Kovtun was shown the red card more often than him.'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

(39) *Bol'še nego iz igrokov sbornoj tol'ko u... Malkina.*
More he.GEN from players.GEN team.GEN only by Malkin.GEN
'Of all national team players, only Malkin has [scored] more [goals] than him.'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

These problematic examples can be dealt with, if an account of how focus or topicalisation salvages oblique readings is provided. The morphological solution, however, is not capable of this by definition, because it depends on case morphology: a non-structural case cannot be overwritten, no matter the position of its bearer.

4 Proposal

In this section, I develop a new analysis of Russian phrasal comparatives that would overcome the challenges faced by the previous approaches. In my understanding of the syntax of Russian comparatives in general and the constitution of the elided part in particular, I rely on what has been noted by Pancheva (2006) and Philippova (2017).

Next, one of the essential observations about the phrasal comparatives is that the SoC appears to be clause-mates with its correlate, as opposed to the clausal comparatives, where they appear to be in different clauses. This can be demonstrated by means of such diagnostics as local reflexive binding, which is only possible within a single clause. Negative concord and wh-extraction have also been cited by Philippova (2017) as diagnostics that demonstrate the absence of a clause boundary separating the SoC from the rest of the clause, although they are less trustworthy for Russian than reflexive binding. Nevertheless, a desirable analysis of the phrasal comparative must place the SoC in the matrix clause to capture the same-clause effects.

At the same time, the phrasal comparative probably has a clausal source, as evidenced by the ambiguity in example (25). I claim that the phrasal comparative is genuinely phrasal in that the SoC rather than a small clause is the complement of the comparative preposition. This rids one of the necessity to postulate an ECM-preposition that assigns the genitive across the small clause boundary – case assignment proceeds exactly like in regular PPs.[5] Also, the SoC and the correlate belonging to the same clause is accounted for this way. All in all, I propose a direct analysis for Russian phrasal comparatives.

[5]There are reasons to believe that Russian comparatives contain a silent preposition (Philippova 2018). Russian is similar to English in this respect, because the SoC in the phrasal comparative is the complement of a *than*-like preposition.

I assume that the phrasal comparative is a DegP, in accordance with Graščenkov & Ljutikova (2017), because it can bear no agreement markers and cannot be used attributively – its external syntax is similar to that of an adverb. In adverbial comparatives, the DegP is an adjunct of the verbal projection that it modifies. The Deg's complement is the adjective/adverb and its specifier is a PP headed by a null preposition and denoting an individual – the SoC. The derivation proceeds the same way as in Hindi-Urdu, as described by Bhatt & Takahashi (2011), and also similarly to what Pancheva (2006) suggests, only without the LF-copying: the Deg needs the SoC and its correlate as arguments, as well as a predicate of individuals and degrees. The lexical entry for this three-place comparative head, which appears in phrasal comparatives, is given in example (40).

(40) -er(x)(P)(y) ↔ ∃d[P (y, d) and ¬P (x, d)] (Bhatt & Takahashi 2011: p. 585)

Semantically, the Deg head, also referred to as the Deg operator from now on, is a three-place predicate, whose first argument is the SoC, the second – a predicate of individuals and degrees and the third – the correlate. The predicate of degrees is the result of the lambda-abstraction of the correlate and the DegP, which leave behind an individual and a degree variable respectively. This predicate returns a set of degrees, to which an individual is up to in some respect, and the Deg operator decides, whether there exists a degree, to which the correlate is up to but the SoC is not, thus performing a comparison between two individuals. A predicate of individuals and degrees is necessary for such a comparison, so the direct analysis is associated with a three-place predicate, whereas for a reduced clause analysis, a two-place predicate comparing two degrees is sufficient.

