“Incomplete” Comparatives
Roger Schwarzschild, Rutgers University

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Background

nomenclature

(1) Jack is more anxious than Jill.

more ~ comparative marker
than Jill ~ Standard Phrase (assume: formed by ellipsis from than Jill is anxious).

(2) Some_x teacher_{<x>} is more_d anxious_{<x,d>}

What are the values for d-indices?

threshold_d

(1) paraphrases as “There is a threshold of anxiety that Jack meets or exceeds that Jill does not meet or exceed.” (Schwarzschild 2008)

Lewis/Kamp/Seuren/McConnell-Ginet, Heim(2001)

Seuren(1973:535), ne explétif in French comparatives

(4) Jean est plus grand que je ne pensais.
   ‘John is taller than I thought’.

LF for (1)

(5) Jack_x is more_d (anxious_{<x,d>}) (than_{-d',d'} Jill_y is NOT anxious_{<y,d'>})

a. \[ \text{than} \] = \lambda \theta \exists \theta' \theta' (\theta \in \Theta' and \theta \in \Theta')

b. \[ \text{than} \] = \lambda \exists \exists \theta (\theta \in \Theta) (treat Standard Phrase like Relative Clause)

(7) \[ \text{than} \] = \lambda \theta \exists \theta' : \theta \in \Theta'

[than is originally the same word as then, Oxf Eng Dict Online 1989]

(8) Jack_x saw_{<x> some_y (boy_{<y>}) (who_{<y,z> sang_{<z>})}

(9) \[ \text{who} \] = \lambda u \lambda A : u \in A
Hebrew

(10) Yael yoter xazaka mi-Dani
    Yael more strong [3sg.fem] from-Danny
    ‘Yael is stronger than Danny’

(11) Yael xazaka mi-Dani
    Yael strong[3sg.fem] from-Danny
    ‘Yael is stronger than Danny’

How does (11) have a comparative meaning in the absence of the comparative marker?

Three Hypotheses

(a) lexical - xazaka ‘strong’ has an inherently comparative meaning in (11). (cf. prefer or late, Schwarzschild 2005)

(b) silent more (Beck et al. for Japanese, Bhatt & Takahashi for Hindi)

(c) the Standard Phrase mi-Dani is a degree quantifier. It binds the degree argument of xazaka ‘strong’ and has a semantics that leads to the more-comparative reading. (Hayashishita 09 for Japanese)

Data inconsistent with hypotheses (a,b)

Contexts where comparatives show up without Standard Phrases require yoter:

questions

(12) eize me-hem yoter kašé?
    which from-them MORE difficult[3sg.masc]
    ‘which of them is more difficult?’

(13) eize me-hem kašé?
    which from-them difficult[3sg.masc]
    ‘which of them is difficult?’

reasons

(14) ki hi #(yoter) z’ira
    because she MORE young[3sg.fem]
    ‘because she’s younger’

object of become

(15) hu niya yoter xazak.
    he became MORE strong
    ‘he got stronger’

(16) hu niya xazak.
    he became strong
    ‘he became strong’

(17) My grass is greener, thanks to MiracleGro.

(18) Drive faster!

A differential without a preposition requires yoter:

(19) hu harbe *(yoter) xazak mi-Dani
    he a lot MORE strong than-Dani
    ‘he’s a lot stronger than Danny’

(20) hu (yoter) xazak mi-Dani ba-harbe
    he MORE big than-me P – a lot
    ‘he’s a lot stronger than Danny’

⇒ Differentials are in Spec of DegP  (Corver)
**Standard Phrase as Degree Binder**

(21) Yael, is strong<sub>x,d</sub> than<sub>d</sub> Danny, is NOT strong<sub>y,d</sub>.

