Elative adjectives in Dutch, English, and Czech

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ABSTRACT

This article examines a proposed lexical-semantic category of *elative adjectives*, which express a high degree of a given property in the positive (i.e. non-comparative and non-superlative) form. The term *elative* is adopted from Hoeksema's (2012) study of elative compound adjectives in Dutch (e.g. *pijlsnel* 'arrow-fast'). Building on his Dutch data and drawing on an original survey of English and Czech, the article provides an inventory of elative adjectives in the three languages. Elative adjectives fall into two basic structural types: compounds and derivatives (both prefixal and suffixal). Their degree interpretation is motivated either by a conventionalised comparison (simile; 'as fast as an arrow') or by the presence of an intensifying affix(oid) (e.g. Dutch *oer-sterk* 'ultrastrong', English *over-critical*, Czech *pře-krásný* 'superbeautiful'; *maxi-*, *hyper-*, *mega-*). The conclusion summarises the survey findings and offers tentative arguments for recognising this adjectival subset. This is not to suggest that elatives are necessarily widespread across languages, much less universal; however, their attestation in several languages makes them a promising target for further comparative research.[1]

KEYWORDS

adjective, compound, derivative, elative, high degree

DOI

https://doi.org/10.14712/18059635.2026.1.2

1 INTRODUCTION

The linguistic term 'elative' (from Latin *ēlātus*, raised, elevated) is used for an adjective or noun in two senses. In Finno-Ugric languages it refers to one of the locative cases with the meaning 'out of' or 'from'. In Arabic (and other Semitic languages) the elative is a special invariable form that serves as both the comparative and superlative form of the adjective. A comparison (between two things) is created when the elative is followed by a comparative conjunction (*min* 'than'). The superlative meaning arises when the elative is followed by an indefinite noun (which produces a "the [adj]est [noun]" meaning) or a definite plural noun (which then means "the [adj]est of (all) the [nouns]"). (For the specific use of the term 'elative' in Czech see Section 4, Footnote 7 below.)

In this respect, Hoeksema (2012), whose study on 'elative' compounds in Dutch provided the impetus for the following comparison, uses the term 'elative' somewhat loosely. He defines these compounds as indicating "a high degree of a property that is expressed by their right-hand member, the head of the compound, usually by making use of some kind of conventionalized comparison" (p. 92). However, by singling out this group of adjectives, he draws attention to an interesting, but above all useful distinction. The 'elative' adjective *beresterk* 'bear-strong' means neither 'strong' nor

1 I would like to thank Aleš Klégr for advice and help.

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'stronger' nor 'the strongest' but 'very (very) strong'. Moreover, it has an expressive component of meaning. And although Hoeksema concentrates on adjectival compounds, he also briefly comments on other groups of adjectives with elative meaning and, in doing so, introduces the broader notion of **elative adjectives** taken up in this study.

More recently, the term 'elative' is mentioned by de Clercq et al. (2023) in their summary of degree morphology in generative linguistics. The authors start from Ultan's (1972) four degrees of predicative comparison (positive: *X is high*; equative: *X is as high as*; comparative: *X is higher than*; superlative: *X is the highest*) and add eight more degree constructions involving the positive. Among them are the augmentative (*X is very / extremely / highly uncertain*) and diminutive degrees (*X is a bit/slightly/somewhat exaggerated*). They note that the augmentative degree for which they say the term elative is sometimes used can be also expressed by affixal degree markers (in some cases diachronically related to the superlative markers, cf. Italian *buon-issim-o* 'very good'). Interestingly, they claim that the same degree markers can be both augmentative and diminutive at the same time, depending on the polarity of the adjective. Accordingly they interpret the Czech markers *–oun-, -in-* as augmentative with "negative" adjectives (*malý* 'small' > *mal-in-k-ý* 'very small', *krátký* 'short' > *kraťoun/in-k-ý* 'very short') and as diminutive with "positive" adjectives (*sladký* 'sweet' > *slaďoun/in-k-ý* '(nicely) sweet', *teplý* 'warm' > *tepl-oun-k-ý* '(nicely) warm').

However, the criteria for distinguishing between negative and positive adjectives are unclear, context-dependent and so potentially subjective. Moreover, *malinký* and *kraťounký* carry the same emotive connotations as *slaďounký* and *teplounký*: the affixes *–oun/in-* are inherently marked. Also, apart from sharing emotiveness, both the augmentative *kratinký* and the presumably diminutive *slaďounký* equally express a high degree of the property denoted by the positive: *X is so (very) short that it is cute, X is so (very) sweet that it is nice*. Actually, the diminutive interpretation of *slaďounký* and *teplounký* does not fit in with how de Clercq et al. paraphrase diminutive degree, *a bit/slightly/somewhat* (i.e. 'to a small degree, to some extent'), and would make more sense with *malinký* ('very small'). The complementary terms augmentative/diminutive refer to size, dimension, which is just one kind of property. In contrast, the term 'elative' does not carry with it any restriction as to the nature of the property in question and denotes only its high(er) degree. Therefore, the designation 'elative' will be retained. The augmentatives distinguished in Czech linguistics (see Section 4) will be considered as a subset of elatives.

If anything, the concept of elativity or elativeness suggests the possibility that there is a special lexical-semantic set of degree adjectives (non-comparative and non-superlative in form) in languages which, although not commonly distinguished, has a specific function and practical application in communication. The aim of this study is to make a preliminary survey and comparison of such adjectives in two other languages, English and Czech, in order to complement Hoeksema's findings and get a better idea of their structural types and cross-linguistic similarities or dissimilarities.

The comparison starts with a brief summary of the findings for Dutch based on Hoeksema (Section 2), then continues with a review of the situation in English and

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Czech (Sections 3 and 4 respectively). Since elative adjectives (i.e. adjectives expressing a high degree of the quality without being comparatives or superlatives) have not yet been recognized and studied in either of these two languages, their overview is necessarily incomplete (information on them is scattered in various sources or does not exist and had to be manually extracted), and the conclusions (Section 5) only tentative.

2 ELATIVE ADJECTIVES IN DUTCH

Although Hoeksema's (2012) study was the trigger for the present exploration of elative adjectives, his primary focus is on elative compounds, while the other types of elative adjectives, derivatives, are mentioned only in passing. For this reason, the account of elative adjectives in Dutch may need to be supplemented (by a Dutch language specialist). Also, not all the issues addressed by Hoeksema are relevant to the topic at hand and so only the pertinent facts will be summarised here.