I will now demonstrate the derivation of the subject reading of example (41). First, a DegP is built and adjoined to the VP (Figure 1). Then the subject is raised, creating a predicate of individuals at LF, and the DegP moves, leaving a degree variable (Figure 2). The resulting structure is interpretable, since the Deg head has received the SoC, the raised correlate and the predicate of degrees and individuals (both the Deg and the correlate have left traces in there).

(41) *Ja (prygaju) vyše Ani.*
I jump higher Anya.GEN
'I jump higher than Anya.'

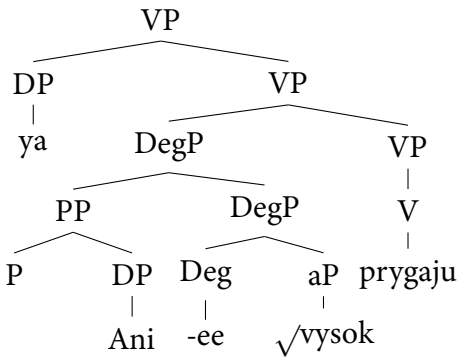

Figure 1: Building the verb phrase containing a DegP

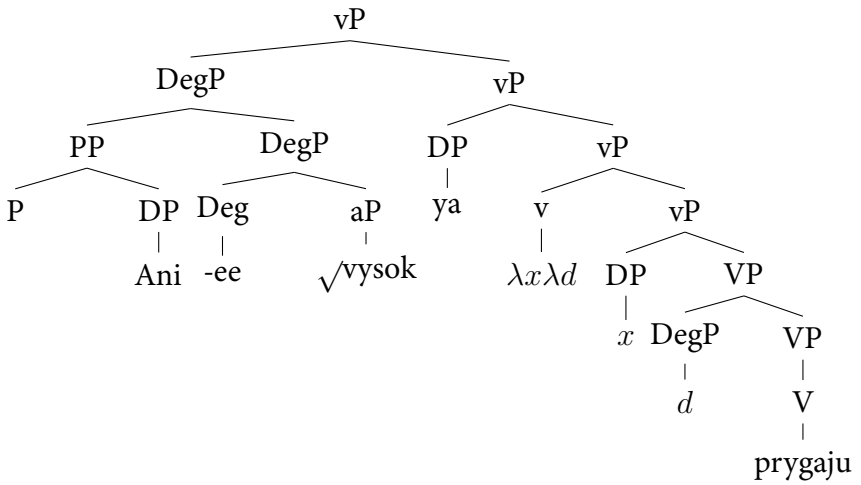

Figure 2: Moving DegP and the correlate to form a predicate of degrees and individuals.

