

A Typological Study of the Mongolian and Chinese Comparatives From the Perspective of the Cardiff Grammar

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Abstract—This paper explores the syntactic and semantic functions of “NP + ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives and “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives from the perspective of the model of Cardiff Grammar in Systemic Functional Linguistics. It is found that “NP + ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives is case group, which can function as Main Verb and Adjunct. “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives is prepositional phrase, which can serve as Main Verb, Adjunct and Complement. Through the typological analysis, we find that the similarities in Mongolian and Chinese comparatives outweigh their differences in terms of process type and subject theme. However, the detailed features vary in the most delicate systems – within the lexical zone at the stratum of lexicogrammar. The findings not only provide a tentative solution to the long-standing debates on the comparatives, but also shed light on the teaching and learning of the comparatives in Mongolian and Chinese.

Index Terms—Mongolian comparative, Cardiff Grammar, systemic functional linguistics, typology

I. INTRODUCTION

“Comparison” is one of the most basic behaviors of human beings in perceiving the world, which is embodied in language as the category of comparison. Typically, it can be realized by the linguistic expression, namely, the comparatives, whose function is to compare the different aspects of an object or the differences between two objects. The previous studies on the comparatives have achieved a lot, but it mainly focuses on Chinese or English, showing a tendency of detailed description, in-depth explanation and diverse perspectives. However, there are still doubts concerning the syntactic study of the Chinese comparatives, especially, the identification of the word class of the comparative marker “比” (bǐ), such as verb theory (Zhao, 1968; Xiang, 2005), preposition theory (Liu, 1996), conjunction theory (Hong, 1991), marker theory (Fu, 1978), etc. Even though Generative Grammar mostly adopts the Theory of Degree Semantics (von Stechow, 1984) to deal with the syntactic and semantic issues of the Chinese comparatives, the syntactic property of the comparative marker “比” (bǐ) is still unresolved, which prompts Chinese to be compared with other languages.

Comparatively, the study of the comparatives in Mongolian is relatively weak. Some Mongolian scholars mention the concept of the Mongolian comparatives when discussing the ablative case marker “ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ ” (aca/ece “Ablative Case Marker, hereafter ‘ABL’”) (Qinggertei, 1991; Daobu, 1983; Delgelma, et al., 2013, etc.). There still exist some debates concerning its syntactic function. For instance, “NP (noun phrase) + ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives is mostly regarded as an indirect object (Qinggertei, 1991; Delgelma et al., 2013), adverbial (Su, 2015), complement (Daobu, 1979) and so on. In addition, there is no consensus on the understanding of its function. For example, Delgelma et al. (2013, p. 49-50) argue that “NP + ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (aca/ece)” dominated by adjective predicate is an indirect object in form, but functions as an adverbial like the prepositional phrase “比(bǐ)+ NP” in Chinese. Daobu (1979) holds that complement is connected with predicate through various case makers or postpositions. In “ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ ᠴᠠᠭᠠᠨ ” (casu-aca cagan “whiter than snow”), “ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (casu-aca)” (NP+ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ <aca/ece>) is complement of the ablative case marker. Moreover, Daobu (1979, p. 103) points out that “direct (object)” and “indirect (object)” in Mongolian are distinguished by means of grammatical form, i.e., the syntactic constituents with the accusative case makers (or other grammatical forms but functionally equivalent to the accusative case marker) are named as “direct complement” or “direct object”, and the syntactic constituents with other case makers are “indirect complement” or “indirect object”. In other words, the distinction between direct object and indirect object, as well as object and complement is not clear enough. It can be seen that there are different views on the syntactic functions of “NP+ ᠠᠴᠠᠢ (aca/ece)” in Mongolian, which is mainly due to the fact that traditional grammar focuses only on form, but ignores meaning and function, and the definition of traditional syntactic constituents in Mongolian is indeterminate and vague.

Different from traditional grammar, the Cardiff Grammar (CG) combines the analysis of semantic stratum and lexicogrammatical stratum, which adheres to the principle that meaning is primary and form realizes meaning (Fawcett, 2008). Many linguistic scholars have applied it to the syntactic and semantic analysis of the Chinese and English linguistic phenomenon (e.g. Zhang & Zhang, 2012; Xiang & Liu, 2018; He & Xue, 2018; Xiang, 2019, etc.). Therefore, to explore the panorama of the syntactic and semantic functions of “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives and “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives, this paper will focus on what the basic features of the structural elements in the Mongolian comparatives are and how the syntactic and semantic functions of “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” and “比(bǐ)+ NP” are realized from the perspective of CG. In addition to understand what the differences and similarities of the Mongolian and Chinese comparatives in terms of the experiential and textual metafunctions are, the second aim of this paper is to examine the typological features of the Mongolian comparatives by means of comparing them with the Chinese ones, which not only provides a tentative solution to the long-standing debates on the comparatives, but also sheds light on the teaching and learning of the comparatives in Mongolian and Chinese.

