

CONSTRUAL OF PRONOUNS IN FRENCH AND VIETNAMESE PHRASAL COMPARATIVES

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Abstract

In this talk, I develop a new test for diagnosing the availability of clausal standard constituent based on the construal of pronouns in comparative constructions. The French phrasal comparative in (1) only yields the sloppy reading whereas the Vietnamese phrasal comparative in (2) only yields the strict reading:

- (1) John s'est mieux défendu que son avocat. (French)
John REFL-be better defend than his lawyer
John defended himself better than his lawyer.
a. QUD: "Who defended himself better?"
Sloppy reading: John_i defended himself_i better than his lawyer_j defended himself_j
b. QUD: "Who defended John better?"
***Strict reading:** John_i defended himself_i better than his lawyer_j defended him_i
- (2) John tự biện-hộ tốt hơn là luật-sư của anh-ấy (Vietnamese)
John TU defend good more LA lawyer of him
'John defended himself better than his lawyer did.'
a. QUD: "Who defended himself better?"
***Sloppy reading:** John_i defended himself_i better than his lawyer_j defended himself_j
b. QUD: "Who defended John better?"
Strict reading: John_i defended himself_i better than his lawyer_j defended himself_i

The expression of comparison substantially varies across languages with respect to the nature of the standard constituent (individual vs. degree denoting argument). Two analyses have been proposed to account for phrasal comparatives:

- i. Following the *Direct analysis*, the standard constituent is a DP (i.e. an individual denoting argument), and there is only one occurrence of the gradable predicate in the syntax, predicting the existence of the sloppy reading only.
- ii. Following the *Reduced analysis* the standard constituent underlyingly clausal so that there are two occurrences of the gradable predicate in the syntax, predicting the existence of both the sloppy and the strict reading.

I argue that this asymmetry between French and Vietnamese can be accounted for by assuming that French phrasal comparatives support the direct analysis whereas Vietnamese phrasal comparatives are underlyingly clausal, and therefore support the reduced analysis.