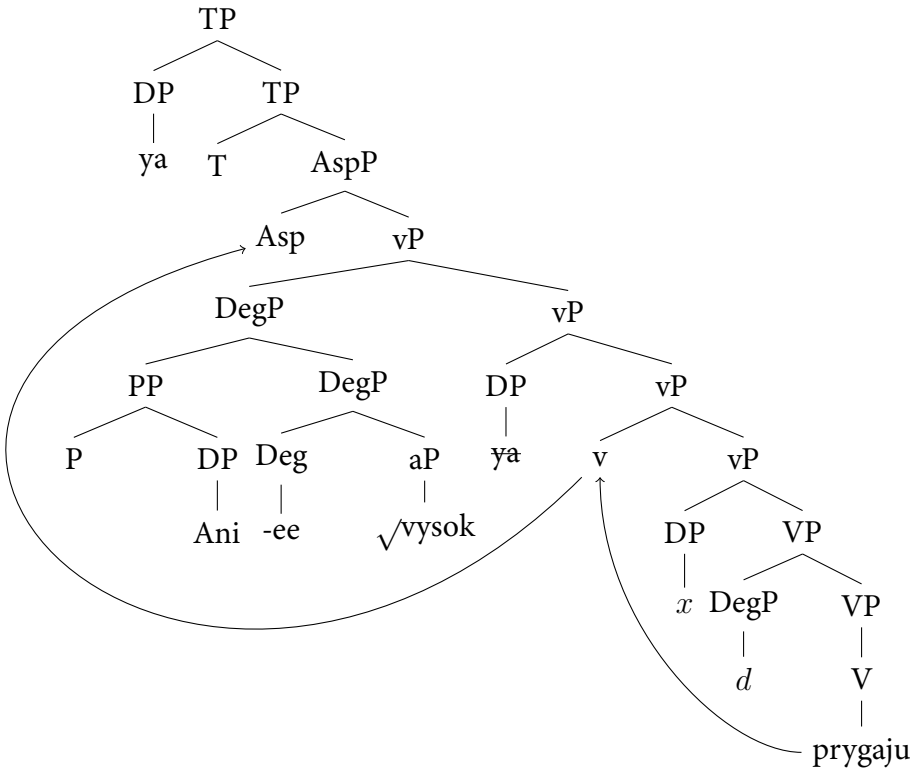

Figure 3: Deriving surface SVO word order.

The final step is to derive the surface word order. Here I follow Bailyn (1995), Gribanova (2013) in assuming that the verb head moves to a position just below T in Russian. The subject occupies Spec, TP, thus the correct word order is obtained, where the DegP is in the position that adverbs usually appear in (see Figure 3). The order of the SoC and the comparative adverb is the reverse of what Figures 1–3 show, but this may be dealt with in several ways: Graščenkov & Ljutikova (2017) assume that there exists a *small deg* head on a par with the regular Deg, to which the comparative head moves, thus appearing to the left of the SoC; it might also be that DegP's specifier projects to its right, which has been

proposed for certain heads (see Bruening (2010) on ApplP). I must leave the comparison of these two mechanisms to future work.

Oblique readings are derived in a similar fashion, the only difference being that the movement of the correlate is to a focus/topic position. The last steps of the derivation of example (42) are illustrated in Figure 4.

(42) *Maše* *ja* *pomogaju* *bol'še* *Ani.*
Masha.DAT I help more Anya.GEN
'I help Masha more than I help Anya.'