II. THE SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE MONGOLIAN AND CHINESE COMPARATIVES

A. The Basic Categories and the Syntactic and Semantic Representation in Cardiff Grammar

CG (Fawcett, 2000, 2008), proposed by Fawcett under the influence of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Tucker, 1998, p. 37), is regarded as a dialect of SFL, although it differs in a number of ways from Hallidayan approach (c.f. Halliday, 2014). Fawcett (2000, p. 237) recognizes three basic syntactic categories, namely, class of unit, element of structure and item. The basic relations between them are: componence, filling and exponece (Fawcett, 2008, p. 76). In other words, a class of unit is composed of elements of structure or expounded by items. In CG, the basic syntactic units are clause, nominal group, quality group, quantity group and prepositional group. A clause is composed of Subject, Operator, Main Verb, Complement, Adjunct and other main elements of structure, which are further filled by elements of structure or classes of unit, or expounded directly by items.

In addition, the multifunctional nature of language is displayed in the representation of the meanings. SFL claims that all human languages are multifunctional, and there are three main strands of meaning: experiential, interpersonal and thematic meanings, which are combined into a single structure (Halliday, 1985, 1994). In SFL, the different strand of meaning is represented almost by all the elements in the structure, such as the systems of TRANSITIVITY, MOOD, THEME and so on. In CG, however, the different functions of the clause are displayed by different elements of the clause instead of the whole structure of the clause. That is to say, it is the role of syntax to show the integration of these intermittent 'strands of meaning' in a single structure (Fawcett, 2000, p. 147). The syntactic and semantic representation of a simple clause is illustrated in Figure 1¹.

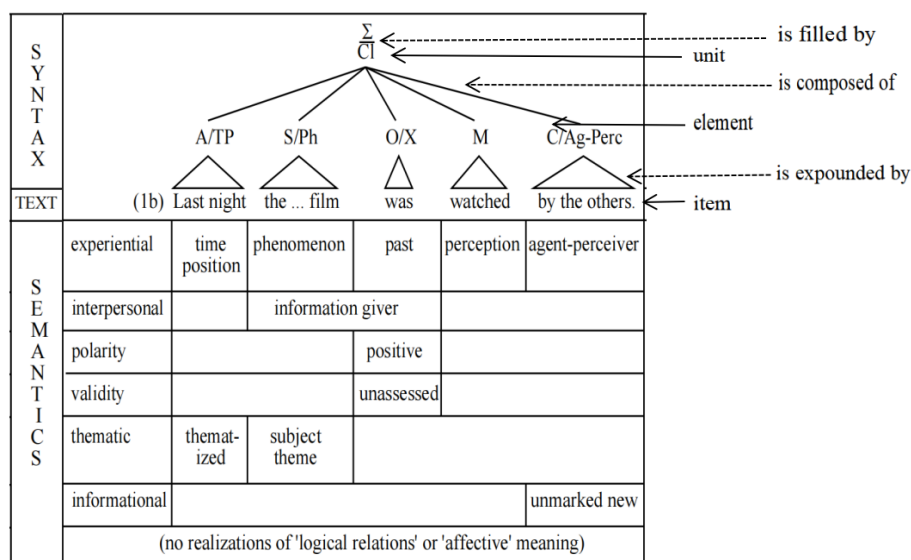


Figure 1 The Syntactic and Semantic Representation of a Simple Clause (c.f. Fawcett, 2008)

In Figure 1, syntactically, the clause is composed of the elements of Adjunct, Subject, Operator, Main Verb, and Complement. Meanwhile, they are expounded respectively by the items “last night”, “the...film”, “was”, “watched” and “by the others”. Semantically, experiential strand of meaning is realized by the system of TRANSITIVITY. It defines the range of types of process and the participants in each of those types of process. In CG, the PROCESS is typically expressed in the Main Verb, and the PARTICIPANTS are typically expressed in the Subject and Complement.

¹ Key: Σ = Sentence; C = Clause; S = Subject; O = Operator; X = Auxiliary; M = Main Verb; C = Complement; A = Adjunct; / = 'is conflated with' TP = Time Position Ph = Phenomenon Ag-Perc = Agent-Perceiver.

Therefore, the experiential meaning of “Last night the...film was watched by the others” is realized through the three elements of Subject, Main Verb and Complement that express the choices in TRANSITIVITY. In light of the interpersonal meaning, the choice of MOOD is expressed by the two elements of Subject and Operator which realize the function of “information giver”. Textual meaning is realized through the Subject and the elements ahead of the Subject that express the choices of THEME.

B. The Syntactic and Semantic Analysis of the Mongolian Comparatives

Since “comparison” is a category combining semantics and syntax” (Liu, 2004, p. 37), the study of the category of comparison should consider both meaning and form (Xu, 2007). The structural elements and the syntactic and semantic analysis of the Mongolian comparative will be illustrated in the following two aspects.

(a). The Basic Structural Elements of the Mongolian Comparatives

The basic structural elements of the comparatives mainly include comparison subject (SJ), comparison standard (ST), comparison marker (M) that elicits ST, and comparison result (R) (“than” in English, “比” (bǐ) in Chinese, “-а/-е” (aca/ece) in Mongolian) (Deng, 2015, p. 48). For instance:

(1) $\text{ Batu } \text{ Dorji-aca } \text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$

(batu dorji-aca öndör)

Batu Dorji-ABL tall.

SJ ST M R

“Batu is taller than Dorji.”

In the above example, “ $\text{ Batu } \text{ Dorji-aca } \text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$ ” (batu “Batu”) is SJ, representing the main party of the two objects being compared. “ $\text{ Dorji } \text{ Dorji-aca } \text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$ ” (dorji “Dorji”) is ST, that is, the reference for comparison; “ $\text{ -aca } \text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$ ” (aca) is M, which elicits ST. “ $\text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$ ” (öndör “tall”) is R, which indicates the difference between the two objects which are compared in terms of character, quantity, degree, etc. When the comparison subject can be inferred from the context, it can be omitted, such as $\text{ agulan-aca } \text{ öndör } \text{ .}^2$ (“<It is> higher than mountain”).

In Mongolian, the comparison subject and the comparison standard are mainly nominals, including nouns/noun phrases, pronouns, numbers, verbal nouns with different morphological changes of case, number and possessive categories and so on, as is shown in the examples below:

(2) $\text{ ulagan ni } \text{ köke-ece } \text{ oqor } \text{ .}^2$

red -subject marker blue-ABL short

SJ ST M R

“The red one is shorter than the blue one.”

(3) $\text{ tere } \text{ nama-aca } \text{ neng } \text{ ileküü } \text{ köke-dü } \text{ duratai } \text{ .}^2$

He me-ABL much over Huhe-DAT like

SJ ST M R

“He likes Huhe more than I does./ He likes Huhe more than me.”

(4) $\text{ abqu } \text{ aca } \text{ öngkü } \text{ ni } \text{ degere } \text{ .}^2$

taking (verbal noun)- ABL giving (verbal noun)-subject marker good

ST M SJ R

“Giving is better than receiving.”

Since Mongolian is a language with morphological markers, the comparison marker “ $\text{ -aca/ece } \text{ .}^2$ ” (aca/ece) is used to mark the comparison standard, and the subject is marked with the nominative case “ $\text{ -a } \text{ .}^2$ ” (no specific case) or the subject markers “ $\text{ -ni } \text{ .}^2$ ” (ni) or “ $\text{ -gegeci } \text{ .}^2$ ” (gedeg ni). When nouns and pronouns act as comparative subjects, the subject markers are generally not required. But when adjectives or verbal nouns act as comparative subjects, the subject markers need to be added (e.g. $\text{ ulagan ni } \text{ köke-ece } \text{ oqor } \text{ .}^2$ ulagan ni <the red one>; $\text{ öngkü ni } \text{ abqu aca degere } \text{ .}^2$ öngkü ni <giving> in the previous examples). Due to the existence of various nominal case makers in Mongolian, the comparison subject and the comparison standard can be placed in a relatively flexible position. For example, “ $\text{ abqu aca öngkü ni degere } \text{ .}^2$ ” (abqu aca öngkü ni degere) and “ $\text{ öngkü ni abqu aca degere } \text{ .}^2$ ” (öngkü ni abqu aca degere) have the same syntactic meaning, that is, “Giving is better than receiving”. Moreover, the verbs which are used as the comparison subject and the comparison standard must be changed into the form with nominal properties by means of adding various word-forming suffixes — mainly the suffix of verbal noun. In the example “ $\text{ abqu aca öngkü ni degere } \text{ .}^2$ ” (abqu aca öngkü ni degere “Giving is better than receiving”), “ $\text{ abqu } \text{ .}^2$ ” (abqu “taking”) and “ $\text{ öngkü } \text{ .}^2$ ” (öngkü “giving”) obtain the nominal properties by adding the suffix of verbal noun “ $\text{ -a/kü } \text{ .}^2$ ” (qu/k ü).

² The Mongolian examples used in the paper mainly come from the literature (Qinggertei, 1991; Su, 2015) and the Chinese examples are created by the authors. The Mongolian vertical script (i.e. Modern Written Mongolian) is transliterated with the scheme provided by The Library of Congress, which generally follows the Vladimirtsov-Mostaert system but with some changes (see <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/mongolia.pdf>). The Chinese examples are transliterated using pinyin.

The typical component of the comparison result is adjective or adjective phrase, ahead of which there may exist the relative adverbs of degree, such as “нэг” (neng “much”) and “саяа” (baga sana “a bit”), the absolute adverbs of degree, such as “тунг” (tong “quite”) and “маса” (masi “very much”), and the number-classifiers, such as “нэг толгой” (nige tologai “one head”). However, those modifiers are not obligatory. For example,

- (5) енек үгээр энэ газартай нэгдүгээр сайхан нөхцөлөөр энэ газартай тунг/төнг/маса сайхан “
 (enek ü gajar-un üjemji ni nöküğe gajar-aca neng/tong/masi saihan)
 this place-GEN scenery-subject marker that place-ABL much beautiful
 SJ ST M R

(The scenery in this place is more beautiful than that in that place.)

