

Two comparatives

Dieter Wunderlich, Düsseldorf

Mi-nél több-et olvasok, an-nál kevesebb-et tudok.
what-ADESS more-ACC read.1sg that-ADESS little-COMP-ACC know.1sg
'The more I read, the less I know'

1. The comparative debate

The now classical debate on comparatives in the eighties was concerned with two questions. First, is the phrasal comparative, exemplified in (1a), an elliptical subcase of a clausal comparative, exemplified in (1b) (and in what sense), or is it an independent type of construction? The clausal comparative displays a relation between degrees that, in principle, can be determined by any sort of state of affairs. This type of construction is more general, and, evidently, more complex than the phrasal one, and therefore it has attracted the interest of most of the literature on comparatives. Only a minority of researchers (Hoeksema 1983, Heim 1985, Pinkal 1989/1990) regarded the phrasal comparative as a construction of its own, which is simpler but efficient enough to just compare two objects with respect to a given scale.

- (1) a. An elephant is bigger than a camel.
b. This shelf is longer than the room is wide.

The second question concerned the status of the comparative complement, expressed by *than* in English: is it an argument introduced by the comparative morpheme when it is applied to an adjective or adverb, or is it a free adjunct? Only Pinkal (1989) argued for the latter; in his adjunct analysis, the comparative morpheme itself only contributes the information that the relevant degree surpasses some contextual value, whereas the sentential complement, being a free relative, adds a specification of this value. For the majority of researchers, all instances in (2) would be elliptical, though it is not so clear what the relevant complements have to look like. However, all these examples are complete in the adjunct analysis, although they may be subject to modification.

- (2) a. The rhinoceros is one of the bigger animals.
b. I really would like to take a longer leave.
c. Older people usually need more sleep.

Cross-linguistically, there is some evidence that a phrasal and a clausal comparative construction can coexist, and also morphological evidence for the adjunct analysis, besides the syntactic evidence given by Karger et al. (1994). In the following, I will consider some such evidence from Hungarian.¹

¹ When I wish that our addressee is a happier and wiser man, I do not have in mind any person that I want to compare him with. All that I would like to emphasize is that Hungarian, being home of our addressee, is happy and wise in providing us with two standards of comparison. Feri Kiefer once edited a paper of mine on comparative clauses (1973); this now is the second one about this fascinating topic (which justifies the title 'two comparatives'). Between then and now lies what I call the 'classical period' of comparative research, with a list of famous names (Cresswell 1976, Klein 1980, 1991, Hellan 1981, Hoeksema 1983, von Stechow 1984, Heim 1985, Bierwisch 1987, Pinkal 1989, 1990), from all of them I learned much, although only little has made its way into this paper. The Hungarian examples indicated with KVF are taken from Kenesei, Vago & Fenyvesi (1998). I am especially grateful to Tünde Vallyon and Renata Meyer for providing me with further data, to Chris Piñon as well as two reviewers for their constructive comments, and to Barbara Stiebels, who introduced me to Hungarian morphology.

2. Two types of Hungarian comparatives

In contrast to English and German, but in company with Latin and probably other languages, Hungarian has two types of comparative constructions: a phrasal type in which the complement is realized with adessive case, and a clausal type in which it is introduced by the particle *mint*. The following examples show that both constructions are possible when two entities are compared in just one dimension, expressed by an adjective in (3a), an adverb in (3b), or a quantity expression in (3c).

- (3) a. Anna érdekes-ebb volt Péter-nél /, mint Péter.
 Anna interesting-COMP was Peter-ADESS / than Peter
 ‘Anna was more interesting than Peter’
- b. Anna gyors-abb-an olvas Péter-nél /, mint Péter.
 Anna fast-COMP-ADV reads Peter-ADESS / than Peter
 ‘Anna reads faster than Peter’
- c. Anna több könyv-et olvas Péter-nél /, mint Péter.
 Anna more book-ACC reads Peter-ADESS / than Peter
 ‘Anna reads more books than Peter’ (KVF:153)

The adessive contributes the standard of comparison by semantic case (with the literal meaning ‘located at a proximal place’), therefore only the dimension expressed by the comparative morpheme is relevant (‘be more interesting’, ‘read faster’, ‘read more books’). In contrast, *mint* is a complementizer which selects a certain type of relative clause, and so can contribute a much wider range of degrees as the standard of comparison. The examples in (4) show that *mint* allows a quite articulated clause structure, even though ellipsis is preferred if the dimension of comparison is held constant.

