

**UTER VESTRUM EST CELERIOR? RELATIVE
COMPARATIVES WITHOUT AN EXPLICIT STANDARD
IN CLASSICAL LATIN***

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ABSTRACT

The article explores Latin comparatives, both of adjectives and adverbs, which are not accompanied by an explicit standard (basis of comparison) in the form of the ablative of comparison or *quam* + NP/SENT. Such cases are considerably numerous, but virtually none of them are the so-called absolute comparatives. The majority of comparatives have an implicit standard, which is recoverable from the context, situation, general knowledge, or through some logical operation. The article describes the typical circumstances under which the non-expression of the standard is the unmarked or even the only possible variant.

Keywords: comparative; relative comparative; absolute comparative; implicit standard; explicit standard; Classical Latin; partitive comparative; determinative comparative

1. Introduction

This article aims to describe conditions under which a relative comparative is not accompanied by an explicit standard in the form of the ablative of comparison or in the form of *quam* + NP/sentence.

According to my statistics (which will be given in section 3 below), most comparatives of both adjectives and adverbs are not accompanied by an explicit standard; this, however, does not amount to say that all such comparatives are instances of the so-called absolute comparative.¹ Cf. five comparatives in ex. (1) below: none of them should be

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¹ I differ in this from Cuzzolin, Lehmann (2004: 1213), who seem to define “absolute comparative” on the grounds of non-expression of standard (no matter if the standard is implicit or none at all): “Comparatives occurring without standard, traditionally labelled absolute comparatives, seem much more frequent than those occurring with the standard, but statistics on this point are scarce.” Cuzzolin (2011: 552) gives Cic. *Nat. deor.* III, 44 as an example of the absolute comparative: *Haec Carneades aiebat, non ut deos tolleret – quid enim philosopho minus conveniens –, sed ut Stoicos nihil de dis explicare convinceret.* “These arguments were advanced by Carneades, not with the object of establishing atheism (for what could less befit a philosopher?) but to prove the Stoic theology worthless.” In this passage, however, the standard is easily recoverable from the previous context (“What could less befit

labelled “absolute” because they have very easily recoverable standards, which just do not happen to be overtly expressed. In fact, these standards are so easily recoverable that the speaker/writer did not feel the need to express them overtly (but could have done so: i.e. *robustioribus [quam Atratinus]*; *liberius et fortius et magis more nostro [quam nunc refutabimus Atratinum]*; *tecum agam lenius [quam agerem cum illis]*).²

- (1) *Quam quidem partem accusationis admiratus sum et moleste tuli potissimum esse Atrati-
no datam. [...] Vellem aliquis ex vobis robustioribus hunc male dicendi locum suscepisset;
aliquanto liberius et fortius et magis more nostro refutarem istam male dicendi licen-
tiam. Tecum, Atratine, agam lenius, quod et pudor tuus moderatur orationi meae et meum
erga te parentemque tuum beneficium tueri debeo.*

“I was both surprised and annoyed that this part of the accusation was entrusted to Atratinus of all people. [...] I could wish that one of the more hardened among you accusers had taken upon himself the part of slanderer; we should have rather more freedom and force, and feel far more natural, in retorting upon such licence of an evil tongue. With you, Atratinus, I will deal more leniently, since your scruples restrain my language, and I feel bound also not to undo the kindness I have done you and your father.” (Cic. *Cael.* 7)³

In the present article, I will describe regular conditions under which standard typically remains implicit.⁴ The most useful notes on relative comparatives without explicit standard (“Komparativ ohne das zweite Glied der Vergleichung”) are given in Kühner, Stegmann (1955: 475–477) who mention a lot of examples of various kinds. The aim of the present article is to point out the extremely high frequency of (relative) comparatives without explicit standard (section 3) and to describe more systematically conditions under which the non-expression of the standard is the unmarked variant or even the only possibility (section 4).

My main corpus consists of texts of classical authors of the first century BC, both prose writers (Cicero, Caesar) and poets (Lucretius, Ovid). In section 3, where statistics are given, I have selected a text (or a part of it) for each author and counted comparatives with and without explicit standards; for illustrative purposes, however, I also use some examples from other works of these authors as well as examples from other classical authors, ranging from Plautus to Seneca Minor.

a philosopher than establishing atheism?”). A comparative with an implicit standard should not be considered absolute.

² In fact, if the term “absolute comparative” is to be retained as a useful descriptive label, it will need a new definition and more precise delimitation of examples to which this label should be applied. For even most of the comparatives traditionally labelled “absolute” still do have some implicit standard (e.g. “than is normal” or “than was expected”). In the rest of the article, I try to avoid using this term.

³ All translations (if not stated otherwise) are taken from the *Loeb Classical Library*.

⁴ Someone may wish to call this an ellipsis of standard (ellipsis of the ablative of comparison or ellipsis of *quam* NP/SENT). Interestingly enough, in general theories of ellipsis, e.g. McShane (2005), no attention is paid to such cases and the scholars examining “ellipsis in comparatives”, e.g. Lechner (2004) and many others quoted there, pay attention only to the difference between *than* + NP vs. *than* + SENT.

2. Terminology

Throughout the article, I use the term “standard” (Spanish “estándar”), used e.g. by Baños Baños (2009: 649). It corresponds to the term “comparatum” in the classical simile terminology, or “basis of comparison” used by Pinkster (2015: 1075), or “term of comparison” used by Oniga (2014: 89) or “second member with a comparative”, “second membre d’une comparaison”, “zweite Glied der Vergleichung” used by Panhuis (2006: 150), Bertocchi, Orlandini (1996: 195) and Kühner, Stegmann (1955: 475–77), respectively.

3. Statistics

According to my data (see Table 1), most comparatives are not accompanied by an explicit standard in the form of the ablative of comparison or in the form of *quam* + NP/ sentence. The percentage of comparatives with and without an explicit standard in other texts may (and will) be different; my data, however, show that even the absolute numbers of comparatives without an explicit standard are considerable.⁵

Table 1: Number of comparatives with and without an explicit standard

	Comparatives without an explicit standard	Comparatives with an explicit standard	Number of words (in round numbers)
Caes. Gall. I	74	24	8 500
	75,50%	24,50%	
Cic. Catil. I–IV	46	22	12 500
	67,60%	32,40%	
Lucr. I	38	13	7 500
	74,50%	25,50%	
Ov. Am. I	22	8	5 000
	73,30 %	26,70%	
Total	182	67	33 500
	73,10%	26,90%	

It would be a mistake, however, to jump to a conclusion that every comparative without an explicit standard is the so-called absolute comparative; quite the opposite: I could not find an example which I would be willing to label as an absolute comparative. In section 4, I will describe conditions under which the standard typically remains implicit or cannot be expected at all, and yet we must speak of relative rather than absolute comparatives.

⁵ I have excluded the instances of substantivized *maiores* (“ancestors”) and of the conjunction *quominus*.

4. Comparatives with implicit standards

4.1 A standard deducible from the previous context⁶

There is usually no need to express the standard when it was mentioned in the closely preceding context. Cf. ex. (2) and (3) below and also *robustioribus* in (1) above.

- (2) *Inciat L. Lentulus consul senatum [...] In eandem sententiam loquitur Scipio [...] Dixerat aliquis leniorem sententiam.*

“The consul L. Lentulus puts pressure on the senate [...] Scipio expresses himself in similar terms [...] Some had expressed less rigorous views.” (Caes. Civ. I, 1–2)

- (3) *Mars quoque deprensus fabrilia vincula sensit; notior in caelo fabula nulla fuit.*

“Mars, too, was caught, and felt the bonds of the smith; no tale was better known in heaven.” (Ov. Am. I, 9, 39–40)

In ex. (2), *leniorem* compares the harshness of other speeches with those of L. Lentulus and Scipio, whose speeches were paraphrased or mentioned in the previous context. In ex. (3), the standard of *notior* is the very tale mentioned in the preceding verse: no tale was better known in heaven than the one the poet has just mentioned (how Mars was caught with Venus).