Hoeksema's starting point is what he calls **compounds expressing stereotyped comparisons**. They are essentially simile-based compounds and although he is aware of their relationship to similes, unlike Norrick (see Section 3) he never explicitly mentions that they are actually transformations of similes. Among his examples are *hondstrouw* ('dog faithful'), *kaarsrecht* ('candle straight'), *torenhoog* ('tower high'), *sneeuwwit* ('snow white') or *beresterk* ('bear strong'); the noun in them represents a large degree of the given property (bears are typically associated with strength: *sterk als een beer* 'strong as a bear'). Hoeksema notes that not always does a conventional comparison have its compound counterpart: *sterk als een paard* ('strong as a horse'), but not **paardesterk* ('horse strong'). In some cases, the comparison on which the compound is based may be indirect: *moedernaakt* ('mother-naked') cannot be analysed as 'naked as a mother', but rather as 'naked as a newborn child', where the noun *moeder* evokes an association with birth.

Stereotyped comparisons may result in **analogical extensions of comparison-based compounds**, in which the noun (comparatum) has become a generalized intensifying premodifier: *beresterk* ('bear-strong') has subsequently given rise to many new compounds, such as *beregoed* ('bear-good'), *beregezellig* ('bear-cosy') or *bereslecht* ('bear-bad'). In other words, *bere-* has developed into an intensifying affixoid. Many of these compounds, however, have disappeared from the standard language or are limited only to certain regional dialects, such as those based on *keihard* ('rockhard'): *keileuk* ('rock-nice'), *keislim* ('rock-smart'), etc. On the other hand, some analogical extensions result in sets of compounds that are similar in meaning and at the same time have well-attested comparison counterparts, e.g. *apetrots* ('monkey proud'), *apelazerus* ('monkey plastered'), or *apestoned* ('monkey stoned'): *lazerus als een aap* and *stoned als een aap*.

Hoeksema then turns his attention to several types of elative compounds which are not comparison-based. First, he describes **causative compounds**, i.e. those in which the high degree follows from the causal relation between the components of the compound, the first one being typically verbal, e.g. *barstensvol* ('bursting full'),

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kotsmisselijk ('puke-sick'), *smoorheet* ('choke-hot'), *stikjaloers* ('choke jealous' = extremely jealous), *stervenskoud* ('freezing cold'), *doodmoe* ('dead-tired'). Also this type may be extended analogously and lose its causative meaning: *doodgewoon* ('dead normal'), *doodeenvoudig* ('dead simple'), *smoorverliefd* ('choke-infatuated' = totally infatuated). Such compounds often overlap with the category of taboo-based ones due to the nature of the resulting states (death, nausea, etc.).

The next type that Hoeksema mentions is compounds with **taboo elements** (whose source is mainly religion, sex and excretion). They are in fact a subcategory of **pejorative compounds** which he describes separately. He mentions compounds with *god-*: *godgans* ('god-entire'), *godsgruwelijk* ('god-awful'); *ziel-* ('soul'): *zielsgelukkig* ('soul-happy' = intensely happy), *zielsbedroefd* ('soul-sad' = deeply sad), *zielsgraag* ('soul-gladly' = with immense pleasure), *zielsveel* ('soul-much' = very much); and *dood* ('death, dead'): *doodziek* and *doodkrank* (both meaning 'mortally ill'). In most of these compounds, however, the premodifier functions as a general intensifier 'very': *doodgewoon* ('dead ordinary'), *doodsimpel* ('dead simple') or *doodongelukkig* ('dead unhappy'). This also applies to other compounds using words semantically related to *dood-*, e.g., *stervens-* ('dying'; *stervenskoud* 'freezing cold'), which again overlap with causative ones. There are many taboo compounds with *bloed-* ('blood', interpreted as the 'blood of God or Christ', though the accepted etymology of the similar English 'bloody' is different) such as *bloedmooi* ('extremely beautiful') or *bloedserieus* ('completely serious'). While the *dood-* compounds are relatively long-established, taboo compounds involving bodily excretion and the related body parts were introduced into Dutch mainly in the second half of the 20th century. They include *pis-* ('piss'): *pisnijdig* ('piss-angry'), *zeik-* ('pee'): *zeiknijdig* ('pee-angry'), *poep-* ('poop'): *poepchic* ('poop chic'), *schijt-* ('shit'): *schijtbenauwd* ('shit afraid'), *stront-* ('shit'): *stronteigenwijs* ('shit-stubborn'), *spuug —* ('spit'): *spuugzat* ('spitting tired'), *kots-* ('vomit'): *kotsmisselijk* ('vomit sick/fed up'), *rete-* ('ass'): *retecool* ('ass-cool'). Other vulgar pejorative compounds with elative force include, e.g. *kut-* ('cunt') and *klote-* ('bollocks'). Hoeksema also points out that not only adjectives (*hongerig* 'hungry'), but also nouns (*honger* 'hunger') can be gradable and so modified by elative intensifiers of various types: *brulhonger* ('cry hunger'), *geeuwhonger* ('yawn hunger'), *pokkenweer* ('pocks weather' = lousy weather), *teringhekel* ('tuberculosis-hate'), *koleregang* ('cholera speed'). The pejorative element serves not to express disapproval of the head noun, but rather to reinforce its negativity or intensity.

Intensification may also be expressed by a **measure noun** in plural form: *eeuwenoud* ('centuries old'), *ellenlang* ('yards long'), *duimendik* ('inches thick'). These elatives are special in that in addition to expressing a high degree they may also convey the speaker's subjective evaluation to a greater or lesser extent.

A related group of simile-based compounds is that of **colour terms**. Hoeksema observes that while many colour compounds simply denote subtypes of a colour, e.g., *mosgroen* ('moss green'), there are compounds expressing intensified degrees of colour, i.e. elative colour terms. He demonstrates that colours are indeed gradable as they can combine with degree adverbs: accordingly *pikzwart* ('pitch black') can be described simply as 'very black'. As another indicator of elativeness he mentions the possibility of emphatic vowel lengthening of the first element in pronunciation,

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which helps distinguish elative from non-elative compounds: *vuurrood* ('fire red') or *dooodsbleek* ('death pale'). Such emphatic lengthening is not restricted to colour terms, cf. *beeeerekoud* ('bear cold').