- (4) a. Anna érdekes-ebb, mint (a-milyen érdekes) Péter (volt).
 Anna interesting-COMP than REL-what.kind interesting Peter was
 ‘Anna is more interesting than Peter was’
- b. Anna gyors-abb-an olvas, mint (a-hogy (gyors-an)) Péter (olvas).
 Anna fast-COMP-ADV reads than REL-how fast-ADV Peter reads
 ‘Anna reads faster than Peter does’
- c. Anna több könyv-et olvas, mint (a-mennyi (könyve)-t) Péter (olvas).
 Anna more book-ACC reads than REL.how.many book-ACC Peter reads
 ‘Anna reads more books than Peter does’ (KVF:151-152)

Similar observations can be made if the item of comparison has a lower rather than a higher degree on a scale, although with some restrictions. The adessive is only triggered by an explicit comparative form with the suffix /-(V)bb/ on the scale expression, and not by the suppletive form *kevésbé*, which is preferred with adjectives but only allows the clausal construction.

- (5) a. Anna kevésbé érdekes volt {*Péter-nél/, mint Péter}.
 Anna less interesting was than Peter
 ‘Anna was less interesting than Peter’
- b. Anna kevésbé gyors-an olvas {*Péter-nél/, mint Péter}.
 Anna less fast-ADV reads than Peter
 ‘Anna reads less fast than Peter’

- c. Anna keves-ebb könyv-et olvas {Péter-nél/, mint Péter}.
 Anna less book-ACC reads than Peter / Peter-adess
 ‘Anna reads less books than Peter’ (KVF:152-153)

The *mint*-construction allows a full clause, if both the dimension and the object of comparison are shifted:

- (6) Anna több könyv-et olvas-ott, mint a-mennyi cikk-et Péter írt.
 Anna more book-ACC read-PAST than REL-how.many article-ACC Peter wrote
 ‘Anna has read more books than Peter has written articles’ (KVF:152)

What is interesting in this construction is the appearance of a relative pronoun, which indicates that the free relative analysis is on the right track. (7) shows that the same clause can indeed be used as a headless relative. Therefore, the complementizer *mint* itself is semantically empty. This is confirmed by the fact that *mint* also introduces equative constructions with a positive form of the adjective, as in (8).

- (7) A-mennyi cikk-et Péter írt, csodálatos/impozáns volt.
 REL-how.many article-ACC Peter wrote amazing/impressive was.
 ‘How many articles Peter wrote, was amazing/impressive’
- (8) Anna olyan érdekes, mint (a-milyen) Péter (volt).
 Anna such interesting as REL-how Peter was.
 ‘Anna was as interesting as Peter’ (KVF:155)

3. Restrictions for the two types of comparatives

Given these two types of comparative complements, the adessive DP and the relative clause introduced by *mint*, one may ask why they coexist. The answer is that they underlie different structural constraints: there are some constructions in which only the adessive can appear, but others in which only *mint* can appear. Recall that the adessive forms a clause-internal DP phrase, but *mint* a CP adjunct, that is, an independent clause (even if is reduced by ellipsis). This lets us predict a certain distribution of the two comparative constructions. Concerning *mint*, the following constraints are relevant: (i) A CP adjunct forms a syntactic island; therefore, it does not allow extraction (such as that required by *wh*-movement). (ii) The *mint* CP cannot precede the comparative morpheme (in particular, when it is elliptical and its content must be reconstructed). (iii) No CP can be embedded prenominaly in a possessor phrase. None of these constraints is effective with respect to adessive DPs: they do not form an island within the comparative phrase, they may precede the comparative morpheme, and they can be embedded prenominaly.

That extraction of the adessive complement is possible is shown by the *wh*-sentences in (9) as well as by the relative clause in (10). The counterparts with *mint* are totally ungrammatical.

- (9) a. Ki-nél volt Péter érdekes-ebb?
 who-ADESS was Peter interesting-COMP
 ‘Peter was more interesting than who?’
 a1. *Ki volt Péter érdekes-ebb mint ?
 (Who was Peter more interesting than?)
 a2. *Mint ki volt Péter érdekes-ebb?
 (Than who was Peter more interesting?)

