



FACHLITERATUR
EDITION ROMIOSINI
ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ



ICGL12 | 12th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON GREEK LINGUISTICS
16 – 19 SEPTEMBER 2015
FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN, CEMOG

Proceedings of the ICGL12

vol. 1

The International Conference on Greek Linguistics is a biennial meeting on the study and analysis of Greek (Ancient, Medieval and Modern), placing particular emphasis on the later stages of the language.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ICGL12
ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΤΟΥ ICGL12

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**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 12TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON GREEK LINGUISTICS**

**ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΤΟΥ 12^{ΟΥ} ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ
ΓΛΩΣΣΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ**

VOL. 1



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Vertrieb und Gesamtherstellung: Epubli (www.epubli.de)
Satz und Layout: Rea Papamichail / Center für Digitale Systeme, Freie Universität Berlin
Gesetzt aus Minion Pro
Umschlaggestaltung: Thanasis Georgiou, Yorgos Konstantinou
Umschlagillustration: Yorgos Konstantinou

ISBN 978-3-946142-34-8
Printed in Germany

Online-Bibliothek der Edition Romiosini:
www.edition-romiosini.de

*Στη μνήμη του Gaberell Drachman (†10.9.2014)
και της Αγγελικής Μαλικούτη-Drachman (†4.5.2015)
για την τεράστια προσφορά τους στην ελληνική γλωσσολογία
και την αγάπη τους για την ελληνική γλώσσα*

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑ ΕΚΔΟΤΩΝ

Το 12ο Διεθνές Συνέδριο Ελληνικής Γλωσσολογίας (International Conference on Greek Linguistics/ICGL12) πραγματοποιήθηκε στο Κέντρο Νέου Ελληνισμού του Ελεύθερου Πανεπιστημίου του Βερολίνου (Centrum Modernes Griechenland, Freie Universität Berlin) στις 16-19 Σεπτεμβρίου 2015 με τη συμμετοχή περίπου τετρακοσίων συνέδρων απ' όλον τον κόσμο.

Την Επιστημονική Επιτροπή του ICGL12 στελέχωσαν οι Θανάσης Γεωργακόπουλος, Θεοδοσία-Σούλα Παυλίδου, Μίλτος Πεχλιβάνος, Άρτεμις Αλεξιάδου, Δώρα Αλεξοπούλου, Γιάννης Ανδρουτσόπουλος, Αμαλία Αρβανίτη, Σταύρος Ασημακόπουλος, Αλεξάνδρα Γεωργακοπούλου, Κλεάνθης Γκρώμαν, Σαβίνα Ιατρίδου, Mark Janse, Brian Joseph, Αλέξης Καλοκαιρινός, Ναπολέον Κάτσος, Ευαγγελία Κορδώνη, Αμαλία Μόζερ, Ελένη Μπουτουλούση, Κική Νικηφορίδου, Αγγελική Ράλλη, Άννα Ρούσσου, Αθηνά Σιούπη, Σταύρος Σκοπετέας, Κατερίνα Στάθη, Μελίτα Σταύρου, Αρχόντω Τερζή, Νίνα Τοπιντζή, Ιάνθη Τσιμπλή και Σταυρούλα Τσιπλάκου.

Την Οργανωτική Επιτροπή του ICGL12 στελέχωσαν οι Θανάσης Γεωργακόπουλος, Αλέξης Καλοκαιρινός, Κώστας Κοσμάς, Θεοδοσία-Σούλα Παυλίδου και Μίλτος Πεχλιβάνος.

Οι δύο τόμοι των πρακτικών του συνεδρίου είναι προϊόν της εργασίας της Εκδοτικής Επιτροπής στην οποία συμμετείχαν οι Θανάσης Γεωργακόπουλος, Θεοδοσία-Σούλα Παυλίδου, Μίλτος Πεχλιβάνος, Άρτεμις Αλεξιάδου, Γιάννης Ανδρουτσόπουλος, Αλέξης Καλοκαιρινός, Σταύρος Σκοπετέας και Κατερίνα Στάθη.