He also observes that some colours combine with elative modification significantly more often than others (while also clustering around the basic perceptual contrasts). At the top of the list are white/pale and black/dark, followed by red, with much lower representation for green, yellow, blue, and almost none for brown, grey, purple, or orange. Some examples: *hagelblank* ('hail white'), *krijtwit* ('chalk white'), *lijkbleek* ('corpse pale'), *wasbleek* ('wax pale'), *aardedonker* ('earth dark'), *stikdonker* ('suffocate dark'), *duvelzwart* ('devil black'), *ravenzwart* ('raven black'), *bloedrood* ('blood red'), *gifgroen* ('poison green'), *knalblauw* ('bang blue'), *kanariegeel* ('canary yellow').[2]

Many elative colour expressions are not purely chromatic but rather serve figurative or evaluative functions, often relating to human appearance or emotional states. For example, *vuurrood* ('fire red') describes a flushed face rather than an object, and *asgrauw* ('ashen grey') is acceptable when referring to complexion but not to inanimate objects. Moreover, terms like *grasgroen* ('grass green') may acquire an elative reading only in metaphorical contexts (e.g., 'very inexperienced').

Although Hoeksema's main concern is elative compounds, he could not omit the parallel category of elative **derivative adjectives** (and nouns). Dutch appears to employ a variety of elative prefixes that serve as degree modifiers, ranging from historically entrenched native elements to recent borrowings. Their usage reflects semantic specialization (e.g., negativity, emphasis), diachronic shifts in productivity, and the convergence between morphology and syntax, particularly in informal registers.

The native Dutch prefixes include, for instance, *oer-*, which functions both as a temporal qualifier ('original') and as an elative marker ('very'), e.g., *oergezellig* ('very cosy'), though its usage is waning. *Aarts-* ('arch-') has a similar dual function, appearing both in hierarchical terms such as *aartsbisschop* ('archbishop'), and in elative nominal expressions like *aartsvijand* ('archenemy'). The prefix *in-* primarily intensifies adjectives such as *intriest* ('very sad'), *inslecht* ('very bad') and favours expressions with negative connotation, although *inkeurig* ('very proper') and *innetjes* ('very neat, very proper') are also attested. It is notably associated with reduplicative constructions for emphasis, such as *in- en inverdrietig* ('in-and-in', i.e. 'deeply saddened'). Its use is declining in contemporary Dutch. The prefix *door-* ('through'), once productive (cf. *dooreerlijk* 'very honest'), now persists chiefly in fixed expressions like *doornat*

2 Although *kanariegeel* specifies a shade of yellow, it is a brighter and more vibrant shade which can be interpreted as 'extra' yellow, i.e. 'very' yellow, to use Hoeksema's argument for *pikzwart* above. Similarly, other colour specifications (*blood-red, poison-green*) may either be simply thought to refer to the shade, or they may be seen as colour-boosters, stressing the quintessential or exceptional quality of the colour. Certainly *blood* and *poison* are too strong attributes to be neutral designations of the shade (cf. *krvorudý* in Czech). However, intensification in colour compounds is specific in nature; it translates into expressiveness and evaluation, which makes them a peripheral group among the other simile-based compounds with clearly elative meaning.

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('completely wet'), and has largely been replaced by the adverbial construction *door en door* ('through and through'). *Over-* allows both elative and excessive readings; while in *overheerlijk* ('very delicious') it is an intensifier, in *oververstandig* ('overly sensible'), it denotes excess. Some cases, e.g., *overgroot* ('large size'), have fixed attributive functions, e.g., *overgrote meerderheid* ('vast majority'), without clear gradability.

The case of *super-*, *mega-*, *giga-* and *hyper-* is somewhat special. Hoeksema calls them simply prefixes (or prefix-like), but in the other two languages, English and Czech, they (at least some of them) are regarded as combining forms or prefixoids producing formations classified as compounds. In Dutch *super-* and *hyper-* have gained prominence since the 1950s, while *mega-* and *giga-* have become increasingly popular roughly since 2000. They were quite recently joined by another foreign prefix, *uber-*, borrowed not from German, but from English. These elements generally serve as intensifiers of both adjectives and nouns, though their interpretation can shift from elative to qualitative or evaluative, compare the intensifying *supergroot* (*een supergroot huis*) and the noun *superman* where *super-* denotes exceptional quality rather than mere intensity. Hoeksema notes that in informal usage formations with *super-*, *uber-*, *giga-* and *mega-* tend to be increasingly often written as two words, e.g. *super cool*, *mega sterk* ('strong'), *uber zwak* ('weak'), blurring the line between prefixation and adverbial modification.

He discusses the borderline between syntactic adverb + adjective combinations spelled as two words and elative compounds/derivatives (spelled as one complex word) at length and finds considerable variation among them. For example, *dolblij* ('crazy-happy, elated') is generally univerbated and treated as a compound, whereas *dol veel* ('crazy much') remains a free combination. It seems that as a syntactic combination becomes fixed there is a tendency (but not a rule) it will be spelled as one word (and treated grammatically accordingly). Apparently, the opposite is true for *super-*, *uber-*, *giga-* and *mega-* in informal registers and digital media.

Hoeksema characterizes this variation in terms of (de)grammaticalization which he illustrates, for instance, by the element *reuze* ('giant') appearing in the compound *reuzesterk* 'giant strong'. It was quickly followed by other compounds, such as *reuzesnel* ('giant fast') and *reuzeveel* ('giant many'), which were subsequently reanalysed as adverb + adjective combinations. This ultimately established *reuze* as a modifier of verbs. Similarly, the prefix *super-* is increasingly often being used as an adverb of degree — *super gezellig* ('very cosy'). Obviously drawing a line between morphological compounding/derivation and syntactic modification is somewhat problematic in Dutch elative adjectives. The problem is moreover complicated by the polysemy and constructional specialization of these items. This reflects broader shifts in language use, orthographic conventions, and the external influence of other languages, especially English.

Since Hoeksema's focus is mainly on elative compounding, it is possible that full research on elative adjectives in general may reveal other structural possibilities for the formation of these adjectives in Dutch.

3 ELATIVE ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

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Hoeksema is probably right that compounds are the most expressive and conspicuous group among elative adjectives. His study is also helpful in that he provides Dutch examples of elative adjectives with English equivalents. This gives some idea of whether causative, taboo, measure-noun, colour and affixal (affixoidal) adjectives function as elatives also in English. It turns out that not only compound adjectives but also most of the other elative adjectives mentioned by Hoeksema, have correlates in English. Taking this as a point of departure we add our own findings on other groups of English adjectives that can be classified as elative.

