

# Reduced Clausal Comparatives in Arabic and Slavic

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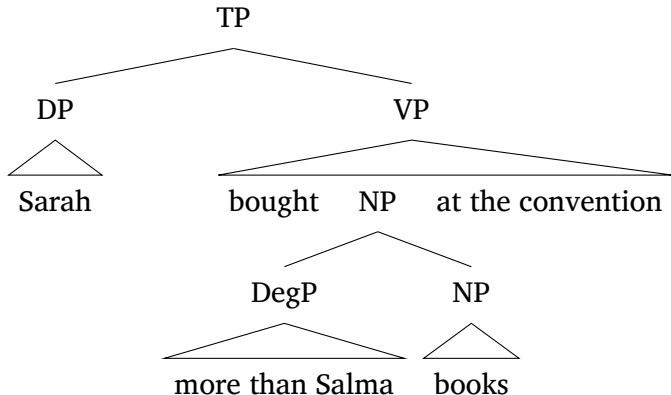
# How do comparative constructions work?

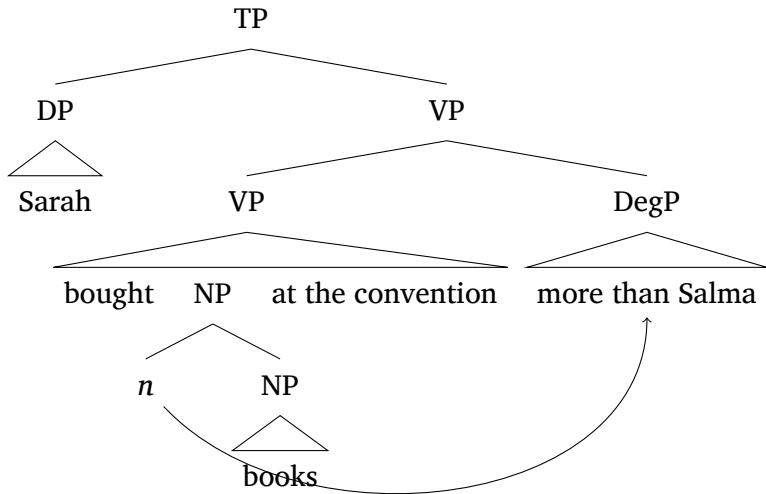
Sarah bought more books at the book convention than Salma.