Παρότι στο συνέδριο οι ανακοινώσεις είχαν ταξινομηθεί σύμφωνα με θεματικούς άξονες, τα κείμενα των ανακοινώσεων παρατίθενται σε αλφαβητική σειρά, σύμφωνα με το λατινικό αλφάβητο· εξαίρεση αποτελούν οι εναρκτήριες ομιλίες, οι οποίες βρίσκονται στην αρχή του πρώτου τόμου.

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AMBIGUITY AND THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF COMPARATIVE COMPLEMENTS IN GREEK¹

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Abstract

Το παρόν άρθρο εξετάζει μια συγκριτική δομή η οποία παρουσιάζει αμφισημία με τύπους που συνιστούν κατάλοιπα του συγκρητισμού πτώσεων στις γερμανικές γλώσσες. Στα ελληνικά, το απ'ότι συντάσσεται με παρεμφατικές προτάσεις, οι οποίες μπορούν να είναι ελλειπτικές, και η εμφανιζόμενη ονομαστική αντιστοιχεί στο υποκείμενο πρότασης που περιέχει λεξικό ρήμα. Φράσεις προσδιοριστικού δείκτη/ονοματικές φράσεις σε εγγενή γενική πτώση είναι εξορισμού μη παρεμφατικές δομές, καθώς δεν είναι προτασιακές, και επιτρέπουν επανασύνθεση φράσης που είναι υποκείμενο σε δομή κατηγορήσης. Αμφισημία εμφανίζεται σε συγκριτικές δομές με το από, η οποία θα δείξω ότι οφείλεται στις ιδιαίτερες ιδιότητες του από.

Keywords: ambiguity, case assignment, comparative constructions, CP-periphery, ellipsis, operator movement, small clause, tense

1. Introduction

As observed already by Bresnan (1973), there are certain comparative constructions that display ambiguity, as illustrated in (1) for English:

¹ This research was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), as part of the project “The syntax of functional left peripheries and its relation to information structure”. I owe many thanks to Nikos Engonopoulos for his indispensable help with the Greek data.

- (1) I saw a taller woman than my mother.
 (A) ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.’
 (B) ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother is.’

Note that ambiguity arises only if the clause is elliptical: full clauses are not ambiguous. The question arises what causes ambiguity in English and cross-linguistically. In the literature, there are two classical directions. On the one hand, one may adopt a purely clausal analysis (see Bresnan 1973, Lechner 2004): in this case, ambiguity results from the fact that there are two different underlying structures (where both are full, tensed clauses). On the other hand, one may adopt a purely phrasal analysis (cf. Hankamer 1973 for the phrasal analysis of *than*): in this case, there is essentially no underlying structure, and ambiguity results from the fact that the DP (*my mother* in (1) above) may have multiple associations.

Greek is particularly important because it has three types of comparatives: one introduced by *ἀπ’ὅτι* (*ap’oti*, ‘than’), which is clausal; one introduced by the preposition *ἀπο* (*apo*, ‘from’), which is semi-phrasal; and one where the comparative complement is in the genitive, which is phrasal. Based on the evidence from the Greek data, I propose that ambiguity in cases like (1) arises when there are various underlying structures (which are not necessarily clauses). I also demonstrate that there are four types of structures cross-linguistically that behave differently with respect to constructions like (1). First, remnants of tensed clauses are associated with reading (A). Second, remnants of tenseless clauses receive reading (B). Third, DPs following prepositions with clausal complements are ambiguous, whereby reading (B) is preferred over reading (A). Fourth, DPs in simple PPs (including Kase projections, KPs) are associated with reading (B).

2. Clausal comparatives

In the case of reading (A), see (1) above, a lexical, tensed verb is reconstructed (the predicate is a verb). This is illustrated in (2) for English:

- (2) I saw a taller woman than my mother ~~saw an x-tall woman~~.

