

Expressing Comparison in Cheyenne

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Outline

- 1 Comparatives across Languages
- 2 Comparatives in Cheyenne

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What's a comparative?

- Comparative structures express a comparison in degree, quantity, or quality between two things

(1) Annie is taller than Dale. DEGREE

(2) Annie has more bananas than Dale. QUANTITY

(3) Annie is better at painting than Dale. QUALITY

- They involve

- a subject (e.g., Annie)
- a scale, introduced by a predicate (e.g., height, introduced by *tall*)
- a standard of comparison (e.g., Dale)

Types of comparatives

- Comparative structures express a comparison in degree, quantity, or quality between two things
 - Broadly construed, includes equatives and superlatives
- Different languages use different structures to encode comparison
 - (Bobaljik 2012, a consolidation of Stassen 1984, 1985)
 - 1 Conjoined comparatives
 - 2 Exceed comparatives
 - 3 Standard comparatives

Conjoined comparatives

- Two contrasting statements, flagged with negation or intensification
 - ~ *Annie is tall, Dale is not*
- (4) Mosbi ó-le sum eka Banimo ó-**ta** gwaab-ó-be.
 Mosbi NEUT-TOP big and Banimo NEUT-**emph** small-PRED-DECL
 'Port Moresby is big and Vanimo is small' (Mian, Fedden 2007 (3-36))
- Subject: Mosbi
 - Scale: size (introduced by *sum* 'big')
 - Standard: Banimo
- Used in languages like Mian (Ok-Awyu, Papua New Guinea (Fedden 2007)) and Itelmen (Chukotko-Kamchatkan, Eastern Russia (Bobaljik 2000))
 - One in four/five languages, possibly endangered (Bobaljik 2012)

Standard comparatives

- So called because of their contents, not their prevalence
 - Mark the standard of comparison with a case or particle
 - Optional marking on the predicate
 - ~ *Annie is taller **than** Dale*
- (6) bə-manitoba jotey kay mə-jisyael.
 in-Manitoba more cold **from**-Israel
 'Manitoba is colder than Israel.' (Hebrew)
- Subject: Manitoba
 - Scale: cold (introduced by *kay* 'cold')
 - Standard: Israel
- Used in languages like English, Hebrew, and Japanese
 - The primary focus of cross-linguistic analyses of comparatives

- Different languages use different structures to encode comparison
 - 1 Conjoined comparatives
 - No overt comparative morphology, simple predication
 - 2 Exceed comparatives
 - Main verb meaning 'exceed', scale introduced separately
 - 3 Standard comparatives
 - Marking on the standard of comparison

Conjoined comparatives in Algonquian

- Menominee has been argued to use a conjoined comparative

(7) Apaeqsek tatāhkesew, nenah taeh **kan**.
 more he.is.strong I and **not**
 'He is stronger than me.'

(Menominee, Bloomfield 1962
 from Dahlstrom 2015)

- Subject: he
- Scale: strength (introduced by *tatāhkesew* 'he is strong')
- Standard: speaker

- Also Meskwaki (Dahlstrom 2015)

Standard comparatives in Algonquian

- Nishnaabemwin has been argued to use a standard comparative

(8) Washme ndoo-gnooz **pii dash** mBill.
 more I.am.tall **than then** Bill

'I am taller than Bill.'

(Valentine 2001, Nishnaabemwin)

- Subject: speaker
- Scale: height (introduced by *ndoo-gnooz* 'I am tall')
- Standard: Bill

- Different languages use different structures to encode comparison
 - 1 Conjoined comparatives
 - No overt comparative morphology, simple predication
 - 2 Exceed comparatives
 - Main verb meaning ‘exceed’, scale introduced separately
 - 3 Standard comparatives
 - Marking on the standard of comparison

- Where does Cheyenne fit in?

Typological prediction

- Stassen 1984, 1985 argues that comparative structures are determined by other properties in a language
 - Syntax of conjunction (dependence or independence of clauses)
 - Availability of deletion under identity
- Cheyenne conjoins independent clauses (no subordination, no “deranking”)
 - \rightsquigarrow conjoined or standard comparatives
- For identity deletion, Cheyenne results not yet clear
 - If deletion is allowed, Stassen (1984) predicts a standard comparative

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Background & Methodology

- Spoken in Montana and Oklahoma
- Ethnologue lists 2,100 native speakers, though a recent Montana survey places the number closer to 500, with most speakers over 50
- Looked through the online dictionary (Fisher et al. 2006)
 - Common English comparatives (*taller, bigger, better*)
 - Every occurrence of English *than, more*
- Looked through existing texts (e.g., from Leman 1980a,b, 1987; Cheyenne Bible Translation Committee 2009)
 - Candidates discovered through dictionary searching
 - Places where the English translation used comparatives
- Primary elicitation ongoing

hóno'xe-

(9) Né-hóno'xè-ho'tse-nòtse men-òtse.

