Comparatives in San Sebastián del Monte Mixtec: a Mixed Construction
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1. Introduction

This talk presents novel data on conjoined comparatives from San Sebastián del Monte Mixtec (SSM), an Otomanguean language spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico.

(1) Yu’ù jikò ka ì, òònjìví Chuchi.2

\[ TP1 \text{yu’ù} \ jikò=\text{ga}=\text{i} \quad, \quad TP2 \text{òònjìví} \ Chuchi \]

‘Yo soy más alto que Chuchi.’
‘I am taller than Chuchi.’

The goals of this talk:

- **Typological contribution:**
  - **Observation:** Davis and Mellesmoen (2019) observe that one could suggest, based on the data above mentioned, that the availability of a conjoined comparative construction might be enough for identifying a [-DSP].
  - **Contribution:** I will support the idea that conjoined comparatives are not a sufficient diagnostic for [-DSP] status.

- **Theoretical contribution:** I offer an analysis for conjoined comparatives in SSM. I propose that the first conjunct is an incomplete comparative (also known as context comparative), the second conjunct in SSM conjoined comparatives negates an alternative of the first clauses.

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1 I would like to thank my language teachers Félix Córtes and Adrian Espinosa Davila, and the whole community in San Sebastián del Monte for welcoming me and teaching me Mixtec. A big thank you to my Research Assistants Angela Sicong Xu and Tatevik Shahinyan for organizing the data and discussing it with me. I am grateful to Prof. Pam Munro, Prof. Carson Schütze, Prof. Dylan Bumford, and Megan Gotowski for their guidance and for their suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank the members of the American Indian Seminar and of the Syntax-Semantics Seminar at UCLA and the three anonymous WCCFL reviewers for their observations. This work was funded by the Institute of American Cultures and the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA. Any mistakes are my own.

Abbreviations which are used in this paper: POT = potential, CONT = continuative, COMP = completive, M = masculine, F = feminine, COP = non-verbal copula, SG = singular, PL = plural, HON = honorific, CFR = classifier, HUM = human, BASE = pronominal base, NEG.N = nominal negation, IND = independent pronouns.

2 Each example from my own fieldwork is reported in five tiers:
   1. Community orthography which I am developing with the speakers in the community.
   2. Linguists’ orthography more faithful to the way the language is pronounced with segmentation.
   3. Glosses
   4. Spanish translation
   5. English translation.

3 DSP is what distinguishes a degreeless language ([-DSP]) from a degreeful one ([+DSP]).
The structure of this talk:

§2: introduces a brief outline of SSM with the information necessary to follow this talk.

§3: introduces argumentation in favor of two kinds of conjoined comparatives found crosslinguistically: a [+DSP] one and a [-DSP] one.

§4: offers an analysis to account for the comparative construction in SSM.

§5: concludes and discusses future research questions.

2. The data

San Sebastián del Monte is a town in the Santo Domingo Tonalá municipality of Oaxaca state, Mexico, approximately 45km SW of Huajuapan de León, with a population of 2000 people. San Sebastián del Monte Mixtec (ISO: mks) is part of the Mixtecan language family, Otomanguean stock.

It is a tonal language (three tones) and it has a VSO word order, though other word orders are available depending on information structure (focus and topic).

(2)  *Sìsi tinà xìtà.*
  sìsi  tinà  xìtà  eat.CONT  dog  tortilla
  ‘El perro come la tortilla.’
  ‘The dog eats the tortilla.’
(3) \textit{Sísí tì xità.}
\begin{itemize}
\item sísí=tì \quad \text{xità} \quad \text{eat.CONT=}3\text{animal} \quad \text{tortilla}
\item ‘Él (el perro) come la tortilla.’
\item ‘It (the dog) eats the tortilla.’
\end{itemize}

The element which is in focus or in topic position needs to be to the left of the verb.

(4) \textit{Lupi tà´vi vásò.}
\begin{itemize}
\item Lupi \quad \text{tà´vi} \quad \text{vásò} \quad \text{Lupi break.COMP} \quad \text{glass}
\item ‘LUPI rompió el vaso.’
\item ‘LUPI broke the glass.’
\end{itemize}

(5) \textit{Lupi tà´vi ñá vásò.}
\begin{itemize}
\item Lupi \quad \text{tà´vi} = \text{ñá} \quad \text{vásò} \quad \text{Lupi break.COMP=3SG.F} \quad \text{glass}
\item ‘Lupi, la que rompió el vaso.’
\item ‘As for Lupi, she broke the glass.’\footnote{Although from the translation it seems that we are dealing with a contrastive topic, this is not the case. I use this kind of translation (‘as for…’) to indicate that the preverbal element is a topic.}
\end{itemize}

Adjectives can function as predicates (6), in which case they occur before the subject, as with verbal predicates. In these cases no copula occurs with them.