In the meantime, the comparison result can also be verb or verbal phrases, ahead of which there is Adjunct. This Adjunct is obligatory on some occasion. Consider the following examples:

- (6) сэцэн нэма-аца сайхан дагулана “
 (secen nama-aca saihan dagulana)
 Siqin me-ABL pretty sing
 SJ ST M R

(Siqin sings better than I do.)

- (7) тэрэ нэма-аца ондоо газартай байдал-и ойлгана “
 (tere nama-aca önö gajar-un baidal-i oilagana)
 he me-ABL current place-GEN situation-ACC know
 SJ ST M R

(He knows the local situation better than I do.)

In the examples above, the comparison results are embodied by the verb “дагулана” (dagulana “sing”) and the verbal phrase “ондоо газартай байдал-и ойлгана” (önö gajar-un baidal-i oilagana “know the local situation”). Moreover, “сайхан” (saihan “pretty”) is an obligatory element in (6).

In short, through the description of the basic features of the structural elements in the Mongolian comparatives, we can infer that the syntactic and semantic functions of “NP+ аца/еца” are closely related to the comparison results. According to the morphological class of the comparison results, the Mongolian comparatives can be classified into two types in structure: SJ+ST- аца/еца+adjective/adjective phrase (R), and SJ+ST- аца/еца+ (adjective/adverb)-verb/verbal phrase (R). In order to clarify the syntactic and semantic features of “NP+ аца/еца” in the Mongolian comparatives, we will analyze the two types of structures from the perspective of CG as follows.

(b). The Analysis of the Mongolian Comparatives From Perspective of Cardiff Grammar

According to CG, “NP+ аца/еца” in the Mongolian comparatives can function as Main Verb and Adjunct, which are analyzed as follows.

1. “NP+ аца/еца” as Main Verb

To analyze the first type of the Mongolian comparatives “SJ+ST- аца/еца+adjective/adjective phrase (R)”, we will take the clause “бат дорж-аца өндөр” (batu dorji-aca öndör “Batu is taller than Dorji”) as an example. Since the analysis of CG is meaning oriented, the meaning expressed in this clause is that Batu is tall. As to the degree of the height, it is taller than Dorji. In other words, “бат дорж-аца өндөр” (batu dorji-aca öndör “Batu is taller than Dorji”) is Event-relating process, in which “бат” (batu “Batu”) is Carrier and “дорж-аца өндөр” (dorji-aca öndör “taller than Dorji”) is Phenomenon. In Mongolian, nominals can function as predicate alone. Би багси “(bi bagsi “I am a teacher”) and ус тоггалал “(usu tonggalag “Water is clear”) are cases in point. “багси” (bagsi “teacher”) and “тоггалал” (tonggalag “clear”) in the two clauses above function as predicate. According to CG, this clause unit (CI) is composed of three elements: Subject (S) conflated with Carrier (C), Main Verb (M) conflated with Phenomenon (Ph), and Ender (E). S/Ca is expounded by the item “бат” (batu “Batu”), and E is expounded by the Mongolian period “.”. “M/Ph” is a complicated element. It is filled by the unit-quality group (qlgp) which is further composed of degree temperer (dt) and apex (a). “dt” is filled by the case group (cgp)³ which is composed of completive (cv) and case marker (c). The completive is filled by nominal group (ngp) with the only element-head (h). “h” “c” and “a” are expounded respectively by the items “дорж” (dorji), “аца/еца” (aca/ece) and “өндөр” (öndör). The analysis of “NP+ аца/еца” as main verb from the perspective of CG is shown in Figure 2 below.

³ Given that there is no prepositional phrase in Mongolian, the preposition in Chinese and English is semantically equivalent with the case maker in Mongolian, even though the case marker is the grammatical category. However, the case maker and the preposition vary greatly in terms of the syntactic functions (see Sunderiya, 2013). “NP+ аца/еца” is thus named as case group (cgp) instead of prepositional group (pgp).

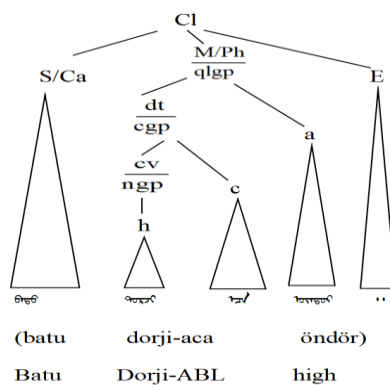


Figure 2 Syntactic Analysis of “NP+ / (aca/ece)” as Main Verb From the Perspective of CG

Syntactically, the case marker “/”(aca) and the completive “доржи”(dorji “Dorji”) form a case group “(cv+c</>)”. Additionally, the case group which functions as degree temperer is combined with apex “өндөр” (öndör “tall”) and they form a quality group. The whole quality group “доржи-аца өндөр” (dorji-aca öndör “taller than Dorji”) acts as Main Verb. Moreover, in such structures, comparison result can also be modified by emphasizing temperer. For instance, би агаар / тэгийг өндөрөөр / (bi teg ün-ece nige tologai öndör “I am a head taller than him”). The different point in this example is that the quality group is composed of three elements: the case group “агаар / (teg ün-ace)” as degree temperer, nominal group “тэгийг” (nige tologai “a head”) as emphasizing temperer and the apex “өндөр” (öndör “tall”). However, if the Mongolian comparatives are action process and mental process, “NP+ / (aca/ece)” functions as Adjunct.