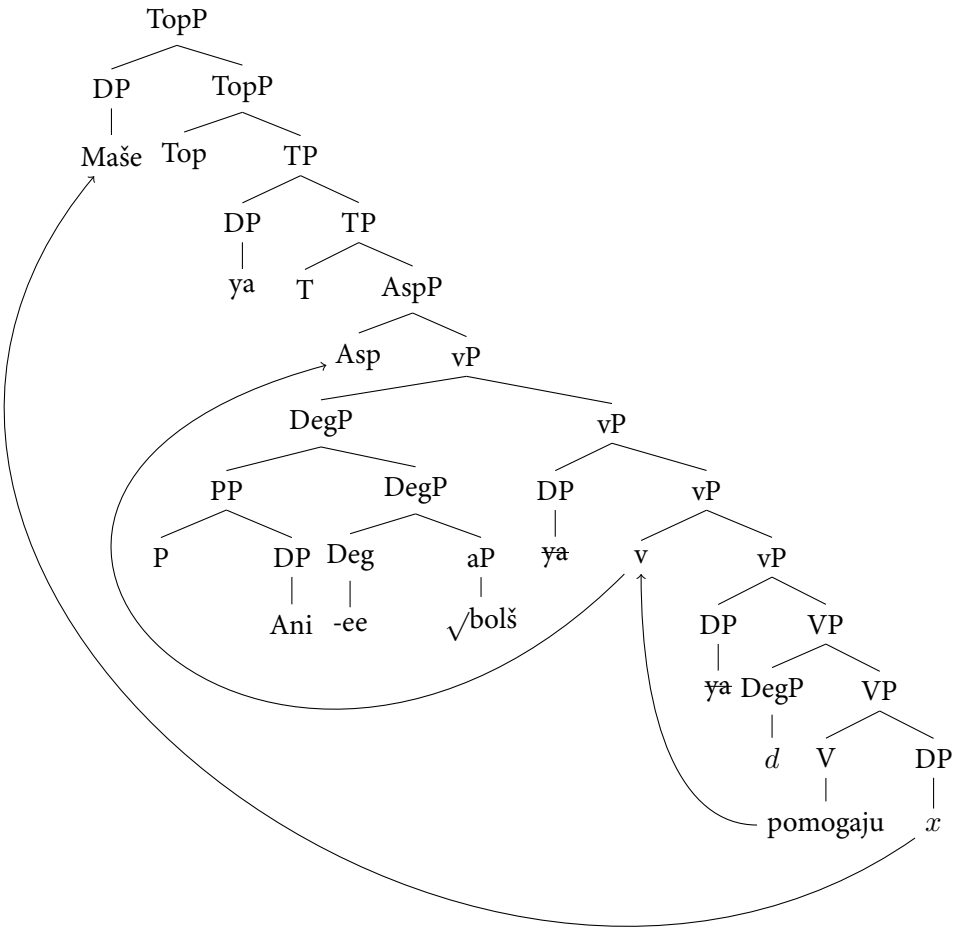

Figure 4: Deriving the oblique reading via topicalisation of the correlate.

In what follows I provide empirical support for the fact that a direct analysis is suitable for Russian phrasal comparatives, building on existing work, where Direct analyses are proposed for Hindi-Urdu (Bhatt & Takahashi 2007, 2011), Lithuanian (Vaikšnoraitė 2021) and Malagasy (Potsdam 2017). Also, I demonstrate that the improved acceptability of oblique readings with an A-bar moved correlate is explicable under the direct analysis, assuming that phrasal comparatives are among those syntactic environments where scrambling can impact semantic interpretation.

5 Supporting evidence

5.1 Case marking and categorial status of the SoC

The SoC in the phrasal comparative in Russian is strictly nominal and genitive. This fact immediately suggests a direct analysis, since little evidence of any clausal source is observed, as far as the SoC is concerned. The case marking is invariant, so any case received by the SoC in an elided clause should be overwritten. An analysis along these lines by Philippova (2017) has been considered and criticised in Section 3.2. Considering that every case can be overwritten in the right scrambling configuration, any observed restrictions on overwritable cases may be circumvented, so the analysis turns out to be too restrictive. If no case other than the genitive from the comparative preposition is assigned to the SoC, the issue is dissolved.

The nominal status of the SoC is explained by any analysis that admits the existence of a comparative preposition in Russian, which is true of both analyses that I have reviewed, so the direct analysis has the same predictive power in this regard.

Where it is superior again, however, is the phonological non-recoverability of any elided material from the alleged clausal source (P. Rudnev, p.c.). While Pancheva (2006) postulates a null anaphoric predicate, Philippova (2017) supposes the existence of an elided small clause, of which no part can be pronounced. It is very rare in ellipsis that the deleted structure is completely unrecoverable (Ross 1988, Sag 1976, Merchant 2001)

The supposed unacceptability of measure phrases as SoCs in clausal comparatives, which is one of the key motivations behind Pancheva's analysis, when viewed from a different angle, supports the direct analysis as well. The phrasal comparative admits both measure phrase and individual SoCs; the clausal comparative accepts individuals and, occasionally, measure phrases, if it is explicitly specified that the correlate represents a measure as well. The clausal comparative, then, is dependent on the matrix clause's content for the interpretation of the SoC, whereas in the phrasal one, the role of the SoC is *underdetermined*, since it can only be construed as an argument of the Deg operator and not in any kind of clause. This conjecture is evidenced by the existence of an ambiguity between measure and individual in phrasal comparatives, where, for example, a person can represent themselves or their height (43).