(6) \textit{Jikó Chuchi.}
\begin{itemize}
\item jikó \quad \text{Chuchi}
\item tall \quad \text{Chuchi}
\item ‘Chuchi es alto.’
\item ‘Chuchi is tall.’
\end{itemize}

2.1. San Sebastián del Monte Mixtec Comparatives

SSM can express comparatives with three distinct constructions, all of which use the comparative marker \textit{ga}.

(7) \textit{Yu’ù jiko ka i, òönjiví mee ni.}
\begin{itemize}
\item yu’ù \quad \text{jiko=} \text{ga=} \text{i} \quad \text{1SG.IND} \quad \text{tall.CONT=} \text{GA=} \text{1SG} \quad \text{NEG.N} \quad \text{BASE=} \text{2SG.HON}
\item ‘Yo soy más alto que usted.’\footnote{To simplify things I am going to translate each comparative as an English particle comparative, even when the subject of the comparative is in focus or topic.}
\item ‘I am taller than you.’
\end{itemize}

Conjoined comparative
In all three examples, the comparative morpheme is cliticized to the predicate (‘tall’) and precedes the clitic pronoun.

**Conjoined comparative:** In (7) a clause and a phrase are conjoined, although no conjunction appears. The clause, as I will show later, ends with the first person singular pronoun, while the phrase in the second conjunct starts with the negation òònjiví.

**Locative and particle comparatives:** (8) and (9) are monoclausal comparatives, where the standard of comparison (‘you’) is introduced by two different standard markers (the locative nòò and the particle ja).

These three constructions express the same idea, but they are distinct in the way they are formed. At the end of this talk I will show the distribution of each construction depending on the age group which uses them; however, today’s talk will focus only on conjoined comparatives (for more information about the other two comparatives refer to my dissertation).

### 2.2. Conjoined comparatives: a background

Conjoined comparatives are comparatives which use two conjoined clauses to associate the target of comparison and the standard of comparison (Stassen 1985).

- The two clauses can be prosodically separated and thus are reported orthographically with a comma in between, or they can be coordinated by a conjunction (e.g. ‘and’) as in (12).
- In the second conjunct they can either use an antonym of the predicate used in the first conjunct as in Samoan and in ?ayʔajuðəm (10)-(13), or they can use negation as in Motu and in Menonimi (11)-(12).²

(10) **Ua loa lenei va’a ,** ua **puupuu** lena.

‘This boat is longer than that boat.’ Samoan (Stassen, 1985: 187)

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² Although specifics about prosodic boundaries are not offered by Stassen (1985), other than by using a comma (no reference to the actual prosody), the clause boundary seems to match the position of the comma within the sentence.
(11) Ina na námohere, una na dia námohere
this is good  more that is not good
‘This is better than that.’ Motu (Stassen 1985: 186)

(12) Apeqsek tata’hkesew, nenah teh kan
more  he-is-strong  I and not
‘He is stronger than me.’ Menomini (Stassen 1985: 186)

(13) xāxāl Tony, titul Laura.
tall  Tony small Laura
‘Tony is taller than Laura’ (Literally: ‘Tony is tall, Laura is small.’)
ʔayʔajuθəm (Davis & Mellesmoen 2019: 47)

Like other conjoined comparative constructions, SSM uses a prosodic break between the two clauses (represented with a comma in writing, but produced with a pause orally); the same break is not available in the other two comparative constructions available in SSM (which are monoclausal). Furthermore, the second clause has a contrastive nominal negation (òònjìví), which negates the subject, the direct object or the indirect object of what is understood as the clause.

(14) Sisi kà i tako, òòn jivì mee ní.
sisi=ì=tako, òòn jivì mee=nì
eat.CONT=GA=1SG taco NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON
‘Comí más tacos que usted.’
‘I ate more tacos than you.’

(15) Kási kuá’a ka tìna ndìka, òòn jivi tìkuáá.
kási-kuá’a=ga tìna ndìka, òòn jivi tìkuáá
eat.CONT=much=GA dog banana NEG.N orange
‘El perro está comiendo más bananas que naranjas.’
‘The dog is eating more bananas than oranges.’

7 Where else do we find òònjìví? It is a negation used specifically to negate DPs.
(i) Context: someone asks me if I ate the last apples in the kitchen.
Sási tikuá’a, òòn jivi manzana.
sás=i tikuá’a, òòn jivi manzana
eat.COMP=1SG orange NEG.N apple
‘Comí naranjas, no manzanas.’
‘I ate oranges, not apples.’
(ii) Context: someone asks me if I ate the last apples in the kitchen.
Sási, òòn jivì manzana.
sás=i, òòn jivi manzana
eat.COMP=1SG NEG.N apple
Lit.: ‘Comí, no manzanas.’
Lit.: ‘I ate, [but] not apples.’
So far, then, the SSM construction fits the description of a conjoined comparative, by virtue of the prosodic break and the negation in the second conjunct.

In the following sections I will bring empirical evidence for the argument that indeed SSM conjoined comparative has gradable predicate and a comparative morpheme.

3. The proposal: not all conjoined comparatives comparatives are created equal

I will prove that SSM, similarly to ?ayʔajuθm, has gradable predicates ([+DSP]). Thus confirming that conjoined comparatives are not a diagnostic for the [+/DSP] parameter (Davis and Mellesmoen, 2019).

In the following section I will attest what typologically expected characteristics of comparatives the conjoined comparatives in SSM have. SSM conjoined comparatives:
- ga functions as a comparative morpheme in the conjoined comparative construction,
- SSM is a [+DSP] language

- Without the ga morpheme it is not possible for (17) to be interpreted in a comparative manner, as in (18).

(17) Chuchi jikò kà, òònjìví See.
    Chuchi jikò=gà , òònjìví See
    Chuchi tall,CONT=GA NEG.N See
    ‘Chuchi es más alto que See.’
    ‘Chuchi is taller than See.’

(18) Chuchi jikò, òònjìví See.
    Chuchi jikò , òònjìví See
    Chuchi tall,CONT NEG.N See
    ‘Chuchi es alto, no See.’
    ‘Chuchi is tall, [but] not See.’

Conclusion 1: The morpheme ga used in the first conjunct behaves as a comparative marker, and not simply as a contrastive or emphatic marker.9

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8 This sentence is ambiguous between the meaning offered above and ‘I am sending more letters to Liya than Chuchi is sending.’ One of my consultant suggested that we could disambiguate the two meanings by using the locative comparative.

9 That ga is a contrastive or emphatic marker has been previously raised for Chalcacatongo Mixtec by Bobaljik (2012).
3.1. A language with gradable predicates [+DSP]

As demonstrated by Deal and Hohaus (2019), the presence of the comparative morpheme alone does not mean that we are dealing with a degreeful language.
In this section I will check whether predicates in SSM are indeed gradable or if they are vague.

The Degree Semantics Parameter (Beck et al., 2009) captures how languages vary in the semantics of their gradable predicates.

**Degree Semantics Parameter** [+DSP] (Beck et al., 2009: 19):
A language {does/does not} have gradable predicates (type <d, <e,t>> and related), i.e. lexical items that introduce degree arguments.

Going back to two of the most reported examples of [+DSP] and [-DSP] languages in the comparative literature, English and Washo respectively.

(19) John is taller than Mary.

t’e:liwhu de-ʔil-kaykay-i? k’-e?-i da?mo?mo? de-ʔil-kaykay-i?-e:s
man nmlz-attr-tall-attr 3-cop-ipfv woman nmlz-attr-tall-attr-neg
k’áʔaš k’-e?-aʔ-š
3-cop-aor-sr
‘The man is taller than the woman.’
(Literally: ‘The man is tall, the woman is not tall.’) Bochnak (2015:4)

Their predicates’ lexical entries are given in (21) and (22).

(21) \[[\text{tall}_{\text{Washo-[-DSP]}}]\] = λx. x counts as tall with respect to C
(22) \[[\text{tall}_{\text{English-[+DSP]}}]\] = λd. λx. \text{HEIGHT}(x) ≥ d

To distinguish between these two systems, where English involves degree arguments while Washo does not, I use differential comparatives as a test for [DSP]. It is known that although other tests (see appendix) have been successfully modeled in a [-DSP] system, the existence of differential comparatives is agreed upon as a sufficient condition for a language to be [+DSP].