2. “NP+ / (aca/ece)” as Adjunct

In the second type, there also exists the structure “((c</>)+cv)+apex” functioning as quality group. The major difference lies in that the quality group in the first type functions as Main Verb, it functions as Adjunct in the second type. The clause “батү багатур аца қурдун гүйүне” (batu bagatur-aca qurdun güyüne “Batu runs faster than Bagatur”) is an action process, with “батү” (batu “Batu”) as Affected-agent (Ag) and “гүйүне” (güyüne “run”) as Main Verb (M) to express the experiential meaning of “Batu runs”. With respect to the manner of Batu’s running, the process is modified by “багатур аца қурдун” (bagatur-aca qurdun “faster than Bagatur”), emphasizing that Batu runs quite fast, and his speed is higher than Bagatur’s. As is illustrated in Figure 3, the clause is composed of four elements, i.e., Subject (S) conflated with Agent (Ag), Adjunct (A)⁴, Main Verb (M) and Ender (E). “S/Ag”, “M” and “E” are expounded respectively by “батү” (batu “Batu”), “гүйүне” (güyüne “run”) and the period “.”. As far as Adjunct is concerned, it is filled by quality group (qlgp), which is further composed of degree temperer (dt) and apex (a). “dt” is filled by case group (cgp) which is composed of completive (cv) and the case maker (c) “/”(aca). “cv”, “c” and “a” are expounded respectively by the items “багатур”(bagatur “Bagatur”), “/”(aca) and “қурдун”(qurdun “fast”).

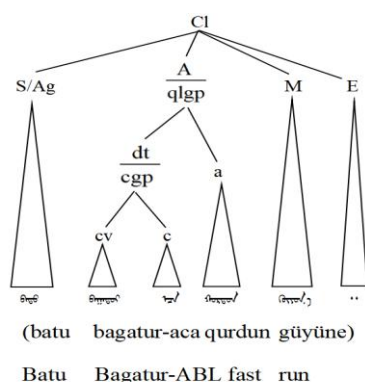


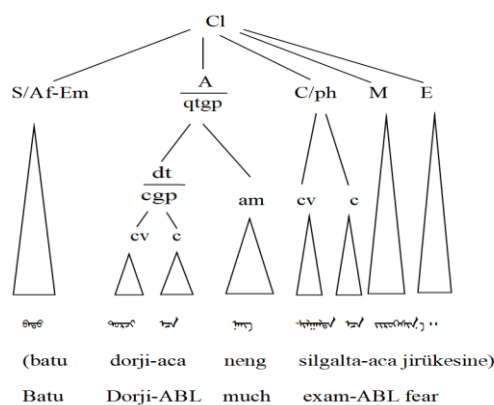
Figure 3 Syntactic Analysis of “NP+ / (aca/ece)” as Complement From the Perspective of CG

As is analyzed above, syntactically, the case maker “/” is combined with completive expounded by “багатур” (Bagatur) and they form a case group. The case group “(cv+c</>)” functions as degree temperer. It is further combined with

⁴ As Fawcett (2008) argues that a Complement is any Participant Role except for Subject” and a Participant Role is the one expected to occur in the clause, which serves as a result of knowing what the process is. Therefore, in the clause “батү багатур аца қурдун гүйүне” (batu bagatur-aca qurdun güyüne “Batu runs faster than Bagatur”), “багатур аца қурдун” (bagatur-aca qurdun “faster than Bagatur”) is not the role which is expected to occur in the clause, because in Mongolian “батү гүйүне” (batu güyüne “Batu runs”) without “багатур аца қурдун” (bagatur-aca qurdun “faster than Bagatur”) can also express a complete experiential meaning. Therefore, “багатур аца қурдун” (bagatur-aca qurdun “faster than Bagatur”) is analyzed as Adjunct instead of Complement.

apex “*hurdu*” (hurdu “fast”) to form a quality group. The quality group “*bagatur-aca hurdu*” (bagatur-aca hurdu “faster than Bagatur”) functions as Adjunct.

Here is another case. The comparison results are still verb or verbal group, but “NP+ *aca/ece*” is combined with the relative adverb (typically adverb of degree) instead of adjective to form a quality group. The quality group fills Adjunct to indicate the degree of the process. Note that the adverbs in Mongolian are relatively fewer than those in Chinese and English, because some words which correspond semantically with the adverbs in other languages are expressed by adjective and postposition in Mongolian (for details, see Qingertei, 1991). In addition, the comparative is typically mental process. We will illustrate the semantic and syntactic configuration with the example “*batu dorji-aca neng silgalta-aca jirükesine*” (“Batu is much more afraid of the exam than Dorji does”). According to CG, the Clause (Cl) is composed of five elements, Subject (S) conflated with Affected-emoter (Af-em), Adjunct (A), Main Verb (M), Complement (C) conflated with Phenomenon (Ph), and Ender (E). “Af-em”, “M” and “E” are expounded respectively by “*batu*” (batu “Batu”), “*jirükesine*” (jirükesine “fear”) and the period “.”. Phenomenon (ph) is expounded by “*silgalta-aca*” (silgalta-aca “exam-ABL”). Adjunct (a) is filled by quantity group (qtgp) which is further composed of adjustor (ad) and amount (am). Amount is expounded by the degree adverb “*neng*” (neng “much”). Adjustor (ad) is filled by case group (cgp) and is composed of case (c) expounded by “*aca*” (aca) and completive (cv) expounded by “*dorji*” (dorji “Dorji”). The analysis of “NP+ *aca/ece*” as Adjunct from the perspective of CG is shown in Figure 4 below.



“Batu is much more afraid of the exam than Dorji does.”

Figure 4 Syntactic Analysis of “NP+ *aca/ece*” as Adjunct From the Perspective of CG

In this clause, “*batu*” (batu “Batu”) is subject; “*jirükesine*” (jirükesine “fear”) is Main Verb; and “*silgalta-aca*” (exam-ABL) is complement. The three elements constitute a clause with a complete meaning “Batu is afraid of exam”. The ablative case marker “*aca*” (aca) and completive “*dorji*” (dorji “Dorji”) form a case group functioning as adjustor. “*neng*” (neng “much”) functions as amount. The use of “*dorji-aca neng*” (dorji-aca neng) indicates the degree of Batu’s fearing. Thus “NP+ *aca/ece*” structure in the third type functions as Adjunct.

To sum up, according to the syntactic and semantic analysis of “NP+ *aca/ece*” in the Mongolian comparatives from the perspective CG, “NP+ *aca/ece*” can function as Main Verb and Adjunct with the changes of the comparison results (see Figure 5).

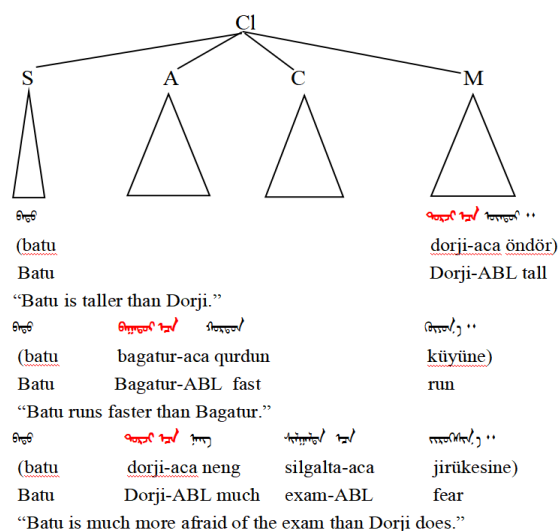


Figure 5 The Summary of the Syntactic Analysis of “NP+ *aca/ece*” in the Mongolian Comparatives

When the comparison result is adjective, “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” (degree temperer) together with adjective (apex) forms a quality group which fills Main Verb. When the comparison result is verb or verbal group, it has to be considered from the following two aspects. For one thing, when the comparison result is Adjunct-Predicate structure with an obligatory adjective as Adjunct, “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” (degree temperer) together with the adjective (apex) forms a quality group which fills Adjunct. For another, when the comparison result is verb or verbal group without an obligatory adjective as Adjunct, “NP+ 比” fills Adjunct. In addition, when the comparison result is a clause, “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” also functions as Adjunct. The analysis on the Mongolian comparatives from the perspective CG defines more systematically the syntactic functions and semantic features of “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives.

C. The Analysis of the Chinese Structural Elements From Perspective of the Cardiff Grammar

The basic structural elements of the Chinese comparatives have been thoroughly described in literature (for details, see Fu, 1978; Liu, 1996; Sa, 2003, etc.). According to CG, “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives is prepositional phrase, which serves as Main Verb, Adjunct and Complement.

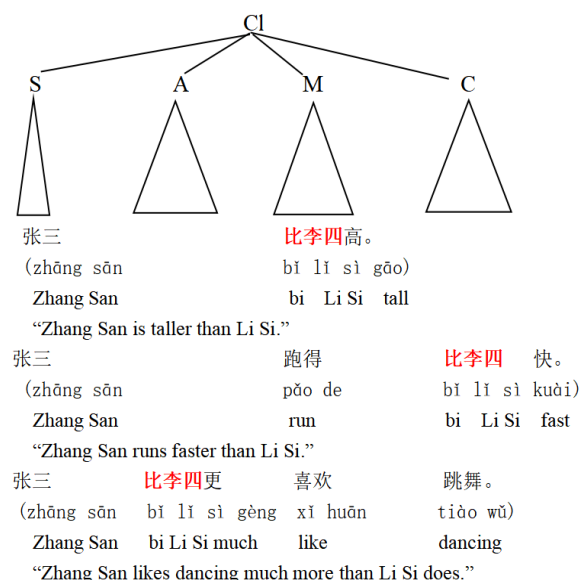


Figure 6 The Syntactic Analysis of “比 (bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese Comparatives

Based on CG, “NP+ 比 (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives can function as MainVerb and Adjunct. In the same token, “比 (bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives can also serve as MainVerb and Adjunct, as is shown in Figure 6 above. With regards the experiential meaning, the clause “张三比李四高。”(zhāng sān bǐ lǐ sì gāo “Zhang San is taller than Li Si”) is an Event-relating process, in which the Subject (S) “张三”(zhāng sān “Zhang San”) is conflated with Carrier and the Main Verb (M) “比李四高”(bǐ lǐ sì gāo “taller than Li Si”) is conflated with Phenomenon. The Main Verb (M) is filled by the quality group, which is further composed of degree temperer and apex expounded by “高”(gāo “tall”). As for the degree temperer, it is filled by the prepositional group which is composed of the nominal group expounded by 李四(lǐ sì “Li Si”) and preposition 比(bǐ). Thus, the meaning expressed in this clause is that Zhang San is tall. As to the degree of the height, he is taller than Dorji. The clause “张三比李四更喜欢跳舞。”(zhāng sān bǐ lǐ sì gèng xǐ huān tiào wǔ “Zhang San likes dancing much more than Li Si does”) is a mental process, in which the Subject (S) “张三”(zhāng sān “Zhang San”) is conflated with Affected-emoter, and the Complement (C) conflated with Phenomenon is expounded by “跳舞”(tiào wǔ “dancing”). With regards to the Adjunct (A), it is filled by quantity group which is further composed of adjustor and amount. Amount is expounded by the degree adverb “更”(gèng “much”). Adjustor (ad) is filled by prepositional group and is composed of preposition expounded by “比”(bǐ) and completive expounded by 李四(lǐ sì “Li Si”). Thus, the experiential meaning realized in the clause is that Zhang San likes dancing, with the Adjunct (A) “比李四更”(bǐ lǐ sì gèng “much more than Li Si”) to indicate the degree of the “liking” process.

Additionally, “比 (bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives can function as Complement. In the clause “张三跑得比李四快。”(zhāng sān pǎo de bǐ lǐ sì kuài “Zhang San runs faster than Li Si”), “比李四快”(bǐ lǐ sì kuài faster than Li Si) is Complement (C), a role expected by the process. In other words, 张三跑得(zhāng sān pǎo de “Zhang San runs”) can not express a complete meaning, which expects “quality” to express the meaning that Zhang San runs fast. Further, his speed is compared with Li Si’s. In the action process, the Subject (S) “张三”(zhāng sān “Zhang San”) is conflated with Affected-agent, the Main verb (M) is expounded by “跑得”(pǎo de “run”), and the Complement (C) is filled by

the quality group “比李四快” (bǐ lǐ sì kuài “faster than Li Si”). As regards the quality group, similarly, it is further composed of degree temperer filled by prepositional group “比李四” (bǐ lǐ sì “than Li Si”) and apex expounded by “快” (kuài “fast”).

III. TYPOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The comparatives both in Mongolian and Chinese convey three metafunctions in communication — experiential, interpersonal and textual functions. Given that the present study centers on the positive comparatives, and tense, aspect and mood of the comparatives are not taken into account in this study, the typological discussion will be conducted primarily in terms of experiential and textual metafunctions.

As far as experiential metafunction is concerned, the Mongolian comparative is manifested in the assignment of the types of process and the choices of the configuration of processes. In view of the division of process, relational process, action process and mental process occur frequently in construing the comparative experience. The Mongolian comparatives share some general features with those in Chinese. Generally, it is in the relational process that “NP+ ɣ (aca/ece)” and apex function as Process. In the action process, “NP+ ɣ (aca/ece)” together with apex functions as Adjunct. In the mental process, “NP+ ɣ (aca/ece)” as well as amount functions as Adjunct. However, the comparatives expressed by the mental process may convey ambiguous meanings, which rarely occurs in the Chinese comparatives. For instance, the clause ɓᠠᠲᠤ ᠳᠣᠷᠵᠢ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠨᠢᠭ ᠰᠢᠯᠭᠠᠲᠤ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ (batu dorji-aca neng silgalta-aca jirükesine) expresses the meaning of “Batu is much more afraid of exam than Dorji does”, but in some discourse context it may also mean “Batu is afraid of exam more than Dorji”. In addition, “比 (bǐ)+NP” in the Chinese comparatives functions as Adjunct mainly in the mental process and sometimes in the action process. Mongolian as a SOV language, process is always put at the end of the comparatives. With regard to the features of the configuration of each process, there are a number of distinctions between the Mongolian and Chinese comparatives. Firstly, since Mongolian is a language abounding with various case markers, “NP+ ɣ (aca/ece)” can appear in a relatively flexible position without changing the meaning of the comparatives, but this is not the case in the Chinese comparative. For instance,

(8) ɓᠠᠲᠤ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠳᠣᠷᠵᠢ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ
(toso usu-aca kõnggen)

oil water-ABL light
“Oil is lighter than water.”

(9) ɓᠠᠲᠤ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠳᠣᠷᠵᠢ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ
usu toso-aca kõnggen “)

water oil-ABL light
“water is lighter than oil.”

(10) 油 比 水 轻。
(yóu bǐ shuǐ qīng)

oil bi-water light
“Oil is lighter than water.”