(43) *Nikita možet podnjat' bol'še Ani.*
Nikita can lift more Anya.GEN
'Nikita can lift more than Anya can.' — Anya as an individual
'Nikita can lift more than Anya weighs.' — Anya as a measure of weight

Pancheva allows a direct analysis for measure phrase comparatives because of their "inherent semantics" of degrees: degrees do not need LF-copying to be interpreted by the predicative partitive *than*-preposition. However, the fact that SoCs in phrasal comparatives can be ambiguous between degrees and individuals, prompts one to consider a direct analysis for individual SoCs as well.

5.2 How A-bar movement feeds oblique readings

There are three examples that Philippova (2017) concedes are not generated by her analysis. The first one features a dative correlate NP (44).

(44) *Bol'še nix udalos' zarabotat' tol'ko PIFam.*
More they.GEN managed.NOM to earn only open-end funds.DAT
'Only open-end funds managed to earn more than them [bond funds].'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

The principal detail is that example (44) is biclausal: the verb *udat'sja* 'to be successful' in the impersonal form has a dative argument and subcategorises a non-finite clause. Whether *udat'sja* is a raising or a control verb, is of little importance here: what matters is that the correlate is not necessarily its dative argument. If we assume that the correlate is the null category (PRO or the copy of the matrix dative argument), which is the subject of the embedded non-finite clause, the example ceases to be problematic, since the subject is an acceptable position for the SoC.

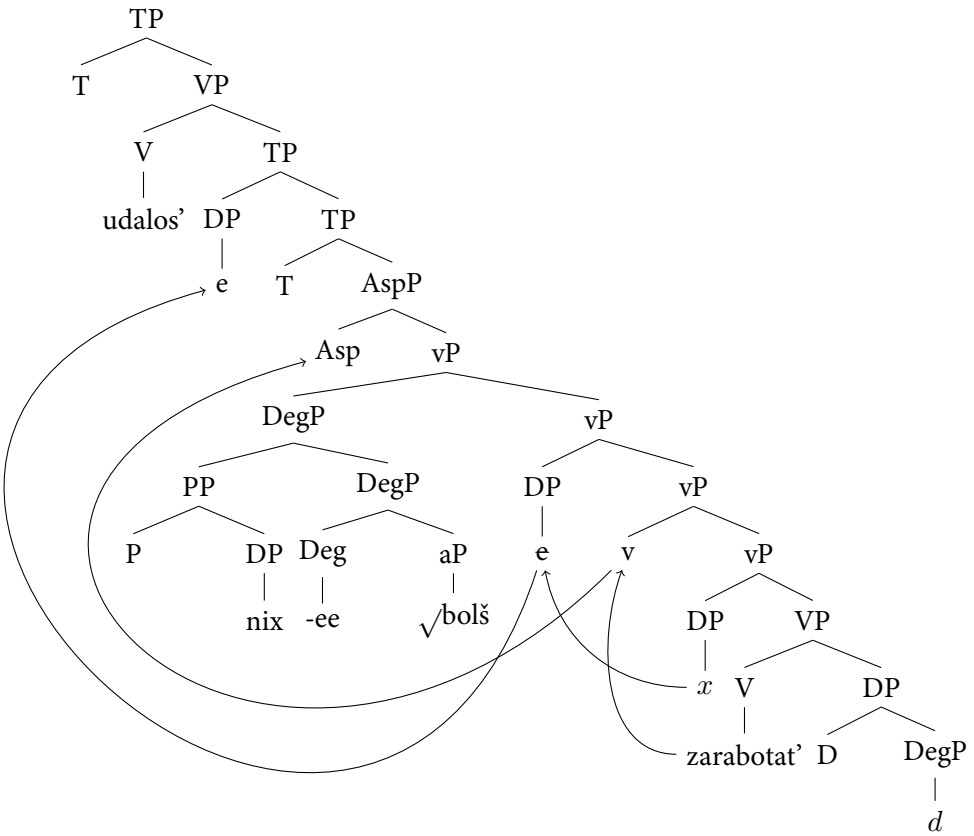

Figure 5: An embedded subject as the correlate.