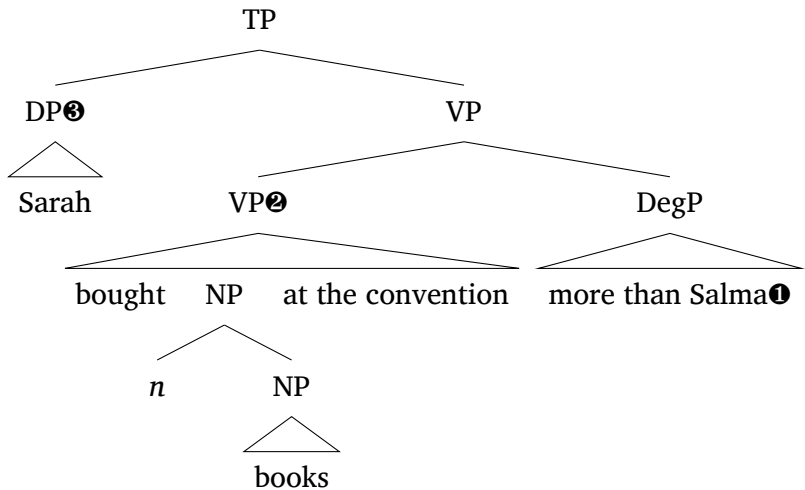


# How do comparative constructions work?

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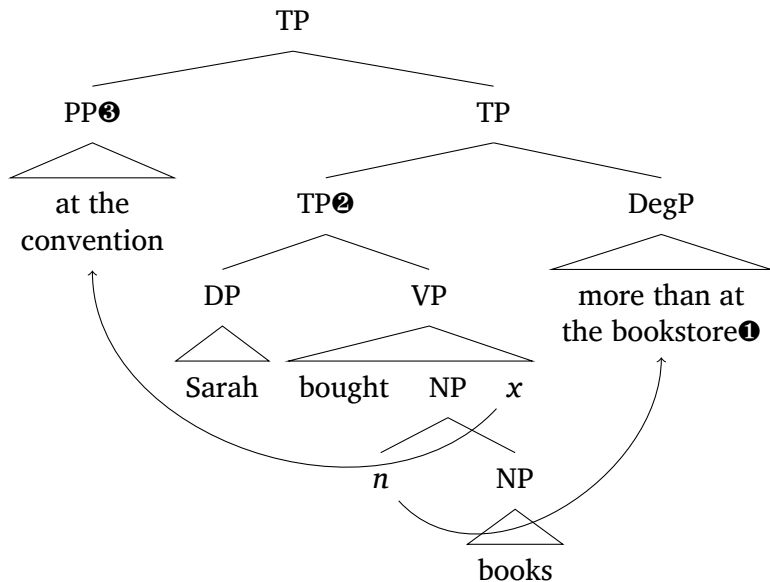






*More* says “③ is greater than ① in terms of ②”

Sarah bought more books at the book convention than at the bookstore.



Sarah bought more books than Salma bought.



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Sarah bought more books than Salma did ~~buy books~~.

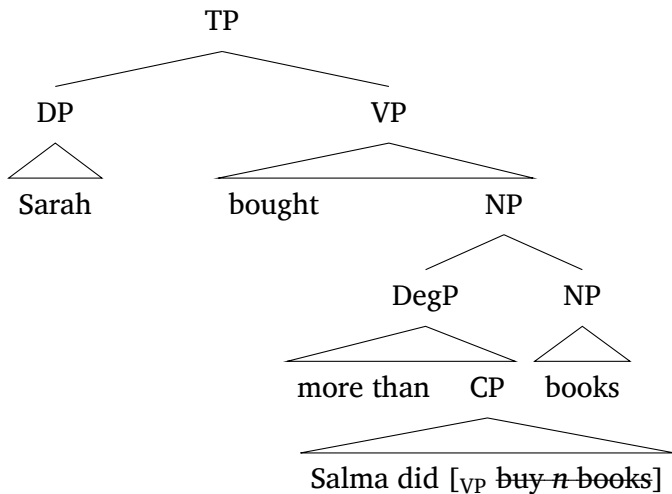
Sarah bought more books than Salma bought.

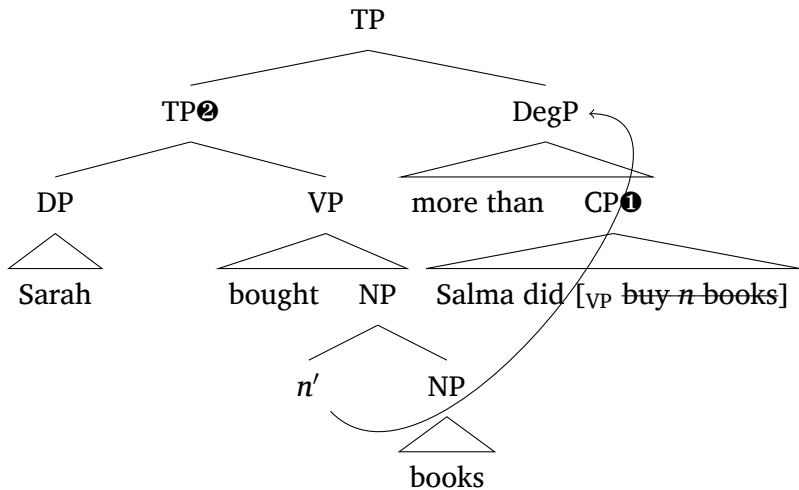
Sarah bought more books than Salma bought ~~books~~.

Sarah bought more books than Salma did.

Sarah bought more books than Salma did ~~buy books~~.

“Comparative deletion” (Bresnan 1973): In the clausal comparative, you elide at least the scalar term in the standard clause.