**Differential measure phrases:** SSM conjoined comparative is capable of hosting a differential measure phrase as well.

(23) *Jikó Liya iin metro kà, òònjjiví Lupe.*

`jikó Liya iin metro=ù òònjjiví Lupe
tall.CONT Liya one meter=GA NEG.N Lupe
‘Liya es un metro más alta que Lupe.’
‘Liya is one meter taller than Lupe.’

---

10 Predicates in [-DSP] languages are also known as *vague predicates.*
The differential measure phrase test is reported in (23) and the vague quantificational differential comparatives are also grammatical as reported in (24)-(25).

\[ (24) \quad \text{Jìì cha ka ini, òònjivì Liya.} \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{jìì} & \quad \text{cha=} \quad \text{ini} \quad , \quad \text{òònjivì} \quad \text{Liya} \\
\text{happyCONT} & \quad \text{little=} \quad \text{GA} \quad \text{mind} \quad \text{NEG.N} \quad \text{Liya}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Yo estoy un poco más feliz que Liya.’
‘I am a little happier than Liya.’

\[ (25) \quad \text{Yu’ù jiko kua’a ka ì, òònjivì mee ní.} \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yu’ù} & \quad \text{jiko} \quad \text{kua’a=} \quad \text{ga=} \quad \text{ì} \quad , \quad \text{òònjivì} \quad \text{mee=} \quad \text{ní} \\
\text{1SG.IND} & \quad \text{tallCONT} \quad \text{much=} \quad \text{GA=} \quad \text{1SG} \quad \text{NEG.N} \quad \text{BASE=} \quad \text{2SG.HON}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Yo soy mucho más alta que usted.’
‘I am much taller than you.’

\textbf{Conclusion 2: SSM is a language with gradable predicates ([+DSP]).}

\textbf{4. Analysis of conjoined comparatives in SSM}

Theoretically a question arises: if SSM has gradable predicates ([+DSP]) and it uses a comparative morpheme, why do we have a conjoined comparative structure and what does that mean for the analysis of conjoined comparatives in SSM?

- In (26) there is an individual, or a set of individuals, which is salient in the discourse and that I am taller than.

\[ (26) \quad \text{Yu’ù jikò ka ì.} \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yu’ù} & \quad \text{jikò=} \quad \text{ga=} \quad \text{ì} \\
\text{1SG.IND} & \quad \text{tallCONT} \quad \text{GA=} \quad \text{1SG}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Yo soy más alta.’
‘I am taller.’

- When we only have the clause with the comparative marker, and we do not have a second coordinate clause, or a standard phrase, the meaning in Mixtec is that of an incomplete comparative (this term was created by Sheldon 1945 (as cited by Schwarzschild (2008)), but today it is also known as context comparative (Hohaus 2015)).

In (26) there is an implied completion to the comparative meaning, as previously indicated by Sheldon (1945) in English (27).

\[ (27) \quad \{ \text{Come out onto the porch.} \} \quad \text{It’s cooler here.} \quad \text{(Schwarzschild 2008:89)} \]

In (27) the implied completion is “than inside” and it is made clearer by the preceding sentence. In SSM the implied completion was inserted in the contexts I have given before uttering (28) in Mixtec.
(28) Context 1: There is a group of tall people, all with different levels of tallness (I offered a drawing with a number equivalent to the height of each person). Can I say (26)?

(29) Context 2: Chuchi and I are both basketball players, I am 198 cm tall and Chuchi is 190 cm tall. Can I say (26)?

The answer to both contexts in (28) and (29) was affirmative, thus we can see that as Sheldon (1945) predicted for English, the completion of the comparative sentence is clear to the speaker and influenced by the context.

Moreover, using (26) in the context in (28) when no one else is as tall or taller than myself, shows that (26) also has a superlative meaning, as long as I allow the comparison set to have more than one member.

Conclusion 3: The context must be referred to by ga. Thus, a quantificational determiner (in our case ga – a degree quantifier) has an argument index whose value is determined by the pragmatics derived from the discourse (and I will add/clarify by the shared knowledge of the speakers) (vonFintel 1994, Schwarzschild 2010).

Moreover, as I proposed earlier, the predicates in SSM are gradable (30) and ga functions as a comparative morpheme in comparatives (31).

(30) \[[\text{jikò}]\]=λd. λx. \text{HEIGHT}(x) ≥ d

- jikò is a gradable predicate, d is a variable over degrees, x is a variable over individuals, and \text{HEIGHT} is a measure function relating x to d, a degree on the scale of height (Cresswell 1976, von Stechow 1984, Heim 1985, 2001, Kennedy & McNally 2005 among others).