Note that the degree expression (*x-tall woman*) would be eliminated in English anyway (see Bresnan 1973, Kennedy 2002, Bacskai-Atkari 2014c), hence for our purposes the

elision of the verb is more interesting. In (2), the subclause has the tense specification of the matrix clause: this is also the interpretation of the elided version; hence, we can conclude that there is a full clause (containing a TP) underlyingly.

In the case of reading (B), a predicative relation is reconstructed, which is not tensed (the predicate is an adjective). This is illustrated in (3) for English:

- (3) a. I saw a taller woman than my mother ~~BE an x-tall woman~~.
 b. I can't imagine a braver woman than Queen Boudicca ~~BE an x-brave woman~~.

In these cases, the complement of *than* is tenseless. If one were to paraphrase the sentences in (3), the one in (3a) would most naturally transform into a *than*-clause in the present tense (depending chiefly on whether the speaker's mother is alive), while in the case of (3b) the *than*-clause would be in the past tense since Queen Boudicca is a historical character from the 1st century. The interpretation of the *than*-clause in (3) is not tied to the tense specification of the matrix clause; instead, it is influenced by pragmatics and the given context.

There is further evidence for a tensed/tenseless distinction from German (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014b). Consider the following examples:

- (4) a. Ich habe eine größere Frau als meine Mutter gesehen.
 I have a.F.ACC taller woman than my. mother seen
 F.NOM/
 ACC

'I saw a taller woman than my mother.'

- b. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als mein Vater gesehen.
 I have a.M.ACC taller man than my. father seen
 M.NOM

'I saw a taller man than my father saw.'

- (4) c. Ich habe einen größeren Mann als meinen Vater gesehen.
 I have a.M.ACC taller man than my.M.ACC father seen

'I saw a taller man than my father is.'

As can be seen, only the example in (4a) is ambiguous: here the remnant DP following *als* ‘than’ is case-ambiguous between the nominative and the accusative. Masculine DPs show case distinction in German, and the corresponding examples in (4b) and (4c) are not ambiguous: the nominative remnant is associated with reading A, while the accusative remnant triggers reading (B). The availability of the accusative for the remnant in German in (4c) must be due to exceptional case assignment from the matrix verbal predicate: in German, there is no default accusative case (Schütze 2001); hence, the presence of the accusative must be the result of there being an overt case assigner. Further, the accusative case is indeed available for small clause subjects, assigned by the matrix verb. The pattern is not restricted to *als*: similar phenomena can be observed with *wie* ‘as’ and *außer* ‘except for’. A similar behaviour can be observed in Icelandic comparatives, too (see Bacskai-Atkari 2014d).

In short, the analysis for the Germanic pattern discussed here can be summarised as follows. Nominative remnants are the results of clausal ellipsis, whereby nominative case is assigned by the finite inflection regularly. Accusative remnants, on the other hand, are remnants of small clauses, and case is assigned by the matrix verb. Ambiguity is hence the result of case syncretism. It can also be concluded that elements like *than* or *als* ‘than’ may take both TP and PredP (small clause) complements (on small clauses as PredPs, cf. Matushansky 2012, following Bowers 1993).

Let us now turn to Greek. In Greek, clausal comparatives are formed with the element *από,τι* (*apóti*, ‘than’). Observe:

- (5) a. Είδα μια γυναίκα ψηλότερη **από,τι** η μητέρα μου.
 saw.1SG a woman taller than the.NOM mother my
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother saw.’

- b.* Είδα μια γυναίκα ψηλότερη **από,τι** τη μητέρα μου
 saw.1SG a woman taller than the.ACC mother my
 # ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother.’

As can be seen, Greek allows a nominative remnant in this construction, associated with reading (A); however, no accusative remnant is licensed here. Note that for underlying objects, the accusative case is naturally licensed; consider:

- (6) a. Σ'αγαπώ περισσότερο απ'ό,τι η Μαρία.
 I.love.you more than the.NOM Mary
 'I love you more than Mary loves you.'
- b. Σ'αγαπώ περισσότερο απ'ό,τι τη Μαρία.
 I.love.you more than the.ACC Mary
 'I love you more than I love Mary.'

In Greek clausal comparatives, then, the nominative matches a subject and the accusative an object, just as in full clauses. The only puzzle is why the sentences in (5a) is not ambiguous, as there are two subjects available underlyingly.

To sum up the empirical findings, the Greek clausal comparative pattern can be characterised as follows. First, no accusative case remnant is available, which indicates that the complement of *απ'ό,τι* cannot be a PredP in the German way. Second, the nominative remnant is not ambiguous, which is in line with the assumption that the reconstruction of a predicative relation with an adjectival predicate should involve a tenseless clause (tenseless–tenseless match), but *απ'ό,τι* always takes a TP complement. Hence, reduced clauses with *απ'ό,τι* are always the results of clausal ellipsis. Greek thus provides evidence that ambiguity in constructions like (1) is not universal, and neither is the availability of reading (B).

3. Phrasal comparatives

In Germanic languages, comparatives are introduced by an element corresponding to *than*, which is a C-element, hence even reduced comparatives are underlyingly clausal (tensed clauses or small clauses). In several other languages, however, single PPs are attested in other languages, the notion of PP including Kase projections (KPs) where a nominal element bears some lexical case. Such languages include Italian (with the preposition *di* 'of'), Polish (with the genitive case), Russian (with the genitive case), and Hungarian (with the adessive case). I assume that lexical cases are instances of a PP projection (see e.g. Asbury 2005; 2008), the KP being the lowest PP layer, immediately above the DP; the KP tops off the nominal projection, while projections of higher P constitute a different extended projection (Den Dikken 2010, cf. also Dékány and Hegedűs 2014 on Hungarian).

In Greek, phrasal comparatives of this sort are attested with the genitive; though this construction counts as dated (dated), my informants were able to issue judgements on the given type. In the constructions under scrutiny here, only reading (B) is available:

- (7) Είδα μια γυναίκα ψηλότερη της μητέρας μου.
 saw.1SG a woman taller the.GEN mother.GEN my
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother is.’

As can be seen, the construction with the genitive comparative is not ambiguous; this is not surprising inasmuch as a similar pattern can be observed in other languages with true phrasal comparatives (see above), and the PP is a tenseless construction which matches a tenseless interpretation. Note that in Greek, the genitive comparative is not available in contexts where no tenseless match is available:

- (8)* Σ’αγαπώ περισσότερο της Μαρίας.
 I.love.you more the.GEN Mary.GEN
 ‘I love you more than Mary.’

To sum up the empirical data concerning the Greek phrasal comparative pattern, the following can be concluded. First, a genitive PP (KP) is attested, where the K head takes a single DP complement; hence, there no tense specification is possible within the PP, and no ambiguity arises. Second, the tenseless–tenseless match satisfied, and the reconstruction of a predicative relation with an adjectival predicate is always possible. Hence, genitive comparatives never involve ellipsis. Greek thus provides evidence (along with other languages with PP-comparatives) that true phrasal comparatives are not ambiguous in constructions like (1), therefore the ambiguity of English (1) cannot be due to *than* being a P head in two possible derivations.

4. A special hybrid comparative in Greek

So far, we have observed a rather predictable behaviour of clausal versus phrasal comparatives in constructions like (1). However, in Greek there is a third kind of comparative construction, where the comparative complement is introduced by the preposition *απο* (*απο*, ‘from’). This is illustrated in (9) below:

- (9) Είδα μια γυναίκα ψηλότερη από τη μητέρα μου.
 saw.1SG a woman taller from the.ACC mother my
 ‘I saw a taller woman than my mother.’