*More* says “<sup>2</sup> holds to a greater degree than <sup>1</sup>.”

The phrasal comparative:

Sarah bought [<sub>DeG</sub>P more than [<sub>DP</sub> Salma]] books.



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Sarah bought [<sub>DeG</sub>P more than [<sub>DP</sub> Salma]] books.

The clausal comparative:

Sarah bought [<sub>DeG</sub>P more than [<sub>CP</sub> Salma did ~~buy books~~]] books.



The phrasal comparative:

Sarah bought [<sub>DegP</sub> more than [<sub>DP</sub> Salma]] books.

The clausal comparative:

Sarah bought [<sub>DegP</sub> more than [<sub>CP</sub> Salma did ~~buy books~~]] books.

Can these be unified?

Sarah bought [<sub>DegP</sub> more than [<sub>CP</sub> Salma did ~~buy books~~]] books.



Russian:

Germann byl sli'nee čem (byl) ego protivnik.

Germann was stronger what.INST (was) his adversary.NOM

'Germann was stronger than his adversary.'

Germann byl sli'nee svoego protivnika.

Germann was stronger own adversary.GEN

'Germann was stronger than his adversary.'

Serbo-Croatian:

Ana je viša nego Tanja.

Ana is taller than Tanja.NOM

‘Ana is taller than Tanja.’

Ana je viša od Tanje.

Ana is taller from Tanja.GEN

‘Ana is taller than Tanja.’

Serbo-Croatian:

Marija je viša nego (što je) Petar.

Maria is taller than (what is) Peter.NOM

‘Maria is taller than Peter.’

Marija je viša od (\*što je) Petra

Maria is taller from (\*what is) Peter.GEN

‘Maria is taller than Peter.’

# “Reduced clausal comparatives” (Pancheva 2006)

Pancheva (2006): the complement of *od* may be a small clause with an elided predicate.

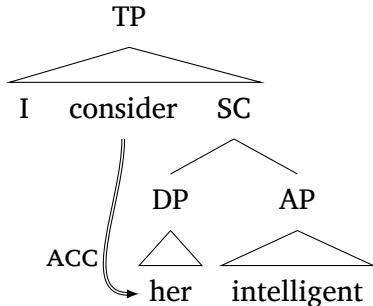
Small clauses—case assignment under ECM:

I consider her intelligent.

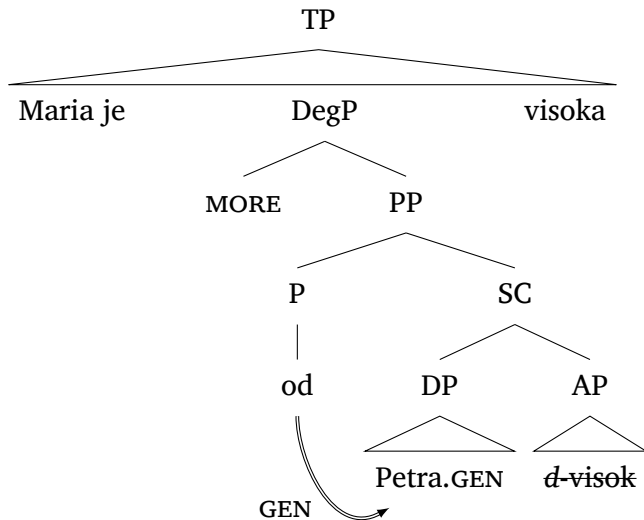
I thought her wise.

I want her off the boat.