2-*hono'xe*-have-PL.INAN berry-PL.INAN

'You have more berries (than I).' (Fisher et al. 2006, *hóno'xe-*)

- Not entirely clear
 - Could be a quantifier ('most of the berries', entails 'more')
 - Could be an excessive ('too many berries')
- If a comparative, contextual standard of comparison
 - No marking (standard)
 - Can't tell if it would be a direct argument (exceed), in a different predication (conjoined)

hehpe-

■ Positive form

- (10) É-háa'èstahe.
 3-tall
 'He is tall.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *-háa'èstahe*)

■ Plus *hehpe-*

- (11) É-hehpe-'èstahe.
 3-*hehpe*-tall
 'He's taller.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *-'èstahe*)

hehpe-

- Looking more closely at that example

(11) É-hehpe-'éstahe.

3-*hehpe*-tall

'He's taller.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, -'éstahe)

- Subject: 3rd person
- Scale: height (introduced by 'éstahe 'be tall')
- Standard: (contextual)
- No explicit standard
- Could be an excessive (~ 'too tall (for something)')
- Could be a comparative

hehpe- with an explicit standard

- Can take an explicit standard as a direct object

(12) Ná-hehpó-'èstahe-m-a.

3-*hehpe*-tall-FTA-3:1

'He's taller than me.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, -*hehpó'èstàhem*)

– Subject: 3rd person

– Scale: height (introduced by '*èstahe* 'be tall')

– Standard: speaker

- Rules out *hehpe-* being an excessive or a conjoined comparative
- Takes a standard, not interpreted as 'too tall for me'
 - ∴ not an excessive
- Standard as a direct object in the same clause
 - ∴ not a conjoined comparative

hehpe- with an explicit standard

- Can take an explicit standard in a conjunct clause

(13) É-hehpè-stòhá-nèstse na-men-òtse
 3-*hehpe*-be.so.many-PL.INAN 1-berry-PL.INAN
 tsé-h-néehóve-to.
 IND-PST-be.the.person-CNJ.2.SG

'I have more berries than you do.' (Fisher et al. 2006, *hehpèstohá-*)

- Subject: speaker
- Scale: # of berries possessed
- Standard: # of berries possessed by addressee (~ 'than you do')

hehpe- with an explicit standard + *he'xóve-*

- (14) Náhko'éehe ná-hehpe-méhot-a tsé(ox)-he'xóve-méhót-á'éstse
 my.mother 1-*hehpe*-love-INV IND-to.the.degree-love-CNJ.3:1
 ného'éehe.
 my.father

'My mother loves me more than my father does.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *he'xóve-*)

- Subject: speaker's mother
- Scale: amount of love
- Standard: speaker's father does (a verbal clause, not just a NP)

heóme-, an excessive

- Usually a preverb

(15) É-heómè-ho-háaeho'ta.

3-too-REDUP-hot

'It's too hot [to work].'

(‘The Grasshopper and the Ant’, Lemán 1980a)

- With adverbifying *-to*, also as an independent particle

(16) Heóme-sto kásováaheh-o mó-h-vése-na'h-e-he-vó-he.

heóme-ADV young.man-PL Q-PST-also-kill-PSV-NEG-PL-INF

'Too many young men had also been killed.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *heómesto*)

Superlatives and equatives

(17) É-náno'se-péhéva'e.

3-most-be.good

'It is the best.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *náno'se-*)

(18) Hoóhtsetsé-héha é-he'èstahe.

tree-*hehá* 3-be.tall

'He's as tall as a tree.'

(Fisher et al. 2006, *-héhá*)

- *hehá* marking the standard (the tree)

Wrapping up

- *hehpe-* found to be the most common preverb involved in comparison
- Based on this data, Cheyenne seems to use a standard comparative
 - Overt comparative morphology, no emphasis or negation
 - ∴ not a conjoined comparative
 - *hehpe-* might mean ‘exceed’, but isn’t the main verb
 - ∴ not an exceed comparative
- Most likely a standard comparative, with standards introduced in what looks like a conjunct clause
- However, Cheyenne *hehpe-* looks like a Meskwaki comparative preverb which Dahlstrom (2015) argues is part of a conjoined comparative

(19) a·wasi . . . [_vahpi·hčī–we·wenesi-wa]
 more . . . to.such.extent–

‘She is prettier’

(Meskwaki, Dahlstrom 2015, (7b))

Thanks!

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