As regards compound adjectives (Hoeksema's stereotyped comparisons), the useful source for English is Norrick's (1987) study. Like Hoeksema, he focuses on compound adjectives based on similes, although his aim is different. These adjectives, characterized as elliptical transformations of similes, start from the multi-word structure of a simile, such as *cold* (tertium comparationis) *as* (comparator) *ice* (comparatum, or vehicle), which is then transformed into one complex word wherein tertium comparationis becomes head of the compound, comparatum its modifying first constituent and the comparator is left out: *ice-cold*.[3]

Norrick wants to find out whether these recurrent lexicalized compounds or Comparative Noun-Adjective Compounds (CNACs), as he calls them, have the same properties as similes. He analyses the inventory of 366 stock similes supplied by the Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs (Wilson, 1970) and Lipka's (1966) list of 638 similes, yielding 274 CNACs. He notes, among other things, that as with similes the tertium elements of the CNACs tend to form clusters (50% name colours, 25% directly perceived properties, such as cold or sweet). He concludes that both internal and textual semantic properties of CNACs correspond to those of full-blown similes, namely that CNACs, like similes proper, fulfil the two textual functions of intensification and explication/specification.

There are two things to be stressed, (a) not all CNACs are intensifying and (b) not all similes lend themselves to transformation into a CNAC, although Norrick's assessment of Lipka's list of similes suggests that more than 40 % of them do (and some of them are more frequent than the original simile). To give a few examples of comparative (simile-based or simile-like) compound adjectives: *bear-strong, blood-red, bone-dry, brass-bold, buck naked, bullet fast, crystal-clear, dust-dry, feather-soft, grass green, ice-cold, ink black, iron-hard, jet-black, judge sober, lark happy, lightning fast, lily-white, mouse-poor, paper-white, picture pretty, pitch-black, pitch-dark, razor-sharp, red-hot, rock-hard, rock-solid, sky blue, sky-high, stone-cold, stone-deaf, wolf-hungry*. The 16th-century compound *brand new* is based on the idea 'straight from the fire' (cf. *oven-hot*); the North American *picture-perfect* stresses the impeccability.

However, not all N-ADJ compounds with a degree reading need to be based on a pre-existing simile (cf. *Kennedy-handsome, bullet-straight*). In his study, Varti-

3 Emmer (2023, p. 63) calls these transformations Compound Adjectival Similes (CAS), and based on corpus data claims that generally adjectives such as PITCH(-)BLACK or RAZOR(-)SHARP are significantly more frequent than their original similes.

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ainen (2019) finds evidence that such degree (i.e. intensifying) adjectives, specifically those combining with a proper name and described as following the PN(Deg)-ADJ pattern, are gaining the status of a conventionalized construction. Although he warns that since this construction, producing many ad hoc neologisms (e.g. *Rockefeller rich, Gabby Hayes big, Kate Moss skinny, Sarah Palin stupid, Van Johnson good*), has caught on only recently, it has not spread to all varieties of English (it seems to be confined mainly to American English). Also, native speakers differ in their judgements of the construction's acceptability in different contexts. Still, the emergence and increasing use of this pattern suggest that speakers have a need for elative adjectives. In addition, proper-name compounds, although ad hoc and not (yet) part of the central lexicon, are clearly analogous to similes proper with the comparatum being the typical bearer of the property (cf. *picture-pretty* and *Penelope Cruz pretty*).

The subtype attested by Hoeksema in Dutch and called analogical extensions of comparison-based compounds in which the comparatum assumes the role of a general intensifier and is then used in 'illogical' combinations (from *ice-cold* to *ice-warm* or *ice-tired*), do not seem to have counterparts in English. The category of causative compounds mentioned by Hoeksema, implying a causative relationship between tertium and comparatum, does exist in English, though it seems to be relatively infrequent, e.g., *bursting full, choking full, scalding hot, piping hot, stifling hot, sizzling hot, dead-tired* or *sickening sweet*.

The next group of elative compounds that Hoeksema mentions and that do have correlates in English are pejorative compounds. They include taboo-word intensifiers (referring to religion, sex, human waste and related activities and body parts). However, they also appear to be relatively uncommon and often ad hoc creations: *god ugly, shit-bad* (*night*), *shit sick, pig-shit thick, dick headed* (derived from 'dickhead'), with the exception of the well-established *god-awful*.

Unlike pejorative compounds, measure-noun compounds are a regular part of the English lexicon (the unspecific and metaphorical reading of great duration, length, etc., follows from the meaning of the noun or the use of the plural form): *age-long, epoch-long, era-long, eternity-long, ages-long, eons-long*, *centuries-old, centuries-long, centuries-lasting, millennia-long*, *miles-long, miles-wide,* etc. (semantically similar but differently formed is *time-honored*). There is another group of compound adjectives referring to dimension, based on a fairly productive pattern: *king-sized* (*bed*), *giant-sized, mammoth-sized, leviathan-sized, monster-sized* (cf. *monster big* (*house*)) and, conversely, *mite-sized, pinhead-sized, pea-sized*, *pint-sized,* etc.

A different type that can be added to compounds is combining-form (or affixoid) adjectives.[4] They come in two forms. The first one, comparative compounds with

4 The difference between combining forms and affixoids (prefixoids, suffixoids) is difficult to establish (see Amiot & Dugas, 2021). For example, Mattiello (2023, p. 11) uses 'affixoid' for a free morph turned bound morph with a more abstract meaning (*proof-*, as in *water-proof, fool-proof*) and 'combining form' only for forms abbreviated/secreted from compounds (*must-* as in *must-see* from *must-have*), even if they happen to correspond to free morphs. For simplicity's sake, we will not distinguish between them here.

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a (potentially) elative reading, consist of a noun (as a comparatum) and the suffixoid *-like* (as a comparator, with the meaning 'resembling, characteristic of'): *icelike, stonelike, childlike, dreamlike, brotherlike, ladylike, gentlemanlike* ('very polite and refined'). The elative interpretation may be context-dependent: *chameleonlike* ('ever-changing, inconstant'), *spaghettilike* ('elongated, very long'), *phantomlike* ('unreal, spooky'), *cartoonlike* ('unrealistic, exaggerated').