Interestingly enough, some scholars commenting on such examples, do find such a standard uncertain. For instance, Gotoff (2002: 245) commenting on Cic. Lig. 13, quoted below in (4), remarks: “Harsher and worse than what the speaker neglects to say.”

- (4) *Res enim eo spectat, ut ea poena, in qua adhuc Q. Ligarius sit, non videamini esse contenti. Quae est igitur alia praeter mortem? Si enim est in exilio, sicuti est, quid amplius postulatis? an, ne ignoscatur? Hoc vero multo acerbius multoque est durius.*

“For your conduct of the case suggests that you are not satisfied with the penalty under which Quintus Ligarius has so far fallen. But what other penalty is there except death? If he is in exile, as he is, what more do you ask? That pardon should be refused him? That is even harsher and worse.” (Cic. Lig. 13)⁷

I would argue that Cicero is not neglectful here: at the beginning, Cicero says that the accusers must be seeking Ligarius’s death because they prosecute a man who already is in exile; then he suggests another possible motivation (*An ne ignoscatur?*): the accusers may seek not the execution of Ligarius, but they may rather want to prevent Caesar from pardoning him. And this latter possibility is even much harsher and worse [than the former possibility, i.e. seeking Ligarius’s death]. Thus, in my opinion, the context is clear enough to allow the non-expression of the standard and this non-expression does not

⁶ The previous context consists of all the preceding utterances (but the closely preceding ones are typically more relevant).

⁷ I have made slight alterations in the translation of the last sentence to be more compatible with Gotoff’s comment.

admit any other interpretation than the one I have just suggested (at least on the part of a cooperative recipient). There is no neglect on the part of Cicero.⁸

A special case of a standard deducible from the previous context occurs in what I decided to call a **rhetorical gradation**. It goes like this: the speaker firstly mentions something with a considerable frequency (quantity, etc.) and then moves to something that has the frequency (quantity, etc.) even larger. For instance, in ex. (5), the comparative *certiora* follows a statement with the elative *certissima* which expresses a pretty high level of certainty; the comparative then expresses even greater certainty. In ex. (6), the Helvetii try to cross a river several times in broad daylight, but even more frequently at night. In ex. (7), the great debts are surpassed by even greater wealth (note also the presence of the word *etiam*).

- (5) *Ac mihi quidem, Quirites, cum illa CERTISSIMA visa sunt argumenta atque indicia sceleris, tabellae, signa, manus, denique unius cuiusque confessio, tum multo certiora illa, color, oculi, voltus, taciturnitas.*

“In my view, citizens, completely convincing as were the letter, seal, handwriting and confession of each man as arguments and proofs of their guilt, still more so were their pallor, eyes, expression and their silence.” (Cic. *Catil.* III, 13)

- (6) *Helvetii ea spe deiecti navibus iunctis ratibusque compluribus factis, alii vadis Rhodani, qua minima altitudo fluminis erat, NON NUMQUAM interdium, saepius noctu, si perrumpere possent conati [...]*

“Disappointed of this hope, the Helvetii attempted, sometimes by day, more often by night, to break through, either by joining boats together or by fording the Rhone where the depth of the stream was least.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 8, 4)

- (7) *Unum genus est eorum, qui MAGNO in aere alieno maiores etiam possessiones habent.*

“One group consists of those who have large debts and possess even larger estates.” (Cic. *Catil.* II, 18)⁹

Standards are especially prone to remain implicit in passages where a **contrast** between two entities or possibilities (A and B) is systematically built up in the text. When such a contrast between A and B has been established and then a comparative whose comparandum is A occurs, the most likely and easily recoverable candidate for the standard (comparatum) is B. The implicit standard is something like “than the other one”. Cf. ex. (8)–(10):

- (8) *Erant omnino itinera DUO, quibus itineribus domo exire possent: UNUM per Sequanos, angustum et difficile [...]; ALTERUM per provinciam nostram, multo facilius atque expeditius [...]*

“There were two routes, and no more, by which they could leave their homeland. One lay through the territory of the Sequani, a narrow route and a difficult [...]. The other route, through the Roman Province, was far more easy and convenient [...].” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 6, 1–2)

⁸ Note also the contextually recoverable standard of *amplius* in the very same passage (the implicit standard of *amplius* is probably something like “than his exile”).

