In East Asia, the more the merrier

Keywords: comparative correlative; East Asian languages; language contact; morphosyntax; linguistic typology

This paper will discuss various strategies employed by the languages of East Asia in the so-called comparative correlative constructions. Comparative correlative constructions express situations where a change in degree in one phenomenon leads to a change in another. In English these are expressed using the 'the…the' construction, as in 'the more the merrier', 'the bigger they are, the harder they fall', etc. Different languages code these constructions in different ways, even though there are frequent similarities in the structure on the syntactic level (den Dikken, 2005). East (and Central) Asian languages exhibit a wide variety of strategies of marking such constructions which will be discussed and compared in this paper. These do differ from patterns seen in most Indo-European languages, where the first clause starts with a relative pronoun, and the second with a demonstrative pronoun as in the Czech '**Čím** víc gólů dame, **tím** víc bodů máme.' This variability makes them interesting also from the typological point of view. Some Asian languages use rather straightforward strategies using double particles of degree, such as Manchu/Sibe, or Chinese.

1. ***Eli*** *yawe-m(e)* ***eli*** *saxurum*
   PTC go-CVB PTC cold
   'It gets colder the further we go.' (Sibe)

Some outliers, such as Ewenki, employ comparative suffixes.

2. *D'u-duk goro-**tmor-it** hoktoron silimku-**tmar** bi-cho-n.*
   house-ABL far-**CMPR-INSTR** path narrow-**CMPR** be-PST-3SG
   'The farther from the house the narrower was the path.'
   (Ewenki, Nedjalkov, 2014, p. 121)

Others, such as Japanese employ a rather more unusual construction where the verb/adjective first appears in a conditional converbal form, and then the same verb/adjective appears again in an adnominal form (in Japanese identical to the finite verb form) modifying a particle of degree. This can be followed by a different adjective or a whole clause. A surprisingly similar construction can be observed in Korean.

3. *Tabere-**ba** tabe-**ru*** *hodo* *oishii.*
   Eat-**COND** eat-**NPST** measure tasty
   The more you eat the tastier it gets. (Japanese)

These constructions will be discussed with emphasis on their diachronic development, and the possible influence of language contact.

Bibliography

Den Dikken, Marcel. "Comparative Correlatives Comparatively," in *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 497-532, Oct. 2005, doi: 10.1162/002438905774464377.

Lee, Iksop and Ramsey, Robert S. *The Korean Language*. (SUNY Series in Korean Studies.) New York: State University of New York Press, 2000.

Nedjalkov, Igor. *Evenki*. Routledge, 2014.

Nikolaeva, Irina, and Maria Tolskaya. *A Grammar of Udihe*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2011.

Zikmundová, Veronika. *Spoken Sibe: Morphology of the Inflected Parts of Speech*. Prague: Karolinum Press, 2013.