- b. Ki-nél olvas-ott Péter több könyv-et?
 who-ADESS read-PAST Peter more book-ACC
 ‘Peter read more books than who?’

- (10) Ismer-t-em egy ember-t, a-ki-nél senkisésem olvas-ott több könyv-et.
 know-PAST-1sg a man-ACC, REL-who-ADESS nobody read-PAST more book-ACC
 ‘I knew a man, nobody read more books than he’

Moreover, that the adessive phrase, but not the *mint*-complement, can be embedded into a prenominal possessor phrase is shown in (11).

- (11) a. Péter [Anná-nál érdekes-ebb emberek könyv-e-i-t] olvasta.
 Peter [Anna-ADESS interesting-COMP people’s books-3sg.POSS-pl-ACC] read.DEF
 ‘Peter has read books by people more interesting than Anna’
 b. * Péter [érdekes-ebb mint Anna emberek könyvei-t] olvasta. (KVF:154)

For the purpose of expressivity, it is thus plausible that the adessive exists. On the other hand, the *mint* clause should also exist, if only for the purpose of expressing equatives. Moreover, the intended meaning of (6) above cannot readily be expressed by an adessive comparative, unless Hungarian allowed as much nominalization as Turkish. Turkish lacks a clausal comparative formed with a particle but permits the expression of rather complex comparisons by means of nominalization (the Turkish comparative case is the ablative).

- (12) Turkish
 a. Hasan san-a ben-den fazla kitap ver-di.
 Hasan 2sg-DAT 1sg-ABL more book give-PAST
 ‘Hasan gave you more books than I (gave you)’
 b. Hasan san-a [ben-im ver-diğ-im-den] fazla kitap ver-di.
 Hasan 2sg-DAT [1sg-GEN give-FNOML-1sg-ABL] more book give-PAST
 ‘Hasan gave you more books than I gave (you)’
 c. Hasan san-a [ben-im Ali-ye ver-diğ-im-den] fazla kitap ver-di.
 Hasan 2sg-DAT [1sg-GEN Ali-DAT give-FNOML-1sg-ABL] more book give-PAST
 ‘Hasan gave you more books than I gave Ali’ (Kornfilt 1997:179)

Note that the Turkish ablative, when it takes a simple DP rather than a nominalized verb, is restricted to the contrast with the nominative. As I will show later, the Hungarian adessive is less restricted, although for the price that some ambiguities arise.

4. Semantic considerations

As expected, the *mint*-clause, but not the adessive, shows semantic effects that are unique for a clausal comparative, where the comparative is in the scope of the standard of comparison. (13a) shows that an ‘or’ coordination in the *mint*-clause preferably gets the same interpretation as the ‘and’ coordination (13b); such an interpretation is impossible for the ‘or’ coordinated adessive in (13c).²

² It is possible to focus the phrase *Hansnál vagy Fritznél*, so that it gets scope over the comparative. Then only the ‘or’ reading is possible, see below.

- (13) a. Péter okos-abb volt, mint Hans vagy Fritz.
Peter clever-COMP was than Hans or Fritz
'Peter was more clever than both Hans and Fritz' (preferred)
'Peter was more clever than either Hans or Fritz' (dispreferred)
- b. Péter okos-abb volt, mint Hans és Fritz.
Peter clever-COMP was than Hans and Fritz
'Peter was more clever than both Hans and Fritz'
- c. Péter okos-abb volt Hans-nál és Fritz-nél / *Hans-nál vagy Fritz-nél.
Peter clever-COMP was Hans-ADESS and Fritz-ADESS / *Hans-ADESS or Fritz-ADESS
'Peter was more clever than both Hans and Fritz'

This result is derived in Pinkal's (1989) approach, in which the *mint*-clause expresses generic quantification with the comparative in its scope. (14a) represents the *mint*-clause under the assumption that its content is (elliptically) reconstructed in the context of *okos*, while (14b) represents the main clause, with 'ι' as the Russellian operator for definite descriptions. This yields the representation (14c) for (13a); this formula is equivalent to the conjunction (14d).³