⁹ I have made slight alterations in the *Loeb Classical Library* translation.

- (9) *Illud in his rebus vereor, ne forte rearis
impia te RATIONIS inire ELEMENTA viamque
indugredi sceleris. quod contra saepius ILLA
RELIGIO peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.*

“One thing I fear in this matter, that in this your apprenticeship to philosophy you may perhaps see impiety, and the entering on the path of crime; whereas on the contrary more often it is that very Superstition which has brought forth criminal and impious deeds.” (Lucr. I, 80–83)

- (10) *VIR male dissimulat: tectius ILLA cupit.*

“The man dissembles badly: she conceals desire better.” (Ov. Ars I, 276)

In ex. (8), Caesar informs us that the Helvetii had only two possible ways of emigration and then he contrasts both: one had such and such properties, the other one was better in this and that. Notice the use of numerals *duo* (indicating the total number of ways) and *unum* and *alterum* (contrasting both ways). In ex. (9), Lucretius contrasts the Epicurean rational teachings with (irrational and impious) religion. He has already established a contrast between these two in I, 62–79 where he described the epical contest between Epicurus and superstition; here the contrast is strengthened by *contra* in I, 82. In ex. (10), Ovid contrasts the desire of men and women (this contrast of sexes is present throughout the whole poem).

Comparatives *magis* and *potius* occur frequently in a subtype of adversative relation which is called **substitution**.¹⁰ It consists in substituting an inappropriate or untrue expression with a better, finer, more plausible one. The substitution can be expressed by an adversative particle accompanied with a comparative (see *sed magis* in (11)) or by a mere comparative (asyndeton, see *potius* in (12)). The motivation for using such a comparative for indicating the substitution is clear: the latter expression is somehow better than the former. The comparison is rather meta-communicative and the comparatives *magis* and *potius* acquired a specialized discourse function which is nevertheless clearly derived from their relative, not absolute usage.

- (11) *perspicere ut possis res gestas funditus omnis
non ita uti corpus per se constare neque esse
nec ratione cluere eadem qua constet inane,
sed magis ut merito possis eventa vocare
corporis atque loci, res in quo quaeque gerantur.*

“[...] so that you may perceive that things done never at all consist or exist in themselves as body does, nor are said to exist in the same way as void; but rather you may properly call them accidents of body, and of the place in which the things are severally done.” (Lucr. I, 478–482)

- (12) [...] *cur amplius addere quaeris,
rursum quod pereat male et ingratum occidat omne,
non potius vitae finem facis atque laboris?*

¹⁰ For basic types of adversativity see Kroon (1995: 210–217).

“[...] why seek to add more, only to be miserably lost again and to perish wholly without gratification? Why not rather make an end of life and trouble?” (Lucr. III, 941–943)

Only for the sake of completeness, let me conclude this section with a hardly surprising fact: where two or more comparatives are coordinated or parallel, the standard (if still the same) is expressed only once. Cf. (13) and (14):

- (13) [*Sicilia*] *nil tamen hoc habuisse viro praeclarius in se nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque videtur.*

“[...] yet it [Sicily] seems to have contained in it nothing more illustrious than this man, nor more sacred and wonderful and dear” (Lucr. I, 729–730)

- (14) *Quis consideratior illo? Quis tectior? Quis prudentialior?*

Nay, but who was more circumspect than he? Who more guarded? Who more sagacious?” (Cic. *Deiot.* 16)

In ex. (13), the standard *hoc viro* goes with comparatives *praeclarius*, *magis sanctum*, (*magis*) *mirum*, and (*magis*) *carum*. In ex. (14), the parallelism of the sentences secures that the standard *illo* is taken with all three comparatives. Only rarely (and typically not in prose) we can find examples where the same standard is expressed more than once. Cf. ex. (15), where the standards *hoc* and *quam illic est* both refer to the braggart soldier Pyrgopolinices.