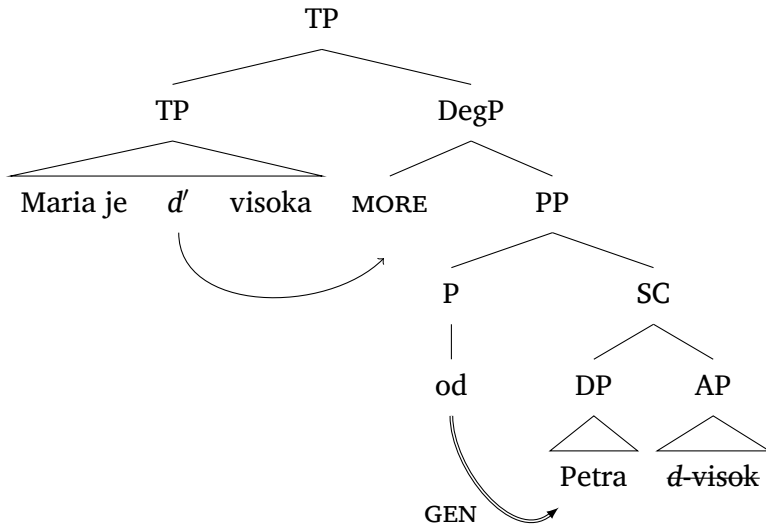
I need the desks against the wall.



# “Reduced clausal comparatives” (Pancheva 2006)



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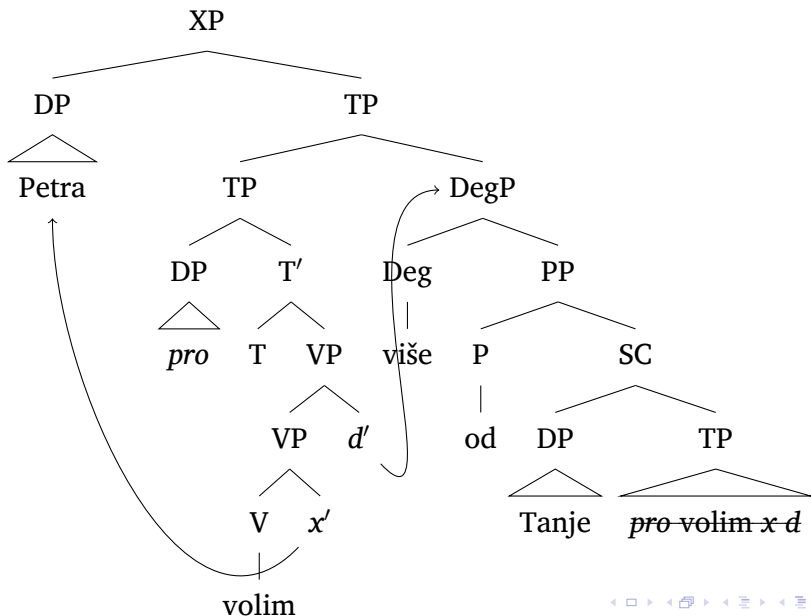


# “Reduced clausal comparatives” (Pancheva 2006)

Volim Petra više od Tanje.  
love.1S Peter more from Tanje.GEN  
‘I love Peter more than Tanja does.’  
‘I love Peter more than I love Tanja.’



# “Reduced clausal comparatives” (Pancheva 2006)





# Arabic comparatives

## Clausal comparative:

iftar-at sa:ra kutub ?akθar mim-ma: iftar-at salma: kutub.  
bought-F Sarah books more from-what bought-F Salma.NOM books  
'Sarah bought more books than Salma bought.'

\*iftar-at sa:ra kutub ?akθar mim-ma: iftar-at salma: kutub.  
bought-F Sarah books more from-what bought-F Salma.NOM books  
'(Sarah bought more books than Salma did.)'

## Phrasal comparative:

iftar-at sa:ra kutub ?akθar min salma:  
bought-F Sarah books more from Salma.GEN  
'Sarah bought more books than Salma.'



# Reduced clausal comparatives in Arabic

“When a thing is compared with itself, the second occurrence is *min* + pronoun with no repetition of the first noun” (Badawi et al. 2016):

ka:n-at ũuhrat-u tawfi:q l-ħaki:m qa:ʔima ũala: l-masraħ ʔakθar  
was-F fame-NOM Tawfiq Al-Hakim based on the-theater more  
min-ha: ũala: ʔalwa:n l-ʔadab l-ʔuxra:  
from-it.GEN on genres the-literature the-other  
‘Tawfiq Al-Hakim’s fame was based more on theater than on other  
genres of literature.’

