Expressing Comparison in Cheyenne

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Outline

1. Comparatives across Languages

2. Comparatives in Cheyenne
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1. Comparatives across Languages
2. Comparatives in Cheyenne
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)
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)
Exceed comparatives

- Use a verb which means ‘exceed’/‘surpass’
- ∼ Annie **exceeds** Dale in height

(5) Ø-ojär  abbâ-nnet  t-əššəjrət-t.
3.MASC.SG-surpass.RESULT father-3.SG.POSS FEM-length-FEM.SG

‘He is taller than his father’ (Tamashek, Heath 2005 (222c))

- Subject: he
- Scale: height (introduced by əššəjrət ‘length’)
- Standard: his father

- Used in languages like Amele (Madang, Papua New Guinea (Roberts 1987)), Tamashek (Berber, Mali (Heath 2005)), and Mandarin
- About as common as the conjoined comparative (Stassen 2008; 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
-  \textit{Annie is taller than Dale}

\begin{equation}
\text{bə-manitoba jotey kay mə-jisyael.}
\end{equation}
\text{in-Manitoba more cold from-Israel}

\text{‘Manitoba is colder than Israel.’} \quad \text{(Hebrew)}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Subject: Manitoba
  \item Scale: cold (introduced by kay ‘cold’)
  \item Standard: Israel
\end{itemize}

- 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
Menominee has been argued to use a conjoined comparative

\[(7) \quad \text{Apaeqsek tatāhkesew, nenah taeh } \text{kan.} \]
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)
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?
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”)
  - \( \leadsto \) conjoined or standard comparatives

For identity deletion, Cheyenne results not yet clear
  - If deletion is allowed, Stassen (1984) predicts a standard comparative
Outline

1. Comparatives across Languages

2. Comparatives in Cheyenne
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
(9) Né-hóno'xe-ho'tse-nôtse men-ôtse.
2-hóno'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'ëstahe.
   3-tall
   'He is tall.'  (Fisher et al. 2006, -háa'ëstahe)

- Plus hehpe-

(11) É-hehpe-'ëstahe.
   3-hehpe-tall
   'He’s taller.'  (Fisher et al. 2006, -'ëstahe)
Comparatives across Languages
Comparatives in Cheyenne

Looking more closely at that example

(11) É-hehpe-'ëstahe.
3-hehpe-tall
‘He’s taller.’ (Fisher et al. 2006, -'ëstahe)

- Subject: 3rd person
- Scale: height (introduced by 'ëstahe ‘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

\[(12) \quad \text{Ná-hehpó-}'ëstahe-m-a.}\]
\[3-hehpe\text{-tall-FTA-3:1}\]
\[\text{‘He’s taller than me.’} \quad (\text{Fisher et al. 2006, } -hehpó'ëstāhem)\]

- Subject: 3rd person
- Scale: height (introduced by ‘ëstahe ‘be tall’)
- Standard: speaker

- Rules out *hehpe-* being an excessive or a conjoined comparative
- Takes a standard, not interpreted as ‘too tall for me’
  - \(\therefore\) not an excessive
- Standard as a direct object in the same clause
  - \(\therefore\) not a conjoined comparative
**hehpe- with an explicit standard**

- Can take an explicit standard in a conjunct clause

(13)É-hehpê-stôhá-nêstse na-men-ôtse
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, hehpêstohá-)

- 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 né-hehpe-méhot-a tsé(ox)-he'xóve-méhot-á'èstse 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-heómé-ho-háaehe'ta.
    3-too-REDUP-hot
    ‘It’s too hot [to work].’
    (‘The Grasshopper and the Ant’, Leman 1980a)

- With adverbifying -to, also as an independent particle

(16) Heóme-sto kásováahe'h-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-pêhéva'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·hči–we·wenesi-wa]  
more ... to.such.extent–  
‘She is prettier’ (Meskwaki, Dahlstrom 2015, (7b))
Thanks!