- (15) *periuuiorem hoc hominem si quis viderit aut gloriarum pleniorum quam illic est, me sibi habeto.*

“If anyone sees a man perjuring himself more than this one or more boastful than he is, he can have me for himself.” (Plaut. *Mil.* 21–23)

4.2 A standard deducible from the cultural encyclopedia or situation

We have seen above in 4.1, examples (8)–(10), that contrastive elements are quite natural standards for each other: the contrast, however, does not have to be established in the preceding context, as we have seen it above; instead, the speaker can rely on the cultural encyclopedia (shared knowledge, stereotypes, and semantic oppositions). Ex. (16) is similar to ex. (10) given above: Cicero (or rather a character in his dialogue, L. Crassus) compares speaking habits of women and men. Cicero (Crassus), however, was not talking about differences between men and women before and has not contrasted the sexes so far; he introduces a woman (Laelia) into the discourse all of a sudden and claims that women are better in a certain aspect. He believes that the recipient can easily infer that the standard is *men* because he believes there is a shared cultural opposition between sexes.

- (16) *Equidem cum audio socrum meam Laeliam – facilius enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant [...]*
 “For my own part when I hear my wife’s mother Laelia – since it is easier for women to keep the old pronunciation unspoiled [...]” (Cic. *De orat.* III, 45)

Some standards are deducible nor from the previous context neither from the encyclopedia, but rather from the extra-textual situation. In ex. (17) below, Aeneas tries to console his fellows reminding them that they have made it through much harder times [“than the present ones”]. Note that, if we want to make the standard explicit here, we need to supply not an anaphoric pronoun (as in cases where the standard is deducible from the previous context), but rather an exophoric one (because the standard is deducible from the situation); cf. also the exophoric *his* in the following context.

- (17) *O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.*
 “You, who have suffered worse, this also God will end.” (Verg. *Aen.* I, 199)

4.3 Change in quality/quantity over time

The non-expression of the standard regularly takes place also in descriptions of a change of some feature. In this case, the speaker describes some qualitative or quantitative increase or decrease in a certain feature over time. He/she, therefore, does not compare two entities, but rather one entity in two different moments (some t_1 and t_2). The implicit standard in these cases is something like “than the very same thing was before”. Cf. ex. (18)–(21):

- (18) [...] *multo maior alacritas studiumque pugnandi maius exercitui iniectum est [...]*
 “[...] the army was inspired with far greater eagerness and enthusiasm for battle.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 46, 4)
- (19) *Magnam Caesarem iniuriam facere, qui suo adventu vectigalia sibi deteriora faceret [...]*
 “Caesar was doing him a serious injury, for his advance was damaging [i.e. was worsening] his revenues.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 36, 4)
- (20) [...] *audacius resistere ac fortius pugnare coeperunt.*
 “[...] they began to resist more boldly and to fight more bravely.” (Caes. *Gall.* II, 26, 2)
- (21) *at mihi perpetuo patria tellure carendum est, ni fuerit laesi mollior ira dei.*
 “But I must be forever deprived of my native land, unless the wrath of the injured god be softened.” (Ov. *Trist.* I, 5, 83–84)

The verb *fio* frequently occurs with comparatives to express the change of quality/quantity over time, cf. ex. (22) below. The construction *fio* + positive is used to emphasize that the entity changes so much that it reaches the positive, cf. ex. (23) below; *fio* + comparative indicates only the change and leaves open the degree of change. Sometimes, however, *fio* + comparative and *fio* + positive can be nearly synonymous and interchangeable, cf. (24).

