

A photograph of the Great Wall of China winding through misty, hilly terrain. The wall is visible in the foreground and middle ground, with several watchtowers perched on the ridges. The sky is overcast and filled with thick fog.

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Equatives and similatives in Chinese – Historical and typological perspectives

Alain PEYRAUBE 贝罗贝
CRLAO, EHESS-CNRS, Paris, France

Introduction: Definition

- ⌘ A comparative construction involves a grading process: two objects are positioned along a continuum with respect to a certain property.
- ⌘ One object can have either *more*, *less* or an *equal* degree of the given dimension or quality when judged against the other object.

Introduction: Definition (2)

Hence, comparative constructions normally contain two NPs: the ‘standard’ and the ‘comparee’, a formal comparative marker and typically a stative predicate denoting the dimension or quality: the ‘parameter’.

Introduction (3)

Comparative constructions in the languages of the world are generally classified into four main types (Henkelmann 2006):

I - Positive 原级

II - Equality 等比句 or 平比局

III - Inequality 差比句

(i) Superiority 优级比较

(ii) Inferiority 次级比较 (负差比)

IV - Superlative 最高级

Inequality - Superiority

This construction is also known as the relative comparative, *comparativus relativus*, *le comparatif de supériorité* or 差比句 *chábǐjù* in Chinese.
Example from English:

‘Carla is taller than Nicolas.’

NPA [Comparee]– Stative predicate or Parameter
(ADJ + DEGR *-er*) – Comparative marker –
NPB [Standard]

[CM = comparative marker]

Comparative constructions of superiority in Sinitic languages

- ⌘ Synchronously, two comparative construction types predominate in Sinitic languages (Chappell and Peyraube 2015):
- ⌘ Type I: ‘Compare’ type – dependent marked:
NPA – CM – NPB – VP
- ⌘ Type II: ‘Surpass’ type – head marked
NPA – VERB – CM – NPB

Note: The source and forms for the comparative markers may vary, while the structures remain essentially the same.

SINITIC LANGUAGES

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. NORTHERN CHINESE | (Mandarin) 北方話 $\cong 71.5\%$ (845m) |
| 2. JIN 晉 | Shanxi, Inner Mongolia $\cong 3.5\%$ (45m) |
| 3. XIANG 湘 | Hunan, $\cong 4.8\%$ (55m) |
| 4. GAN 贛 | Jiangxi, $\cong 2.4\%$ (30m) |
| 5. HUI 徽 | Anhui, $\cong 1.8\text{m}$ |
| 6. WU 吳 e.g. Shanghainese | Zhejiang, S. Jiangsu $\cong 8.5\%$ (98m) |
| 7. MIN 閩 e.g. Hokkien | Fujian, $\cong 4.1\%$ (45m) |
| 8. KEJIA or HAKKA 客家 | NE Guangdong, Jiangxi $\cong 3.7\%$ (40m) |
| 9. YUE 粵 e.g. Cantonese | Guangdong, $\cong 5.0\%$ (60m) |
| 10. PINGHUA 平話 | Guangxi, $\cong 2\text{-}3\text{m}$ |

Type I: ‘Compare’ schema

Most common type synchronically
NPA– CM – NPB– VP (VP = typically an ADJ coding dimension)

(1) 他比我高 Standard Mandarin –

tā (A) bǐ (CM) wǒ (B) gāo (ADJ)

3SG compared:to 1SG tall

‘He is taller than me.’

The preposition *bǐ* < Verb ‘to compare’ as used in a SVC (attested from Early Medieval: 3rd – 4th c. AD).

Type II: ‘Surpass’ schema

Hong Kong Cantonese – Type II: Surpass

NPA– VERB – CM –NPB

(2) 佢 高 过 我

khøy¹³ kou⁵⁵ kuɔ³³ ñɔ¹³

3SG tall CM 1SG

‘He is taller than me.’

The second structural type (II) is commonly represented by the ‘surpass’ schema in Sinitic languages, because the CM has its origin in a verb meaning ‘surpass’, ‘exceed’ or even ‘defeat’, ‘win’.

