Comparatives in Cheyenne
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This talk examines the encoding of comparison in Cheyenne (Algonquian: Montana and Oklahoma), based on existing language materials (Leman 2011; Fisher et al. 2006; Cheyenne Bible Translation Committee 2007) and one author’s fieldwork.

**Comparatives crosslinguistically.** Comparative structures are ones which express a comparison in degree, quantity, or quality between two things. Comparison is expressed by different structures cross-linguistically, with three major classes emerging in the literature. *Conjoined comparatives* express a comparison by means of two contrasting simple statements, akin to ‘Mary is tall and John is not’, sometimes involving negation or intensification to flag the contrast; this strategy is used in languages like Mian, Itelmen, and Mauwake, about one of every four/five languages (Bobaljik 2012). *Exceed comparatives* use a verb which means ‘exceed’/’surpass’, akin to ‘Mary exceeds John in height’; this structure is used in languages like Amele, Mandarin, and Tamashek, and is about as common as the conjoined comparative (Stassen 2008; Bobaljik 2012). The remainder of the world’s languages use a *standard comparative*1 which involve a standard of comparison (marked by case or a particle), and sometimes marking on the predicate as well, as in *John is taller than Mary*; this strategy is used by languages like English, Hebrew, and Japanese, and has been the primary focus of cross-linguistic analyses of comparatives.

**Cheyenne Comparatives.** There are two Cheyenne forms that are good candidates for comparatives, both of which are preverbs. *Hόnō'xe-* , which Fisher et al. 2006 translates as ‘most, more’, is used in at least some comparisons, like (1).

(1) Néhόnō'xého'tsenótse menótse.
   Né-hόnō'xe-ho'tsén-ótse mene-ótse
   2-HΟΝΟ'XE-have-P.L.INAN berry-P.L.INAN
   ‘You have more berries (than I).’ (Fisher et al. 2006, hόnō'xe-)

We discuss the distribution of this preverb, and discuss whether it is better considered a comparative or a quantifier (as in ‘more of the berries’).

Another good candidate is *hehpe-* (initial variant *hehp-*), which Fisher et al. 2006 and Leman 2011 both translate as ‘beyond’. *Hehp(e)-* occurs in both intransitive forms (with contextually-provided standards of comparison) as in (2) and transitive forms as in (3).

(2) Éhehpe'éstaha.
    É-hehpe'-éstaha.
    3-HEHPE-tall
    ‘He’s taller.’ (Fisher et al. 2006, -'éstaha)

(3) Náhehpó'éståhema.
    Ná-hehp-o'éståhe-m-a.
    3-HEHPE-tall-FTA-3:1
    ‘He’s taller than me.’ (Fisher et al. 2006, -hehpó'éståhem)

We discuss the distribution of this preverb and whether it is best classified as a comparative or an excessive (like English *too*). Ultimately, Cheyenne is classified as making use of a *standard comparative*, as these preverbs attach to the predicate and reference a standard (be it explicit or contextual). We also compare these strategies to those found in other Algonquian languages, e.g., Meskwaki (Dahlstrom 2015).

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1So called because of their contents, not their prevalence.
References


Cheyenne Bible Translation Committee. 2007. *Ma’heonemôxe’êstoo’o: Cheyenne Scripture*. Busby, MT: CCEP.