ʔan-na:s-u          ʔaʃbah-u          bi-zama:l-i-him  
the-people-NOM more.similar-NOM to-peers-GEN-their  
min-hum          bi-ʔa:ba:ʔ-i-him.  
from-them.GEN to-fathers-GEN-their

‘People are more similar to their peers than to their parents.’

wa-la-ʔana: ʔahamm-u          bi-zira:h-i          rasu:l-i  
and-PRT-I more.concerned-NOM at-wounds-GEN prophet-GEN  
l-la:h-i          min-ni: bi-zira:h-i:  
the-God-GEN from-me at-wounds-my

‘I was more concerned about the wounds of the prophet of God than about my own wounds.’

ḥamd-an li-lla:h ?anna-hum fi: mawsim r-rabi:ʕ wa-l-ḥa:za  
praise-ACC to-God that-they in season the-Spring and-the-need  
li-l-ma:? ?aqall min-ha: fi: faʕl ʕ-ʕayf.  
for-the-water less from-it.GEN in season the-summer  
'Thank God they were in in the Spring and the need for water was  
less than in the summer.'

ka:n-at l-xuṭwat-u tu-maθθil-u ʔiʃa:ra muwaʒʒaha  
was-F the-step-NOM F-represent-IND gesture aimed

li-n-nuxba ʔakθar min-ha: li-l-ʃa:mma.

at-the-elite more from-it.GEN at-the-general public

‘The step represented a gesture aimed more at the elite than at the general public.’

wa-hija muʃadda li-naql l-bari:d wa-r-rukka:b ʔakθar  
and-it intended for-transport the-mail and-the-passengers more

min-ha: li-naql l-baḍa:ʔiʃ.

from-it.GEN for-transport the-wares

‘And it was intended more for the transport of mail and passengers than for the transport of cargo.’

The preceding examples display the format:

SUBJ<sub>i</sub> (BE) ADJ PP more from PRONOUN<sub>i</sub> ~~ADJ~~ PP

# The elided predicate may contain a verb

wa-ʕalim-at l-miʕrijj-u l-jawm ʔanna l-za:miʕa ta-ttaʒih-u  
and-learned-F Egypt Today that the-university F-tend-IND  
li-ʔiʕa:dat-i t-tarmi:m ʔakθar min-ha: ʔila:  
toward-redoing-GEN the-restoration more from-it.GEN to  
l-hadm.  
the-demolition

‘And Egypt Today has learned that the university is heading more toward redoing the restoration than toward demolition.’

# Elided predicate may contain a verb

wa-waṣaf-at    ṣ-ṣahi:fa    ṣawdat-a    l-bara:diʕi: bi-ʔanna-ha:  
and-described-F the-newspaper return-ACC Al-Baradii as-that-it  
ṣawda ta-li:q-u bi-zaʕi:m l-ʕa:lam    ʔakθar min-ha:  
return F-fit-IND to-leader the-world more from-it.GEN  
bi-diblu:ma:sijj duwali:    rafi:ʕ-i    l-mustawa:.  
to-diplomat international high-GEN the-level  
'And the newspaper described Al-Baradii's return as one more fitting  
for a world leader than for a high ranking international diplomat.'



# Elided predicate may contain a verb

ʔal-ħadi:θ      ʕan maħaʔṭa:t ʔakθar dra:mijjat-an fi: ħajja:t  
the-discussion on places      more dramatic-ACC in life  
ma:ndi:la: jartabiṭ bi-l-ma:ḍi: ʔakθar min-hu      bi-l-mustaqbal.  
Mandela relate to-the-past more from-it.GEN to-the-future  
‘The discussion of the more dramatic parts of Mandela’s life relate to  
the past more than to the future.’

wa-la:kinna ṭari:q l-ʕala:qa:t      maʕa ʔi:ra:n jataqaddam-u  
and-but path the-relations with Iran progress-IND  
li-l-ʔama:ma ʔakθar min-hu li-l-wara:ʔ.  
to-the-front more from-it to-the-back  
‘But the path of relations with Iran is progressing more forward than  
backward.’