As indicated, the sentence in (9) is ambiguous, yet there seems to be a preference for reading (A). The preposition *απο* regularly takes an accusative DP as a complement; in certain constructions, the interpretation of this DP may show ambiguity. Consider:

- (8)* Σ’αγαπώ περισσότερο από τη μητέρα μου.
 I.love.you more from the.ACC mother my
 ‘I love you more than my mother.’

The data in (9) and (10) are interesting especially because ambiguity with true phrasal comparatives is attested cross-linguistically for the type in (10) but not for the type in (9). In other words, while the behaviour of the obligatorily accusative DP following *απο* in (10) suggests that *απο*-comparatives are regular phrasal comparatives, the pattern in (9) indicates that this is not the case.

Note also that the accusative DP after *απο* is different from the German-type accusative remnant: the latter is restricted to constructions like (1) and the accusative is due to the matrix verb, while in Greek the string *απο* + accusative DP has a wide distribution, just like true phrasal comparatives do, and the accusative is independent of matrix verb here.

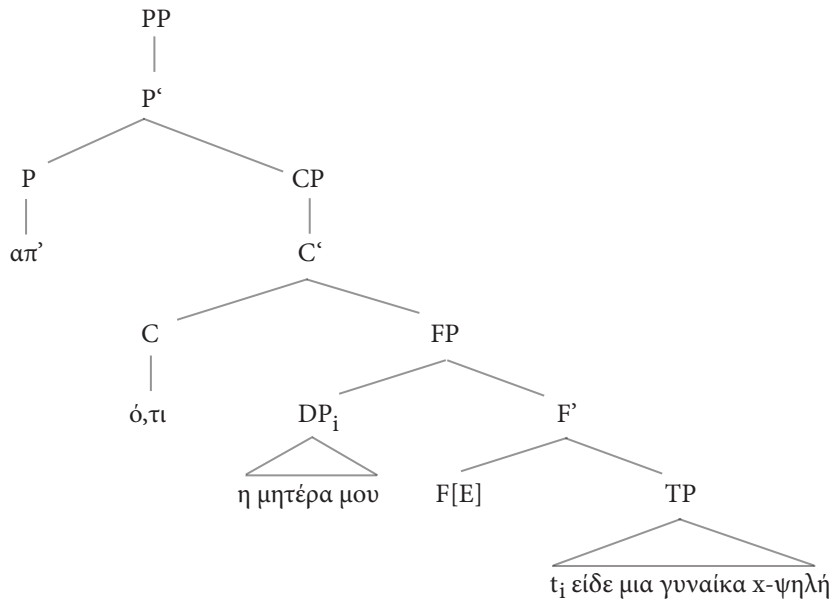
The behaviour of *απο* can be explained if one adopts the analysis of Merchant (2009), who argues that *απο* is a P head that takes a CP complement. This has some support from comparatives involving *απ’ό,τι* (*ap’oti*, ‘than’), where *απ’ό,τι* is a complex form involving a preposition *απ’* (*ap’*), a shortened form of *απο*, and the relativiser *ό,τι* (*oti*), which otherwise occurs in free relatives (Merchant 2009: 137). The difference between comparatives with *απ’ό,τι* and ones with *απο* can be described as follows. If the preposition is of the form *απ’*, it takes a CP complement, which hosts *ό,τι* in its specifier, and the remnant (if there is ellipsis) moves to an FP (functional projection) below the CP (as remnants regularly do in sluicing constructions), but there is no further movement to the CP or the PP (Merchant 2009: 149–151). By contrast, if the preposition is of the form *απο*, this also takes a CP, but the CP layer itself contains no visible element, and the remnant DP moves up to the specifier of the PP, while *απο* moves up to a higher p head position. For the details of this analysis, see Merchant

(2009: 151–156, as his “option 1” for accounting for certain island effects related to movement).