I am going to assume the following semantics for the comparative morpheme in SSM, which is what usually we would use for the incomplete comparative’s operators (Hohaus 2015).

(31) \[[\text{ga}_C]\]=\lambda R_{<d,<e,t>>} λx. \text{MAX}(\lambda d. R(x)(d) = 1) > \text{MAX}(\lambda d. \exists x \in C[R(x)(d)])

A comparative like (31) would mean ‘The maximal degree d such that Liya is d-tall exceeds some contextually provided height degree.’

(32) \[[[\text{Liya [tall}_{<d,<e,t>> \text{ comparison-ga]} ] ]]}=1\iff
[\lambda R_{<d,<e,t>>} [\lambda x. \text{MAX}(\lambda d. R(d)(x) = 1) = c]] (\lambda d. \lambda x. \text{HEIGHT}(x) ≥ d)(L) = 1
\iff \text{MAX}(\lambda d. \text{HEIGHT}(L) ≥ d) > c

Moreover, the semantics of the comparative is the same as the superlatives; we are going to assume that there is a set of possibilities, and in the comparative there is a set of two in there.

In the case of differentials we would add an extra variable.
(33) \[ [g_a C]^C = \lambda d. \lambda R. \lambda x. \text{MAX}(\lambda d. R(d)(x) = 1) \geq \text{MAX}(\lambda d. \exists x \in C[R(x)(d)]) + d \]

Let’s now add the second conjunct:

(34) Jikò ka Liya, ôônjivi Chuchi.
\begin{align*}
\text{Jikò}= & \text{ga Liya , ôônjivi Chuchi.} \\
\text{tall.CONT}= & \text{GA Liya NEG.N Chuchi} \\
\text{‘Liya es más alta que Chuchi.’} \\
\text{‘Liya is taller than Chuchi.’}
\end{align*}

While the English than-clause specifies a standard of comparison directly, the second conjunct in SSM conjoined comparatives negates an alternative of the first clauses (where the DP in the second clause takes the place of one of the DP in the first clause).

Similarly to English:

(35) I ate more tacos, you did not eat more tacos.

When the second conjunct is missing, similarly to English, the context is relevant.

(36) \{John is sick\} I ate more tacos.
(37) \{The burritos were awful\} I ate more taco.

Observation: The second conjunct is formed by a nominal negation which takes a DP as its argument and it moves it to the left periphery of the clause. The rest of the clause can be elided under stripping.

Assumption: For the sake of concreteness one can assume, in line with the main analysis of fragments in stripping, that the negated DP has been fronted as it is the focused element, and everything else is elided. And as a matter of fact, independently in SSM we can find focused elements fronted.

(38)
5. Conclusion

SSM: is a [+DSP] language, has a coordination and a comparative marker. The first conjunct is an incomplete comparative, while the second conjunct negates one of the alternatives of the first clause.

The coordinate nature of the comparative does not inform us as to whether the languages is necessarily [-DSP] or on whether the second conjunct functions as an actual standard phrase; every point needs to be tested before concluding anything.

Whether SMM has undergone a shift from being [-DSP] to being [+DSP], similarly to Samoan (Hohaus 2018), is at this point pure speculation. Some support for this idea comes from the fact that the particle comparative started only with the new generations, while it did not previously exist.

Moreover, the particle comparative does not exist in closely related languages like Yucuquimi de Ocampo Mixtec (p.c. León Vázquez). It will be worthwhile to explore this point in the future, with both careful synchronic and diachronic comparison, in order to test this hypothesis.

As work done on ṭayʔajuθəm (Davis and Mellesmoen 2019), Samoan (Hohaus 2014, 2018), Washo (Bochnak 2014, 2018) and Nez Perce (Deal & Hohaus 2019) among others, has shown, to better inform our understanding of comparatives, and specifically of conjoined comparatives, we need to do more theoretically driven fieldwork. I look forward to provide more information to this comparative enterprise.

6. Reference


In Papers for the International Conference on Salish and Neighbouring Languages 54.


Hohaus, V. 2018. How do degrees enter the grammar? Language change in Samoan from [-DSP] to [+ DSP].


7. Appendix

7.1. Remaining puzzles

In SSM, when the meaning change of the second clause, compared to the first clause, involves something more or other than one DP we need to produce the full second clause and not just the
phrase òòn jìví+DP. That is true when the aspect of the verb changes as in (39), when the verb changes as in (40)-(41) and when the predicate adjective changes as in (42). The result is that the second clause acquires the shape of a light headed relative, headed by the classifier that better fits the meaning.