These examples display the format:

SUBJ<sub>i</sub> VERB PP more from PRONOUN<sub>i</sub> VERB PP

# The DP restriction

These examples display the format:

SUBJ<sub>i</sub> VERB PP more from PRONOUN<sub>i</sub> VERB PP

You cannot strand a DP in this manner:

\*SUBJ<sub>i</sub> VERB DP more from PRONOUN<sub>i</sub> VERB DP

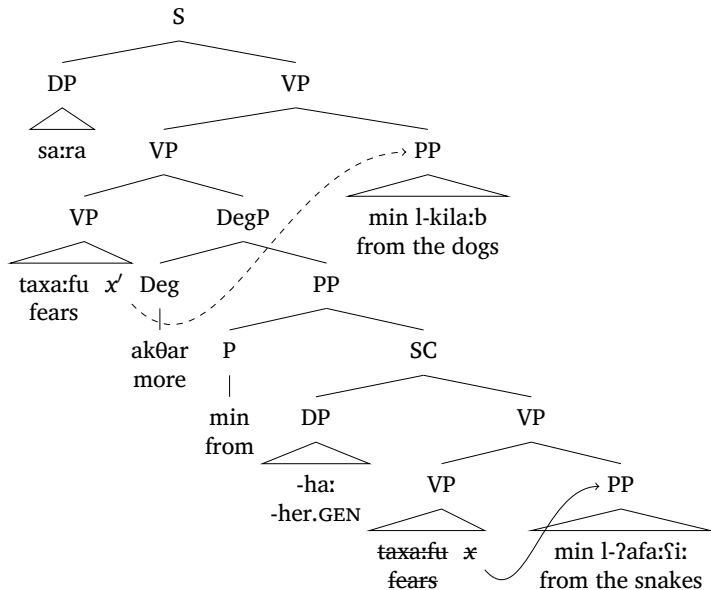


# The DP restriction

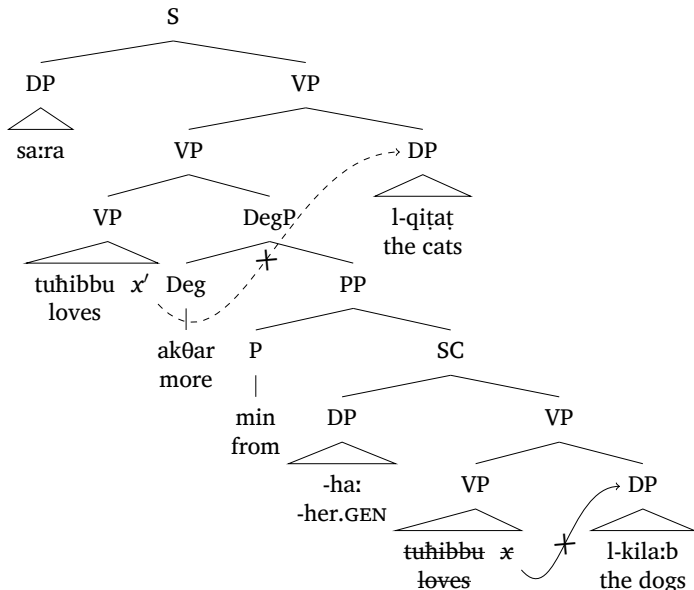
\*sa:ra tu-ħibb-u l-qīṭaṭ akθar min-ha: l-kila:b.  
Sarah F-love-IND the-cats more from-her.GEN the-dogs  
(‘Sarah loves cats more than she loves dogs.’)

sa:ra ta-xa:f-u min l-kila:b akθar min-ha: min l-ʔafa:ʕi:.  
Sarah F-fear-IND from the-dogs more from-her.GEN from the-snakes  
(‘Sarah fears dogs more than she fears snakes.’)