In the representations above, I adopt the analysis of Merchant (2009), with a difference regarding the status of *ό,τι*: I assume that it is a C head, not an operator, contrary to Merchant (2009). The reason for this is that, as Merchant (2009) also indicates, *ό,τι* is licensed even in cases where it cannot be the degree operator itself (ordinary headless relatives), and it cannot be considered to be the comparative operator itself. However, there can be only one comparative/relative operator in a single CP, which is in this case covert and the overt element *ό,τι* can thus only have a C head status at the left periphery of the clause (cf. Bacskai-Atkari 2014a: 497–499, Bacskai-Atkari 2014c: 117–118, 223–226 for a similar argumentation for German *wie* ‘as/how’). As is evident from subcomparative constructions, where the quantified AP is overt in the subclause, the AP is not adjacent to *ό,τι*, which should be possible if *ό,τι* were the comparative operator (see the data of Giannakidou and Yoon 2011: 630).

Taking this difference into consideration, the structure I assume for (5a) is as follows (based on Merchant 2009: 149, ex. 43b); “x” refers to the degree associated with the adjective in the subclause:

(11)

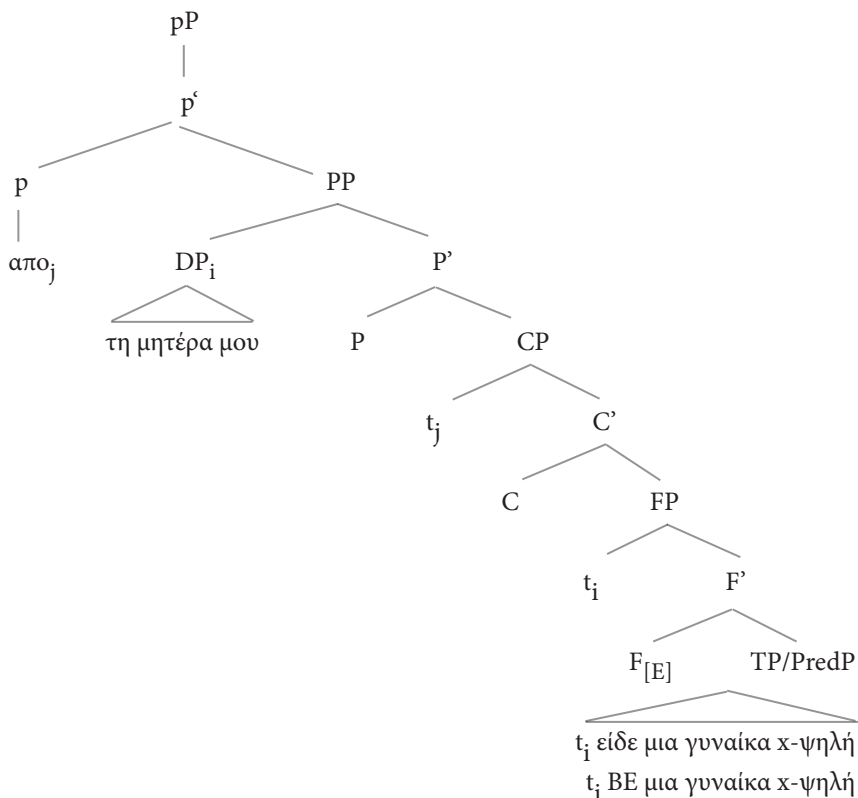


As can be seen, the subject DP *η μητέρα μου* (*i mitera mou*, ‘my mother’) remains below the CP. Hence, no case assignment is possible from the matrix verb or from the P head since the complementiser *ό,τι* acts as an intervener. On the other hand, nominative case assignment in the TP is possible regularly. The CP is finite, and it is essentially a headless relative clause, where the presence of the C-element *ό,τι* enables the CP to appear as the complement of a preposition: in this sense, the CP is [+nominal].

By contrast, structure of (10) is as follows (based on Merchant 2009: 152, ex. 45b); “BE” refers an abstract predicative head.