(39)  Sìsi ka ì tako, òònjiví ñá ko’o in kusi.
    sìsi=ga=i take NEG.N kus=ì
eat.COMP=GA=1SG	
taco		
go.POT=1SG
eat.POT=1SG
‘Yo comí más tacos de que voy a comer.’
‘I ate more tacos than the ones I am going to eat.’

(40)  Jakua’a ka ì, òònjiví ñà kixì.
    jakua’a=ga=i	
toopark NEG.N
study.POT=GA=1SG	
go.POT=1SG
‘Yo voy a estudiar más de que voy a dormir.’
‘I will study more than I will sleep.’

(41)  Kixi ka ì, òònjiví ñà jakua’a ì.
    kixi=ga=i	
toopark NEG.N
sleep.POT=GA=1SG	
go.POT=1SG
‘Yo voy a dormir más de que voy a estudiar.’
‘I will sleep more than I will study.’

(42)  Káá ka’ni kà mesa, òònjiví ña jiko tó.
    káá ka’ni=ga= mesa	
toolarge NEG.N
be.CONT=GA= table NEG.N
cfr:3THING-tall=3WOOD
‘La mesa está más larga que alta.’
‘The table is larger than it is tall.’

Example (40) is a very interesting case because there is no overt object to “study,” yet the pronoun referring to THING is used. This is true even in example (41) with “sleep,” where “sleep” is an intransitive verb and it should not take any direct object. Thus, we can conclude that the third person pronoun referring to non-round inanimates can also refer to ideas or amounts. If the verb changes but the direct object stays the same the best fitting pronoun would be used, as the case with a round object, the orange, shows in (43)-(44). As we would not be able to normally use the pronoun referring to things (ñá) for oranges it follows that it cannot be used even in comparative constructions.

(43)  Vîtì sásì ò’on kà tikuua, òònjiví ti sásì kôìni.
    vîti sás=ì	
today eat.COMP=1SG
ò’on=gà	
toopark orange NEG.N
cfr:3ROUND-eat.COMP=1SG
kôìni yesterday
‘Hoy comí 5 naranjas más de que comí ayer.’
‘Today I ate five oranges more than I ate yesterday.’
Since it is obligatory for the DP preceded by òòn jiví to move leftward in a focus position when in a comparative construction we can assume that òòn jiví+DP will always occur to the left of the verb, whether the verb and the rest of the subordinate clause follows it overtly or it has been elided.

An additional puzzle is the impossibility of using the conjoined comparative when building a comparison with a degree as in (45). The ungrammaticality of (45) is repaired by an exceed comparative construction (thus adding a fourth kind of comparative to Mixtec).

(45) *Kà’vi kua’a kà i, òònjìví ònì (libro).
    *kà’vi-kua’a=kà=ì, òònjìví ònì (libro)
    read.COMP=many=GA=1SG NEG.F three book
    Intended: ‘Yo leí más libros que tres.’
    Intended: ‘I read more than three books.’

(46) Niyà’a o ònì libro kà’vi.
    niyà’a o ònì libro kà’v-i
    exceed.COMP COP three book read.COMP-1SG
    Intended: ‘Yo leí más libros que tres.’
    Intended: ‘I read more than three books.’

7.2. Kennedy’s (2007) tests

(i) Crisp judgment test\(^{11}\)

Implicit comparisons, where the predicate is in its positive form (“tall” rather than “taller”), is expected to be infelicitous in crisp judgement contexts, as the difference in height is minimal.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) The Crisp Judgment Test relies on the Similarity Constraint: When x and y differ only to a very small degree in the property that a vague predicate G is used to express, speakers are unable or unwilling to judge the proposition that x is G true and y is G false (Klein 1980, Fara 2000, Kennedy 2011).

\(^{12}\) As the Washo case shows, when there is a minimum difference between the two gradients compared, and the sentence is infelicitous, then we are dealing with an implicit comparison.

(i) Context: comparing two ladders, where one is only slightly taller than the other.

\# wí:diʔ ítìmàŋa délkàýkayiʔ k’éʔì
wí:diʔ ítìmàŋa de-ʔìl-kàýkay-ʔì k’éʔì-eʔ-i
this ladder NMLZ-ATTR-tall-ATTR 3-COP-IPFV this NMLZ-ATTR-tall-ATTR-NEG
k’éʔàš
k’éʔì-eʔ-i-ʔ-
3-COP-AOR-SR

Intended: ‘This ladder is taller than that one.’
(lit.: ‘This ladder is tall, that one is not tall.’) Washo (Bochnak 2014: 171)
In SSM even when we are dealing with a minimum difference between two gradients, the comparative is felicitous.

(47)  
**Context:** I am 180cm tall and you are 179cm tall.

\[\text{Yu’ù jiko ka i, ôònjjiví mee ni.} \]
\[\text{yu’ù jiko=ka=i, ôònjjiví mee=nì.} \]
\[\text{1SG.IND tall, CONT=GÀ=1SG NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON} \]

‘Yo soy más alto que usted.’
‘I am taller than you.’

(ii) **Absolute standard predicate test**

Implicit comparisons are expected to be infelicitous with absolute-standard predicates since their standard do not depend on the context; if we say that one bar is bent, it would be false to assert that the other one is not, when the context provides that both bars have some degree of bentess. On the other hand, explicit comparisons are supposed to be felicitous with absolute-standard predicates because their comparative morpheme needs two distinct degrees of “bentness” in the example offered where we are comparing bars that have different degrees of bendedness.\(^\text{13}\)

In SSM the word ‘curved’ is used instead of ‘bent’ but it shares the same absolute nature. Also for this test, the conjoined comparative in SSM is felicitous, which means that there is a degree difference between the two objects compared.

(48)  
\[\text{Nikàvà kà barra yó’ò, ôònjjiví ŋá seen.} \]
\[\text{nikàvà=kà barra yó’ò , ôònjjiví ŋá-seen} \]
\[\text{curved.COMP=CM bar this NEG.N CFR:3THING-there} \]

‘Esta barra esta más curva que esa (barra).’
‘This bar is more curved than that one (bar).’

(iii) **Differential measure phrases**

Measure phrases are capable to override the semantics of the positive form of the predicate. By composing a gradable adjective with a measure phrase we obtain a predicate which is not context dependent anymore (Pinkal 1995). Thus, Implicit comparison should not allow a non-comparative adjective to combine with a measure phrase, as there would not be any standard of comparison to manipulate, while in the Explicit comparison differential measure phrases are allowed.\(^\text{14}\)

SSM conjoined comparative is capable to host a differential measure phrase as well.

\(^\text{13}\) The example reported from Washo shows a case of an implicit comparison.

\[\text{#wì:diʔ \ ?ílk’ùnk’unìʔaš} \]
\[\text{wì:diʔ \ ?ílši:šibiʔi} \]
\[\text{this \ ATTR-bent-ATTR-AOR-SR \ this \ ATTR-straight-ATTR-IPFV} \]

Intended: ‘This one is more bent than that one.’
(lit.: ‘This one is bent, that one is straight.’) Washo (Bochnack 2014: 172)

\(^\text{14}\) Washo, which only has implicit comparisons, does not allow the occurrence of measure phrases in its comparative constructions.
7.3. Distribution of the ga morpheme in comparatives

Depending on the element that we are comparing, the ga morpheme can combine with:
- a verbal predicate (50),
- an adverb (51),
- an adjective, predicate (52) and attributive (53),
- or a numeral (54)

(50) Ñakaa sàsi ka ña kopaya, òònjìví me ní.
Ña-kaa sàsi=ga=ñà kopaya, òònjìví me=ní
CFR.3HUM.SG.F-that eat.COMP=GA=3HUM.SG.F papaya NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON
‘Ella comió más papayas que Usted.’
‘She ate more papayas\(^{15}\) than you.’

(51) Chuchi kana kono kama kà rà, òònjìví Liya.
Chuchi kana kono= kama=ga=rà , òònjìví Liya
Chuchi go.CONT run.CONT-fast=GA=3HUM.M NEG.N Liya
‘Chuchi corre más rápido que Liya.’
‘Chuchi runs faster than Liya’

(52) Yu’ù jiko ka i, òònjìví mee ní.
Yu’ù jiko=ga=i , òònjìví mee=nì.
1SG.IND tall.CONT=GA=1SG NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON
‘Yo soy más alto que Usted.’
‘I am taller than you.’

(53) Sàsì ndika tyina’no ka, òònjìví mee ní.
Sàsì ndika tyina’no=ga , òònjìví mee=nì
eat.COMP banana big=GA NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON
‘Yo como bananas más grandes que Usted.’
‘I ate bigger bananas than you.’

\(^{15}\) SSM does not distinguish between mass nouns and count nouns.

(i)  Yu’ù kua’a kopayá sàsì.
Yu’ù kua’a kopayá sàs=i.
1SG.IND much papaya eat.COMP=1SG
‘Yo comí muchas papayas.’/ ‘Yo comí mucha papaya.’
‘I ate many papayas./I ate much papaya.’
(54)  Tikaa sìsi rà ò’ôn ka tako, òònjìví ñakaa.
  Ti-kaa  sìsi=rà  ò’ôn=ga  tako  ,  òònjìví
  CFR.3HUM.SG.M-that  eat.COMP=3HUM.M  five=GA  taco  NEG.N
  ña-kaa
  CFR.3HUM.SG.F-that
  ‘Él comió cinco bananas más que ella.’
  ‘He ate five tacos more than she did.’

7.4. Adjectives in SSM

Adjectives can be attributive (55) and they can function as predicates (56), in which case they occur before the subject, as with verbal predicates. In these cases no copula occurs with them.

(55)  Ñalo’ò jikó nìntivi nòò yá’vì.
  ña-lo’ò  jikó  nìntivi  nòò  yá’vì
  CFR.3HUM.SG.F-little  tall  enter.COMP  land  market
  ‘La chica alta entró al mercado.’
  ‘The tall girl entered the market.’

(56)  Jikó ñálo’ò.
  jikó  ñá-lo’ò
  tall  CFR.3HUM.SG.F-little
  ‘La chica es alta.’
  ‘The girl is tall.’

7.5. Various additional data

In regular particle comparatives, where the second clause is a subordinate, the test generally used to check whether we are dealing with phrasal versus clausal comparative is an ambiguity test like the one reported in (57). The ambiguity can be seen by looking at the ambiguity that a sentence like (58) has in English, between external and internal reading.

(57)  Mary bought a bigger car than John.
  a. External reading: Mary’s new car is bigger than John’s car.
  b. Internal reading: Mary’s new car is bigger than John.  (Deal & Hohaus 2019:353)

Although the same seems to be true also for SSM, at a more in depth analysis the ambiguity per se should be expected if we are dealing with coordination and with ellipsis.

(58)  Jákákó Liya iin leè ka’no kà, òònjìví Lupì.
  jákákó  Liya  iin  leè  ka’no=ga  ,  òònjìví  Lupì
  give.birth.CONT  Liya  one  baby  small=GA  NEG.N-AFF  Lupì
  ‘Maria dió a luz un bebe más grande que Lupe.’
  ‘Mary gave birth to bigger children than Lupe.’
  a. External reading: Mary gave birth to bigger babies than Lupe did.
  b. Internal reading: Mary gave birth to babies bigger than Lupe.
(59)   Kóó jikó kà i, òònjíví mènì. 
   kóó jikó-gà=i , òònjíví mè=ní 
   NEG tall-GA=1SG NEG.N BASE=2SG.HON
   ‘Yo no soy más alto que usted.’
   ‘I am not taller than you.’

(60)   a.   Chuchi sisì kà táko nóò Lupe, òònjíví Liya.
       Chuchi sisì=gà táko nóò Lupe , òònjíví Liya
       Chuchi eat.COMP=GA taco on Lupe NEG.N Liya
       ‘Chuchi comió más manzanas que Lupe, not Liya.’
       ‘Chuchi ate more apples than Lupe, not Liya.’

       b.   *Chuchi sisì kà táko, òònjíví Lupe, òònjíví Liya.
           *Chuchi sisì=gà táko , òònjíví Lupe , òònjíví Liya
           Chuchi eat.COMP=GA taco NEG.N Lupe NEG.N Liya

(61) Ká’an Liya ŋá jikò ní, òònjíví Chuchi.
    Ká’an Liya ŋá jikò=ní , òònjíví Chuchi.
    speak.CONT Liya that tall=2SG.HON NEG.N Chuchi
    ‘Liya dice que usted es alto, no Chuchi.’
    ‘Liya says that you are taller than Chuchi.’

(62)   a.   Nájoò ka’an Liya jiko kà nóò Chuchi?
       nájoò ka’an Liya jiko=gà nóò Chuchi
       who speak.CONT Liya tall=GA on Chuchi
       ‘Quién dice Liya que es más alto que Chuchi?’
       ‘Who does Liya say is taller than Chuchi?’

       b.   *Nájoò ka’an Liya jiko kà, òònjíví Chuchi?
           *Nájoò ka’an Liya jiko=gà , òònjíví Chuchi
           who speak.CONT Liya tall=GA NEG.N Chuchi