

TypoBO 2020 – Typology in Bologna

Comparative constructions: linguistic typology at the crossroads

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Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna (Italy)

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Comparative constructions are a set of grammatical strategies that the languages of the world use to compare two or more items in order to highlight both differences and similarities among them (cf. Dixon 2008, Stolz 2013, Treis 2018). We can recognize different types of comparative constructions depending on the kind of relationship existing between the two (or more) items (Fuchs 2014, Treis 2018). The first relevant distinction to be made is between *quantitative comparison* and *qualitative comparison* (cf. Treis 2018: iii): quantitative comparison can be further divided into comparison of **inequality** (superiority, e.g. *taller than*, *tallest*, or inferiority, e.g. *less tall than*, *least tall*) or **equality** (e.g. *as tall as*), while qualitative comparison can be further distinguished into **similarity** (e.g. *like a horse*) and **simulation** (e.g. *as if he were a horse*).

The languages of the world exhibit several different formal strategies to express these functions, as argued in the typological literature (e.g. Ultan 1972, Andersen 1983, Stassen 1985, Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2004, Dixon 2008, Stolz 2013, Treis & Vanhove 2017, Treis 2018). However, we can generally identify some elements that are cross-linguistically recurrent within a comparative construction (cf. Stolz 2013: 9 and Treis 2018: ii). The **comparee** and the **standard** are the items being compared to each other, respectively, the *primum comparationis* (comparee) and the *secundum comparationis* (standard). The **parameter** or **quality** is the property on which comparee and standard are compared (*tertium comparationis*). The **degree** (or **parameter**) **marker** explicates the kind of relationship that comparee and standard have with respect to the parameter/quality (e.g. *more*, *less*, *as ... as* in English). Finally, the **tie** or **standard marker** is the grammatical function or relation that connects comparee, standard, and quality (e.g. *than* in English).

Standard markers of comparison seem to develop out of a restricted set of recurrent sources (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2002), such as verbal forms meaning ‘exceed/defeat/surpass’ (Cantonese *kwo* ‘surpass’ > *kwo* ‘than’) and interrogative adverbs (Hungarian *mint* ‘how’ > *mint* ‘than’). Furthermore, comparative constructions themselves can constitute the source for different diachronic paths, leading to subjective functions such as evidentiality (e.g. in Even *ureci-n* ‘like, apparently’ cf. Malchukov 2000: 461) or more intersubjective functions applying at the discourse level, leading to elements such

as discourse markers (e.g. English *like*) and topic markers (e.g. English *as for*). In addition, the discourse use of comparative constructions reveals that these strategies are frequently employed in a highly creative way, taking scope over phrases other than the prototypically gradable ones (e.g. superlatives on nouns and verbs).

This workshop aims to gather scholars working on comparative constructions, both of the quantitative and qualitative types, integrating the typological perspective with complementary approaches and methodologies, including diachronic and sociolinguistic ones.

To reach this aim, we invite submissions addressing one of the following topics:

- (i) Cross-linguistic investigations of one or more comparative constructions using data from descriptive grammars and/or corpora;
- (ii) Language-specific descriptions of one or more comparative constructions adopting a typological perspective, taking into consideration also discourse variation;
- (iii) Diachronic analyses (typological and/or language specific) investigating the source of one or more comparative constructions;
- (iv) Diachronic analyses (typological and/or language specific) investigating the development of one or more comparative strategies into new constructions (e.g. evidential markers, discourse markers, etc.).

Selected papers of the workshop will be published in the newly founded, open-access journal *Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads*.

Submission information

Anonymous abstracts should be no longer than one-page A4 (margins of 2,5 cm on each side, single-spaced lines, Times New Roman font, 12 pt. font size), with the possibility of using an additional page for examples and references. Abstracts should be written in English, with fully glossed examples conforming to the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

Submissions should be sent to typologyinbologna@gmail.com

Deadline for submission: February 5, 2020.

Notification of acceptance: March 1, 2020.

Information and updates can be found on the TypoBO 2020 website:

<https://eventi.unibo.it/typobo-2020>

References

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