- (14) a. *mint Hans vagy Fritz (okos volt)*: $\lambda D \forall d [\text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{hans},d) \vee \text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{fritz},d) \rightarrow D(d)]$
- b. *Péter okosabb volt*: $\lambda d \iota d' [\text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d') > d]$,
abbreviated as $\lambda d \text{ MORE.CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d)$
- c. $\forall d [\text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{hans},d) \vee \text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{fritz},d) \rightarrow \text{MORE.CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d)]$
"For all degrees d such that Hans is d-clever or Fritz is d-clever, Peter is more clever than d."
- d. $\forall d (\text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{hans},d) \rightarrow \text{MORE.CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d)) \ \& \ \forall d (\text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{fritz},d) \rightarrow \text{MORE.CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d))$

For the adessive construction I assume that the adessive phrase is in the scope of the comparative. In (15a), the comparative is extended by means of the operation ARG (described in Wunderlich 1997), which adds a variable Q as the place-holder for the relation expressed by the adessive phrase. The adessive itself expresses an identity relation between degrees on some scale P, as shown in (15b). Functional application then yields the result (15c) for the VP in (13c) above. Finally, in (15d), the subject term is integrated, and the value of P is contextually specified by the predicate CLEVER. One can easily see that 'or' and 'and' coordination would yield different results. This analysis thus clearly shows that the phrasal comparative leads to different results from the clausal one.

- (15) a. ARG(*okosabb*): $\lambda Q \lambda x \{ \text{MORE.CLEVER}(x,d) \ \& \ Q(d) \}$
- b. *Hans-nál*: $\lambda d [d = \iota d' P(\mathbf{hans},d')]$
- c. $\lambda x \lambda d \{ \text{MORE.CLEVER}(x,d) \ \& \ [d = \iota d' P(\mathbf{hans},d') \ \& \ d = \iota d' P(\mathbf{fritz},d')] \}$
- d. $\exists d \{ \text{MORE.CLEVER}(\mathbf{peter},d) \ \& \ [d = \iota d' \text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{hans},d') \ \& \ d = \iota d' \text{CLEVER}(\mathbf{fritz},d')] \}$
"The degree to which Peter is clever exceeds the degree to which Hans is clever and it exceeds the degree to which Fritz is clever."

³ For the conjunction expressed in (13b), the interpretation parallel to (14c) would make sense only if Hans and Fritz are equally clever; therefore, the ellipsis is reconstructed differently, and the sentence directly expresses (14d).

If an ‘or’ coordinated adessive phrase is focused, having scope over the comparative (16a) (see fn.2), one only gets the ‘or’ reading given in (16b). This is because the adessive does not evoke a generic reading.

- (16) a. Péter Hans-nál vagy Fritz-nél volt okos-abb.
 Peter Hans-ADESS or Fritz ADESS was clever-COMP
 ‘It was Hans or Fritz that Peter was more clever than’
- b. $\exists d \{ [d = \text{Hans}] \vee d = \text{Fritz} \} \& \text{MORE.CLEVER}(\text{Peter}, d)$
 ‘The degree to which Hans is clever or the degree to which Fritz is clever is exceeded by the degree to which Peter is clever.’

That the adessive is interpreted with respect to the same scale as the adjective is a default assumption. Theoretically, it should be possible that the adessive DP delivers a value on another scale, given that the adessive case is applied to a deadjectival noun.⁴ Consider (17b), which is the adessive counterpart to the *mint*-comparative in (17a); this sentence is judged grammatical by some of my informants, although Kenesei, Vago & Fenyvesi (1998:153) regard it as ungrammatical. For comparison, the parallel Turkish example is shown in (18).

- (17) a. A polc hossz-abb, mint amilyen széles a szoba.
 the shelf long-COMP than what wide the room
 ‘The shelf is longer than the room is wide’
- b. A polc hossz-abb a szoba széles-ség-é-nél.
 the shelf long-COMP the room wide-NOML-3sg.POSS-ADESS
 ‘The shelf is longer than the room’s width’
- (18) Turkish
 Masa kapı-nın geniş-liğ-in-den daha enli-dir.
 table door-GEN wide-NOML-3sg.POSS-ABL more broad-3sg
 ‘The table is broader than the door’s width’

Since it is possible that the adessive phrase introduces its own scale, the analysis in (15), which assumes identification with the scale of the comparative element as the default rather than as the only option, is correct.