The structure of example (44) is presented in Figure 5 above. Example (44) does not necessarily have a dative reading: this reading can just as well be a subject reading, where the correlate is the empty category in the embedded subject position.

The next type of sentences not explained by Philippova (2017) features a PP correlate (45) or a dative one (46).

(45) *Bol'še nego iz igrokov sbornoj tol'ko u... Malkina.*
More he.GEN from players.GEN team.GEN only by Malkin.GEN
'Of all national team players, only Malkin has [scored] more [goals] than him.'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

(46) *Bol'še nego krasnuju kartočku pokazyvali tol'ko Juriju Kovtunu.*
More he.GEN red.ACC card.ACC showed.PL only Yury.DAT Kovtun.DAT
'Only Yury Kovtun was shown the red card more often than him.'
(Philippova 2017: p. 12)

These examples illustrate the generalisation that I have made earlier in Section 2 about scrambling feeding oblique readings. Let us see how it can be handled in a direct analysis. Recall that in order to supply the three-place comparative operator with a predicate argument, the correlate moves out. In the derivation of the subject reading, this is the A-movement of the subject. I suggest that in order to derive the oblique reading, one has to scramble the correlate (see Figure 4). Note that for a PP correlate, there is no need to move the preposition's complement, which is prohibited in Russian. It is sufficient that the PP can be scrambled and that its semantic type is that of an individual, so that it could saturate the first argument of the Deg operator. Since the construction 'u N-GEN' marks possessors, it can well be assumed to be equivalent to a DP in terms of semantic representation, like, for instance, by-phrases in passives in some analyses (Bruening 2013, Angelopoulos, Collins & Terzi 2020).

The mechanism that allows scrambling to license oblique readings has some ramifications for the syntax-semantics interface, which I will now proceed to clarify.

5.3 How scrambling affects interpretation

It follows from the direct analysis of the phrasal comparative that scrambling is semantically visible and affects interpretation. Moreover, A-bar movement of the oblique correlate is necessary for it to be interpreted as such. This is a plausible conclusion, since scrambling has been observed to be semantically interpretable elsewhere, for instance, it can resolve scope ambiguities in Russian (Antonyuk 2015). Quantifier scope varies because of the availability of quantifier raising, which happens at LF, but if the scope relations *can* be disambiguated by overt movement in Russian, they *are*. This is known as Ionin's Scope Principle (Ionin 2001; 47), which is a version of Pesetsky's (1989) Earliness Principle.

(47) Ionin's scope principle: The availability of overt movement restricts covert movement. (Ionin 2001)

The phrasal comparative, then, is another case where overt movement (scrambling) affects semantic interpretation. Scrambling bleeds quantifier raising and feeds oblique readings of phrasal comparatives. Thus, the examples that Philippova (2017) cites as problematic, where scrambled oblique correlates are acceptable, can be handled successfully.

5.4 Reflexive binding in the phrasal comparative

While discussing possible objections to Pancheva's (2006) LF-copying analysis, I have mentioned that the fact that scrambling affects interpretation is in conflict with the data on reflexive binding: while the scrambled correlate needs to have its higher copy interpreted and the lower one deleted for the purpose of providing the Deg operator with a predicate of degrees and individuals, there also needs to be a lower copy of the correlate that is c-commanded by the subject, so that the reflexive could be bound. The direct analysis, which I have been defending, suffers from the exact same problem, which can be solved the exact same way: by assuming a derivational approach to binding, where principles of Binding theory apply as their conditions are met during the derivation (Belletti & Rizzi 1988, Bailyn 2003, 1988). It only needs to be demonstrated how the subject reading of example (31), repeated in example (48), is derived.