(22) [than<sub>d</sub> (Danny, is NOT strong<sub>y,d</sub>)] (Yael, is strong<sub>x,d</sub>)

(23) $[\text{than}] = \lambda \Theta \lambda \Theta' : \exists \theta (\theta \in \Theta \text{ and } \theta \in \Theta')$ ($<$<sub>d,t</sub>,<sub>d,t</sub>, $>$)

**How do yoter ‘more’ and mi- ‘than’ combine**

Co-predication

(24) $\exists x \text{ woman}<sub>x</sub> \text{ prayed}_{<x,e>} \text{ quietly}_{<e>}$

**Domain-adverbial adjuncts** (for ‘C’ see von Fintel 1994)

(25) In Mary’s class<sub>C</sub> every<sub>x</sub> student<sub>x</sub> passed<sub>x</sub>.

(26) According to the law<sub>MB</sub> Jack<sub>x</sub> can<sub>w</sub> drive<sub>x,w</sub>.

**Standard Phrase as Domain Adverbial**:

(27) $[\text{more}] = \lambda \Theta_{\text{dom}} \lambda \Theta_{\text{scope}} \forall \theta (\theta \in \Theta_{\text{dom}} \rightarrow \theta \in \Theta_{\text{scope}})$

(28) $[\text{than}] = \lambda \Theta_{\text{dom}} \lambda \Theta_{\text{scope}} : \exists \theta (\theta \in \Theta_{\text{dom}} \text{ and } \theta \in \Theta_{\text{scope}}) = (23)$

**Questions again**

(29) Which of them<sub>x</sub> is strong<sub>x,d</sub>?
(30) Which of them is more \( d \leq C \) strong \( < x, d > \)?

(31) Pragmatics: The value for \( C \) must be such that for some value for ‘\( x \), the scope of ‘which of them’ is true and for some value it’s false:

(32) **SCOPE of which of them:** more \( d \leq C \) strong \( < x, d > \)

**Other languages with no-Comparative Marker Comparatives**

The Standard Marker, \( mi \)- in Hebrew, is used outside the comparative:

(33) higati mi-Boston
    arrive.1st.PST from-Boston
    ‘I arrived from Boston’

**Hindi, Japanese** (Bhatt & Takahashi)

(34) Atif Boman-se lambaa hai
    Atif.m Boman-than tall be.Prs.Sg
    ‘Atif is taller than Boman.’

“the postposition –se is also used to mark instruments and locative and temporal from.”

(B&T)

**But Hindi is much more liberal with comparatives with no-CM and no Standard ((12)-(18) above)**

(35) Taroo-wa [Hanako-yori] kasikoi.
    Taro-Top Hanako-than smart
    ‘Taro is smarter than Hanako.’

(36) **yori** as a postposition in verbal argument:

Watasi-wa Tokyo-yori mairimasita.
    I-Top Tokyo-from came
    ‘I came from Tokyo.’

**Turkish** (Hofstetter 2009)

(37) Maria Peter’den uzun
    Maria Peter.Ablative tall
    ‘Maria is taller than Peter.’

**Q’eqchi’** (Stewart 1980)

(38) Jun tenamit kach’in chi r u a’in.
    one village small P-A3-face that
    ‘a village smaller than that one’

(39) naxik chi w-u
    he-go P A1-face
    ‘he left me’

**chi…u has many uses, also relevant here: ‘in front of’**

**Navajo** (Bogal-Allbritten 2008)

(40) [shi lááh] ánniñees
    1sg-BEYOND ‘á-n’i2-3S-CLASS-tall
    ‘She/he/it is taller than me’

(41) ‘alááh "beyond, farthestmost, farthest, highest (bi lááh, beyond it): as in “I went beyond Farmington yesterday” (Young and Morgan dictionary 1571 85 25)

(42) Generalization: in every case, the Standard Phrase has some kind of marking familiar from other constructions.

**But having an ‘argument-type’ Standard Phrase doesn’t entail possibility of no-comparative marker:**

Examples from Pancheva(2006)

(43) Anna vyše Ivana. (Russian)
    Anna taller Ivan-GEN
    ‘Anna is taller than Ivan’

(44) Ana je viša od Tanje (predicative)
    Ana is taller from Tanja-
    ‘Ana is taller than Tanya’

(45) neke od devojaka (Serbo-Croatian)
    some from girls-
    ‘some of the girls’
Finer generalization: In every case, the Standard Phrase is marked with a location/path marker (case, preposition, postposition).

