

# Comparative of inferiority: marking and aspects of use

VALERIA MODINA<sup>1, 2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SAINT PETERSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

<sup>2</sup> INSTITUTE FOR LINGUISTIC STUDIES, RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Submitted: 16/11/2020 Revised version: 6/6/2021

Accepted: 17/03/2021 Published: 31/08/2021

## Abstract

In this paper the comparative of inferiority ('A is less tall than B') is discussed in regards to its coding and functioning. The classification of the marking is based on the connection of the marking of inferiority to the marking of other constructions of comparison. Thus, two main types of the marking are distinguished: specific and derived. The discussion of some problematic issues connected to the comparative of inferiority accompanies the description of the marking. The findings in the marking are interpreted as signs of the markedness of the comparative of inferiority. The remaining part of the paper is devoted to the description of the functions of the comparative of inferiority and its aspects of use as suggested by the data from Russian.

**Keywords:** Comparison; comparative constructions; comparative of inferiority; language typology; rivalry; Russian

## 1. Introduction

This paper examines comparative constructions of inferiority. Comparative constructions of inferiority are used to describe the referent that has some property to a lower degree through the comparison with the other referent.

(1) Russian (Indo-European)

<i>Petja</i>	<i>meneje</i>	<i>vysokij</i>	<i>čem</i>	<i>Vanja</i>
Petja	less	tall	than	Vanja

'Petja is less tall than Vanja'

Different aspects of comparison have attracted the attention of many linguists and such topics as cross-linguistically attested types of constructions of comparison and

the rivalry of different constructions of comparison in a specific language have been explored in a number of papers. However, comparison of inferiority is only rarely mentioned in those works and almost never gets discussed in depth.

The notion of the comparative of inferiority is not particularly new as it appears in grammars dating back at least to the end of the 19th century (see, for example, this grammar of Somali, Larajasse & Sampont 1897: 64-65). This fact is probably connected with the presence of markers of inferiority in a number of European languages (e.g. English *less* or Spanish *menos*). Nevertheless, comparative constructions of inferiority are rarely even mentioned in descriptive grammars and, if mentioned, the information given is quite scarce and non-uniform most of the times. Therefore, the task of constructing a typology of comparative of inferiority is fairly difficult due to the lack of information on these constructions. In this paper, I present a preliminary outline of the types of constructions that express the meaning of inferiority. Despite the fact that this sketch is by no means comprehensive, I still hope that this description can be of some value for the study of comparison.

The other problem addressed here is the rivalry of the comparative of superiority and the comparative of inferiority within one language. Though the issue of the rivalry of several comparative constructions has been addressed previously (see, for example, Hilpert (2008) and Kosheleva (2016) on the rivalry of synthetic and analytical comparative constructions) it has never included the comparative of inferiority. The conditions of the use of these constructions and their functions are of particular interest since the comparative of inferiority may be seen as unnecessary due to the possibility of using an antonym (i.e. '*Petja is shorter than Vanja*' for (1)) or switching the referents (i.e. '*Vanja is taller than Petja*'). This rivalry is analyzed in this paper using the Russian data. Such analysis of distribution of the comparative constructions in Russian potentially gives new perspectives on the issue that can be addressed in the descriptions of other languages as well.

The paper is organized as follows. I begin by introducing and clarifying some of the terms used in the research (Section 2). Section 3 is devoted to the classification of the attested marking of the inferiority. In Section 4 the opposition of superiority and inferiority is discussed in terms of markedness. The analysis of the rivalry of comparative constructions in Russian is presented in Section 5. Section 6 contains conclusions.

## 2. Terms and notions

Construction of comparison is defined here as a construction which is used when one referent is described through the comparison of its degree on a gradable scale with the degree of another referent.

I adhere to the practice of identifying constitutive elements of the comparison construction which is used consistently through the publications on the subject (Ultan 1972; Stolz 2013; Haspelmath et al. 2017; Treis 2018). Still, the terms used and definitions given in the works on the comparison can be quite different, therefore it is important to present the terminology as it is used throughout this paper. Consider the following example.

(1') Russian (Indo-European)

Comparee	Parameter Marker	Parameter Standard Marker	Standard
<i>Petja</i>	<i>meneje</i>	<i>vysokij čem</i>	<i>Vanja</i>
Petja	less	tall than	Vanja

'Petja is less tall than Vanja'

It is possible to identify five key components of the construction of comparison. Three of those components are primary and constitute any comparison construction, explicitly or implicitly:

*Comparee* – the referent which is described through the comparison.

*Standard of comparison* – the referent to which the comparee is being compared.

*Parameter of comparison* – the property of comparison. It is worth noting that the term parameter is applied here to only one member of an antonymic pair rather than to the common basis of the antonyms. For example, *high* and *low* are considered to represent two parameters, not one parameter of height.

The other two components of the constructions of comparison are used to mark the comparison.

*Standard marker* – marker of comparison closely associated with the standard of comparison.

*Parameter marker* – marker of comparison closely associated with the parameter.

Note that for the component called here *parameter marker* the terms *degree marker* or *degree* are employed sometimes (Ultan 1972; Stolz 2013; Haspelmath 2017; Treis 2018). Definitions themselves also may contain the notion of degree. In fact, it seems

like the actual relation of degrees between comparee and standard (i.e. ‘more’ or ‘less’) does not have to be marked exclusively on the parameter. Conjoined comparatives (formed by two juxtaposed clauses, Stassen 1985: 37-38), exceed comparatives (comparative constructions where the comparee is the subject of an ‘exceed’ verb and the standard is the direct object, Stassen 1985: 42)<sup>1</sup> and comparative constructions with sole standard marker carry the semantics of the relation of degrees as well, suggesting that the semantic notion of degree is useless for defining any of the constituents of comparative construction. Consequently, I argue here that the term *parameter marker* is a more appropriate one than *degree marker* and that the definition of this element should not refer to the notion of degree.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the definitions used here are strictly structural (following Haspelmath et al. 2017: 11).

The act of comparison can result in two possible outcomes, namely in the assertion of equality or in the assertion of inequality of the items regarding some parameter. Inequality, in turn, can be encoded both in the comparative construction of superiority and in the comparative construction of inferiority. *Comparative of superiority* is defined here as a construction in which the referent that has the property to a higher degree appears in the position of the comparee (e.g. *Horses are bigger than dogs*). *Comparative of inferiority* is a construction in which the referent that has the property to a lower degree appears in the position of the comparee (e.g. *Dogs are less big than horses*).

It needs to be mentioned here that the notion of inferiority is largely absent not only from the descriptive grammars of particular languages but also from the very basic terms used in the literature on the subject. In other words, the study of

---

<sup>1</sup> The case of exceed comparatives is a telling one as the ‘exceed’ verb has been analysed both as the standard marker (in Ultan 1972: “In Sotho, a verb meaning ‘surpass, excel’ assumes the marking function in the comparative (...) Here again, applying the criterion of immediate constituency, *fēta* ‘surpass’ must be regarded as a standard marker since it is in constituency with its object which is equivalent to the standard of comparison in spite of the fact that it obviously contains a semantic feature of degree”) and as the parameter marker (or index in Dixon 2012: 343-375). This kind of comparative construction was also entirely excluded from the opposition of parameter marker and standard marker in Haspelmath (2017): “Like equative constructions, comparative constructions usually have a standard-marker, or otherwise they may have a verb (‘exceed’) expressing the relationship between the comparee and the standard. (...) If the construction has a standard-marker rather than using a verb, it may also have a degree-marker”.

<sup>2</sup> Though it seems to be true that if a construction contains both a parameter marker and a standard marker the difference in degree (‘more’ or ‘less’) is reflected in the parameter marker.

comparison is skewed to the superior side of the issue. The terms *comparative* and *superlative*<sup>3</sup> themselves are often defined as constructions that express superior meaning (e.g. Shvedova 1980: 545; Mel'čuk 1998: 117; Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2004: 1213, Treis 2018: iii).<sup>4</sup>

As long as such definitions are employed expressions parallel to English 'less' and 'least' cannot be included in the discussion of comparison. Therefore, I opt here for less biased definitions following the ones given in Ultan (1972):

Comparative – the construction used to express the situation when the comparee differs in the degree of the parameter from the standard, where the latter does not contain all the members of the class to which the former belongs (i.e. *John is taller than the brothers* – the referent set of NP *brothers* does not contain John).

Superlative – the construction used to express the situation when the comparee differs in the degree of the parameter from the standard, where the latter contains all the members of the class to which the former belongs (*John is the tallest of the brothers* – the referent set on NP *brothers* does contain John).

This bias is not random as it reflects the asymmetry of superiority and inferiority that is discussed further in Section 4. It is important to mention that this bias in terminology may have partially led to the scarcity of data on the comparative of inferiority in descriptive grammars. Therefore, a more precise terminology that incorporates both superiority and inferiority is a desideratum.

### 3. Marking of the comparative of inferiority

In this section, I sketch out the types of markers of inferiority and give examples of them. Other constructions of comparison have been studied in depth in regards to their marking (Ultan 1972; Stassen 1985; Heine 1997; Dixon 2012; Gorshenin 2012; Bobaljik 2012; Stolz 2013; Haspelmath et al. 2017). These typologies were based on a variety of grounds such as the source of the marker and the morphosyntactical traits of constructions. The basic distinction made here is whether the marker of inferiority

---

<sup>3</sup> An anonymous reviewer points out that while the term *comparative* is neutral with respect to the direction of comparison, the term *superlative* is etymologically connected to the notion of superiority. Therefore, it may be useful for the theory of comparison to come up with a neutral term that will bracket *superlative* and “*inferlative*” (*the least tall*).

<sup>4</sup> It is still worth noting that at the same time at least in the last two papers mentioned above the comparative of inferiority is described as a kind of comparative construction despite the given definition.

is derived from other constructions of comparison or not. The following is not a classification per se but rather an outline of attested variation in marking accompanied by the discussion of the issues connected to it.

### 3.1. Problematic points

Firstly, I would like to mention some problematic points regarding the description of the comparative of inferiority. One of them is related to the fact that, apparently, in some languages there are several markers of the comparative of superiority whose distribution is based on the semantics of the parameter. The “negative” member of an antonymic pair (e.g. *small, light*) in those cases is marked with a marker different from the one applied to the “positive” member (e.g. *big, heavy*) in comparative constructions. For example, this kind of opposition is present in Murui (2), where the meaning of the standard marker refers to distance, interiority, and vertical position.

