

## 2.

### Ray Jackendoff - Brandeis University *Curiouser and curiouser*

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As is well known, the comparative adjective/adverb in English exhibits a suppletion between morphological and phrasal forms: *fatter* vs. *more beautiful*. The choice depends on prosody: the morphological form is chosen when the adjective/adverb is monosyllabic or bisyllabic ending in -y (e.g. *luckier*); the phrasal form is chosen otherwise. A few cases are ambidextrous, e.g. *oftener* or *more often*.

This suppletion poses an interesting problem for a rarely discussed construction that might be called the "reduplicated comparative," used to express a change over time. With the morphological comparative we get *fatter and fatter*; with the phrasal comparative we get *more and more beautiful*, not *\*more beautiful and more beautiful* or *\*more beautiful and beautiful*.

The standard assumption, I believe, is that the phrasal comparative more closely reflects underlying syntactic form: the comparative morpheme takes its own specifiers (*much/far more beautiful*, *\*much/far beautiful*) and complements (*more beautiful than Madonna*, *\*beautiful than Madonna*), and it alternates freely with other degree morphemes such as *less*, *so*, and *too* (Jackendoff 1977, chapter 6).

Under this assumption, the reduplicated phrasal comparative arises by reduplicating the morpheme *more*. Thus *more and more beautiful* has the structure [<sub>AP</sub> [<sub>Spec</sub> more and more] [<sub>A</sub> beautiful]].

Turning to the morphological comparative, it is usually assumed that the *-er* affix (and the suppletions *better* and *worse*) are the result either of adjoining the comparative morpheme to the adjective or vice versa. But then, in the case of the reduplicated comparative, where does the extra copy of the adjective come from? Under the assumption that the affix adjoins to the adjective, there is no source for the second adjective nor a way for the conjunction between the two comparative morphemes to become a conjunction between the adjectives. If, alternatively, the adjective adjoins to the comparative morpheme, the conjunction can remain in situ, but the adjective still needs to be reduplicated in the course of movement. This would appear to be a case of across-the-board insertion, the converse of the well-known across-the-board extraction, but an operation heretofore unknown (to me at least) in generative grammar.

#### References

Jackendoff, R. (1977) *X-Bar Syntax*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA.

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