- (22) *Non facta est lacrimis turpior illa suis.*
 “The tears did not make her less pretty.” (Ov. *Ars* I, 534)¹¹
- (23) *Leve fit, quod bene fertur, onus.*
 “Light grows the burden that is well borne.” (Ov. *Am.* I, 2, 10)
- (24) *Haec a concubitu fit sedula, tardior illa.*
 “An intrigue makes one more eager, another more sluggish.” (Ov. *Ars* I, 377)¹²

Comparatives indicating the change of quantity occur frequently with the expression *in dies* (“day by day”).¹³ Cf. ex. (25)–(27):

- (25) *Ceterum mihi IN DIES magis animus accenditur [...]*
 “But my resolution is fired more and more every day [...].” (Sall. *Catil.* 20, 6)
- (26) *Quae res IN DIES confirmatiorem eius exercitum efficiebat.*
 “This action made his army day by day more confident.” (Caes. *Civ.* III, 84)
- (27) *Agitabatur magis magisque IN DIES animus ferox inopia rei familiaris et conscientia scelerum [...]*
 “His haughty spirit was goaded more and more every day by poverty and a sense of guilt [...].” (Sall. *Catil.* 5, 7)

4.4 Comparison with a hypothetical alternative

In a sense, the comparison with a hypothetical alternative is similar to the case of change of quality/quantity over time (4.3). The main difference is that in the case of change in quality/quantity over time one entity is compared in some t_1 and t_2 ; in the case of comparison with a hypothetical alternative what is compared are the versions of an entity in, so to speak, alternative universes. In other words, change in time is concerned with temporality, whereas comparison with a hypothetical alternative concerns modality. Cf. ex. (28)–(29):

- (28) *Adde quod et partus faciunt breviora iuventae tempora.*
 “Besides, childbirth shortens the period of youth.” (Ov. *Ars* III, 81–82)
- (29) *Lucundiorum autem faciet libertatem servitutis recordatio.*
 “And freedom will be made sweeter by the memory of servitude.” (Cic. *Phil.* III, 36)

¹¹ This translation is my own.

¹² In this case, the interchangeability of *fit* + positive and *fit* + comparative is supported also by the fact that the translator of the poem in the *Loeb Classical Library* could arbitrarily supply the word *more* (in *more eager*) without distorting the meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, as the anonymous peer-reviewer kindly reminded me, the adjective *sedulus* has no attested comparatives (which necessitated the positive).

¹³ Cf. Ramsey (2007: 71 ad Sall. *Catil.* 5, 7).

Both in ex. (28) and (29), there is a phenomenon (*partus* “childbirth” and *recordatio servitutis* “memory of servitude”, respectively) which by its mere occurrence or presence influences a degree of something else. The implicit standard, then, is the hypothetical non-occurrence or absence of this phenomenon. In ex. (28), Ovid claims that the pregnancy shortens the youth of a woman: the case of giving birth is compared with the hypothetical alternative of not having a child. In ex. (29), Cicero claims that freedom is sweeter when it comes after the experience of servitude than it would be without this experience.

A special case of comparison with a hypothetical alternative is represented by the construction “*quo/hoc/eo/propterea* + comparative + *quod* (rarely *quia*)”. The *quod* sentence justifies the higher degree expressed by comparative; if the state of affairs were different, the degree would be lesser. Cf. ex. (30):

(30) *Id hoc facilius iis persuasit, quod undique loci natura Helvetii continentur.*

“In this he persuaded them the more easily, because the Helvetii are closely confined by the nature of their territory.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 2, 3)

In this example, Orgetorix persuaded his fellow citizens to migrate the more easily because the Helvetii did not have enough territory. If they had had, the persuasion would not have been that easy.