(2) Murui (Witotoan; Wojtylak 2018: 175)

- |    |  |                 |                                     |                           |
|----|--|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. | Comparee   | Standard        | Standard Marker                     | Parameter                 |
|    | <i>[kai jo-fo]<sub>vcs</sub></i>   | <i>[oo-ie</i>   | <i>aa-fe-mo]<sub>np:perf</sub></i>  | <i>aare<sub>vcc</sub></i> |
|    | 1PL house-CLF:CAVITY   | 2SG-GEN         | <b>above-CLF:SIDE-LOC</b>           | <b>long</b>               |
|    | ‘Our house is taller than yours (lit. our house, yours on the top side, long).’                    |                 |                                     |                           |
| b. | Comparee   | Standard        | Standard Marker                     |                           |
|    | <i>pila-ji = disubj</i>  | <i>[mechera</i> | <i>foo-fe-mo]<sub>np:perf</sub></i> |                           |
|    | battery.SP-CLF:SMALL.ROUND = SUBJ/A.TOP  | lighter.SP      | <b>inside-CLF:SIDE-LOC</b>          |                           |
|    | Parameter  |                 |                                     |                           |
|    | <i>jano-re-d-e<sub>pred</sub></i>  |                 |                                     |                           |
|    | <b>small-ATT-LK-3</b>  |                 |                                     |                           |
|    | ‘The battery is smaller than the lighter (lit. the battery, the lighter on the inside, is small).’ |                 |                                     |                           |

The author explicitly refers to *foofemo* as to the marker of inferiority (instead of the marker of superiority for the “negative” antonym) and, at the same time, underlines that the notion “inferiority” is not understood as expressing ‘less’ but rather ‘higher degree of a “negative” adjective’. The same meaning of “inferiority” seems to be

adopted by A. Aikhenvald for the analysis of one of the comparative strategies in Yalaku (3).

(3) Yalaku (Ndu; Aikhenvald 2018: 4)

- a. [*semi*= *de-te*]                      [*wore-I de-te*]  
tall/long = 3MASC.SG-stay go.up-go 3MASC.SG-be  
'He is tall, he goes up (in height)' (lit. Go up go he is)
- b. [*foi*= *de-t*],                      [*tada-d*]  
short = 3MASC.SG-be go.down-3MASC.SG  
'He is short, he is shorter (than the other child)' (lit. He goes down)

Though this kind of opposition of the markers is definitely worth attention of the researchers it must be distinguished from the opposition discussed here. Therefore, it is suggested to investigate this phenomenon further and to develop alternative terminology for the semantically induced opposition of the markers of superiority. This kind of difference is not discussed here further.<sup>5</sup>

The other problem is connected to the biclausal constructions of comparison which come in a variety of flavours (see Dixon 2012: 358-360). One of them is conjoined comparative (in terms of Stassen's typology) formed by juxtaposition of two independent clauses with antonyms (*A is big, B is small*) or two independent clauses, one of which includes negation (*A is big, B is not big*) as in Samoan (4).

(4) Samoan (Oceanic; Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2004: 1214)

*Ua loa lenei va'a, ua puupuu lena*  
is long this boat, is short that

'This boat is longer than that.'

As both clauses have the same grammatical structure, it is difficult to identify the comparee and the standard of such comparative construction. As long as identification of the components stays problematic, it is not possible to describe such constructions as instances of comparative of superiority or comparative of inferiority.

Nevertheless, such comparatives are sometimes analysed in regards to superiority or inferiority. As demonstrated in the description of the comparative constructions in

---

<sup>5</sup> This opposition is also relevant for Urarina (Olawsky 2006: 208-209), Afar (Bliese 1977: 90).

Kanoê, the construction expresses inferiority in the case when the first clause represents the assertion of the lower degree (5).

(5) Kanoê (Kapixana; Bacelar 2004: 249, 269)

- a. *ñā tyj ej-turo-e-re pja tyj ej-turo*  
 POSS1SG house big-place-DECL-AUX POSS2SG house big-place  
*k-e-re*  
 NEG-DECL-AUX  
 ‘My house is bigger than yours’ (Lit.: ‘My house is big, your house is not big’)
- b. *ñā vae-nake ā-nake k-e-re [aj ā-kȳj*  
 POSS1SG cousin-FEM tall-FEM NEG-DECL-AUX 1SG tall-MASC  
*ō-e-re]*  
 1-DECL-AUX  
 ‘My cousin is less tall than me’ (Lit.: ‘My cousin is not tall, I am tall’)

Therefore, the order of clauses is relevant and it is suggested that in Kanoê it is the first clause where the comparee is located, but the reason for this analysis is not specified. One may argue for some kind of iconicity in the ordering of the clauses in a way that the subject of the first clause is considered to have a higher communicative rank and should, therefore, be considered the comparee. However, it is not clear if this interpretation is not arbitrary (i.e. if there is actual communicative inequality of the referents and the ordering is truly iconic) and if this kind of ordering is systematic within a single language and cross-linguistically.

Another possibility is to assume the parallelism of the basic word order and order of constituents in comparative constructions (where comparee corresponds to S, and standard to O), as suggested by Romero-Figueroa (1986). Romero-Figueroa argues that in Warao, where the basic word order is OSV, the order of clauses in the comparative construction follows the basic word order of the language, which means that the first clause contains the standard of comparison, not the comparee (Romero-Figueroa 1986: 105-106). The examples (5a, 5b) from Kanoê corroborate this analysis as well, because the basic word order in Kanoê is SOV (Bacelar 2004: 228). At the same time, an opposite point of view is reflected in the grammar of Ayutla Mixe: since the comparative construction is biclausal, it is not relevant for the word order correlations (Romero-Méndez 2008: 443).



Considering that there is no universal rule to identify the comparee in biclausal constructions and that the grammars largely remain silent on the basis of the particular interpretation, it is unclear if the opposition of superiority and inferiority is relevant for this type of constructions. Thus, biclausal constructions are not discussed henceforth. The issue of the ordering of clauses in a biclausal comparative construction requires further study.

### 3.2. *Specific markers of inferiority*

“Specific markers of inferiority” are defined here as ones that are not derived from other constructions of comparison. This kind of markers can be found in comparative constructions of structurally different types. The subdivision in this category is based on the degree of parallelism of constructions of superiority and inferiority.

#### 3.2.1 *Parallel specific markers of inferiority*

First of all, structurally specific markers of inferiority sometimes reflect the features of the ones that express superiority, i.e. the constructions are identical except for difference in the relation marker (i.e. the unit that expresses ‘more’ or ‘less’). For example, in Amis the opposition of superiority and inferiority is possible only in one type of comparative construction, in which the relation is expressed by a predicate that is followed by the parameter of comparison. The only difference present is the predicate itself (6).

(6) Amis (East Formosan; Kuo & Sung 2010: 32-33)

a. *Ø-ikaka ku su'su' ni mama aku tisuwanan*  
AF-more NOM fat NCM.SG.GEN father 1SG.GEN 2SG.OBL  
'My father is fatter than you.'

b. *Ø-isafa ku takaraw nira takuwanan*  
AF-less NOM tall 3SG.GEN 1SG.OBL  
'He is less tall than me.'

Specific parallel markers are also found in comparative constructions of other morphosyntactical nature. In Lizu the comparative of superiority is formed with prefix *jæ-* and the comparative of the inferiority is marked by the negator *mw-*, exemplifying the case of parallel affixes (7).

(7) Lizu (Tibeto-Burman; Chirkova 2019: 29-30)

- a.  $\alpha = \hat{t} \text{ j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v} \text{ le } \text{ne} = \hat{t} \text{ j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v} \text{ p}\text{v} \text{ j}\alpha\text{-m}\text{b}\alpha\hat{\text{a}}$   
 $\alpha = \hat{t}$   $\text{j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v}$   $\text{le}$   $\text{ne} = \hat{t}$   $\text{j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v}$   
 1SG = GEN younger.brother TOP 2SG = GEN younger.brother  
 $\text{p}\text{v}$   $\text{j}\alpha\text{-m}\text{b}\alpha\hat{\text{a}}$   
 like **more**-be.tall  
 ‘My brother is taller than your brother.’
- b.  $\alpha = \hat{t} \text{ j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v} \text{ le } \text{ne} = \hat{t} \text{ j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v} \text{ p}\text{v} \text{ mw-m}\text{b}\alpha\hat{\text{a}}$   
 $\alpha = \hat{t}$   $\text{j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v}$   $\text{le}$   $\text{ne} = \hat{t}$   $\text{j}^{\text{h}}\text{e}\text{n}\text{v}$   
 1SG = GEN younger.brother TOP 2SG = GEN younger.brother  
 $\text{p}\text{v}$   $\text{mw-m}\text{b}\alpha\hat{\text{a}}$   
 like **NEG**-be.tall  
 ‘My brother is not as tall as your brother.’

This marker of inferiority is analysed here as a non-derived one because, firstly, the comparative of inferiority does not contain the marker of superiority *jæ-*, and, secondly, the marker *jæ-* is not described as optional (i.e. it is not the case that the comparative of inferiority is formed by the negation of the comparative of superiority with the omitted marker *jæ-*). The same analysis applies to the comparative constructions of Xuwen (Li & Thompson 1983: 20-21).

The relation between the referents may be realized in the standard marker (giving us another example of the uselessness of the notion “degree” when defining elements of the comparative construction). A special marker of inferiority appears as a marker of standard in Teribe (8) and Navajo (9).

(8) Teribe (Talamanca; Quesada 2000: 139, as cited in Dixon 2012: 362)

- a. [*Bor*  $u$ ] *kégué* *bopoya* *kinmo*  
 1SG.POSS house old 2SG.POSS **above**  
 ‘My house is older than yours’

- b. *Kwe kégué bop dorko*  
 DEM old 2SG **under**  
 ‘This one is less old than you’

(9) Navajo (Athapaskan; Bogal-Allbritten & Coppock 2020: 127)

- a. *Alice (Ben) yi-lááh ’ánítnééz.*  
 Alice Ben 3OBJ-**beyond** 3SUBJ.tall  
 ‘Alice is taller than Ben/him/her/it.’
- b. *Alice shi-’oh ’ánítnééz.*  
 Alice 1OBJ-**short.of** 3SUBJ.tall  
 ‘Alice is less tall than me.’

Some languages demonstrate usage of non-derived markers of inferiority parallel to the “exceed” comparatives of superiority. This type of coding can be found in Amharic (Leslau 1995: 788) and Hausa (10).

(10) Hausa (Chadic; Newman 2000: 93-96)

- a. *Kanò tā fi Kàdūna yawàn mutānē*  
 Kano it **exceeds** Kaduna quantity.of people  
 ‘Kano is bigger (i.e., more populous) than Kaduna’
- b. *Gidānā yā gazà nākà girmā*  
 House.of.my it **falls short** of yours size  
 ‘My house is not as large as yours’

3.2.2 Non-parallel specific markers of inferiority

Nevertheless, sometimes comparative of superiority and comparative of inferiority are not quite parallel in structure. Consider an example from Arapaho (11). The comparative of superiority is expressed by the use of /cebe’ei/ (‘more, beyond’) or /wo’ow/ (‘farther, more’) with a verb while the comparative of inferiority is expressed quite differently with the use of a negative verb and the particle *wootíí* ‘like’.

(11) Arapaho (Algonquian; Cowell & Moss 2008: 228-230)

- a. *ceebe'eitéi'éłht*  
*cebe'ei-tei'eihi-t*  
 IC.beyond-strong(AI)-3S  
 'S/he is stronger.'
- b. *hoow(u)téi'éłh*      *wootíí nenééninoo*  
*ihoowu-tei'eihi*      *wootii*      *neeni-noo*  
 NEG-strong(AI)      **like**      IC.to be(AI)-1SG  
 'S/he is not as strong as me.' (lit. 'S/he is not strong like me.')

Given that the particle *wootíí* does not occur in the comparative of superiority or the comparative of equality, it, accompanied by a negator on the verb, is considered to constitute a specific marker of inferiority that is structurally different from the marker of superiority.

In Central Alaskan Yupik some roots can be expanded by verbalizing suffixes to express inferiority. The marker of superiority is of different origin: note that the structures of comparative are different and comparative of superiority is actually attached to one of the verbalizing suffixes that are in opposition with the *-kelli-* (12).

(12) Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo; Miyaoka 2012: 278)

- qas-tu-uq* 'it is loud'  
*qas-kit-uq* 'it is quiet, less loud'  
*qas-kelli-uq* 'it is getting quieter, less loud'

(13) Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo; Miyaoka 2012: 1305)

- a. *tuner-tu-nrurt-uq*  
 'it is getting more powerful'.  
 b. *tuner-kelli-uq*  
 'it is getting less powerful'

### ***3.3. Derived markers of inferiority***

At the same time, quite often languages employ markers of inferiority that are derived from other constructions of comparison such as equative and comparative of superiority.

### 3.3.1 Negated equative

One of the most frequently attested ways of expressing inferiority is a negated equative construction. This kind of derived marking seems to be the only way to mark inferiority in a number of languages of different origin (14)-(16).

(14) Fongbe (Kwa; Lefebvre & Brousseau 2002: 435)

- a. *Kòkú sù òì / sò Àsíbá.*  
 Koku be.tall resemble / equal Asiba  
 ‘Koku is as tall as Asiba.’
- b. *Kòkú sù sò Àsíbá ǎ.*  
 Koku be.tall equal Asiba NEG  
 ‘Koku is not as tall as Asiba.’ (while the translation does not contain less, the construction is referred to as a way to express inferiority)

(15) Kadiwéu (Guaicuruan; Sandalo 1997: 74-75)

- a. *Maria dawé alikyagi nGijo lyone:Ga.*  
*Maria y-d:-awe alikyagi nGijo lyone:Ga*  
 Mary 3SG.SUBJ-theme-be.fast like DEM young.man  
 ‘Mary is as fast as this boy.’ (Lit.: ‘Mary is fast like this boy.’)
- b. *Maria adawé alikyagi nGijo lyonerGa*  
*Maria aG-y-d:-awe alikyagi nGijo lyone:Ga*  
 Mary NEG-3SG.SUBJ-theme-be.fast like DEM young.man  
 ‘Mary is less fast than this boy.’ (Lit.: ‘Mary is not fast like this boy.’)

(16) Nuosu (Burmese-Lolo; Gerner 2013: 447-449)

- a. *vit gga a hni su si nip vit gga a shy su ngex ngep nrat.*  
 clothes red NOM with clothes yellow NOM similarly nice  
 ‘The red clothes are as beautiful as the yellow clothes.’
- b. *zze ti cyx ma li a zzyx ma ngex ngep a-ap-du.*  
 table DEM.PROX CL TOP DEM.DIST CLF similarly thick <NEG >  
 ‘This table is less thick than that table.’

The negation of the equative is introduced by a special predicate *jokodu* ‘to be true’ in Bororo (17).

(17) Bororo (Bororoan; Nonato 2008: 101-102)

a. *ime erijore areme kori*

<i>ime</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>rico</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>areme</i>	$\emptyset$	<i>kori</i>
men	3PL	(to be) tall	ASSERT	women	3SG	<b>comparison</b>

‘Men are as tall as women’

b. *areme erijojokodukare ime ekori*

<i>areme</i>	<i>e.rijo.jokodu.ka.re</i>	<i>ime</i>	<i>e.kori</i>
women	3PL.(to be)tall.(to be>true.not.ASSERT	men	3PL. <b>comparison</b>

‘Women are less tall than men’ (lit. ‘it is not true that women are as tall as men’)

It is important to point out that this kind of construction is not actually compositional, because the negation of equation is in fact ambiguous: inequality can be both of superior and inferior nature. This non-compositionality gives us ground to consider the negated equative construction a distinct type of derived marker of inferiority. The crosslinguistic regularity of this interpretation of such constructions is of particular interest (see also for Zaar, Caron 2017: 170, Kambaata, Treis 2018: 15-16, Somali, Evangeliste & Cyprien 1897: 64-65).

The issue that is important to note here is that the scope of negation may vary. In the case of the negated equative the fact that it is not only the parameter that lies in the scope of negation is sometimes underlined. For the example (18), the author highlights: “Note that the infinitival VP is included in the scope of the negative, otherwise the translation would be ‘I equal him in (extent of) not eating’”.

(18) Koyra Chiini (Songhay; Heath 1999: 318-319)

<i>ay</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>gaa [ka too ga]</i>
ISG.S	IMPF.NEG	eat [INF <b>attain</b> 3SG.O]

‘do not equal him in eating’.(= ‘I eat less than he [does].’)

### 3.3.2 Negation and the comparative of superiority

This difference in the interpretation induced by the scope of negation does not seem to be problematic in the case of the negated equative. However, in some languages comparative of inferiority is described as expressed by the presence of the negation

in the environment typical not for equative, but for the comparative of superiority. In these cases the role of the scope of negation can be a bit trickier, as the difference in interpretation is not as straightforward as in the case of the negated equative. One of the possible scope-induced differences is discussed on the data from Mbyá Guaraní in Thomas (2017). In Mbyá Guaraní “the order of suffixes on a predicate determines the respective semantic scope of the operators that they denote” (Thomas 2017: 251). Thus, the comparative of inferiority and the negated comparative of superiority are comprised of the same components (parameter, marker of superiority, negation), but these components are put together in different orders. In the case of negated comparative of superiority it can be schematically modelled as [[adjective] + ‘more’] + negation]. The ordering specifies truth conditions: while (19b) is true if Juan and Pedro have the same height, (19a) is not.

(19) Mbyá Guaraní (Tupian; Thomas 2017: 251)

- a. *Juan Pedro gui nda-i-jyvate-i-ve.*  
Juan Pedro from NEG-B3-tall-NEG-ve  
‘Juan is less tall than Pedro.’
- b. *Juan Pedro gu nda-i-jyvate-ve-i.*  
Juan Pedro from NEG-B3-tall-ve-NEG  
‘Juan is not taller than Pedro.’

Therefore, the comparative of inferiority should be distinguished from the negation of the comparative of superiority.

The other problem worth consideration in this regard is the issue of the comparative constructions with morphological antonyms such as *unhappier*. Morphological antonym is analyzed here as a separate lexeme, as the negation forms an opposite parameter rather than functions as a part of the mark of inferiority. An argument in favour of this analysis is that the negation is already present in the positive degree of an adjective (*unhappy*), making it a lexeme feature, not a feature of the comparative construction. Thus, constructions like *more unhappy* are schematically organized as [[adjective]<sub>LEXEME</sub> + negation]<sub>NEW LEXEME</sub> + ‘more’] and not analyzed as instances of comparative of inferiority but rather as instances of comparative of superiority with antonymic parameter. Strictly speaking, the Mbyá Guaraní example (19a) could be an example of this scheme, but the circumfix *n...-i*

is used exclusively on predicates (while in attributive position the negation is marked by the suffix *-(e)ʔ*, Thomas 2017: 249), making the antonymic analysis unlikely.

This kind of distinction is not always made in the descriptions of comparative constructions. An example that was described as an instance of comparative of inferiority comes from Sonora Yaqui (20).

(20) Sonora Yaqui (Cahita; Dedrick & Casad 1999: 111)

- a. *če'a huni'i tu'ii*  
 more even good  
 'it is even better'
- b. *če'a huni'i kaa-tu'ii*  
 more even **not**-good  
 'it is even worse'

In this case the authors explicitly state that “the negative is used to derive an antonym” (note the translation as well), therefore this example is not qualified here as a comparative of inferiority. Other examples of the appearance of negation on the marker can be found in Guajiro (Álvarez 2005: 25), Eastern Geshiza (Honkasalo 2019: 525-526).

An actual “inferior” interpretation of constructions with negation and marker of superiority is possible in three cases.

The first one is when the negation is not utilized for the formation of morphological antonym and the scope of negation in the comparative construction does not include ‘more’ (the case of (19a)).

The second possibility can be represented as [adjective+ [‘more’ + negation]] (“not-more happy”). This kind of construction can be identified as a comparative of inferiority only if it gets non-compositional interpretation of inferiority, otherwise it is ambiguous. Apparently, an example of this construction may be found in Komi (21) (for discussion see also Bobaljik 2012: 217-218).

(21) Komi (Permic; Lytkin 1955: 168-169)

- a. *mičja-dʒik*  
 beautiful-**cmpr**  
 ‘more beautiful’
- b. *abu-dʒik mičja*  
**neg-cmpr** beautiful



‘less beautiful’

The third possibility is when the negated comparative of superiority (“not happier”) discussed earlier regularly gets the same unambiguous (i.e. non-compositional) interpretation of inferiority. It seems like this kind of marking might be present in Mongsen Ao: “An alternative strategy (to express inferiority – V.M.) is for a comparative proposition ‘X is bigger than Y’ to be globally negated by a clause final negative particle *nun*” (Coupe 2007: 261). Also see the literal translation of an example from Purépecha (22).

(22) Purépecha (Tarascan; Chamoreau 2007: 478)

*Maria sani = taru no wiŋapi-f-ti eski thu.*  
 Maria few = **more** NEG be strong-AOR-ASSERT3 SUB 2

‘Maria is weaker (less strong) than you are.’ (Maria is not stronger than you are)

The negation is found on the standard of comparison in the case of Kashibo-Kakataibo, but it seems to negate the whole predication. The non-literal translation suggests unambiguous interpretation of this construction:

(23) Kashibo-Kakataibo (Panoan; Biondi 2011: 343)

a. *Roberto ka mas xuá ki Emilio ‘iken*

*Roberto ka mas xuá ki Emilio ‘iken*  
 Roberto.ABS NAR.3PL more fat than Emilio be.3PL.NON.PAST  
 ‘Roberto is fatter than Emilio.’

b. *Emilio ka mas xua ki Robertoma ‘iken*

*Emilio ka mas xua ki Roberto = ma*  
 Emilio.ABS NAR.3PL more fat than Roberto = NEG  
 ‘iken  
 be.3PL.NON.PAST

‘Emilio is not fatter than Roberto (i.e. is less fat).’

Thus, the data suggests that the comparative of inferiority in theory can be based on the negation of comparative of superiority. Nevertheless, the description of these constructions needs more attention in regards to the scope of negation and regularity

of non-compositional interpretation. Given the lack of the uniform terminology in the subject field and the scarcity of information on the scope of negation, it might well be that some of examples actually do not fall into the comparative of inferiority as it is defined here. These issues require further investigation.

### 3.3.3 Other derived means

The type of marking of inferiority that is present in the vast amount of the Indo-European languages – that is a marker like English *less*, Russian *meneje*, Spanish *menos* – is also seen as a kind of derived marking here, though this point may seem debatable. The reasoning behind this analysis lies in the fact that these markers seem to contain the meaning of superiority in them (but no negation involved). This may not be obvious due to the suppletion as in the case of *little-less* in English, but in some languages the parts ‘more’ and ‘few, little’ are overt. Some examples like German *wenig-er* ‘less’ = *wenig* ‘little, few’ + *-er* ‘more’ were discussed in Bobaljik (2012: 215-217). Other examples may be found in Romanian (24), Albanian and several other Indo-European languages.

(24) Romanian (Indo-European; Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2013: 444-457)

- a. *Ion e mai înalt decât George.*  
 Ion is more tall than George  
 ‘Ion is taller than George.’
- b. *Maria e mai puțin înaltă decât Andreea.*  
 Maria is more little tall than Andreea  
 ‘Maria is less tall than Andreea.’

Another example of the marking of inferiority that involves marker of superiority and no negation is found in Paraguayan Guarani, where the marking of inferiority involves diminutive suffix *-i-* and the marker of superiority *-ve* (25).

(25) Paraguayan Guarani (Tupian; Estigarribia 2020: 249)

- a. *Che amba'apove ndehegui.*  
*che a-mba'apo-ve ndehegui*  
 I 1SG.ACT-work-more from.you  
 ‘I work more than you.’

- b. *omba'apo'ive ñande hígado ha pitikiri'i kuéra*  
*o-mba'apo-'i-ve*                      *ñande-hígado*                      *ha*    *pitikiri'i = kuéra*  
3.ACT-work-DIM-more            1PL.INCL.ACT-liver and kidney = PL  
'our liver and kidneys work less'

It is possible for a language to make use of several types of the comparative of inferiority. In that case it seems very likely that the language that has a non-derived construction will also have a derived one. It is also possible that some of the derived types are employed in those languages for which there is no information on the comparative of inferiority in the grammars (perhaps, derived markers were seen as simply compositional). The classification presented here is rather coarse but still may be of value to the theory of comparison.

#### 4. The asymmetry of superiority and inferiority

The connection of marking of inferiority to other constructions of comparison was chosen as a basis for classification of the types of comparatives of inferiority for one rather simple reason: this distinction clearly demonstrates that in some cases the marking of the comparative of inferiority is derived from other constructions of comparison. This may seem trivial, but at the same time no languages were found to form other constructions of comparison on the base of comparative of inferiority. These facts suggest that the comparative of inferiority is the marked member in the opposition of superiority and inferiority. Though the notion of markedness itself may be problematic, I will still use this term in the sense of multidimensional correlation of different properties pointing to the complexity, difficulty or abnormality of one of the members of opposition (Haspelmath 2006: 37-38).

The direction of the derivation is not the only sign of the markedness of the comparative of inferiority. Some languages appear to have no way to express 'less' other than switching the referents or using an antonym (e.g. in Mualang, Tjia 2007: 120, Mazatec and Chiquihuitlán, Jamieson 1988: 167-168). The fact that some languages have no markers of inferiority while having the comparative of superiority (and never the other way around) suggests that the comparative of inferiority is simply unnecessary for expressing the meaning of inequality.

Another indicator of the asymmetry is connected to the optionality of the parameter marker in some languages. It seems that, in those languages, this

optionality is only applied to the comparative of superiority, and for expression of inferiority the parameter marker is obligatory. An example is found in Turkish (26).

(26) Turkish (Turkic; Lewis 1967: 54)

- |    |                        |                      |             |             |
|----|------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| a. | <i>kurşun-dan</i>      | <b>(<i>daha</i>)</b> | <i>ağır</i> |             |
|    | lead-ABL               | <b>(more)</b>        | heavy       |             |
|    | 'heavier than lead'    |                      |             |             |
| b. | <i>kurşun-dan</i>      | <b>(<i>daha</i>)</b> | <i>az</i>   | <i>ağır</i> |
|    | lead-ABL               | <b>(more)</b>        | little      | heavy       |
|    | 'less heavy than lead' |                      |             |             |

The opposite situation, when the construction with no parameter marker is interpreted as comparative of inferiority and the marker of inferiority is optional was not attested.

The phenomenon of “lesslessness” – the cross-linguistic absence of synthetic markers of inferiority – indicates the markedness of inferiority as well. This fact was pointed out without thorough discussion numerous times (Mel’čuk 1998: 119; Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2004: 1213; Treis 2018: ix), but in Bobaljik (2012) it got attention as an argument for the proposed Complexity Condition which states that “certain types of meanings are complex in ways that the resources of UG cannot pack into a single morpheme” (Bobaljik 2012: 212). It is suggested that inferiority in fact consists of superiority plus reversing operator and, therefore, the meaning of inferiority is considered to be too complex to be expressed by a single morpheme. This theory is reinforced by the aforementioned fact that in some languages the item in which the relation is expressed (e.g. English *less*) in fact contains the comparative of superiority thus indicating the derivation of the comparative of inferiority. Still, it has to be mentioned that, as discussed above, some languages do have non-derived markers of inferiority, some of which are even described as morphemes (see examples for Lizu (7) and Navajo (9)). Nevertheless, the absence of the synthetic marker of inferiority in the presence of the synthetic marker of superiority (even if relevant only for some languages) still may be considered as a sign of the markedness of the comparative of inferiority.

It has been argued that the marked member of the opposition is cognitively more complex: it requires more mental effort, attention and time to be processed (Givón

1991: 337). Psycholinguistic studies have shown that the asymmetry of superiority and inferiority in terms of usage, interpretation and judgement is validated experimentally: “People therefore use ‘more than’ statements more frequently, agree with them more, more readily believe them, and like them better” (Hoorens & Bruckmüller 2015: 765). The effects of this cognitive asymmetry are described in terms of saliency: perceptually it is easier to perceive the presence of an attribute rather than its absence (Hoorens & Bruckmüller 2015: 754).

One of the most prominent properties of comparatives of inferiority is their low frequency. It sometimes gets underlined in grammars (for example, for Arapaho in Cowell & Moss, 2008: 230) and definitely shows up in Russian.<sup>6</sup> The data from Russian National Corpus demonstrates that the comparative of inferiority constitutes only about 4.7% of all the cases of comparatives with adjectives (both synthetic and analytic). Considering that the structural markedness is, arguably, a result of frequency asymmetries, this distinction may be considered the most important one (Haspelmath 2006: 48-49).

Therefore, a number of features make comparative of inferiority the marked member in the opposition of superiority and inferiority. The conditions of use of the marked member in a pair of interchangeable items are of special interest. These conditions are of even higher interest in the case of comparative constructions since there is a possibility of using non-marked comparative of superiority through the switching of referents or using an antonym (*i.e.* *A horse is taller than a dog* and *A dog is shorter than a horse* instead of *A dog is less tall than a horse*), which seems to be enough to express comparison for some languages. The investigation of the distribution of the constructions of inequality will make it possible to describe the functions of the comparative of inferiority in those languages that have a way to express it.

## **5. Aspects of the use of the comparative of inferiority in Russian**

In this section, I provide a discursive, semantic, lexical and pragmatic account for the usage of the comparative of inferiority in Modern Russian language. Here I present only some of the findings based on the data from the Russian National Corpus (RNC)

---

<sup>6</sup> One example of an alleged preference of the comparative of inferiority is found in Bura (Chadic): “Bura adjectives and adverbs are compared ‘down’ rather than ‘up’. Instead of having ‘black, blacker’, they speak of ‘black, less black’” (Blench 2009: 12).

and data collected in the acceptability judgement experiment, for the in-depth discussion see Modina (2020).

Russian has both comparatives of superiority and inferiority. Superiority may be marked both synthetically and analytically and inferiority is marked only analytically, therefore illustrating the common phenomenon of “lesslessness”. The negation of equative construction is regularly interpreted as expressing ‘less’. Consequently, in this paper equatives under negation in Russian are considered to express inferiority. Therefore, there are four possible constructions to express inequality in Russian in terms of marking the relations of degrees: synthetic comparative of superiority (27.a), analytical comparative of superiority (27.b), comparative of inferiority with *meneje* ‘less’ (27.c) and negation of equality (27.d).

(27) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Vanja vyš-e čem Petja*  
 Vanja tall-‘more’ than Petja  
 ‘Vanja is taller than Petja’
- b. *Vanja boleje vysokij čem Petja*  
 Vanja more tall than Petja  
 ‘Vanja is taller than Petja’
- c. *Petja meneje vysokij čem Vanja*  
 Petja less tall than Vanja  
 ‘Petja is less tall than Vanja’
- d. *Petja ne takoj vysokij kak Vanja*  
 Petja NEG so tall as Vanja  
 ‘Petja is less tall than Vanja’ (lit. ‘Petja is not as tall as Vanja’)

Taking into account that either of compared items can, theoretically, appear in the position of comparee (e.g. *Horses are bigger than dogs* vs. *Dogs are less big than horses*) and the possibility of usage of any of the antonyms as the parameter (“bigness” or “smallness”) there is a rivalry of eight expressions with the same assertion of inequality.

In the light of the markedness of comparative of inferiority described in the previous section the comparative constructions of superiority are considered to be the default comparative constructions. Comparative of inferiority is seen as a “last resort”

that is used when the usage of comparative of superiority is impeded (or “blocked”) by factors of diverse nature. There are two types of blocking: “blocking of the conversive” (the need for the appearance of the particular referent in the position of comparee) and “blocking of the antonym” (the need for the usage of a particular member of an antonymic pair as the parameter of comparison). Essentially, it means that the comparative of inferiority is used when a particular referent needs to be described through a particular parameter. Blocking of a conversive is mostly related to the factors of a discursive nature and blocking of an antonym is mostly induced by the semantic features of an antonymic pair.

### 5.1. Discursive functions

Comparative may be seen as a type of valency-increasing operation because a new participant, namely, the standard of comparison, is added to the situation expressed by a positive (Plungyan 2011: 208). Comparative, then, is a source of the regular conversive formation. Jurij D. Apresyan distinguishes two kinds of conversives: lexical and grammatical ones. Both of them represent a shared category that reflects differences in the “logical accentuation” (Apresyan 1995: 257), i.e. reflects the distribution of the communicative ranks of the participants without changing the event structure (similar to the notion of function-changing operations in terms of Haspelmath, 2010: 236-237, but also includes non-grammatical oppositions). After the addition of a new participant the redistribution of communicative ranks becomes available. It can be employed either lexically with an antonym (28.b) or grammatically, with the same lexeme, through the comparative of inferiority (28.c).

(28) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Vanja* ***vyš-e*** *čem* *Petja*  
*Vanja* **tall-‘more’** than *Petja*  
 ‘Vanja is taller than Petja’
- b. *Petja* ***niž-e*** *čem* *Vanja*  
*Petja* **short-‘more’** than *Vanja*  
 ‘Petja is shorter than Vanja’
- c. *Vanja* ***meneje*** ***vysokij*** *čem* *Petja*  
*Vanja* **less** **tall** than *Petja*  
 ‘Vanja is less tall than Petja’

In this sense, the opposition of superiority and inferiority resembles the voice oppositions. Semantic, syntactic and communicative linking for the voice opposition in Russian can be conveniently demonstrated with the following tables (Table 1 and Table 2).

(29) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Raboč-ije*            *strojat*            *škol-u*  
 worker-NOM.PL        build                school-ACC.SG  
 ‘The workers build the school’

Table 1		
Semantic role	Agent	Patient
Syntactic function	Subject	(Nondirect) object
Communicative rank	Higher	Lower

Table 1: ‘The workers build the school’.

- b. *Škol-a*                *stroit-sja*            *raboč-imi*  
 school-NOM.SG        build-REFL            worker-INS.PL  
 ‘The school is built by workers’

Table 2		
Semantic role	Patient	Agent
Syntactic function	Subject	(Nondirect) object
Communicative rank	Higher	Lower

Table 2: ‘The school is built by workers’.

However, it is rather difficult to describe the arguments of a comparative construction in terms of either semantic roles or syntactic functions. For example, in Russian an adjective in comparative construction may appear both in an attributive and in a predicative function, and in the latter case both the comparee and the standard appear in the nominative case (30). In the attributive function an adjective can modify a



noun that is not the subject of the sentence. In this case the comparee is not the subject and is not marked by nominative (the comparee is marked by dative in (31)), while the standard still appears in nominative.

(30) Russian (Indo-European)

Vmeste s tem taktičeskije **raznoglasija** na etot sčet  
Together with this tactic **disagreements** on this issue  
gorazdo meneje važny dlja nas čem **obščnost'** strategičeskix  
far less important for us than **community** strategic  
interesov Rossii i SŠA.  
Interests Russia and USA

'At the same time the tactic **disagreement** on this issue is far less important for us than **common strategic interests** of Russia and the USA' [RNC]

(31) Russian (Indo-European)

Noxo rešyl čto prežnije ugodja volki ostavili **komu-to** boleje  
Noxo decided that old land wolves left **someone** more  
sil'nomu, čem **golod**.  
strong than **hunger**

'Noxo decided that wolves left the old land for **someone** who is stronger than **hunger**' [RNC]

Therefore, the notions of semantic roles and syntactic functions are not particularly helpful in the case of the comparative constructions. What is important here is the redistribution of communicative ranks behind the redistribution of syntactic functions (Plungyan 2011: 185–191) – a procedure that is applicable to the comparative constructions, given that the comparee and the standard are defined in communicative terms. The comparee (defined here as the referent which is described through the comparison) has the highest communicative rank in a comparative construction, while the standard has the lowest. Parallel to the agent-backgrounding operations, comparative of inferiority may be defined as a “comparee-backgrounding” operation. It can be illustrated by the tables parallel to the ones for the voice alternations (Table 3 and Table 4).

(32) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Vanja boleje vysokij čem Petja*  
 Vanja **more tall** than Petja  
 ‘Vanja is more tall than Petja’

Table 3		
Referent	Has the property to a <b>higher</b> degree	Has the property to a <b>lower</b> degree
Component of the comparative construction	Comparee	Standard
Communicative rank	Higher	Lower

Table 3: ‘Vanja is more tall than Petja’.

- b. *Petja meneje vysokij čem Vanja*  
 Petja **less tall** than Vanja  
 ‘Petja is less tall than Vanja’

Table 4		
Referent	Has the property to a <b>lower</b> degree	Has the property to a <b>higher</b> degree
Component of the comparative construction	Comparee	Standard
Communicative rank	Higher	Lower

Table 4: ‘Petja is less tall than Vanja’.

Consequently, the comparative of inferiority may serve functions similar to that of a derived voice. For example, the comparative of inferiority may be used for the change of topic (topic understood here as the referent that is “intended to persist in the

subsequent discourse” Givón 2020: 113), as in examples (33) (previous topic – other kinds of Lagomorphs) and (34) (previous topic – another type of transport).

(33) Russian (Indo-European)

*Meneje izvestnyje predstaviteli zajtseobraznyx piščuxi Oni mel'č-e*  
Less known specimen Lagomorphs pikas they small-‘more’

*zajtsev ushki i lapki u nix koroč-e.*  
hares ears and legs at they short-‘more’

‘Pikas are a less known kind of Lagomorphs. They are smaller than hares and their ears and legs are shorter’ [RNC]

(34) Russian (Indo-European)

*Vozdušnyj že transport v etom smysle meneje privlekatelen.*  
Air PTCL transportation in this sense less appealing

‘Air transportation is less appealing in that regard’ [RNC]

At the same time, the comparative of inferiority may serve an opposite function, i.e. it may be used for keeping the topic. This is the “blocking of the conversive” mentioned before: the comparative of inferiority is used to keep the particular participant in the position of the comparee because of the participant’s high topicality. The following examples are retrieved from encyclopedias: in an encyclopedia the topic of a particular article is identified clearly and should not be changed (example (35) is from an article about anaerobiosis, (36) from an article on rheas, (37) from an article about Germany).

(35) Russian (Indo-European)

*poetomu anaerobioz kak tip obmena veščestv*  
therefore anaerobios as type exchange substances

*meneje effectiveň čem aerobioz*  
less effective than aerobiosis

‘[...] this is why anaerobiosis as a type of metabolism is less effective than aerobiosis’ [RNC]

## (36) Russian (Indo-European)

*Nandu ptitsy vneshne poxožie na strausov no sostavljajuščie*  
 Rheas birds externally similar on ostriches but constituting  
*samostojatel'nyj otrad. Oni meneje jarkije i pomen'sh-e*  
 separate order **they less** colorfull and small-‘more’  
*strausov*  
 ostriches

‘rheas look like ostriches, but are considered to be a separate order. They are less colorful and smaller than ostriches’ [RNC]

## (37) Russian (Indo-European)

*Torgovlya aktsijami kompanij gorazdo meneje razvita*  
**Trading stock companies far less developed**  
*čem v anslosaksonskix stranax*  
 than in **Anglo-Saxon countries**

‘The stock trading (in Germany) is far less developed than in the Anglo-Saxon countries’ [RNC]

For example, it would be quite questionable to make Anglo-Saxon countries the comparee and to use the comparative of superiority in (37) (‘The stock trading in the Anglo-Saxon countries is more developed than in Germany’) when the topic of the article is Germany.<sup>7</sup>

The usage of the comparative of inferiority in coreferential comparison (defined as comparative construction where “the comparee and the standard are the same object described at different stages” (Knjazev 2007: 208) can be motivated by topicality as well, as there may be a need for accentuating the earlier or the later state of affairs. The topic in (38), the condition after drinking alcohol, not before, while in (39) it is the state of affairs earlier in history.

---

<sup>7</sup> The comparative of superiority would be appropriate if there were no need to maintain the topicality of Germany (for example, if the article were about stock trading and the author would like to move on to description of the stock trading in other countries). In this case the comparative of superiority would serve to change the topic – the function, discussed earlier for the comparative of inferiority. An anonymous reviewer points out that these functions of keeping and changing the topic, therefore, are not exclusive for the comparative of inferiority, which is absolutely correct. Nevertheless, the goal of this Section is to explore the distribution of the comparative of inferiority rather than to pinpoint its unique features.

(38) Russian (Indo-European)

<i>Nemedlennoe</i>	<i>dejstvije</i>	<i>alkogola</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>organizm</i>	<i>čeloveka</i>
Immediate	effect	alcohol	on	organism	human
<i>xorošo izvestno.</i>	<i>Posle prinatii 2-3</i>	<i>portsyi</i>	<i>alkogola</i>	<i>zrenije</i>	
well known	after taking	portions	alcohol	<b>vision</b>	
<i>stanovitsja</i>	<i>menee</i>	<i>četkim i</i>	<i>jasnym</i>	<i>a reč</i>	
becomes	<b>less</b>	<b>precise and clear</b>		and speech	
<i>nevnatnoj</i>	<i>uxudšaetsja</i>	<i>koordinatsija</i>	<i>dviženij</i>		
unintelligible	worsens	coordination	actions		

‘The immediate effect of the alcohol on the human body is well-known. After 2-3 drinks the vision becomes less clear, the speech becomes unintelligible and the coordination worsens’ [essilor.ru]

(39) Russian (Indo-European)

<i>Narod</i>	<i>prosveščalsja</i>	<i>imenno</i>	<i>sozertsaja</i>	<i>steny</i>	<i>knižnaja</i>	<i>miniatura</i>
People	educated	exactly	looking	walls	<b>book</b>	<b>miniature</b>
<i>takže</i>	<i>kak</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>sama</i>	<i>kniga</i>	<i>byla</i>	<i>gorazdo meneje dostupnoj</i>
as.well as	as	and	itself	book	was far	<b>less accessible</b>

‘People educated themselves by looking at the walls because book miniatures, just like books, were far less accessible (than nowadays)’ [RNC]

Thus, on one hand, comparatives of superiority and inferiority reflect different communicative ranks of the participants, and, therefore, the comparative of inferiority may be used for changing the topic. On the other hand, the comparative of inferiority may function as a way to keep the topic. Either way, the discursive factors play a crucial role in the use of comparative constructions.

## 5.2. Semantic reasons

Here and further, I present some results of the statistical analysis performed on a sample of texts from Russian National Corpus (all texts were written after 1945).

The usage of comparative of superiority may be impeded by the features of the antonymic pair. Firstly, the most obvious reason for the blocking of the use of an antonym is the absence of a readily available antonym (40).

## (40) Russian (Indo-European)

*Mne kažetsja v otličije ot kotov koški meneje*  
 To.me seems in difference from male.cats female.cats less  
*svobodolubivye bol'se strematsja k domašnemu ujutu*  
**freedom-loving** more seeks to indoor coziness

'I feel like female cats, unlike male cats, are less freedom-loving, they seek the home coziness' [RNC]

## (40') Russian (Indo-European)

*Koški ?-ee / boleje ?*  
 Female.cats ?-'more' / more ?  
 'female cats are ?-er/ more ?'

Therefore, the absence of an antonym is analyzed as a possible condition in which the usage of the comparative of inferiority rises. As shown in Table 5, corpus data showed that this prediction is supported in the case of the negation of equative ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p=0.028$ ), but not in the case of the comparative of inferiority with *meneje*.<sup>8</sup>

Table 5		
	Comparative of superiority	Negated equative
Adjectives with no antonym	318 (95.50%)	15 (4.50%)
Adjectives with an antonym	1766 (97.62%)	43 (2.38%)
Sum	2084 (97.29%)	58 (2.71%)

Table 5: Adjectives with no antonym.

Secondly, pairs of morphological antonyms were analysed using the same data. These kind of pairs are quite heterogeneous in respect to their semantic features (Joshi 2012). While some antonyms seem to be quite interchangeable in comparative constructions (41), others do not (42).

<sup>8</sup> A readily available antonym was considered absent if there were no antonym in the AntonymsDictionary (database comprised of four Russian antonyms dictionary): <http://web-corpora.net/wsgi/antonyms.wsgi/antonyms>.

(41) Russian (Indo-European)

*Osnovnaja           zadača           sdelat'   vstavki   vozmožno   meneje*  
Main               goal           make   insertions possible   less  
*zametnymi*  
visible

'the main goal is to make the insertions as less visible as possible' [RNC]

(41') Russian (Indo-European)

*sdelat'   vstavki           vozmožno   boleje   nezametnymi*  
make   insertions       possible   more   invisible

'to make the insertions as more invisible as possible'

(42) Russian (Indo-European)

*vozmožno iz-za                   meneje   kačestvennogo   snaraženija*  
possible because.of       less   high-quality   equipment  
*nam   prixoditsja ispytyvat'   bol'sije   fizičeskije   nagruzki   čem*  
we   have.to   undergo   big.more   physical   excertion   than  
*našim   kollegam   na   Zapade*  
our   colleagues on   East

'it is possible that, because the quality of our equipment is lower (lit. because of less high-quality equipment) we undergo more physical exertion than our western colleagues' [RNC]

(42') Russian (Indo-European)

? *iz-za                   boleje   nekačestvennogo   snaraženija*  
because.of       more not-high-quality   equipment

Lit. 'because of more not-high-quality equipment'<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> There is no equivalent morphological antonymic pair in English for Russian *kačestvennyj/nekačestvennyj* 'high-quality'/ 'not-high-quality', but consider the difference between *less pleasant music* and *more unpleasant music*.

Meanwhile, corpus data shows that in pairs of morphological antonyms the proportion of comparative of inferiority is higher than in other cases ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ; cf. Table 6).<sup>10</sup>

Table 6		
	Comparative of superiority	Comparative with <i>meneje</i> and negated equative
Adjectives with morphological antonym	830 (90.41%)	88 (9.59%)
Other adjectives	1254 (93.93%)	81 (6.07%)
Sum	2084 (92.50%)	169 (7.50%)

Table 6: Adjectives with morphological antonym (number of lexemes)

This fact is interesting in the light of the derivation of the comparative of inferiority proposed in Bobaljik (2012): the author suggests that the comparative of inferiority is formed when the reversing operator (or negator) fails to merge with the adjective. If it were the case, the pair of antonyms like *pleasant* and *unpleasant* would not be expected to appear in the comparative of inferiority: the operator is overtly merged with the adjective. The analysis shows that Russian data does not support this derivation as these kinds of pairs, on the opposite, appear to be one of the conditions for the higher rate on the comparative of inferiority.

Thirdly, the influence of the class of adjective pair in terms of the classification proposed in Bierwisch (1989) on the choice of the construction was analysed. The author makes a distinction between dimensional (*tall*, *narrow*) and evaluative (*smart*, *lazy*) adjectives. Pairs of evaluative adjectives cannot be used for describing the same situation because they localize their referents on different scales. The pair in (43) seems to be more interchangeable than the pair in (44).

(43) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Vanja* *vyš-e* *čem* *Petja*  
*Vanja* tall-‘more’ than *Petja*

<sup>10</sup> The adjective was defined as only having a morphological antonym if, firstly, no lexical antonyms were found in the AntonymDictionary database and, secondly, a morphological antonym was found in more than five texts in the main corpus of RNC (so as to filter the cases of occasional word formation).



‘Vanja is taller than Petja’

- b. *Petja niž-e čem Vanja*  
 Petja short-‘more’ than Vanja  
 ‘Petja is shorter than Vanja’

(44) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Vanja umn-eje čem Petja*  
 Vanja smart-‘more’ than Petja  
 ‘Vanja is smarter than Petja’
- b. *Petja glup-eje čem Vanja*  
 Petja stupid-‘more’ than Vanja  
 ‘Petja is stupider than Vanja’<sup>11</sup>

These limitations are considered to be the cases of potential blocking of an antonym. Therefore, it is predicted that pairs of evaluative adjectives appear in the comparative constructions of inferiority more frequently than pairs of parametric adjectives (Table 7).<sup>12</sup> Corpus data support this prediction (Fisher’s exact test,  $p = 0.01252$ ).<sup>13</sup>

Table 7		
	Comparative of superiority	Comparative with <i>meneje</i> and negated equative
Dimensional adjectives	1176 (99.32%)	8 (0.68%)
Evaluative adjectives	315 (95.74%)	14 (4.26%)
Sum	1491 (98.54%)	22 (1.46%)

<sup>11</sup> Note a similar comment in a grammar of Basque when discussing the comparative of inferiority and the possibility of the use of the comparative of superiority with an antonym: “I will close this subsection with the important observation that Basque possesses no comparatives denoting inferiority in quality. In particular, there is no straightforward way of rendering the English sentence *Mary is less pretty than Eve*. Since *Miren Eba baino itsusiagoa da* ‘Mary is uglier than Eve’ won’t do, the only possibility is to resort to a negated equative: *Miren ez da Eba bezain polita* ‘Mary is not as pretty as Eve’” (de Rijk 2008: 713-714).

<sup>12</sup> This prediction in other terms is also formulated in Apresyan (1995: 266).

<sup>13</sup> The evaluation of the pair of adjectives regarding the opposition of evaluative and dimensional adjectives is rather convoluted. The details of this process can be found in Modina (2020).

**Table 7:** Parametric and evaluative adjectives (number of tokens)

To sum up, it can be said that the semantic features of a pair of antonyms (availability of an antonym, its morphological structure, its semantic class) influence the choice of a comparative construction.

### ***5.3. Lexical factors***

At the same time, it is possible that the factors that cannot be described in terms of blocking have an impact on the choice of the comparative construction as well. In particular, the high frequency of constructions of superiority may partially stem from the connection of those constructions to the high-frequency lexemes.

Firstly, the analysis of the corpus data showed that the distribution of constructions by lexemes is not homogeneous, i.e. different constructions are used with different lexemes. Though this finding may seem trivial, in fact it is not: if the low frequency was just a feature of the comparative of inferiority, it would mean that every adjective appears in the comparative on inferiority in about 5% of the cases (as the whole proportion of the comparative of inferiority is about 4.7%). Non-homogeneity shows that the lexeme itself is a factor that affects the distribution of the constructions.

Secondly, the comparative of superiority establishes closer links with lexemes than comparative of inferiority because even the lexemes with the highest proportions of appearance as the part of the comparative of inferiority (such as *zametnyj* 'notable' that has the highest rates for the construction of inferiority and the negated construction of equality) are used in those constructions in less than 50% of the cases. At the same time, the lexemes with the highest rates for the comparative of superiority are used in them almost exclusively, having the percentage of appearance close to 100%. The results, of course, are limited by the data analysed, but even these preliminary results demonstrate the differences between the constructions in question.

The distribution of constructions is connected to the frequency of the lexeme in such a way that the most frequent adjectives<sup>14</sup> tend to appear in the constructions of superiority ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Table 8).

---

<sup>14</sup> Top 100 adjective lexemes by frequency based on the frequency dictionary Lyashevskaya & Sharoff (2009).