The second affixoid group includes compounds with the intensifying lexical elements *mega-* (*mega rich*, *megatechnical*), *maxi-* (*maxiprofitable, maxiclever*), *giga-* (*gigasmall, gigafat, gigabright*), *super-* (*superintelligent, supernormal*) and *uber-* (*uber*-cool) which are described by the online Oxford Learner's Dictionaries as combining forms (to which *turbo-*, as in *turbo fast*, could be added).[5] However, similar morphemes with elative force are classified by this dictionary as prefixes: *hyper-* (*hypersensitive*), *extra-* (*extralarge, extranoisy, extra difficult*) and *ultra-* (*ultra-rich*). Apparently both groups may also combine (*super ultra rich, super hyper mega big*). Adjectives formed by these intensifiers are on the borderline between compounds and derivatives; indeed even *giga-*, *maxi-*, *mega-*, *super-* and *uber-* are labelled as prefixes by some dictionaries, such as Cambridge Learner's Dictionary.[6] A similar situation obtains in Czech (see below). The form of these adjectives vacillates — it can be closed (written as one word), hyphenated, but also open (*super careful*). In addition to such foreign prefixes as *extra-* or *hyper-*, there are degree prefixes of English origin: *over-* (*overconfident, overpolite*) and *out-* (*outsized, outachieving* (*student*)).

Elative suffixes include *-less* expressing an unlimited degree in (lexicalized) adjectives (*timeless, ageless, dateless, priceless, bottomless, boundless*). The next adjectival suffix *-y*, due to its meaning 'full of, having the quality of', may express both specification and intensification like similes depending on the noun base: *icy* (*stare*), *stony* (*expression*), *bossy, stumpy, silky, dreamy* (= 'perfect, ideal'). As its meaning is also 'full of' such adjectives may express a 'high degree of' without the noun base serving as the comparatum: *hilly, chatty, leggy, bosomy*. Similarly, the suffix *-ish*, meaning, among others, 'having the characteristics of, like' has the potential to form what can be seen as transformations of intensifying similes, e.g. *mulish* ('very stubborn'), *brutish, childish*, if the characteristic property is sufficiently above-average. Implied comparison may occasionally appear in individual lexical items (*stellar* in *stellar student*).

In sum, in English as in Dutch elative meaning can be conveyed not only by compounds (of various types), but also by derivatives.

4 ELATIVE ADJECTIVES IN CZECH

There does not seem to be any study in Czech on what we call elative adjectives here, and these adjectives are not singled out as a special group. However, it should be

5 https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/

6 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/learner-english/

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noted that in Czech linguistics the term elative is known but it is applied in a different sense.[7]

It is true, nonetheless, that Czech linguistics distinguishes 'augmentative adjectives'. But augmentation, rather than involving merely 'enlargement, size', is essentially interpreted as the process of coarsening the denotation with the primary emphasis on the negative evaluation (pejoration) and colloquial emotional colouring. Augmentatives (see Rusínová, 2017) are illustrated chiefly by nouns formed by suffixes — *dub* ('oak') → *dubisko* ('big oak'), *chlap* ('guy') → *chlapisko* ('hulk of a guy') — and univerbation, such as *Václavské náměstí* (Wenceslas Square) → *Václavák*. Augmentation is also said to be semantically close to intensification and formed by prefixes (or prefixoids) such as *arci-, ultra-* which can be used even with adjectives. Augmentative adjectives are usually mentioned as an afterthought although they may be formed by specific means: *dlouhý* ('long') → *dlouhatánský* ('long-long'); see below. Since augmentatives only partially overlap with elative adjectives (augmentation is conceived along somewhat different lines), they are treated here as a specific subgroup of elatives. This is unlike comparatives used without comparison and called elatives in Czech linguistics (see Footnote 7).

In general, elative adjectives in Czech follow the same patterns as in Dutch and English, but the inventory of elative means appears to be richer. They can be divided according to how they are formed and how the intensification is achieved. From the word-formation point of view, they are either compound or derived adjectives. From the semantic point of view, both groups, compounds and derivatives, contain adjectives in which the higher degree of the property is expressed either indirectly by comparison ('like an X') or by an explicit affixal (affixoidal) intensifier (paraphrasable by 'very, highly, extremely'). References to Czech adjectives expressing a high degree either by comparison or without it are dispersed among various sources. The aim of this study is not to provide an exhaustive account, but rather to draw attention to their existence and their differences from elative adjectives in the other two languages.

(1) **Elative compound adjectives**. The prototypical comparative elative type described by Hoeksema and Norrick (who calls them 'comparative noun-adjective compounds' or CNACs) also occurs in Czech. The simile construction is collapsed into a single word by leaving out the comparator and making the tertium comparationis the head of the compound, with the comparatum as its modifier: *pevný jako skála* ('solid as (a) rock') → *skálopevný* ('rock solid').

7 Description of the Czech elative according to Hladká (2017): "Linguistic form of adjectives morphologically homonymous with the comparative, but without the grammatical feature of gradation, and thus with the blocking of the comparative construction: *starší žena* [older woman] (elative) × *je starší než já* [she is older than me] (comparative); *muž tmavší pleti*, *silnější člověk* [darker-skinned man, more corpulent man]. This absolute (false) comparative expresses a modification of the property expressed by the adjective in the sense of its weakening (the phrase *starší žena* [older woman] denotes a woman younger in age than the phrase *stará žena* [old woman]), often with a tinge of evaluation; it can also be used as a euphemism (*starší žena* [older woman] instead of *stará žena* [old woman])."

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Unlike in English where Norrick mentions 274 CNACs, their number in Czech appears to be very small, in the order of tens of adjectives (even if counting in literary, poetic, author-specific as well as obsolete and rarely used adjectives; cf. Šlosar, 1999). Searching for them in the language corpora is therefore mostly unsuccessful. Not only are there very few of them in Czech, but this type also does not seem to be productive, in contrast to English where new adjectives are easily formed from the existing similes but also entirely from scratch on the same pattern (*Bill Gates rich*). One reason could be that derivation represents the main word-formation process in Czech (cf. Bozděchová, 2015, p. 2881).