(48) *Petja$_i$ ljubit sebja bol'še svoej$_i$ tëšči.*
Petya loves self.ACC more self's.GEN mother-in-law.GEN
Subject reading (sloppy, available): 'Petya$_i$ loves himself more than his$_i$ mother-in-law loves herself.'
Subject reading (strict, unavailable): 'Petya$_i$ loves himself more than his$_i$ mother-in-law loves Petya.'
Object reading: 'Petya$_i$ loves himself more than he$_i$ loves his$_i$ mother-in-law.'

Figure 6 represents the moment in the derivation where Principle A is satisfied and where *sebja* 'self.ACC' is bound. After the subject *Petja* and the DegP are moved, the reflexive inside predicate of individuals and degrees is interpreted as a bound variable and does not refer to Petja; therefore, *sebja* 'self.ACC' can be "rebound" by the SoC at LF when the SoC is passed to the Deg operator. The fact that the reflexive cannot be interpreted as referring to the subject is supported by the absence of strict reading of example (48).

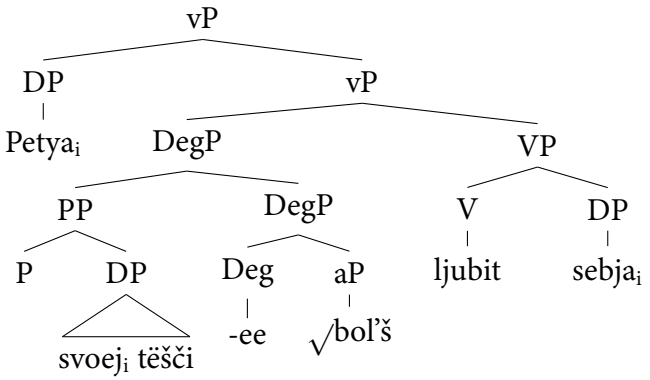

Figure 6: Principle A applies.

Figure 7 shows the final stage of the derivation of the subject reading, where the predicate of degrees and individuals is formed and the Deg operator receives all three of its arguments.