Table 8		
Table	Comparative of superiority	Comparative of inferiority
Top 100 adjective lexemes by frequency	2363 (97.93%)	50 (2.07%)
Other lexemes	2086 (92.51%)	169 (7.49%)
Sum	4449 (95.31%)	219 (4.69%)

**Table 8:** Top 100 lexemes by frequency (number of tokens).

This connection of the comparative of superiority to the high frequency of a lexeme partially explains why comparison of superiority appears in texts more often than the comparison of inferiority. Nevertheless, even without high-frequency lexemes the proportion of the comparative of inferiority is still much smaller than the proportion of the comparative of superiority (7.49% vs 92.51%).

#### 5.4. Pragmatic features

In a number of researches on the comparative in Russian it has been argued that the analytical comparative of superiority has a positive degree in the presupposition in contrast to the synthetic comparative of superiority (e.g. Mel'čuk 1998: 123; Grashchenkov & Lyutikova 2017: 124-125). That is 'Vanja is more tall than Petja' have the presupposition 'Petja is tall'.

Those investigations do not specify any pragmatic features of the comparative of inferiority (only a brief comment on the comparative with *meneje* is given in Grashchenkov & Lyutikova 2017: 125). It is worth noting that in the literature on the presuppositions equative is mentioned as one of the triggers of the presupposition (Levinson 1983: 183), i.e. 'Vanja is as tall as Petja' has the presupposition 'Petja is tall'. If it is true, the presupposition should hold for the negated equative which is considered here as an instance of the comparative of inferiority. The presence of a presupposition can influence the relative frequency of the usage of different comparative constructions, because presupposition naturally narrows down the amount of the contexts in which the utterance is possible.

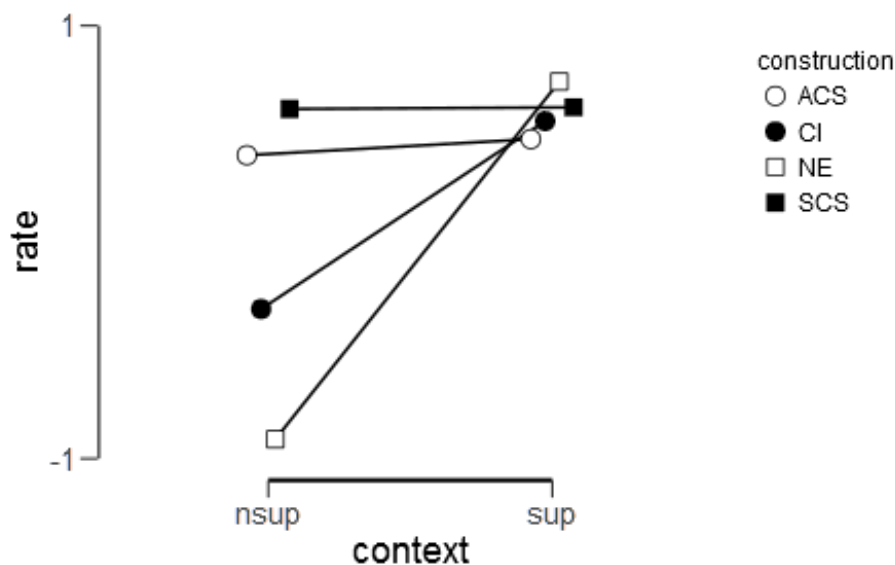
Aforementioned suggestions have not been tested on any experimental data. To test the hypothesis of pragmatic opposition of comparative constructions in Russian an acceptability judgment experiment was carried out. The hypothesis behind the test was that if a construction has a presupposition then an utterance with such a construction will have significantly lower acceptability rates in the case that the context does not support this presupposition. E.g. if the negated equative has presupposition of the positive degree for the standard, than the utterance (45a) should get lower rates than the utterance (45b).

(45) Russian (Indo-European)

- a. *Pervoje zdanije ne vysokoje. Vtoroe zdanije ne takoje vysokoje*  
 first building NEG tall second building NEG so tall  
*kak pervoje*  
 as first  
 ‘The first building is **not** tall. The second building is not as tall as the first one’
- b. *Pervoje zdanije vysokoje. Vtoroje zdanije ne takoje vysokoje*  
 first building tall second building NEG so tall  
*kak pervoje*  
 as first  
 ‘The first building is tall. The second building is not as tall as the first one’

The details of the experiment and thorough discussion can be found in Modina (2020). Here I report only the results relevant to the topic of the current paper (see Fig. 1). 146 respondents completed the survey, where they were asked to rate the acceptability of the utterances (32 target sentences and 32 fillers) on a Likert scale (from 1 to 5).

The analysis showed that synthetic and analytical comparative of superiority do not have a positive degree for the standard of comparison in presupposition: the rates of the utterances in the verifying and falsifying context do not differ significantly (Student’s t-test,  $p = 0.781$  and Mann-Whitney U-test,  $p = 0.052$ ). Nevertheless, the p-value in the case of analytical comparative of superiority is pretty close to the threshold of 0.05, reflecting the mixed intuitions found in the literature.



**Figure 1:** Mean rates of the target sentences. The rates are z-transformed. ACS – analytical comparative of superiority (*boleje vysokij* ‘more tall’), CI – comparative of inferiority with *meneje* (*meneje vysokij* ‘less tall’), NE – negated equative (*ne takoj vysokij kak* ‘not as tall as’), SCS – synthetic comparative of superiority (*vyše* ‘taller’); nsup – falsifying context, sup – verifying context.

Since the rates of utterances in verifying and falsifying context differ significantly in the case of comparative of inferiority (Mann-Whitney U-test,  $p < 0.001$ ) it can be said that the comparative of inferiority has the positive degree for the standard of comparison in presupposition. Consequently, the comparative of inferiority can be used in a smaller amount of contexts. This fact can partially account for the rarity of the comparative of inferiority in Russian.

In the situation of rivalry, members of the opposition can develop additional aspects of differentiation (Andersen 1983: 119). Marked members can start to serve additional functions that will keep them used in certain situations. From this perspective, the existence of the presupposition in the case of comparative of inferiority may motivate speakers to use these constructions. By using them, a speaker can give additional information about the standard of comparison.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Note a similar observation on the pragmatic features of one type of the comparative constructions in Amis: “Another intriguing observation on *ikaka/isafa* comparatives is their pragmatic implication. The usage of *ikaka/isafa* comparatives not only asserts the truth condition of the comparison, but also provides the speaker’s judgment regarding the degree of the property of comparison for the compared entities” (Kuo & Sung 2010: 35).

In the following example the information “two previous lines were wide” is conveyed by the usage of the comparative of inferiority *ne takije širokije* ‘less wide’ instead of the comparison of superiority such as *boleje uzkiye* ‘more narrow’.

(46) Russian (Indo-European)

<i>Neskol'ko raz</i>	<i>doroga peresekala ešče</i>	<i>polosy černoj</i>	<i>Gobi soveršenno</i>
Several times	road crossed	again lines black	Gobi completely
<i>besplodnoj</i>	<i>no ne</i>	<i>takije širokije</i>	<i>kak dve uže</i>
barren	but NEG	so wide	as two already
<i>projdennyje</i>	<i>tak čto</i>	<i>my proxodili ix</i>	<i>v odin nočnoj</i>
<b>crossed</b>	so that	we crossed	them in one night
<i>perexod</i>			
crossing			

‘The road crossed the lines of black and totally barren Gobi Desert several more times, but these lines were not as wide as the two previous ones, so we passed through them in one night’ [RNC]

Apparently, pragmatic characteristics of comparative construction come from an interaction of different factors. The pragmatic opposition can be a feature of constructions, types of adjectives or classes of antonym pairs and the overlap of these aspects needs to be investigated further. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the pragmatic features of the comparative of inferiority are different from those of the comparative of superiority and can both limit and provoke the usage of the former.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to underline that the description of the comparative of inferiority is a challenge even within one language due to the low frequency of the phenomenon. Most of the issues connected with the comparative of inferiority are not exhaustively discussed even on the data of well-known languages.

It is no wonder that this type of comparison hardly gets described in grammars, as the low frequency makes the elicitation difficult even in the case of the specific markers of inferiority. The markers that are derived are naturally quite often analysed as compositional, and the subtlety of semantic differences between the comparative of inferiority and other units (other constructions of comparison with negation,

morphological antonyms) do not serve the description of comparison well. Nevertheless, the relations between the comparative of inferiority and other phenomena allow us to ask a great amount of questions about the comparative of inferiority and comparison in general, so the researchers are encouraged to devote more attention to it.

The aspects of use of comparative constructions, even when examined thoroughly, do not seem to be easily identifiable and clear-cut. Still, it is precisely the rarity of the comparative of inferiority that makes it interesting and important: if so rare and seemingly redundant, why at all present? This is the question that was partially examined in this paper and that seeks further investigation.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback. I am also greatly indebted to Dmitry Gerasimov and Artemii Kuznetsov for their valuable comments.