Geographical areas for Type II 'surpass' in the world's languages

Languages of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia predominantly use the 'exceed' or 'surpass' schema. Bantu, Afro-Asiatic. Examples for SEA: Laotian, Thai (Tai-Kadai) ; Vietnamese, Khmer (Austroasiatic) ; Hmong (Hmong-Mien), Burmese (Tibeto-Burman), Southern Sinitic: Cantonese, Hakka, Min.

- (3) Khaw jaj **kwaa** phom [Thai]
3SG big CM (surpass) 1SG
'He is bigger than me.' (Stassen 1985)

Sinitic Type I comparatives in areal perspective

The Type I structure is used almost exclusively as the comparative in 5/8 subgroups of the vast Mandarin supergroup of dialects, including Northern Beifang, Northeastern (Manchuria), Northwestern Lanyin, Central Plains Zhongyuan, Southern Jianghuai (Li Lan 2003).

Distribution of Type II ‘surpass’ in Sinitic

- ⌘ Nonetheless, the distribution of the Type II comparative ('Surpass' schema) is much more widespread than has been previously supposed:
- ⌘ Basically, geographically southwestern and southern dialect groups in China use it, including particularly the Yue dialects (Cantonese) and the Hakka and Min (or Hokkien) dialects, located in Guangdong province.
- ⌘ Southwestern Mandarin (parts of Hubei, Sichuan, Guizhou) and Shandong Mandarin (Jiaoliao, Jilu subgroups) also use the Type II structure.

Comparative constructions in Sinitic languages



Equatives and similatives

The expression of equality (equatives) and similarity (similatives) has so far not been as thoroughly researched crosslinguistically as the constructions for the comparison of inequality.

Main studies: Haspelmath & Buchholz (1998), Henkelmann (2006), Treis & Vanhove (2017), Haspelmath (2017) ...

Definitions

- In equative constructions, one entity (A, the *Comparee*) is used as a benchmark against which to judge another (B, the *Standard*) in order to express that both possess an equal degree of the given dimension or quality (the *Parameter*) in question.
- Henkelmann (2006: 371):
« Equative constructions express situations in which two referents have a gradable property to the same degree ».

Definitions (2)

- ‘Equatives express equal extent, and similatives express equal manner’ (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998: 278 →
- Major difference between the two constructions = the expression of quantity vs. quality respectively.
- *In the following, the focus is on equatives and not similatives, though-be-it the two are often not easy to differentiate in Chinese.*

Six types and five components

- Equative constructions are quite varied across languages, but Haspelmath (2017) proposes to distinguish six primary types that can be characterized with reference to five components.
- The five key components in an equative construction can be illustrated by using an English or a French example: *A is as big as B*, *A est aussi grand que B*:

The five components

A is as big as B, A est aussi grand que B:

1. Comparee 主体 (A) [*element to be compared*].
2. Degree marker 谓语标记 (first ‘as’).
3. Parameter, most of the time an adjective being the main predicate 谓语 (‘big’).
4. Standard Marker 基准标记 (second ‘as’).
5. Standard Noun 基准 (B) [*item with which the comparee is compared*].

The five components (2)

- The equative degree marker (component 2) is a marker which is closely associated with the parameter (component 3) and occurs only in equative constructions.
- Equative constructions tend to mark both the standard and the parameter, whereas in simulative constructions only the standard is marked.

The six primary types

The six types proposed by Haspelmath (2017):

1. Type 1: Only equative standard-marker: ‘A is tall [like B].’
2. Type 2: Equative degree-marker and standard-marker: ‘A is [equally tall] [as B].’
3. Type 3: Equative degree-marker unified: ‘[A and B] are [equally tall].’ *The comparee and standard referents are UNIFIED, expressed as a single conjoined NP.*

The six primary types (2)

4. Type 4: Primary reach equative: ‘A [reaches>equals B] in height.’ *with a verb as predicate expressing a notion of ‘reaching’.*
5. Type 5: Primary reach equative unified: ‘[A and B] are equal (to each other) in height.’ *Same as 4 but with a unified comparee and standard as subject.*
6. Type 6: Secondary reach equative: ‘A is tall [reaching/equaling B].’