Perhaps there is a more path-oriented/verbal semantics for comparatives:

Jack is taller than Jill ~ there is a pathscale whose source/starting point is Jill on which we find Jack.

Existential quantification → cf. ∃e in (24) above

suggestive evidence: Japanese hoo

Dochi-ra–no hoo-ga omoi ka? (Atsushi Oho, pc)
which gen hoo-NOM heavy Q
‘which one is heavy?’

hon B yori hon A no hoo ga omoshiroi.
Book A is more interesting than book B.

“There is a path/scale whose starting point/source is B and endpoint/goal is A.”

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikt:hoo
a suffix expressing location, direction, or time

ひだり の ほう に ゆうびんきょく です。 (the web)
Sono depaato no ushiro de, hidari no hoo ni yuubinkyoku desu
The post office is after that department store, to the left

hidari – left-side

From Matsui, A and Y. Kubota (2010):

Watashi-no-hoo-ga John-yori neko-o aishiteiru
I-GEN-hoo-NOM John-than cats-ACC love-NONPAST
i. ‘I love cats more than John loves cats.’ (John=Subject)
ii. NOT: ‘I love cats more than I love John.’ (John=Object)

Watashi-wa John-yori neko-no-hoo-o aishiteiru
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Navajo: “comparative aspect” (Young and Morgan grammar)

[shi lááh] ’áníhééž
1sg-BEYOND ‘á-ní’-3S-CLASS-tall
‘She/he/it is taller than me’

Other languages that allow but don’t require CM:

Japanese: yóri (Sawada (to appear))

Koko-wa yóri anzen-da.
Here-TOP more safe-PRED
‘This place is safer.’

Turkish daha (Hofstetter 2009)
Readers familiar with Turkish might miss the element daha here, which often appears in comparatives in this language and seems to trigger a wide range of semantic effects (with “ordinary” comparatives, it usually increases the difference between the standard and the comparee term, in comparatives lacking an overt standard, it seems to express the fact that we are dealing with a comparative as such, and in comparatives with an overt differential, it does not seem to make any contribution to meaning whatsoever).

Hindi: zyaadaa, adhik, Bhatt & Takahashi

“With most but not all adjectives, zyaadaa ‘more’ is optional. The optionality is independent of whether the adjective is predicative or attributive. With nonadjectival comparatives, zyaadaa is obligatory

Q’eqchi’ más (Haeserijn 1966) [my paraphrase/translation]

To for the comparative, the adjective is preceded or not by más and the standard is marked with chi u or chi ix.

The above rule is borrowed from Castilian. True Q’eqchi’ expresses the comparative with the verbs: q’axok ‘pass, beat’, numek ‘overtake, kubek ‘lower’.

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however, it remains optional. With nonadjectival comparatives, zyaadaa is obligatory.

What’s the pressure to have a comparative marker? why is it so ‘easy’ to borrow? why does it remain optional? how does it remain optional?

more domain adverbials?

another path: Hindi, Hebrew and Turkish – ablative-partitive.
not: Japanese, Q’eqchi’ (yorĩ, chi..u are not partitive markers)

H-languages: no-CM is lexically governed. why? How?

FN 6 In general, Hindi-Urdu adjectives which take internal arguments (e.g. utsuk ‘eager about’, paas ‘near’, gussaa ‘angry at’) require an overt zyaadaa, while adjectives that measure physical attributes such height and weight do not. Adjectives that measure abstract attributes such as intelligence and kindness fall in an in-between zone.”

Register, simple vs. derived:

“omission of the degree word ḳīna yoter ‘more’ is possible in formal usage with non-derived adjectives, if the conjunction is ،mi- followed by a noun phrase

fn 12 Derived i.e. verb-based (margiz ‘annoying’) or noun-based, adjectives such as mekupax ‘deprived’ and dati ‘religious’ are also unable to act as construct adjectives.” (Glinert 1989:217)

References:


