

Roger Schwarzschild (Rutgers University)

Dimensional Adjectives

Hebrew has a comparative construction that works like English, with a comparative marker *yoter* ‘more’ and a Standard Phrase headed by the preposition *mi-*:

(i) Dani *yoter xazak mi-Rina* ‘Danny is more powerful than Rina’.

The bare-comparative is restricted to what are sometimes called **dimensional adjectives**. It works with adjectives meaning ‘strong’ and ‘tall’ but not ‘funny’ or ‘interesting’. (see Bhatt and Takashi for similar facts in Hindi).

I will argue that:

(iii) the source of the comparative meaning in (ii) is the Standard Phrase *mi-Rina*
and

(iv) the adjective *xazak* has the same meaning in (ii) as it does in (i).

This position goes against what I claimed in Schwarzschild(2005) but follows the spirit of the account of dimensional adjectives in Navajo analyzed in Bogal-Albritten(2008).

The hypotheses in (iii-iv) lead to the following questions, which I will address in the talk:

- (a) if the Standard Phrase is a degree quantifier in (ii), then how can it co-occur with another putative degree-quantifier *yoter* ‘more’ in (i)?
- (b) Hebrew has a less-than comparative which uses the same Standard Phrase – how can that work if the Standard Phrase contributes a more-comparative meaning in (ii)?
- (c) What is special about dimensional adjectives that allow them to occur in the bare-comparatives?

I will respond to (a) as follows. The comparative marker *yoter* is indeed a degree quantifier. As such, it has a domain of quantification and in (i) the Standard Phrase plays the role of a domain adverbial, commenting on the domain of quantification. To have a picture of what a quantifier-domain adverbial is, one can think of Kratzer(1977)’s analysis of *In view of what is known, the ancestors of the Maoris must have arrived from Tahiti*, according to which modals are world quantifiers whose domain of quantification, ‘the modal base’, is described by the sentence initial adverbial. It will

turn out that the Standard Phrase has a single meaning in (i) and (ii) even though it functions as a degree quantifier in (ii) and as a domain-adverbial in (i).

The proposed analysis relies on the idea that Standard Phrases are degree quantifiers that can also function as quantifier domain adverbials. I will discuss facts about Navajo comparatives that support this idea. In Navajo, there are three different Standard Phrase forming postpositions - corresponding to *more-than*, *less-than* and *equative as* - and the choice of postposition is the only indication of the type of comparison expressed. And, I will argue, in cases where the Standard Phrase co-occurs with a POSitive-degree operator, the Standard Phrase functions as a domain adverbial and is in fact marked as such with a subordinator+copula ('át'éego) sometimes paraphrased as "it being ...".

- Bhatt, R. and S. Takahashi (to appear) "Reduced and Unreduced Phrasal Comparatives," *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*
- Bogal-Allbritten, E. (2008) "Gradability and Degree Constructions in Navajo," B.A. thesis, Swarthmore College.
- Kratzer, A. (1977) "What 'Must' and 'Can' Must and Can Mean," *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 1:337-355
- Schwarzschild, R. (2005) "Measure Phrases as Modifiers of Adjectives," *Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes* 35.207-228.