Sinitic equatives Types

- To characterize Sinitic equatives, Haspelmath classification is not much appropriate. In terms of structure and grammatical meaning, there are three main types of Sinitic equatives (cf. Chao 1968: 681 *sq.*, Chappell & Peyraube 2017).
- **Type I: Conjoined Equative.**
- **Type II: Reach Equative** including *have* verbs.
- **Type III: Resemble Equative.**

Note that the third type, the resemble equative, is not included in other recent typologies.

Consider examples from Standard Chinese as a starting point:

Standard Chinese: Type I – Conjoined

Conjoined equative : [A and B] ‘equally’ Parameter

(4) 这个跟那个一样大

Zhèige gēn nèige yīyàng dà

‘This is the same size as that.’

(literally : ‘this one and that one are equally big’)

Since the two equative NPs are semantically symmetrical, it's also possible to ‘unify’ the comparee and the standard nouns into the subject position (**‘[A and B] are equally tall’** or **‘[A and B] are equal in height’**).

Type I – Conjoined (2)

Chao (1968: 681 *sq.*) explains that if **gēn** 跟 (or **tóng** 同 or **hé** 和) are prepositions (with the meaning of ‘with’), the sentence is interpreted as “X is equally A with Y”. If **gēn** / **tóng** / **hé** are conjunctions (‘and’), the sentence is “X and Y are equally A”.

It is the Type 3 of Haspelmath ‘Equative degree-marker unified’.

Type II – Reach equative

Another possibility is for the equality sense to be expressed by a transitive ‘equal’ (or ‘reach’) verb. In many Sinitic languages, this *reach* or *have* verb combines with an intensifying adverb, based on a deictic ‘such’, ‘so’ or ‘that’ + adj : ‘A has B so Parameter’. Ex:

- (5) 我的小女儿有桌子这么(那么)高了
Wǒ de xiǎo nǚ’er yǒu zhuōzi zhème/(nàme) gāo le
‘My small daughter has reached the height of the table.’ (*literally* ‘is now as tall as the table’)

Special semantic feature of Reach equatives

- For Type I, the comparee and the standard, ie NP_A and NP_B , may be interchanged in this Conjoined Equative
- not so in Type II, the REACH equative, since it codes the notion of the comparee NP_A attaining the same level as the standard NP_B (Liu Zhenping 2010).

In fact, Chao (1968: 681-682) calls it ‘the equaling degree, where X approaches Y from below and equals it on the scale of A’. This is why we have labelled it the **REACH Equative**, even though the main verb is 有 *yǒu* (*have*).

Note, however, that for Chao, a variant of *yǒu* is *xiàng* 像 (*like*). Then, only two types and not three types.

Resemble similitive: 像

- It is the basis of the Resemble Equative (Type III) complex form. It makes use of the similitive verb 像‘to resemble’, ‘be like’, as in :

(6) 这家伙儿像个狐狸

Zhè jiāhuǒr **xiàng** ge húli

‘This guy looks like a fox.’

- Simple *resemble* equative with *xiàng* 像 and predicate *yīyàng* ‘be equal’: **A-xiàng-B-yīyàng**

(7) 你像我一样

Nǐ **xiàng** wǒ *yīyàng*

‘You’re like me.’/ ‘You’re the same as me.’

Type III – Resemble equative: 像

Complex *resemble* equative with *xiàng* 像 including a parameter:

A -xiàng -B -yīyàng -ADJ

(8) 你像我一样高

Nǐ xiàng wǒ yīyàng gāo

2SG like 1SG same tall]

‘You’re as tall as me.’

Other Sinitic languages

- Many other Sinitic languages possess the same set of equative structures: Conjoined (Type I), Reach (Type II) and Resemble (Type III) types.
- A cursory look at data in a variety of Sinitic languages shows quite clearly that they all share at least the type which is labeled the ‘conjoined equative.’ (Type 3 of Haspelmath ‘Equative degree-marker unified’):

X_{comparee} – and/with – Y_{standard} – same Marker – Parameter_{Adj}

Sinitic Conjoined Type I

For example, in Shaowu 邵武话 (闽语), a variety of Northwestern Min:

(9) 老三帮你个样高

Lau⁵⁵san²¹ pɔn²¹ xien³⁵ kə⁰-iɔŋ³⁵ kau²¹

old:three CONJ 2SG the:same tall

‘The third child (in the family) is as tall as you.’

(Data from S. Ngai)

Markers in Type I

The conjunction/preposition which serves as the *Standard Marker* of equative comparison in many Sinitic languages has a **comitative** or **benefactive** preposition as its source.

For example, **pɔn**²¹ 帮 < ‘for’ in Shaowu Northwestern Min, **kei**³⁵ 给 < ‘for’ in Central Plains Mandarin, **kaʔ**⁷⁻⁸ 合 < ‘and’, ‘with’ in Hui’an Southern Min, and **tuhng** 同 < ‘with’ in Hong Kong Cantonese.

Markers in Type I (2)

The *Parameter* of comparison located in the verb phrase (including adjective) is obligatorily modified by an adverb meaning ‘same’ or ‘equal’ (*degree marker?*).

This adverb is frequently a lexicalization of **one-CLF**.

Examples: *kə⁰-iɔŋ³⁵* 个样 in Shaowu (see 9 above), *yāt-yeuhng* 一样 ‘same’ in Hong Kong Cantonese and *i³⁵pan⁵⁵* 一般 ‘same’ in Central Plains Mandarin.

The Min dialect group stands out with e.g. *pin²⁻⁴* 平 or *phā⁵³³ - ā¹¹* 平 平 ‘same, equal’ in Hui'an 惠安 Southern Min or in Puxian 莆仙 (莆田 + 仙游).

Markers in Type I (3)

HUI'AN - *Data from Chen Weirong*

(10) 汝合我平懸

lu³ kaʔ⁷⁻⁸ ua³ pin²⁻⁴ kuin²

2SG and 1SG same tall

‘You are as tall as I am.’

PUXIAN - *Data from Wu Jianming*

(11) 伊和我阿兄平平壯

I²¹ kεʔ²¹ kua²¹ a²⁴ hian²¹ phā⁵³³⁻ ā¹¹ tson²¹

3SG with 1SG brother same:same strong

‘He is as strong as my brother.’

Sinitic Reach Type II

Type II (Reach Type) is also attested in many other Sinitic languages than Standard Mandarin. The ‘reach’ or ‘have’ verb is often used in its negative form ‘*have not*’. Example in YICHUN 宜春话 (GAN, Jiangxi province) - *Data from Li Xuping*

(12) 小张有小李高

sieu⁴² tɕionŋ³⁴ **mau⁴⁴** sieu⁴²li⁴² kao⁴²

Xiao:Zhang NEG:have Xiao:Li tall

‘Xiao Zhang is not as tall as Xiao Li.’

Sinitic Resemble Type III

Type III (Resemble Type) is also finally attested in other Sinitic languages. Actually, in terms of the linguistic area of East and Southeast Asia to which Sinitic languages belong, it could be the most current equative type. Example in Cantonese with the ‘resemble’ equative verb *hóuchíh* 好似:

(13) 佢好似家姐 咅靚
kéuih hóuchíh gājē gam leng

3SG resemble older:sister so pretty

‘She is just as pretty as her (older) sister.’ (Matthews & Yip 2011: 193)

Sinitic Resemble Type III (2)

Meixian Hakka (Guangdong province)

(14) 我如你咁高

ŋai² ju¹ ŋ² an³ go¹

1SG like 2SG degree tall

‘I’m as tall as you.’ (M. Hashimoto 1973)

Another connector in Shaowu is 像□ [tɕioŋ⁵⁵ man²¹] which originally means ‘like, be similar to’, but it is used to conjoin two objects under equative comparison, as shown in example (15):

Sinitic Resemble Type III (3)

(15) 这块饼儿像□那块饼儿个样甜

tɕiɔŋ⁵³ tsei² pian⁵³ nə⁰ tɕiɔŋ⁵⁵ man²¹ ɔŋ⁵³ tsei²
pian⁵³ nə⁰ kə⁰iɔŋ³⁵ tien²²

DEM CLF cake DIMINUTIVE CONJ DEM CLF cake
DIMINUTIVE the:same sweet

‘This cake is as sweet as that cake.’

(literally ‘this cake AND that cake the same sweet’)

Historical evolution of equatives and similatives

Let us now provide some general outlines for the evolution of the system of equatives – and of related similatives – through different stages of the Chinese language (Archaic period, Medieval period, Modern)

- (i) show that equatives have frequently been the source for comparatives of superiority.
- (ii) discuss the outcome of an apparent word order change which has led to typological disharmony for conjoined equatives.



Late Archaic and Pre-Medieval Chinese

ca. 5th BCE – 2nd CE

Several constructions for the equatives/similatives:

(i) A (**Comparee**) + V/Adjective (**Parameter**) + *yú* 于 (**marker**) + B (**Standard**) – Similative
(comparison of equal manner)

- The V/Adj. can be *bì* 比 (and not *bī*), *tóng* 同, *chái* 倚, *móu* 倆, *bìng* 并, *sì* 似, etc.
- Used for the similatives, *bì* having the meaning of ‘to be like’, ‘to be similar’, and not ‘to compare’.

LAC and PMC (2)

(ii) A + *yǔ* 与 (marker) + B + *tóng* 同 (Parameter)
or A + *yǔ* 与 + B + *xiāngsì* 相似 (very rare).

Example:

(16) 尧舜与人同耳 (孟子: 离娄下. 32, 4 c. BCE)

Yáo Shùn *yǔ* rén *tóng* ēr

Yao Shun PREP/CONJ other the:same PRT

‘Yao and Shun were (just) the same as the other men’

In this sentence, the NP ‘*Yáo Shùn*’ is the comparee, the NP ‘*rén*’ is the standard, and the predicate ‘*tóng*’ is the parameter...

LAC and PMC (3)

... *Yǔ* is the conjunction ‘and’ and can be considered as the standard marker. It is nevertheless difficult to decide if the construction is an equative or a similitive.

(iii) A (**comparee**) + *rú* 如/*ruò* 若 (**standard-marker**) + B (**Standard-Noun**) + *zhī* 之 (**referential pronoun**) + **Adj. (Parameter)**

This structure is quite rare and the corresponding one without *zhī* ‘A + *rú* 如/*ruò* 若 + B + Adj.’ has not yet appeared. See below.

诗云：



诗云：“如霜雪之将将
如日月之光明
荀子·王霸第十一

LAC and PMC (4)

(iv) A (Comparee) + Adj (Parameter) + *rú* 如/*ruò* 若 (standard-marker SM) + B (Standard-Noun).

(17) 君子之交淡若水,小人之交甘若醴 (庄子: 山木, 4 c. BCE)

Jūnzi zhī jiāo dàn **ruò** shuǐ, xiǎo rén zhī jiāo gān **ruò** lǐ
gentlemen MOD friendship insipid SM water small people
MOD friendship rich SM sweet-wine [MOD = modifier]

‘Friendship between gentlemen is as insipid as water,
friendship between small-minded people is as rich as
sweet wine.’

LAC and PMC (5)

(18) 猛如虎，狠如羊，贪如狼 (史记：项羽本纪, 1st c. BCE)

Měng rú hǔ hěn rú yang, tān rú láng
powerful SM tiger ferocious SM ram greedy SM
wolf

‘(Be) as powerful as a tiger, as ferocious as a ram,
as greedy as a wolf.’

This represents the main and standard equative/similative construction in Classical Chinese. However, it is again difficult to decide if (17) and (18) are equatives or similatives.

Word order

Actually, in Late Archaic and Pre-Medieval Chinese, the word order (Comparee + Adj. + Standard-marker + Standard-Noun) was the same for both the equatives and the comparatives of superiority but with distinct morphemes for the standard markers (Peyraube 1989): *yú* for superiority, *rú* 如/ruò 若 for equality.

This word order is typologically harmonic with prepositional languages like Chinese, according to Greenberg's Universal 22 (1963) on comparatives. See Chappell & Peyraube 2015.