In this configuration, the subject DP *τη μητέρα μου* (*ti mitera mou*, ‘my mother’) receives accusative case from the P/p head *απο*. If the subject DP is base-generated in a TP, the original nominative case is overridden by the accusative (cf. Merchant 2009); if it is base-generated in a PredP (matching the tenseless relation in the matrix clause),

(12)



it receives no nominative case originally at all. As far as the CP is concerned, irrespectively of whether there is a TP or a PredP, the CP contains no overt element that could make the clause [+nominal].

There are four major questions regarding the structures in (11) and (12). The first question is why $\alpha\pi\omicron$ moves up to p while not $\alpha\pi'$. In Modern Greek, $\alpha\pi\omicron$ moves from P to p anyway: this is a more general property of the particular preposition and is not only attested in comparatives (cf. Lechner & Anagnostopoulou 2005). Further, $\alpha\pi'$ is a clitic that cliticises onto the C head. Lastly, $\alpha\pi\omicron$ moves to p in order to assign case to its complement DP, which is located in [Spec,PP].

The second question is why the DP moves up to PP with $\alpha\pi\omicron$ but not with $\alpha\pi\omicron'$. Both P heads are [+comparative], which is a feature passed on to the C head of the complement, on which it is interpretable; in other words, the CP is selected because of the [+comparative] nature. Otherwise, P heads select a nominal complement. The preposition $\alpha\pi'$ selects a CP containing $\acute{o},\tau\iota$, which makes the CP [+nominal], as a headless relative clause. The preposition $\alpha\pi\omicron$ selects a CP without $\acute{o},\tau\iota$, which is not a free relative clause (as there is no such requirement on comparative subclauses to be relative clauses in general). Therefore, the nominal argument of the P head can be realised only by upward movement of the DP to the [Spec,PP] position, and the P head $\alpha\pi\omicron$ moves up to p , hence the DP argument is within its complement.

The third question is why a PredP is licensed under $\alpha\pi\omicron$ but not under $\alpha\pi'$. On the one hand, no nominative case is assigned within the PredP. On the other hand, external case assignment is available only with $\alpha\pi\omicron$ because it attracts the DP to the PP; hence, with $\alpha\pi'$, the DP would remain in the CP and it would remain caseless, too.

The fourth (and ultimate) question is why are $\alpha\pi'\acute{o},\tau\iota$ -comparatives not ambiguous and $\alpha\pi\omicron$ -comparatives ambiguous in constructions like (1). On the one hand, no PredP is licensed under $\alpha\pi'\acute{o},\tau\iota$ due to case-assignment requirements; the TP for the predicative relation depicted in (1) is not available either because there is no corresponding tense antecedent in the matrix clause, and only recoverable material can be elided (cf. Merchant 2001). On the other hand, with $\alpha\pi\omicron$, both a TP and a PredP are possible since the DP moves up to the PP anyway; a PredP-reconstruction is more faithful to the surface pattern, and there is no case reassignment involved (hence, there is some preference probably towards the predicative reading, yet the ambiguity remains).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined a certain comparative construction that is ambiguous in English and German if the remnant DP is case-syncretic between the nominative and the accusative. In Greek, there are altogether three types of comparatives, and these show different behaviour with respect to the particular construction.

First, there are true clausal comparatives with *ἀπό, τι* (*apoti*, ‘than’): these are not ambiguous. It was shown that a tensed clause can be reconstructed only with an underlying lexical verb, and no external case assignment is available.

Second, there are true phrasal comparatives with the genitive: these are not ambiguous. This is because only a tenseless relation is recoverable (to a limited degree, since the construction is dated).

Third, there are mixed phrasal comparatives with *ἀπο* (*apo*, ‘from’): these are ambiguous. This is because the preposition takes an obligatorily elliptical clause, which is either tensed or tenseless, and the remnant moves up to the PP and it is assigned accusative case there.

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