## Abbreviations

1 = first person	DECL = declarative	NAR = narrative register
2 = second person	DEM = demonstrative	NCM = non-common name
3 = third person	DEM.DIST = distal	marker
A = subject of transitive	demonstrative	NEG = negation
verb	DEM.PROX = proximal	NOM = nominative
ABL = ablative	demonstrative	NP = noun phrase
ACT = active	DIM = diminutive	OBJ = object
AF = actor focus	FEM = feminine	OBL = oblique
AI = animate subject,	GEN = genitive	PAST = past
intransitive verb stem	IC = initial change	PERF = peripheral
AOR = aorist	IMP = imperfective aspect	(argument)
AUX = auxiliary	INCL = inclusive of the	PL = plural
ASSERT = assertive	addressee(s)	POSS = possessive
ATT = attributive	INF = infinitive	PRED = predicate
B = cross-referenced	INS = instrumental	PTCL = particle
argument, class b	LK = linker	REFL = reflexive
CLF = classifier	LOC = locative	SUB = subordinating
CMPR = comparative	MASC = masculine	conjunction

SUBJ = subject of  
intransitive verb  
SG = singular

SP = Spanish loanword  
TOP = topic

VCC = verbless clause  
complement  
VSC = verbless copula

## References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2018. Comparison, Contrast and Similarity in Yalaku. *Linguistic Discovery* 16(1). 162-182.
- Álvarez, José. 2005. Comparative constructions in Guajiro/Wayuunaiki. *Opción* 21(47). 9–36.
- Andersen, Paul K. 1983. *Word Order Typology and Comparative Constructions*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Apresjan, Jurij D. (Апресян, Юрий Д.) 1995. *Izbrannye trudy, tom I. Leksicheskaja semantika* (Избранные труды. Том 1. Лексическая семантика. Синонимические средства языка) [Selected papers, Vol. 1, Lexical Semantics]. Moscow: Jazyki Russkoj Kul'tury.
- Bacelar, Laércio Nora. 2004. *Gramática da língua Kanoê*. PhD dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.
- Bierwisch, Manfred. 1989. The semantics of gradation. In Manfred Bierwisch & Ewald Lang (eds.), *Dimensional Adjectives*, 71-261. Berlin: Springer.
- Biondi, Roberto Zariquiey. 2011. *A grammar of Kashibo-Kakataibo*. PhD Dissertation, LaTrobe University.
- Blench, Roger. 2009. *Bura grammar for a beginner*. Bura Language and Bible Translation Project.
- Bliese, Loren F. 1977. *A generative grammar study of Afar*. PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Arlington.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan D. 2012. *Universals in Comparative Morphology Suppletion, Superlatives, and the Structure of Words*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.
- Bogal-Allbritten, Elizabeth & Coppock, Elizabeth. 2020. *Quantification, Degrees, and Beyond in Navajo*. In Peter Hallman (ed.), *Interactions of Degree and Quantification*, 121–162. Leiden: Brill.
- Caron, Bernard. 2017. Comparison, similarity and simulation in Zaar. In Yvonne Treis & Martine Vanhove (eds.), *Similitive and Equative Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Perspective*, 169–188. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.



- Chamoreau, Claudine. 2007. Grammatical borrowing in Purepecha. In Yaron Matras & Jeanette Sakel (eds.), *Grammatical borrowing in cross-linguistic perspective*, 465–480. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Chirkova, Katia. 2019. Comparison constructions in Lizu (Tibeto-Burman). *Faits de Langues - Les Cahiers*. Paris: Ophrys.
- Coupe, Alexander R. 2007. *A Grammar of Mongsen Ao*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Cowell, Andrew & Moss, Sr. Alonzo. 2008. *The Arapaho language*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.
- Cuzzolin, Pierluigi & Lehmann, Christian. 2004. Comparison and gradation. In Geert Booij, Christian Lehmann, Joachim Mugdan & Stavros Skopeteas (eds.), *Morphologie. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Flexion und Wortbildung, 1857-1882*. Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter.
- Dedric, John M. & Casad, Eugene H. 1999. *Sonora Yaqui language structures*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Dixon, R. M. W. 2012. *Basic Linguistic Theory. Volume 3. Further Grammatical Topics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen & Giurgea, Ion. 2013. *A Reference Grammar of Romanian. Volume 1: The noun phrase*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Estigarribia, Bruno. 2020. *A Grammar of Paraguayan Guarani*. London: ULC Press.
- Gawron, Jean Mark. 1995. Comparatives, Superlatives and Resolution. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 18. 333-380.
- Gerner, Matthias. 2013. *A Grammar of Nuosu*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Givón, Talmy. 1991. Markedness in grammar: Distributional, communicative and cognitive correlates of syntactic structure. *Studies in Language* 15(2). 335-370.
- Givón, Talmy. 2020. *Coherence*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gorshenin, Maksym. 2012. The crosslinguistics of the superlative. In Cornelia Stroh (ed.), *Neues aus der Bremer Linguistikwerkstatt: Aktuelle Themen und Projekte* 31, 55-160. Bochum: Brockmeyer.
- Grashchenkov, Pavel V. & Lyutikova Ekaterina A. (Гращенко, Павел В., Лютикова, Екатерина А.) 2017. О синтаксисе сравнительного в русском языке (О синтаксисе компаратива в русском языке) [Syntax of the comparative in Russian]. *Русский язык в научном освещении (Russian Language and Linguistic Theory)* 1(33). 116–141.

- Haspelmath, Martin. 2006. Against markedness (and what to replace it with). *Journal of Linguistics* 42. 25–70.
- Haspelmath, Martin & Sims, Andrea D. 2010. *Understanding Morphology*. 2nd edn. London: Hodder Education.
- Haspelmath, Martin and the Leipzig Equative Constructions Team. 2017. Equative constructions in world-wide perspective. In Yvonne Treis & Martine Vanhove (eds.), *Similitive and Equative Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Perspective*, 9-32. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Heath, Jeffrey. 1999. *A Grammar of Koyra Chiini, the Songhay of Timbuktu*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Heine, Bernd. 1997. *Cognitive Foundations of Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hilpert, Martin. The English comparative – language structure and language use. *English Language and Linguistics* 12(3). 395-417.
- Honkasalo, Sami. 2019. A Grammar of Eastern Geshiza: A Culturally Anchored Description. PhD Dissertation, University of Helsinki.
- Hoorens, Vera & Bruckmüller, Susanne. 2015. Less is more? Think again! A cognitive fluency-based more–less asymmetry in comparative communication. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 109(5). 753-766.
- Jamieson, Carole. 1988. Gramática Mazateca: Mazateco de Chiquihuitlán de Juárez. México: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano.
- Joshi, Shrikant. 2012. Affixal Negation – Direct, Indirect and their Subtypes. *Syntaxe & Sémantique* 13. 49-63.
- Князев, Юрий П. (Князев, Юрий П.) 2007. *Grammaticheskaja semantika* (Грамматическая семантика) [*Grammar Semantics*]. Moscow: Jazyki Russkoj Kul'tury.
- Kosheleva, Daria. 2016. Rival Forms of Comparatives in Russian. *Poljarnyj vestnik, Norwegian Journal of Slavic Studies* 19. 42–50.
- Kritka, Manfred. 2007. Negated Antonyms: Creating and Filling the Gap. In Uli Sauerland & Penka Stateva (eds.) *Presupposition and Implicature in Compositional Semantics*, 163–177. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Kuo, Cheng-Chuen and Sung, Li-May. 2010. On the syntax of Amis comparative constructions. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics* 36. 25–57.

- Larajasse, Evangeliste de & Sampont, Cyprien de. 1897. *Practical grammar of the Somali language, with a manual of sentences*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
- Lefebvre, Claire & Brousseau, Anne-Marie. 2002. *A Grammar of Fongbe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1995. *Reference Grammar of Amharic*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, Charles & Thompson, Sandra. 1983. A Grammatical description of Xuwen: A colloquial dialect of Lei-zhou Peninsula (Part I). *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* 13(1). 3–21.
- Lewis, Geoffrey L. 1967. *Turkish Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lyashevskaya, Olga N. & Sharoff, Sergej A. (Ляшевская, Ольга Н. & Шаров, Сергей А.) 2009. *Novyj častotnyj slovar' russkoj leksiki* (Новый частотный словарь русской лексики) [New frequency dictionary of Russian lexicon]. Available online at: <http://dict.ruslang.ru/freq.php>.
- Lytkin, Vasily I. (Лыткин, Василий И.) (ed.) 1955. *Sovremennyj komi jazyk* (Современный коми язык) [*Modern Komi*]. Syktyvkar: Komi knizhное izdatel'stvo.
- Mel'čuk, Igor A. (Мельчук, Игорь А.) 1998. *Kurs obščej morfologii. T. II* (Курс общей морфологии, Т. II) [General morphology course of. Vol. II]. Moscow–Vienna: Языки русской культуры–Wiener Slawistischer Almanach.
- Miyaoka, Osahito. 2012. *A grammar of Central Alaskan Yupik: An Eskimo Language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Modina, Valeria V. (Модина, Валерия В.) 2020. *Inferiornye konstruksii v kontekste konkurentsii komparativnyh konstruksij s prilagatel'nymi v sovremennom rusском языке* (Инфериорные конструкции в контексте конкуренции компаративных конструкций с прилагательными в современном русском языке) [Comparative of inferiority in the context of the rivalry of comparative constructions with adjectives in Modern Russian]. Master's Thesis, St. Petersburg State University.
- Newman, Paul. 2000. *The Hausa Language: An Encyclopedic Reference Grammar*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Nonato, Rafael B. 2008. *Ainore Boe egore: um estudo descritivo da língua bororo*. Master's thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas
- Olawsky, Knut. 2006. *A Grammar of Urarina* [Mouton Grammar Library 37]. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Plungian, Vladimir A. (Плунгян, Владимир А.) 2011. *Vvedenie v grammatičeskiju semantiku* (Общая морфология: Введение в проблематику) [Introduction to the grammar semantics]. Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities.
- Quesada, J. Diego. 2000. *A grammar of Teribe*. Munich: Lincom Europa.
- Rijk, Rudolf P. G., de. 2008. *Standard Basque: A Progressive Grammar*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Romero-Figueroa, Andrés. 1986. Warao\* Comparatives. *Studies in Language* 10. 97-108.
- Romero-Mendez, Rodrigo. 2008. *A reference grammar of Ayutla Mixe*. PhD Dissertation, University at Buffalo.
- Sandalo, Maria Filomena. 1995. *A Grammar of Kadiweu*. PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.
- Shvedova, Natalia Yu. (Шведова, Наталия Ю.) (ed.) 1980. *Russkaja grammatika. T. I* (Русская грамматика. Т. I) [Russian Grammar. Vol. I]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Stassen, Leon. 1985. *Comparison and Universal Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stolz, Thomas. 2013. *Competing Comparative Constructions in Europe*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Thomas, Guillaume. 2017. Comparison and the expression of degree in Mbyá Guaraní. In: Bruno Estigarribia & Justin Pinta (eds.). *Guarani Linguistics in the 21st Century*, 231–258. Leiden: Brill.
- Tjia, Johnny. 2007. *A Grammar of Mualang*. Utrecht: LOT.
- Treis, Yvonne. 2018. Comparative Constructions: An Introduction. *Linguistic Discovery* 16(1). i-xxvi.
- Treis, Yvonne. 2018. Comparison in Kambaata: Superiority, equality and similarity. *Linguistic Discovery* 16(1). 64–99.
- Ultan, Russell. 1972. Some features of basic comparative constructions. *Working Papers on Language Universals (Stanford)* 9. 117–162.
- Wojtylak, Katarzyna I. 2018. Comparative Constructions in Murui (Witotoan, Northwest Amazonia). *Linguistic Discovery* 16(1). 162-182.

**CONTACT**

[st072157@student.spbu.ru](mailto:st072157@student.spbu.ru)