Early Medieval (2nd – 6th CE)

The LAC and PMC ‘A + *yǔ* 与+ + *tóng* 同’ or ‘A + *yǔ* 与 + B + *xiàngsì* 相似’ (more rare) constructions are still used in Early Medieval, and the canonical form ‘A + Adj + *rú* /*ruò* + B’ is still and by far the most employed equative construction. There are also for the first time a few examples of *sì* 似 replacing *rú* or *ruò*

But the most striking for this period is the birth of the following equative structure : ‘A + *rú* 如 + B + Adj.’ (most of the time the Adj. *dà* 大 ‘big’)

Early Medieval (2)

This new construction ‘A + *rú* + B + Adj’ is not derived from ‘A + Adj + *rú* + B’ by moving the Adj. (parameter) after B (the standard-noun), as earlier claimed by Peyraube 1989), but from ‘A + *rú* 如 + B + *zhī* 之 (referential pronoun) + Adj. after deletion of *zhī*. See Xie Renyou (2003: 57-59)

‘A + *rú* + B + Adj.’ is not yet as common as ‘A + Adj + *rú* + B’ but starts to become widespread at the end of the period (5th - 6th c. CE). Example:

Early Medieval (3)

(19) ... 如日月光明 (撰集百线经. 6)

... rú rì yuè guāngmíng

... SM sun moon bright

‘... as bright as the sun and moon’

Other similitative structures were used during the Early Medieval period, but not common and found only in the Buddhist translations of the 3rd - 4th c. CE: ‘A + *rú* 如 + B + *bì* 比’;

Early Medieval (4)

‘A + *rú* 如 + B + *xiàngsì* 相似’, co-existing with the LAC and PMC ‘A + *yǔ* 与 + B + *xiàngsì* 相似’ that is now not as rare as it was before.

These similitative constructions form the basis for the equative constructions that contain a parameter in a second syntactic structure in postverbal position.

Late Medieval and Pre-Modern (7th - 14th CE)

Equative > Superiority

What is significant for this period is that the equative/similative construction ‘A + Adj. + *rú* 如 (or *sì* 似) + B’ - which was the standard equative construction from the time of Archaic Chinese - begins to take on the additional function of coding the comparative of inequality (superiority subtype) by the time of Late Medieval Chinese (9th – 12thc.).

Example:

Equative > Superiority (2)

(20) 本寺远于日， 新诗高似云 (姚合诗, 9th c.)

Běn sì yuǎn yú rì, xīn shī gāo sì yún

this temple far SM sun new poem high SM cloud

‘This temple is farther away than the sun, the new poems are higher than the clouds.’

- The first line uses the Archaic Chinese marker of the superiority comparative, *YÚ* 于 ‘at, to’.
- Consequently, the obvious parallelism between the two lines of this poem mean that *sì* 似 in the second line functions most likely as a marker of superiority - and not of equality

Transitional period: 9th - 14th c.

- For the next five centuries (9th - 14th c.), the construction with the postverbal markers *rú* 如 and *sì* 似 remained ambiguous, expressing both a comparative of superiority and the equative
- In postverbal position, these slowly became, however, the most prevalent form for the comparative of superiority during the subsequent Jin (1115-1234) and Yuan (1206-1368) dynasties, that is, a change from an equative to a superiority comparative (Peyraube 1989, Peyraube and Wiebusch 1995, Zhang Cheng 2004, 2005), as also in the example below from a 14th century text.

Postverbal *rú* > superiority

Comparative of superiority with *rú* 如 < ‘be like’

(21) 这但轻如你底 (任风子 *Rèn fēngzi*, 14th c.)

Zhè dàn qīng **rú** nǐdǐ.

‘This load light SM 2sgPOSS

‘This load is lighter than yours.’

I claim that this is on the basis of analogy with the older canonical form with *yú* 于 used in Late Archaic Chinese: A + V/Adjective + *yú* 于+ B

Ambiguity

- This ambiguity (use of the same pattern with the same standard-marker *rú* 如 or *sì* 似 for expressing both the equative and the superiority degree) may have provided the motivation for the formation of a new construction for equative comparison and the expression of similitude.
- Beginning in roughly the same period (10th-14th c.), the equative construction with the form ‘A + *rú* 如 (or *sì* 似) + B + Adj.’ became prevalent and outnumbered the one with post-verbal markers.

Equatives with *rú* 如 or *sì* 似

Equative construction with preverbal *RÚ* 如 < ‘be like’ - NP-Comparee + Standard-Marker + NP-Standard + ADJ.-Parameter

(22) 臉如紅杏鮮妍 (小孫屠 *Xiǎo Sūn Tú*, 14th c.)