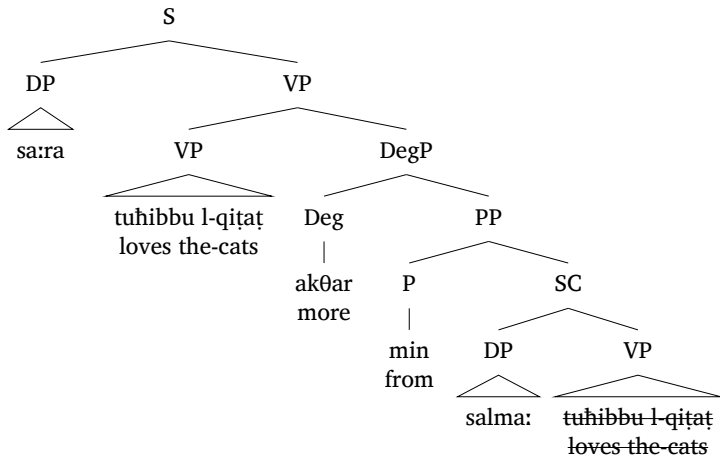
# Analysis



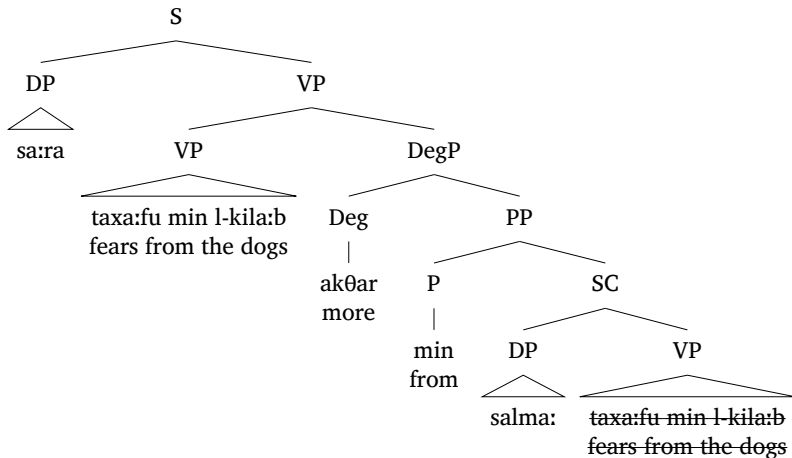
# Analysis



# Behold, then, the “phrasal” comparative



# Behold, then, the “phrasal” comparative





# The pronoun restriction

If you don't strand any material from the ellipsis site, it makes no sense to have a pronominal standard referring back to the subject.

#sa:ra<sub>i</sub> ta-xa:f-u min l-kila:b akθar min-ha:<sub>i</sub>.

Sarah F-fear-IND from the-dogs more from-her.GEN

#‘Sarah<sub>i</sub> fears dogs more than she<sub>i</sub> does.’

sa:ra ta-xa:f-u min l-kila:b akθar min-ha: min l-ʔafa:ʕi:.

Sarah F-fear-IND from the-dogs more from-her.GEN from the-snakes

‘Sarah fears dogs more than she fears snakes.’

# The pronoun restriction

But if you do strand material from the ellipsis site, the subject of the reduced standard clause *must* be a pronoun. There is no obvious semantic/pragmatic reason for this.

\*ʔsa:ra ta-xa:f-u min l-kila:b akθar min salma: min  
Sarah F-fear-IND from the-dogs more from Salma.GEN from  
l-ʔafa:ʕi:  
the-snakes  
(‘Sarah fears dogs more than Salma fears snakes.’)

Compare with the clausal comparative:

sa:ra ta-xa:f-u min l-kila:b akθar mim-ma: taxa:fu  
Sarah F-fear-IND from the-dogs more from-what F-fear-IND  
salma: min l-ʔafa:ʕi:  
Salma.NOM from the-snakes  
(‘Sarah fears dogs more than Salma fears snakes.’)



# The pronoun restriction

- Reduced clauses cannot accommodate multiple foci (points of contrast with the previous context).

