

Comparative morphemes are additive particles: English *-er/more* vs. Chinese *gèng*

Linmin Zhang & Florence Zhang

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In this talk, by zooming into the components of comparison (i.e., the target, the standard, and their difference), we will demonstrate a new perspective on cross-linguistic universals and variation on comparison expressions. We will show that comparison is universally performed by gradable adjectives. Gradable adjectives like "tall" and "short" differ with regard to their direction. Languages with vs. without morphemes like "-er/more" differ with regard to whether gradable adjectives encode, by default, the meaning of non-strict vs. strict inequality. Based on this understanding of comparison, we will discuss the semantic contribution of cross-linguistic particles used in comparatives, focusing on English "-er/more" and Chinese "gèng". We will analyze them as two kinds of additive particles: (i) English "-er/more" is similar to "another", while (ii) Chinese "gèng" is similar to "moreover". Thus the current work also connects the notion of scalarity (or comparison along a scale with ordering) with the notion of additivity.

The manuscript can be found here: <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/008122>.