5. Adessive comparatives can suppress a structural case

If the comparative complement is realized by an adessive, any other case must be suppressed, regardless of whether the complement contrasts with a subject or object. Investigating which cases can be suppressed, I observed two varieties of reaction among my informants: a more liberal one, which (under certain conditions) allows all structural arguments to be contrasted phrasally, and a more restrictive one, which forbids most of these phrasal constructions in favoring the *mint*-comparative. I suggest that the liberal variety represents the more conservative stage which

⁴ If there exists a base noun, the deadjectival noun is blocked:

- (i) A csomag nehezebb a mérleg súly-á-nál / *súlyos-ság-á-nál.
 the package heavy-COMP the scale weight-3sg.POSS-ADESS / weighty-NOM-3sg.POSS-ADESS
 ‘The package is heavier than the scale’s weight/*weightiness’

disfavors the unifying *mint*-comparative. The following observations are based on the liberal judgments, whose default interpretations correspond to the only ones of the more restrictive judgments.

In the context of a polyadic verb with an adverbial comparative, the adessive DP can often contrast with more than one of the verb's arguments. Such a case is illustrated in (19a), where 'you' can be contrasted with either the nominative subject or the accusative object, the latter being the preferred reading. (19b) shows that the *mint*-clause can resolve this ambiguity by overt case-marking. That the adessive can also relate to the nominative is shown in (19c), where the preferred reading of (19a) is rather improbable.

- (19) a. (Én) Péter-t jo-bb-an szeret-em nál-ad.
 I Peter-ACC good-COMP-ADV love-1sg ADESS-2sg
 'I love Peter more than (I love) you' (preferred) [mint téged_{ACC}]
 'I love Peter more than you (love Peter)' [mint te_{NOM}]
- b. Péter-t jo-bb-an szeret-em, mint téged / mint te.
 Peter-acc good-COMP-ADV love-1sg than 2sg.ACC/ than 2sg.NOM
 'I love Peter more than (I love) you/ than you (love Peter)'
- c. A matek-ot jo-bb-an szeret-em nál-ad.
 the math-ACC good-COMP-ADV love-1sg ADESS-2sg
 'I love math more than you (love math)'

A similar observation can be made for ditransitive verbs, which allow the adessive DP to contrast with either the dative recipient or the nominative subject; however, the latter reading needs a different word order.

- (20) a. Anna több könyv-et ad-ott Ferenc-nek Péter-nél.
 Anna more book-ACC give-PAST Ferenc-DAT Peter-ADESS
 'Anna gave more books to Ferenc than to Peter'
- b. Anna Péter-nél több könyv-et ad-ott Ferenc-nek.
 Anna Peter-ADESS more book-ACC give-PAST Ferenc-DAT
 'Anna gave more books to Ferenc than Peter'

The following examples show that the adessive DP never contrasts with a semantic case such as inessive, ablative, or instrumental (21), nor with a possessor of the noun (22).

- (21) a. Inkább a kert-ben ült, mint a ház-ban /*ház-nál.
 more the garden-INESS sat.3sg than the house-INESS/ house-ADESS
 'She sat more in the garden than in the house'
- b. Bélá-tól több level-et kap-t-am, mint Péter-től /*Péter-nél.
 Bela-ABL more letter-ACC receive-PAST-1sg than Peter-ABL /Peter-ADESS
 'I received more letters from Béla than from Peter'
- c. Jo-bb-an szeret-nék Karcsi-val táncol-ni, mint Péter-rel /*Péter-nél.
 good-COMP-ADV like-1sg.COND Charlie-INSTR dance-INF than Peter-INSTR /Peter-ADESS
 'I more like to dance with Charlie than with Peter'
- (22) Ez inkább Péter feladat-a, mint az enyém /*nál-am.
 DEM more Peter task-3sg.POSS than the mine /ADESS-1sg
 'This is more Peter's task than mine'

The adessive in the comparative construction suppresses any other case; it turns out that semantic case cannot be ignored, whereas both accusative and dative can. This fact constitutes evidence for assuming the Hungarian dative to be a structural case.⁵ Let us see whether the various instances of lexically marked dative in Hungarian also allow an adessive comparative: *tetszik* ‘like’ assigns dative to the highest argument (the experiencer) (23a), both *nehéz* ‘difficult’ and *kell* ‘need/must’ assign dative to the subject of the dependent verb (23b,c), and *fontos* ‘important’ assigns dative to the lower argument (23d). All of these constructions are judged grammatical by the more liberal informants, only with a slight question mark for (23a). The lexically marked dative thus turns out to be as structural as the canonical dative of ditransitive verbs.