(11) 水 比 油 轻。
(shuǐ bǐ yóu qīng)

water bi-oil light
“water is lighter than oil.”

However, in the Chinese comparatives, there is a case in which “比 (bǐ)+NP” can move to the position after the main verb without changing the meaning of the comparatives, which, however, is unacceptable in Mongolian. For instance,

(12) 小明 比小强 跳得 高。
(xiǎo míng bǐ xiǎo qiáng tiào de gāo)

Xiaoming bi-Xiaoqiang jump-de high
“Xiaoming jumps higher than Xiaoqing.”

(13) 小明 跳得 比小强 高。
(xiǎo míng tiào de bǐ xiǎo qiáng gāo)

Xiaoming jump-de bi-Xiaoqiang high
“Xiaoming jumps higher than Xiaoqing.”

(14) ɓᠠᠲᠤ ᠪᠠᠭᠠᠲᠤᠷ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ
(batu bagatur-aca qurdun güyüne)

Batu Bagatur-ABL fast run
“Batu runs faster than Bagatur.”

*ɓᠠᠲᠤ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ ᠪᠠᠭᠠᠲᠤᠷ ᠠᠴᠠ ᠵᠢᠷᠦᠭᠦᠰᠢᠨᠡ
(batu qurdun bagatur-aca güyüne)

Batu fast Bagatur-ABL run
(Batu runs faster than Bagatur.)

Additionally, in the Chinese examples above, “高” (gāo “high”) is considered as Complement / Range instead of Adjunct as in the Mongolian comparatives. According to the traditional grammar, Mongolian is distinguished from Chinese in terms of morphological changes, and the grammatical constituents do not always match equally with each other. The Complement as the modifier of Predicate in Chinese thus is corresponding with multiple grammatical constituents, such as Adverbial, Attribute and Auxiliary, etc. in Mongolian (Delgerma et al., 2013). Thirdly, when “NP+ ʔ (aca/ece)” functions as Adjunct, it is often combined with adverb as Amount, such as the relative adverbs of degree “多” (neng “much”) and “多” (baga sana “a bit”) or the absolute adverbs of degree “多” (tōng “quite”), “多” (dengdegüü “too”), “多” (masi “very much”), etc. In contrast, in Chinese, the relative adverb of degree “更” (gèng “much”) is most frequently used, but the absolute adverbs of degree “非常” (fēi cháng “very much”), “太” (tài “too”) and “很” (hěn “quite”) are unacceptable. Fourthly, Carrier, Actor and the comparative standard are generally nominals in the Mongolian comparatives, but in the Chinese comparatives, they can be verbals, nominals or adjectives.

Regarding the textual metafunction, the first general feature in both the Mongolian and Chinese comparatives is that the obligatory ideational theme is most frequently used, followed by the optional interpersonal theme and textual theme. The second point is that there is no theme marker in both languages. Thirdly, the ideational theme can overlap with the Subject. Moreover, Subject in both the Mongolian and Chinese comparatives is often absent in discourse, especially in a dialogic context, which does not cripple the delivery of the meaning. Therefore, the ideational theme can be realized by “比(bǐ)+NP” or “NP+ ʔ (aca/ece)” in Subject-omitted comparatives. What is special in the Mongolian comparative is that Subject is generally marked by the nominative case “φ” (no specific case) or the subject marker “尼” (ni) or “格” (gegci)/ “格” (gedeg ni). ”.

In short, the similarities in Mongolian and Chinese comparatives outweigh their differences in terms of process type and subject theme. However, the detailed features vary in the most delicate systems – within the lexical zone at the stratum of lexicogrammar.

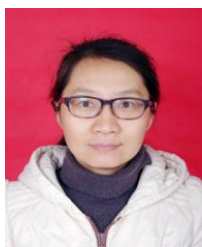
IV. CONCLUSION

Comparatives are a common and important linguistic phenomenon both in Chinese and Mongolian. Due to the lack of systematic analysis, the division of syntactic functions is more influenced by traditional grammar, which results in some controversies regarding the syntactic functions of “比(bǐ)+NP” in the Chinese comparatives and “NP+ ʔ (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives. Based on the model of CG in systemic functional linguistics, this paper reexamines the Mongolian comparatives, especially the syntactic and semantic functions of “NP+ ʔ (aca/ece)” in the Mongolian comparatives and “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives. We argue that “NP+ ʔ” in the Mongolian comparatives is case group, which can function as Main Verb and Adjunct. “比(bǐ)+ NP” in the Chinese comparatives is prepositional phrase, which can serve as Main Verb, Adjunct and Complement. Through the typological discussion, we find that the Mongolian and Chinese comparatives not only share some general features but also some specific features in terms of experiential and textual metafunctions. The typological findings not only provide a tentative solution to the long-standing debates on the comparatives, but also shed light on the teaching and learning of the comparatives in Mongolian and Chinese. Even though Mongolian and Chinese belong to different language families, they still share a number of general linguistic characteristics. It therefore indicates that typological characteristics of the comparatives are the result of a collaboration of language evolution, language contact and human cognition ability, etc.

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