4.5 Partitive and determinative comparative as a means of reference¹⁴

When a speaker uses the name *Gallia ulterior*, he/she does not compare *Gallia ulterior* with *Gallia citerior*, but indicates which part of the *Gallia* he/she is referring to (partitive comparative). Similarly, when a speaker uses the name *Cato Maior*, his/her intention is not to compare *Cato Maior* with *Cato Minor*, but to clearly determine, which member of the class “Catones” he/she wants to refer to (determinative comparative). Partitive and determinative comparatives are not accompanied by explicit standards; nevertheless, they still must be considered relative comparatives rather than absolute (*Cato Minor* is not absolutely *Minor*; he is *Minor* only in relation to *Cato Maior*). Cf. ex. (31) and (32) below; please note that this partitive and determinative usage is far from being limited to proper names and idiomatic expressions, cf. ex. (32).

(31) *Sed in summo iugo duas legiones quas in Gallia citeriore proxime conscripserat et omnia auxilia conlocavit.*

“But he ordered the two legions which he had last enlisted in Nearer Gaul and all the auxiliary troops to be posted on the top of the ridge.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 24, 2)

(32) *Postridie eius diei Caesar praesidio utrisque castris quod satis esse visum est reliquit, alarios omnes in conspectu hostium pro castris minoribus constituit.*

“On the next day Caesar left what he deemed a sufficient garrison for each camp; in front of the lesser camp, in full view of the enemy, he posted all the allied troops.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 51, 1)

¹⁴ This type of comparatives without standard is noticed also by Kühner, Stegmann (1955: 476, Anmerkung 21).

4.6 Correlation of qualities¹⁵

The standard also does not occur where comparatives express the direct or inverse proportion of two qualities. In other words, the standard does not occur where there is a correlation of degrees of two qualities (cf. Eng. *The nicer you are, the easier you are to be hurt*). Note that no explicit standard can be supplied to these constructions. Cf. (33) and (34):

- (33) *Quo quisque honestior genere fama patrimonio est, hoc se fortius gerat* [...] “The more honourable a man is by birth, reputation, and patrimony, the more heroically he should bear himself [...]” (Sen. *Dial.* II, 19, 3)
- (34) [...] *atque eo gravius ferre, quo minus merito populi Romani accidissent.* “[...] and his indignation was the more vehement in proportion as the Roman people had not deserved the misfortune.” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 14, 1)

4.7 Questions of the type: *Sed uter vestrum est celerior?*

Comparatives without an explicit standard occur also in direct and indirect questions in which the speaker asks who/which of the two has the higher degree of some quality. These are the questions of the type: *Sed uter vestrum est celerior?* “But who of you is faster?” (Plaut. *Aul.* 321) The question word *uter* (“who/which of two”) makes any hypothetical standard “than the other” perfectly redundant (the standard would be explicit only if we compared the two with some third, e.g. *Uter vestrum est celerior Gaius?* “Who of you is faster than Gaius?”). Cf. the direct question in (35) and indirect questions in (36) and (37):

- (35) *Utrum igitur in nefariis civibus ulciscendi, cum possis, an pertimescendi diligentior cautio est?* “Well, when you are dealing with villainous citizens, which is the safer precaution, to take vengeance when you can or be frightened?” (Cic. *Phil.* VII, 3)
- (36) *Neque sui iudicii neque suarum esse virium discernere, utra pars iustiore[m] habeat causam.* “It is not within our discretion or our power to discriminate which side has the juster cause.” (Caes. *Civ.* I, 35)
- (37) *Erat in celeritate omne positum certamen, utri prius angustias montesque occuparent.* “The whole contest turned on speed – which of the two would first seize the defiles and the hills.” (Caes. *Civ.* I, 70)

4.8 Comparative meaning “more than one/once”

Quite rarely, comparatives like *plures* can mean “more than one”. This meaning is noted by OLD (s.v. *plures*, meaning 4). Cf. (38) below. Some cultural knowledge is needed for

¹⁵ Cf. “comparación proporcional” in Baños Baños (2009: 649).

the interpretation of this example as well: one needs to know that the standard number of lovers for a decent woman of the old times was one.