- (23) a. Nek-i jobban tetszik a könyv nál-am.
 DAT-3sg better like the book ADESS-1sg.
 ‘He/she likes the book more than I’
- b. Anná-nak Péter-nél nehéz-ebb franciául olvas-ni.
 Anna-DAT Peter-ADESS difficult-COMP French read-INF
 ‘For Anna it is more difficult to read French than for Peter’
- c. Anná-nak több level-et kell ír-ni-a Péter-nél.
 Anna-DAT more letter-ACC need write-INF-3sg.POSS Peter-ADESS
 ‘Anna has to write more letters than Peter’
- d. A GB fontos-abb volt Anná-nak Péter-nél.
 the GB important-COMP was Anna-DAT Peter-ADESS
 ‘GB was more important for Anna than for Peter’
 ‘GB was more important for Anna than Peter’

Note that (23d) is ambiguous between object reading (preferred) and subject reading for the adessive DP. Another candidate is the dative possessor, triggered by the copula (24a); here the adessive DP can be interpreted as the standard of comparison or as the place where the possessed things are located. This attributive construction also allows the adessive DP to contrast with the head noun if the sortal requirements are fulfilled (24b).

- (24) a. Dániel-nek érdekes-ebb könyv-e-i vannak Péter-nél.
 Daniel.DAT interesting-COMP book-3sg.POSS-pl are Peter-ADESS
 ‘Daniel has more interesting books than Peter’
 ‘Daniel has more interesting books at Peter’
- b. Dániel-nek érdekes-ebb könyv-e-i vannak a GB-nél.
 Daniel.DAT interesting-COMP book-3sg.POSS-pl are the GB-ADESS
 ‘Daniel has more interesting books than GB’

Finally, the different behavior of structural vs. semantic case can be seen nicely from the following minimal pair: *telefonál* ‘call up’ can be used either with dative or with instrumental, see (25a) vs. (25b). The respective comparative constructions allow besides the irrelevant subject reading (‘I

⁵ There is more evidence for this conclusion: the Hungarian dative agrees with the possessor, as well as with the inflected infinitive (triggered by the modals such as *kell* ‘must’, *kellene* ‘ought to’, and *szabad* ‘permitted’), and it is lexically assigned to either the highest argument (*tetszik* ‘like’) or the lowest argument (*telefonál* ‘call up’), thereby forcing the remaining argument to be realized in the nominative.

called him more often up than Peter did’) an object reading (even preferred) with dative (26a), but only a locative case reading with instrumental (26b).

- (25) a. Anna Péter-nek telefonál.
Anna Peter-DAT telephone
‘Anna calls Peter up’
- b. Anna Péter-rel telefonál.
Anna Peter-INSTR telephone
‘Anna calls Peter up’
- (26) a. Gyakra-bb-an telefonál-t-am nek-i Péter-nél.
often-COMP-ADV telephone-PAST-1sg DAT-3sg Peter-ADESS
‘I called him up more often than (I called up) Peter’
??‘I called him up more often at Peter’
- b. Gyakra-bb-an telefonál-t-am vel-e Péter-nél.
often-COMP-ADV telephon-PAST-1sg INSTR-3sg Peter-ADESS
‘I called him up more often at Peter’
* ‘I called him up more often than (I called up) Peter’

6. Attributive adessive comparatives can suppress all kinds of case

In attributive comparatives, the adessive DP preferably contrasts with the head noun, independent of its case, but with a different order it may also contrast with another argument of the verb (see also (24) above). The contrast with the head noun is the more natural option because the attribute is part of the NP; in such a case, the denotation of the adessive DP must be contained in that of the head noun, for instance, $\|GB\| \subset \|book\|$.

- (27) a. Anna érdekes-ebb könyv-ek-et olvas-ott a GB-nél.
Anna interesting-COMP book-pl-ACC read-PAST the GB-ADESS
‘Anna read more interesting books than GB’
- b. Anna Péter-nél érdekes-ebb könyv-ek-et olvas-ott.
Anna Peter-ADESS interesting-COMP book-pl-ACC read-PAST
‘Anna read more interesting books than Peter’

Other instances of attributive comparatives are shown in (28).