In agreement with Norrick's claim that 50% of the CNACs name colours (the tertium is a colour), there is a large number of colour terms among the Czech CNACs: *sněhobílý* ('snow-white'), *zlatobílý* ('gold-white'), *smoločerný* ('pitch-black'), *myšošedý* ('mouse-grey'), *mlhošedý* ('fog-grey'), *stříbrobílý* ('silver-white'), *blankytomodrý* ('sky-blue'), *ohňorudý* ('fire-red'), *krvorudý* ('blood-red'), *zlatožlutý* ('gold-yellow'). Adjectives not naming colours (most of them rarely or no longer used) include, for example, *čarokrásný* ('charm-pretty'), *divukrásný* ('wonder-beautiful'), *bleskurychlý* ('lightning-fast'), *nebetyčný* ('sky-high'), *sáhodlouhý* ('fathoms-long'), *skálopevný* ('rock solid'), *střelhbitý* ('bullet-swift'), *hadokřivý* ('snake-crooked'), *medosladký* ('honey-sweet'), *mramorotvrdý* ('marble-hard'), *obrovelký* ('giant-big'), *zlatodrahý* ('gold-expensive'), *zlatohlasý* ('golden-voiced'), *zlatojasný* ('gold-bright'), *zlatoleskly* ('gold-shiny'), *zlatozářný* ('gold-lustrous').

Gold as a comparatum (vehicle) seems to be particularly common. However, many expressions with gold are not elative (degree expressing) but only attributive; they indicate the presence or admixture of golden colour, *zlatobarevný ('gold-coloured')*, *zlatočervený* ('gold-red'), *zlatobledý* ('gold-pale'), *zlatobrvý* ('golden-eyelashed'), *zlatohřívý* ('golden-maned'). *zlatokadeřavý* ('golden-tressed'), *zlatoklas(n)ý* ('having golden wheat ears'). The same is true of other adjectives, *ohňobarevný* ('fire-coloured'), *perlošedý* ('pearl-gray') or *trávozelený* ('grass-green'). All in all, colour terms are a specific subgroup among simile-based compounds. Their premodifiers specify the colour, but as to whether they intensify depends on the context and circumstances (see also Footnote 2). Vartiainen (2019, p. 903) notes that "if something is described as *grass-green*, its colour is interpreted to be a sort of deep and intense green, whereas someone who is *whip-thin* is regarded as extremely thin." While *whip-thin* is clearly elative, colour intensity is of a different kind, expressive and evaluative, and colour terms are better viewed as only loosely associated with elatives (if at all).

Some elative expressions have a less usual structure: *bělosněžný* ('white-snowy') (meaning 'snow-white'; the comparatum is a right-hand component), *běloskvoucí* ('glittering with whiteness'). A rare example of intensity expressed by reduplication is *černočerný* ('black-black'). However, the similarly formed adjective *modromodrý* means 'combining two shades of blue'.

The next type of compounds does not involve comparison; the high degree of the property is directly indicated by an initial combining form (ICF) called prefixoid in Czech linguistics. Intensifying prefixoids in Czech are of both foreign (international) and domestic origin (cf. Podruhová, 2007). The foreign prefixoids include the following: *hyper-* (*hypermorální* 'hypermoral'), *giga-* (*gigaobrovský* 'gigahuge', *gigadlouhý*

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'gigalong'), *maxi-* (*maxivariabilní* 'maxivariable', *maxisilný* 'maxistrong'), *mega-* (*megaúspěšný* 'megasuccessful', *megapopulární* 'megapopular'), *super-* (*superrychlý* 'superfast', *superbláznivý* 'supercrazy'), *extra-* (*extralehký* 'extralight', *extratvrdý* 'extrahard'), *ultra-* (*ultratenký* 'ultrathin', *ultramoderní* 'ultramodern'), *monstr-* (*monstrsocialistický* 'monstersocialist'), *turbo-* (*turboimunitní* 'turboimmune'). Sometimes the prefixoids are doubled, *superhypermoderní* ('superhypermodern'), *hyperextracoolový* ('hyperextracool'), *hypermegaaktivní* ('hypermegaactive'), or even tripled, *superhypermegamoderní*, *superultraextra aktivní*. A look at current exchanges on social media indicates that some of them are in great vogue among young speakers and most of them are stylistically marked.

However, in Czech as in English (see above), the distinction between prefixoids/initial combining forms (ICFs) and prefixes presents a theoretical problem. The demarcation issue is discussed at length by Kastovsky (2009), who analyses Prćić's Oxford (2005) attempt to resolve it using eight criteria. He notes that Prćić himself admits at the outset that there is no hard and fast boundary between prefixes and ICFs.[8] Prćić's tentative list of synchronic prefixes based on his criteria includes, among others, *hyper-, ultra-* and *extra-,* but also *giga-, mega-* and *super-* which are commonly labelled as combining forms (cf. the online Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, Footnote 5). From the speakers' point of view, the distinction between prefixes and prefixoids is irrelevant: the adjectives attested in Czech, *hyperobézní, ultraobézní, extra obézní, megaobézní, gigaobézní* and *superobézní*, all express a high degree of obesity. They are therefore best viewed as a transitional group between compounds and derivatives. Akademický slovník současné češtiny (Academic Dictionary of Contemporary Czech) refers to both *hyper-* and *giga-* as "the first part of compound words." [9]

Czech intensifying prefixoids range from obsolete to relatively recent and colloquial, e.g., *arci-*: *arcisložitý* ('most complex'), *arciďábelský* ('most devilish'), *prach-*: *prachobyčejný* ('very ordinary'), *prachsprostý* ('very mean'), *obr-*: *obrvelký* ('very big'), *obrtěžký* ('very difficult'), *sakra-*: *sakratěžký* ('damn demanding'), *sakradobrý* ('damn good'), *hafo-*: *hafo drahý* ('quite expensive'), *hafo směšný* ('quite ridiculous').[10] Again, there is a thin line between a prefixoid and a prefix. Prefixoids typically originate as independent word classes, a noun (*prach, obr, hafo*), adjective (*arci*), interjection (*sakra*) or preposition (*krom* in the lexicalized, isolated adjective *kromobyčejný* 'anything but ordinary, above average').

(2) **Elative derivative adjectives** are formed by suffixes, prefixes and marginally circumfixes. Most of these affixes are simply intensifying, several of them produce a comparative, simile-like effect.

Starting with suffixes, the **comparative** type is derived by denominative **suffixes**. It can be described as a comparison reduced to its comparatum (vehicle) with ter-

8 More recently, Bauer et al. (2019, p. 62) observe that combining forms remain a 'fuzzy' category.

9 https://www.slovnikcestiny.cz/heslo/

10 The designation Czech means here that these lexical elements have been established in Czech for a long time and are no longer perceived as foreign, regardless of their etymology.