# The pronoun restriction

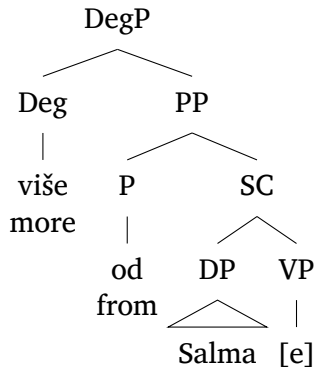
- Reduced clauses cannot accommodate multiple foci (points of contrast with the previous context).
- The possibility of accommodating multiple foci is connected to the availability of functional structure at the left clause edge.

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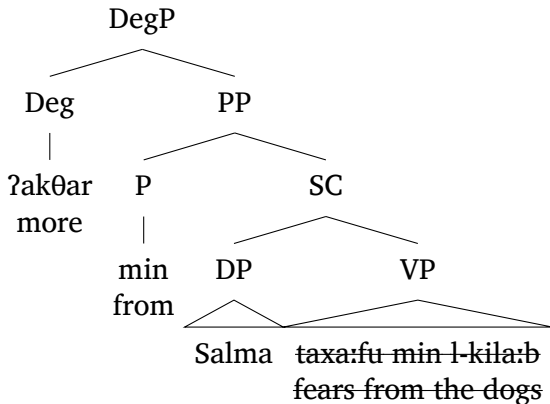
- Reduced clauses cannot accommodate multiple foci (points of contrast with the previous context).
- The possibility of accommodating multiple foci is connected to the availability of functional structure at the left clause edge.
- It's unclear what the syntactic mechanism is that enforces this.

# How does Slavic differ from Arabic?

Pancheva (2006):



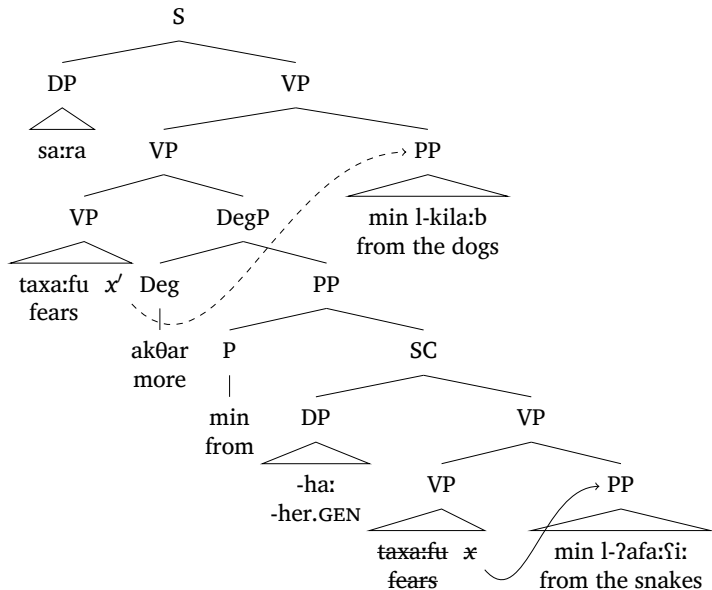
Arabic:



# How does Slavic differ from Arabic?

- Either: Slavic has a null pro-form in the predicate position of the small clause that gets its semantic interpretation from an antecedent, while Arabic has a fully syntactically instantiated predicate in that position that undergoes ellipsis under identity with an antecedent.
- Or alternatively: both languages have an elided predicate in the predicate position of the small clause, but in Slavic ellipsis targets the immediate daughter of SC, while in Arabic it may target smaller constituents.

# How does Slavic differ from Arabic?





- Arabic has a comparative construction in which the prepositional standard marker introduces a genitive-marked DP followed by a PP remnant of an elided predicate.
- This looks just like Pancheva's reduced clausal comparative analysis of “phrasal” comparatives.
- If this is correct, then:
  - Slavic differs from Arabic in having either a pro-form in the predicate position of the small clause or in having “maximal” ellipsis, precluding stranding.
  - Something prevents the subject of the small clause from being non-pronominal under stranding in Arabic.

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