**Hypothetical comparison clauses in Dutch and German dialects**

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In Standard German, hypothetical comparison clauses (HCCs) can be formed in various ways, including by *als* + V1, *als wenn*, *als ob* and *wie wenn*; see (1). While it is generally assumed that these consist of a conditional clause and a comparative or equative element, views differ on how exactly these are integrated. Recent analyses (e.g. Bücking 2015, Bacskai-Atkari 2018) treat HCCs with *wie* as biclausal structures, while HCCs with *als* are considered to be complex subordinate clauses, with a comparative complementizer or preposition selecting a conditional clause. Bacskai-Atkari (2018: 103) proposes the structure in (2); the higher $C^0$ is a comparative complementizer, the lower $C^0$ is an interrogative/conditional complementizer with an empty operator in its specifier.

While these proposals capture the various types of HCCs in Standard German, they do not immediately extend to HCCs in non-standard dialects. As discussed by Jäger (2018), there is a lot of variation in HCCs among the various German dialects, which remains largely understudied. Some dialects use elements that do not occur in Standard German HCCs, like *sam* 'same' in Egerländisch, shown in (3), while others use the familiar elements in configurations that are not readily predicted by earlier analyses, like *als wie* and *wie als* (Jäger 2018: 347). Specifically, these constructions appear to contain two comparison elements and no conditional complementizer, which is unexpected. Furthermore, some dialects have HCCs that seem to contain three C-heads, such as the Bavarian *als wie wenn* (Jäger 2018: 347). It is not immediately clear how a structure with two CPs, such as the one proposed by Bacskai-Atkari (2018), could accommodate these formations.

In order to provide an explanation for these phenomena, it may be useful to broaden our cross-linguistic scope a bit further and compare them to HCCs in Dutch. In Standard Dutch, HCCs are introduced by *alsof*, cognate with German *als ob*. However, Dutch dialects show a large range of variation. The major variants, based on data from dialect surveys and summarized in De Rooij (1965), are shown in (4). Some interesting patterns emerge when looking at the data:

1. HCCs in Dutch dialects are introduced by at most two functional elements, which supports a double-CP construction like the one proposed by Bacskai-Atkari (2018). However, in some dialects these are preceded by the lexical element *gelijk* 'equal'.
2. While *of* is the second functional element in *alsof,* it can also occur instead of *als* as the first functional element, regardless of the element in the second position. Thus, we find: *als dat* next to *of dat*; *als* + V1 next to *of* + V1, and *als wen(t)* next to *of wen(t).* This interchangeability is found throughout the Dutch language area, even though *als* and *of* are not interchangeable in other contexts.

On the basis of this, I propose an analysis of HCCs with two CP layers, as proposed by Bacskai-Atkari (2018). However, the specifier of the higher CP is not empty; instead, I propose that this position is filled by either an overt nominal phrase *gelijk*, or a light noun EQUAL, and it is this element that contributes the equative meaning. The complementizer itself is not 'comparative' or 'equative' but merely serves to link this equative specifier and the clause in its complement; this explains why its form can vary in Dutch. This could also explain why German dialects can have *als* next to another equative element like *sam* or *wie*; under my proposal these are not heads, but rather phrases in the specifier of the higher CP.

**Examples**

(1)  Hanno fährt Fahrrad,
     a.  *als wäre* er betrunken
     b.  *als wenn* er betrunken wäre
     c.  *als ob* er betrunken wäre
     d.  *wie wenn* er betrunken wäre
     (Bücking 2015: 262)

(2)  $[_{CP} \, C_{[compr]} \, [_{CP} \, Op_{[Q]} \, [_{C'} \, C_{[Q]} \, [_{TP} \, \ldots \, ]]]]$

(3)  Er haut se weite niet gröiet, *sam als/als sam* er hiäts niet ghäiet
     he has them further not greeted, same as/as same he had-it not heard
     'He did not greet them, as if he had not heard it'
     (Egerländisch; Weise 1918 via Jäger 2018: 348)

(4)  Variation in HCCs among Dutch dialects (De Rooij 1965)

| Introducing elements | Region |
|---|---|
| *alsof*<br>*of* | Standard |
| *als* | Friesland, northeastern Netherlands |
| *als* + V1<br>*of* + V1 | Friesland, Groningen, Limburg |
| *of dat*<br>*als dat,*<br>*dat* | Flemish Brabant, some others |
| *(ge)lijk,*<br>*(ge)lijk als*<br>*(ge)lijk of*<br>*(ge)lijk dat*<br>*(ge)lijk of dat*<br>*(gelijk als dat)* | West Flanders, East Flanders |
| *als wen(t),*<br>*of wen(t)* | Limburg |
| *of a(t)* | Zeeland |

**References**

Bacskai-Atkari, Julia. 2018. Complementizers and negative polarity in German hypothetical comparatives. In: Christine Dimroth & Stefan Sudhoff (eds.), *The Grammatical Realization of Polarity Contrast: Theoretical, empirical, and typological approaches,* 89-108. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

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