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tium comparationis omitted and the comparator replaced, as it were, by the suffix. There are several such denominative suffixes. The suffix *-í*, e.g. *vlčí* ('wolf's (hunger)'), *mamutí* ('mammothlike = very big'), *orlí* ('eagle's (sight)'), *ostříží* ('falcon's (eyes)'), cf. *hawk-eyed*), is elative especially when the adjective is part of a fixed collocation (*vlčí hlad, ostříží zrak, mamutí podnik*). In the other suffixes the elative meaning is less clear or debatable: *-ský*: *hovadský* ('bovidlike = crass and stupid'; cf. *hovadský nápad*,[11] 'a very stupid idea'), *ďábelský* ('devilish, cunning'; cf. the English 'a devilish clever chap', very, extremely clever), *dětinský* ('childish'); *-ivý*: *ohnivý* ('firelike, fiery = passionate, short-tempered'), *octivý* ('vinegary = very sour'); *-ný*: (*kamenný* 'stonelike, stony = very hard, cold'); *-ózní*: *řešetózní* ('sievelike = very holey'), *rajčatózní* ('tomatolike = very red'); (cf. Artemov, 2018); *-ovitý*: *úhořovitý* ('eel-like = slippery, very sly, cunning'). When the base is a plural noun, as the dictionary paraphrases indicate, [12] the suffix *-(ov)itý* conveys a larger than average amount: *kopce* ('hills') → *kopcovitý* ('mající mnoho kopců', 'having many hills, hilly'), *léta* ('years') → *letitý* ('starý mnoho let', 'many years old, years-long'), *věky* ('ages') → *věkovitý* ('jsoucí, trvající věky', 'ages-long'). Most of the comparative denominative derivatives are not elative, but simply descriptive, *vejčitý* ('egg-shaped'), *mléčný* ('milky'), as the elative meaning follows from the characteristic feature of the noun referent which may be prominent, but not excessive.

The next set consists of **intensifying** suffixes; their elative effect is not based on comparison, and they are attached to adjectives. So-called **augmentative** adjectives are formed by the suffix *-ánský* (with *-ý* as the ending) expressing the augmented degree of the property: *dlouhý* > *dlouhatánský* ('very long'), *veliký* > *velikánský* ('very big'), *hluboký* > *hlubokánský* ('very deep'), *vysoký* > *vysokánský* ('very high, tall'), *široký* > *širokánský* ('very wide'), *ukrutný* > *ukrutánský* ('quite terrible'). The degree can be expressed even more emphatically by **reduplication**, i.e. by adding (and repeating) the component *-an-* and thereby lengthening the suffix: *dlouhatánský* > *dlouhat-an-ánský* > *dlouhat-an-an-ánský*, *velikanánský* > *velikananánský*, *vysokanánský* > *vysokananánský*.

An increased measure of the property combined with **hypocoristic** meaning is indicated by the following six suffixes: *-ičký, -oučký, -inký, -ounký, -oulinký, -oulinkatý*. *Examples: starý* > *staříčký* ('very old'), *čistý* > *čisťounký, čisťoučký ('very clean')*, *drobný* > *droboučký, drobounký* ('very small'); *prostý* > *prostinký, prosťounký* ('very simple'), *tichý* > *tichoučký, tichounký* ('very quiet'). The adjectives may have several variants (note the reduplication of the component *-li-*): *krátký* > *kratičký, kraťounký, kraťoulinký, kraťoulilinký* ('very short'), *hebký* > *heboučký, hebounký, heboulinkatý* ('very soft'), *mladý* > *mladinký, mladičký, mladťounký, mladťoulinký* ('very young'), *sladký* > *slaďoučký, slaďounký, sladičký, sladinký, slaďoulinký* ('very sweet'), *malý* > *maličký, malinký, malilinký, malinkatý, malilinkatý* ('very small'). Elative adjectives may also derive from adverbial bases: *potichu* ('quietly') > *potichounký*.[13]

11 Cf. Slovník spisovného jazyka českého: https://ssjc.ujc.cas.cz/

12 Cf. Slovník spisovného jazyka českého: https://ssjc.ujc.cas.cz/

13 An alternative analysis could be to assume back-formation of the adjective from the elative adverb *potichounku* (← *potichu*).

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Next, degree is explicitly signalled by these five **prefixes**: (i) *pře-, veliký* > *převeliký* ('very large'), *dlouhý* > *předlouhý* ('very long'), *krásný* > *překrásný* ('most beautiful'), *líbezný* > *přelíbezný* ('most lovable'); (ii) *pra-* (with negative connotation), *podivný* > *prapodivný* ('very weird'), *špatný* > *prašpatný* ('very bad'), *malý* > *pramalý* ('very small' (profit)), *starý* > *prastarý* ('very old'); (iii) *roz(to)-, milý* > *rozmilý, roztomilý* ('very lovely'), *divný* > *roztodivný* ('very strange'); (iv) *vele-, vážený* > *velevážený* ('most esteemed'), *schopný* > *veleschopný* ('most capable'); (v) *nad-, lidský* > *nadlidský* ('superhuman'), *nad-, standardní* > *nadstandardní* ('more than standard'). These prefixes, together with augmentative and hypocoristic suffixes are the core means of expressing elative meaning in Czech.

Finally, a notable degree of a given property can be conveyed by expressive adjectives formed from a deverbal base using both prefix and suffix (when the verb itself does not have the prefix, the process involves **circumfixation**): (i) *u-*X*-ný*, *ukecaný, užvaněný* ('excessively chatty'), *udýchaný* ('gasping for breath'), *ulhaný* ('very much prone to lying'), *uštvaný ('all worn-out'); (ii) pro-*X*-ný, propocený ('drenched with sweat'), promočený (*'drenched to the skin'), *prolhaný (*'chronically lying'); (iii) *vy-*X*-ný*, *vyšňořený* ('all dressed-up'), *vymydlený* ('spanking clean'), *vybílený* ('completely cleaned out'); (iv) *na-*X*-ný, natěšený* ('quite excited'), *nastrojený* ('all spruced-up'), *namakaný* ('very muscular'), etc. Whether and which of these adjectives express high degree or rather just evaluation may depend on subjective interpretation. The fact remains that even circumfixation can produce an elative effect.