Liǎn rú hóng xìng xiǎn yán

Face SM red apricot fresh beautiful

‘(Her) face is as fresh and beautiful as a red apricot.’

We have also many examples of ‘A + *rú* 如 + B + *yībàn*’ 一般 in the *Zu tang ji* (10th c.) and in the *Zhuzi yulei* (12th tc.) : 57 occurrences in the first 60 chapters.

Historical depth of Conjoined Equatives in Sinitic languages

The conjoined equative (Type I) is a structure that flourished in use from the Yuan dynasty onwards (13th c.), albeit with different markers (Peyraube 1989, Zhang Cheng 2004):

‘A + *hé* [with] + B + *xiangsi* 像似’, but also
‘A + *hé* 和 + B + *yībàn* 一般 [same]’ and
‘A + *hé* 和 + B + *yīyàng* 一样’. Example from the 14th century *Lǎo Qǐdà* 老乞大, a Mandarin primer for Korean merchants trading in Northern China:

Conjoined – Type I

(23) 却和这里井绳酒子一般取水

Què hé zhèli jǐngshéng sǎzi yībàn qǔ shuǐ

But with [and] here well.rope bucket same get water

‘But (the method of) getting water with a rope and a bucket is the same as here’.

At the end of the period, equative structures begin to undergo lexical replacement of the prepositions *hé* 和 by *gēn* 跟, and so too the final adjective *yībàn* 一般 ‘same’ by *yīyàng* 一样 ‘same’ (Peyraube 1989: 610; Peyraube & Wiebusch 1995).

Fate of postverbal *rú* 如 and *sì* 似 as markers of superiority

Yet, towards the end of the Yuan dynasty (14th c.), there is a decrease in the comparatives of inequality using the markers *yú* 于 < ‘at’, ‘to’ and *rú/sì* < ‘be like, resemble’ in favour of a new preverbal standard marker, *bǐ* 比 < ‘compare’:

- (24) (这桥)比在前十分好 (老乞大 *Lǎo Qīdà*, 14th.)
(zhè qiáo) **bǐ** zài qián shífèn hǎo
(this bridge) SM at before very good
‘(This bridge) is much better than before’.

Modern Chinese (15th - 18th c.)

Equatives: The lexical replacement of the prepositions *hé* 和 by *gēn* 跟, and the final adjective *yībàn* 一般 ‘same’ by *yīyàng* 一样 ‘same’ that started at the end of the preceding period is now more and more common.

And around the 16th-17th centuries, we find many examples of the Type III (Resemble equative, see above) with:

A *xiàng* 像 B *yībàn* 一般 / *yīyàng* 一样 . Several examples of A *xiàng* B *yībàn* are attested in the *Jin Ping Mei cihua* (16th)

Modern Chinese (2)

The latter standard and degree markers represent the pair of markers found in many varieties of non-standard Mandarin, e.g. Central Plains Mandarin and in other branches of Sinitic.

(25) Shangshui Central Plains Mandarin

商水话 (中原官话):

她跟我里分一般多

tʰa⁵⁵ kən³⁵ uo⁵⁵ li¹¹fən³⁵ i³⁵pan⁵⁵ tuo⁵⁵

1SG SM 3 SG grade same many

‘Her marks are as high as mine.’

Superiority 比字句

Becomes dominant in colloquial-style written texts from 17th century onwards and has diffused from Northern Sinitic –which includes most of the Mandarin dialect groups to all other branches of Sinitic, either replacing their native structures or being used as an alternative comparative of inequality (Li Lan 2003).

This means that the change in word order to the preverbal form for the equative with *rú/sì* preceded the preverbal comparative of superiority with *bǐ* 比 ‘to compare’ by several centuries.

Superiority 比字句 (2)

The outcome of these word order changes that began towards the end of the Late Medieval Chinese period remains bafflingly disharmonic with the typological profile of Sinitic.

Note that this type of comparative of inequality is similarly disharmonic with Language Universal 22 on comparatives.

Finally and strikingly, *bǐ* 比 originally could also be used as an equative in Late Medieval Chinese (Tang period), providing another case of an equative construction undergoing semantic specialization to a potential comparative of superiority.

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谢谢！

Thank you

Merci !