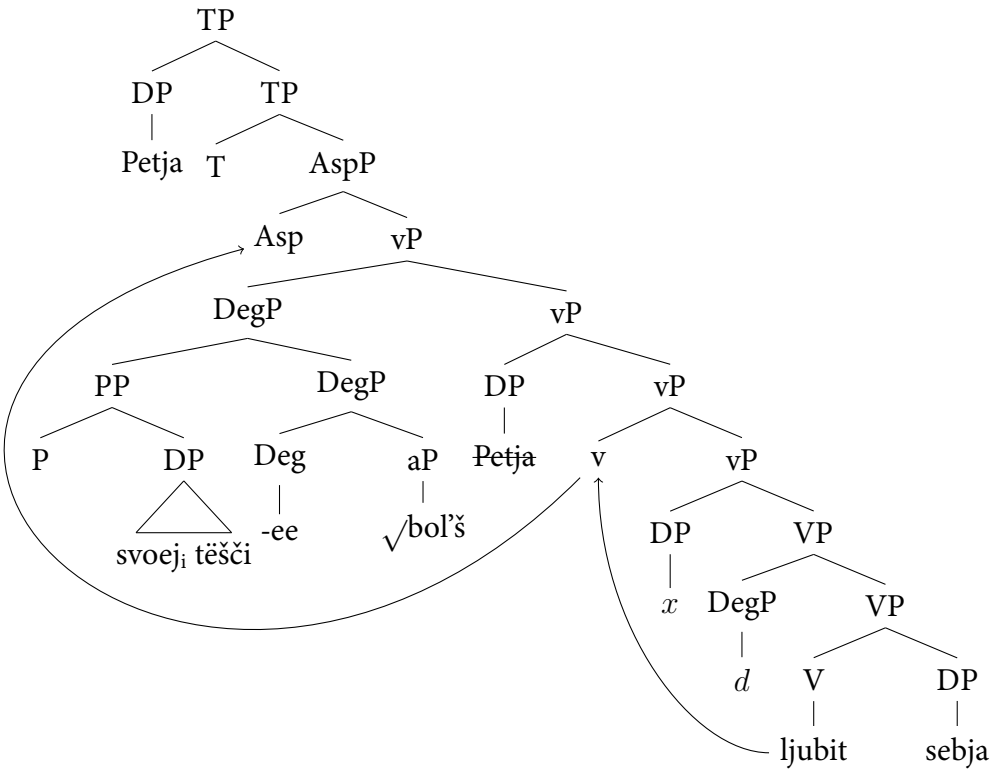

Figure 7: Final stage of the derivation of example (48).

The same logic, however, can be applied to the LF-copying analysis: if the LF-copied vP contains the reflexive as a bound variable, it can be re-bound in the exact same way (see example (49) for how example (48) would then look like at LF). The reflexive *svoej* 'self's.GEN' is bound by the matrix subject, interpreted as a bound variable at LF and bound again by the SoC after LF-copying.

(49) [Petya$_i$ [$\lambda x : x$ loves x]] -er [his$_i$ mother-in-law [$\lambda x : x$ loves x]]

The LF-copying analysis requires the existence of two different types of phonologically null structure – a null anaphoric predicate that picks up reference from the main clause predicate and "regular" elided structure. The former is supposed by Pancheva (2006) to occur in phrasal comparatives and the latter – in clausal comparatives. If both types of comparatives have some hidden structure, it must be of different kinds, since the two types diverge in terms of the availability of strict and sloppy readings: a phrasal comparative can only have a sloppy reading (48), whereas a clausal one can have either (50).[6]

[6]It is common for sentences which have some elided structure with anaphors to have two readings: a sloppy reading, where the overt anaphor and the elided are bound by different participants, and a strict reading, where both refer to the same entity (Ross 1967, Sag 1976).

(50) *Petja$_i$ ljubit svoju$_i$ sobaku bol'še, čem Anja.*
Petya loves self's.ACC dog.ACC more WH Anya
Sloppy reading: 'Petya loves his dog more than Anya loves her dog.'
Strict reading: 'Petya loves himself more than Anya loves his dog.'

The availability of both strict and sloppy readings is typical for VP-ellipsis (VPE; Ross 1967, Sag 1976). Strict readings can be derived via LF-copying, albeit with vehicle change (Oku 1988). It therefore has to be stipulated, why the strict reading in example (48) is not available, that is, why vehicle change does not apply in this case. The direct alternative, however, is much simpler in assuming that the phrasal comparative in Russian lacks silent structure altogether. The reasoning is as follows: if there are two reflexives in the structure – one in the pronounced part and one in the elided part – we expect two readings to be available: strict and sloppy. When one of the readings is prohibited, there must be some factor that rules it out. Superficially, the presence of a second non-LF-copied reflexive in the structure correlates with the availability of the strict reading in Russian comparatives. Whether this correlation actually implies causation is a question for future research.

6 Conclusion

I have demonstrated that the existing accounts of the phrasal comparative in Russian do not make fully correct predictions about the available positions of the SoC. The LF-copying analysis of Pancheva (2006) has been argued to be overly committed to semantic compositionality to the detriment of its empirical coverage of syntactically relevant facts about reflexive binding in the SoC and the availability of PP correlates. Philippova's (2017) suggestion to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable SoCs along the structural versus non-structural case distinction has been shown to rely too heavily on surface morphological case forms rather than the syntactic positions marked by them. My proposal aims to correct the over- and underprediction of the previous approaches by defending a direct analysis for the phrasal comparative in Russian. The direct analysis straightforwardly captures the same-clause effects exhibited by the SoC, its uniform case marking and nominal status; the fact that oblique and even PP correlates are acceptable in scrambling configurations receives an explanation too, assuming that scrambling can affect semantic interpretation in phrasal comparatives.

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