Although Czech uses essentially the same word-formation processes for creating elative adjectives as English and Dutch, i.e. compounding and derivation, it possesses a far more diverse and flexible system for encoding elativity than its Germanic counterparts. To summarize, Czech makes use of the following distinct word-formation strategies for creating elative adjectives, strategies that go well beyond what is typical in Dutch or English:

— Suffixation: augmentative, diminutive-hypocoristic forms (*dlouhatánský, velikánský, sladoučký, heboučký*) — productive and central tools of Czech elativity; of minor importance: comparison-implying suffixes (*vlčí, orlí*);
— Prefixation: also a standard means of intensification in Czech (*překrásný, předlouhý, prapodivný, prašpatný, velezajímavý*);
— Circumfixation: deverbal patterns in which certain items express extremity or completeness, e.g. *propocený, promočený, vymydlený, vybílený*;
— Prefixoidization: prefixoids *mega-, super-, giga-, ultra-,* and similar elements, functioning (alongside affixes) as regular intensifiers in contemporary Czech; a crossroads between derivation and compounding;
— Compounding: comparative, simile-based compounds, e.g. *bleskurychlý, skálopevný* or *sněhobílý,* integrating comparison directly into a single lexical item;
— Reduplication: augmentative and hypocoristic variants *–nanánský, -lilinký* as transparent degree markers (cf. also *superhypermoderní* or *hypermegaaktivní*) and the isolated *černočerný*.

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Especially the range of affixes is markedly wider and more varied than in the other two languages. Some of the affixes are specifically elative, others are multifunctional and the elative force depends on the characteristics of the base and the (collocational) context. By contrast, simile-based adjectival compounds are less in evidence and are restricted to lexicalized, often obsolescent adjectives, while nonce creations are rare. On the other hand, prefixoidal compounds are particularly popular with the younger generations under the influence of English.

5 CONCLUSION

A review of elative adjectives in Dutch, English and Czech shows that in all three languages elatives occur in the form of both compounds and derivatives. Elative adjectives in these languages are either comparative (i.e. simile-based, *keihard, rock-hard, skálopevný*, or simile-like, *Mick Jagger thin*, an updated version of *whip-thin*), or directly intensifying, using an affix(oid) as a degree marker (***in**slecht, **pra**špatný, **super** bad*). While derivational elatives can also be comparative (*mu**lish**, mezk**ovitý***, i.e. 'stubborn as a mule'), compound elatives are directly intensifying only if adjectives with prefixoids (combining forms), such as *mega-, giga-*, are considered to be a type of compound. (A marginal type is a reduplicative compound, cf. the Czech *černočerný* 'black-black').

The three languages appear to differ in the distribution and representation of elatives. As regards simile-based compounds, it is not clear from Hoeksema's description how numerous and productive they are in Dutch (or whether and how much elatives can be derived from the existing similes). On the other hand, English, according to Norrick's data, can relatively easily draw on the considerable store of existing similes with over 40 % of them being transformable into adjectives. On top of that, English has developed a new simile-like (Proper) N-adj pattern which makes it possible to freely form nonce-elatives (*Hitler-evil, Brad Pitt handsome*; Vartiainen, 2019). In Czech, although it also has a large stock of similes (cf. Emmer, 2023), the possibility of transforming them into adjectives is severely limited. The existing simile-based adjectival compounds seem to be relatively few and far between, typically lexicalized (and often obsolescent) without new ones being added. Also, unlike Dutch and English, Czech does not seem to have causative compounds.

As far as derivational adjectives are concerned, while all three languages have and use elative affixes, Czech appears to have a wider spectrum of both prefixes and suffixes (esp. augmentative and diminutive-hypocoristic) than English, which is in keeping with its overall preference for derivation over composition. Dutch, on the other hand, judging by Hoeksema's description (which may not reflect the actual situation), has a relatively small range of prefixes even compared to English (no suffixes are mentioned). All three languages make ample use of the prefixes (prefixoids), such as *maxi-*, *super-*. *hyper-* or *mega-*; in fact, Czech and English even use their combinations (the situation in Dutch again requires further research).

The question to ask is whether elative adjectives are an actual category or whether they are an arbitrary, artificial concept given the variety of means by

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which they are realized. What the elative has in common with the comparative and superlative is that it signifies both the property and its degree at the same time. But since, unlike the comparative and superlative, it is not a grammatical category, it is perhaps to be expected that the means of expressing elativity will be diverse, carry additional connotations, and exhibit selective preferences for certain adjectives and their polarity.

One argument for distinguishing a lexical-semantic category of adjectives expressing a high degree of the property could be that it serves a distinct communicative purpose. We may assume that there is an inherent tendency in human communication to emphatic, emotive expression and exaggeration and elative adjectives are a useful tool for doing so. The findings on these adjectives in the three languages can be summed up in the following definition: elative adjectives are morphologically or lexically derived adjectives that encode an intensified degree of a property in the positive form. Their prototypical members modify inherently gradable bases (e.g. *stone-cold, dlouhatánský, překrásný*), but the category may extend to figurative or evaluative formations (*superhuman, godlike, vlčí* in the collocation *vlčí hlad*) which express a sense of extreme intensity or exceptional quality, even when the degree cannot be quantified.

The results of the morphological comparison open up a typological perspective on how languages can lexicalize elativity. The presence of elative adjectives in genetically related but typologically different languages, could lend further support to the idea that elative adjectives are indeed a distinct, and perhaps common, tool that is desirable to have from the point of view of language users. While the present comparison involves only three Indo-European languages (both analytic and inflected), simile-based elative adjectives have been examined, for instance, in Swedish and Croatian (see Novoselec and Parizoska, 2012), but they can also be found in Finnish, a Finno-Ugric agglutinative language: *bear-strong / karhuvahva, blood-red / verenpunainen, bone-dry / luukuiva, feather-soft / höyhenpehmeä, ice-cold / jääkylmä, knife-sharp / veitsenterävä, pitch-dark / pilkkopimeä, sky-high / taivaan korkea*. Affixal degree markers are attested in Russian, Italian and other languages by de Clercq et al. (2023); an example of a Finnish elative prefix is *yli-*: *ylikriittinen* ('overcritical'), *yliaktiivinen* ('overactive').

To conclude, although elative adjectives are a highly heterogeneous group, their common denominator is a clearly defined function: to express increased degree of the property expressed by an adjective without the use of standard adverbs of degree (*very, highly, extremely*) and in the absence of grammatical comparison. The addition of the expressive/emotive and stylistically marked features gives these adjectives an edge over conventional intensification. The importance of expressiveness and markedness in communication may explain the presence of elative adjectives across languages. It would be interesting to see whether elative adjectives (both compound and derivational) are indeed common in other, non-European languages. If that were the case, it would bolster the claim to the existence of the lexical-semantic field of elative adjectives in language.

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