- (38) *Forsitan immundae Tatio regnante Sabinae
noluerint habiles pluribus esse viris.*
“It may be that in Tatiu’s reign the unadorned Sabine women were reluctant to have more men.” (Ov. *Am.* I, 8, 39–40)¹⁶

Also the adverb *saepius* frequently means “repeatedly, more than once”, cf. ex. (39) below. This form, however, is strongly lexicalized and it is doubtful whether one should interpret it as *saepius* [*quam semel*] “more frequently [than once]”.

- (39) *Cum ab his saepius quaereret neque ullam omnino vocem exprimere posset, idem Diviciacus Haeduus respondit: [...]*
“When he repeated questioning could extract not a word from them, Diviciacus the Aeduan made further reply: [...]” (Caes. *Gall.* I, 32, 3)

5. Conclusions

In this article I tried to show that a vast majority of comparatives both of adjectives and of adverbs are not accompanied by an explicit standard (or comparatum, basis of comparison, the second member with a comparative), i.e. by an ablative of comparison or *quam* + NP/sentence. Practically all of them, however, are relative comparatives (not absolute ones) that have an implicit standard which in most cases can be easily supplied (made explicit).

I have also described typical conditions under which the standard remains implicit: this occurs regularly when the standard is deducible from the previous context, situation, or encyclopedia; it also occurs regularly when we compare a single entity in some time t_1 and t_2 or when we compare something with its hypothetical alternative in an alternative universe. Moreover, the standard is practically never explicit if the speaker uses the comparatives to express correlation of qualities, to indicate a part of an entity (partitive comparative), to refer to a certain member of a class (determinative comparative) or in questions where the speaker does not have the information who/which of the two possesses the higher degree of a quality. From the English translations given below the Latin quotations it is clear that non-expression of standard occurs in English as well as in Latin.

The term “absolute comparative” needs to be redefined, if it is to be retained as a useful tool of linguistic description of any kind. The presence/absence of explicit standard¹⁷ clearly cannot be used as a criterion for determining relative/absolute comparatives. Moreover, even most comparatives traditionally labelled as absolute (e.g. *tua epistula est brevior*) still do have some implicit standard (e.g. “than is usual”, “than was expected”): that, which is not absolutely absolute, is relative.

¹⁶ I have made alterations in the *Loeb Classical Library* translation.

¹⁷ This is the view of Cuzzolin, Lehmann (2004) and Cuzzolin (2011), cf. note 1 above.

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UTER VESTRUM EST CELERIOR? RELATIVNÍ KOMPATIV BEZ EXPLICITNĚ VYJÁDŘENÉHO STANDARDU V KLASICKÉ LATINĚ

Článek se zabývá relativními komparativy, které nejsou doprovázeny explicitním vyjádřením standardu (v podobě *quam* + substantivum/VV nebo v podobě ablativu srovnávacího). Statistika založená na vybraných textech klasických prozaiků i básníků ukazuje, že v průměru 3 ze 4 latinských komparativů nemají explicitně vyjádřený standard (příčemž prakticky u všech je možné určit standard implicitní, a tudíž se nejedná o tzv. absolutní komparativy). Implicitní standard je normou zejména v případech, že je možné jej vyvodit z předcházejícího kontextu, situace či obecné znalosti (kulturní encyklopedie), dále v případech, kdy je srovnávána jedna a táž entita v různých časových bodech nebo v alternativních vesmírech, a dále ve specifických případech, kdy je dvojice komparativů užita pro vyjádření přímé/nepřímé úměry, v otázkách se slovem *uter* nebo v případě komparativu tzv. determinativního (*Cato Maior*) a partitivního (*Gallia ulterior*). Termín *absolutní komparativ* je značně problematický (nelze ho vymezovat na základě formální nepřítomnosti standardu) a bude potřebovat nové jasné vymezení, pokud má být jakkoli užitečný pro jazykovědný popis.

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