- (28) a. Nál-a unalmas-abb ember-t még soha sem látt-am.
ADESS-3sg boring-COMP person-ACC yet never not saw-1sg
‘I’ve never seen a more boring person than him’
- b. Anna a könyv-et egy Péter-nél érdekes-ebb ember-nek küld-te el.
Anna the book-ACC a Peter-ADESS interesting-COMP person-DAT send-PAST.3sg PREV
‘Anna sent the book to a more interesting person than Peter’
- c. Ez a könyv még egy Péter-nél butá-bb ember-nek is tetszett.
this the book even a Peter-ADESS stupid-COMP person-DAT also please.PAST
‘This book has pleased an even more stupid person than Peter’

The attributive construction even allows an adessive complement to contrast with a head noun that bears semantic case, as shown in (29). This is expected, because the adessive DP, being part of the

attribute, contrasts with the nominal head of the DP to which it belongs; there is no external contrast to another DP with semantic case, as in (21) above.

- (29) a. Még Péter-nél is érdekes-ebb ember-től kap-t-am level-et.
 even Peter-ADESS also interesting-COMP person-ABL receive-PAST-1sg letter-ACC
 ‘I received letters from an even more interesting person than Peter’
- b. Szeret-n-ék egy Péter-nél érdekes-ebb ember-rel táncol-ni.
 like-COND-1sg a Peter-ADESS interesting-COMP person-INSTR dance-INF
 ‘I would like to dance with a more interesting man than Peter’

7. Summary

This brief study has presented some interesting facts about Hungarian and I hope it has established the view that two options are better than one. The adessive comparative can escape the striking constraints the clausal construction is confronted with, whereas the *mint* comparative can escape the clumsy nominalizations of Turkish. There is good evidence that the comparative semantics should distinguish between a clausal and a phrasal type with different scope relations. Along the way, it has been shown that Pinkal’s free relative analysis of the comparative clause complement is transparently realized in Hungarian. Furthermore, it has turned out that the Hungarian adessive comparative can override a structural case (including dative), but not a semantic case. Hence, the prominent distinction of structural vs. semantic case is reflected in the distribution of these two comparatives. A final question, not yet addressed, is why the Hungarian correlative construction is best expressed with two adessives (‘The more I read, the less I know’).

References

- Bierwisch, Manfred (1987) Semantik der Graduierung. In M. Bierwisch & Ewald Lang (eds.) *Grammatische und konzeptuelle Aspekte von Dimensionsadjektiven*, 91-286. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Cresswell, Max (1976) The semantics of degree. In Barbara Partee (ed.) *Montague Grammar*, 261-292. New York: Academic Press.
- Heim, Irene (1985) Notes on comparatives and related matters. Ms. Austin, Texas.
- Hellan, Lars (1981) *Towards an integrated analysis of comparatives*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Hoeksema, Jack (1983) Negative polarity and the comparative. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 1: 403-434.
- Karger, Reinhard, Jean-Yves Lerner, and Manfred Pinkal (1994) Zur syntaktisch-semantischen Analyse attributiver Komparative. In Sascha Felix, Christopher Habel, & Gert Rickheit (eds.) *Kognitive Linguistik: Repräsentation und Prozesse*, 107-128. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Kenesei, István, Robert M. Vago, and Anna Fenyvesi (1998) *Hungarian*. London: Routledge.
- Klein, Ewan (1980) A semantics for positive and comparative adjectives. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4: 1-45.
- Klein, Ewan (1991) Comparatives. In Arnim v. Stechow & Dieter Wunderlich (eds.) *Semantics. An international handbook on contemporary research*, 673-691. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Kornfilt, Jaklin (1997) *Turkish*. London: Routledge.
- Pinkal, Manfred (1989) Die Semantik von Satzkomparativen. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 8: 206-256.
- Pinkal, Manfred (1990) On the logical structure of comparatives. In R. Studer (ed.) *Natural language and logic. Lecture notes in Artificial Intelligence*, 146-167. Berlin: Springer.
- Stassen, Leo (1984) The comparative compared. *Journal of Semantics* 3: 143-182.
- von Stechow, Arnim (1984) Comparing semantic theories of comparison. *Journal of Semantics* 3: 1-77.
- Wunderlich, Dieter (1973) Vergleichssätze. In Ferenc Kiefer & Nicolas Ruwet (eds.) *Generative Grammar in Europe*, 629-672. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Wunderlich, Dieter (1997) Argument extension by lexical adjunction. *Journal of Semantics* 14: 95-142.