

Comparative Sentences in Hui'an Southern Min¹

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1. Introduction

Comparison can be divided into three types: comparison of equality, comparison of inequality and superlative. In this paper, comparative sentences refer to those that express comparison of inequality. We only focus on the affirmative forms of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min, which is spoken in Hui'an County of Fujian province and belongs to the Quan-Zhang subgroup of Southern Min dialect family. The discussion here is based on the data from the Town of Luocheng, the county seat of Hui'an County. The data are collected mainly from two resources: (a) spoken data, i.e. natural occurring conversations and (b) field elicitation, i.e. the informants are asked to translate the Mandarin sentences into Hui'an Southern Min version.

Heine (1997) points out that superior comparatives are based on propositions consisting of the following five elements: comparee, predicate, degree marker, marker of standard and standard. The following is an example provided by Heine (1997).

(1) David is smarter than Bob.

In (1), *David* is the comparee, the item compared; *smart*, *-er*, *than* and *Bob* are the predicate, degree marker, marker of standard and standard, respectively.

In this paper, we adopt these five elements mentioned above. Moreover, we would like to introduce two other elements: (a) measure expression, denoting the amount or degree of difference between the comparee and the standard; (b) comparative aspect, denoting the specific aspect based on which one makes a comparison between the comparee and the standard. The example is given in (2).

(2) ua³ tsau³ pi³ i¹ kha^{ʔ6} ken³ man² tsue⁵
I run compare he comparatively fast very much
'I run much faster than him'

In (2), the comparee *ua³* 'I' and the standard *i¹* 'he' are compared in terms of running which is indicated by the comparative aspect *tsau³* 'run'; *man² tsue⁵* 'very much' is a measure expression, modifying the predicate *ken³* 'fast' and denoting the degree of difference between *ua³* 'I' and *i¹* 'he'.

According to the marker of standard, the affirmative forms of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min can mainly be classified into three types: (a) comparative sentences with the marker '*pi³*', i.e. 'comparee *pi³* standard *kha^{ʔ6}* predicate', in which *kha^{ʔ6}*

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² Hui'an Southern Min has seven citation tones, i.e. high level (*yinping*), low level (*yangping*), high rising (*yinshang*), low rising (*yangshang*), going (*qusheng*), high entering (*yinru*) and low entering (*yangru*), which are labeled by numerals 1 through 7. For example, '3' in '*ua³*' indicates high rising (*yinshang*). It should be noted, however, that sandhi tones are used in the examples when they are needed.

‘comparatively’ is a degree marker; (b) comparative sentences with the marker *khu5* ‘from’, i.e. ‘comparee predicate *khu5* standard’ and (c) comparative sentences without a marker of standard, i.e. ‘comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard’. It should be noted that type (a), i.e. ‘comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate’, is the dominating type of comparative sentences, since only this type is found in the spoken data we collected except one example of type (c) i.e. ‘comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard’.

Before presenting the organization of this paper, we would like to introduce the head-marking and dependent-marking put forward by Nichols (1986) and the framework of exploring comparative sentences proposed by Liu (2003). Nichols (1986) points out that morphological marking of grammatical relations may appear on either the head or the dependent member of the constituent (or on both, or on neither). The following is an example of dependent-marking and head-marking in Nichols (1986).

- (3) a. English the man’s house
 b. Hungarian az ember ház-a

In (3a), the possessive construction is marked by the genitive case on the dependent noun *man*. This is an example of dependent-marking. In (3b), the possessive construction is marked by a pronominal suffix on the head noun *ház* ‘house’. This is an example of head-marking. When the formal marking appears both on the head and dependent, it is double-marking.

Liu (2003) suggests that comparative sentences can be examined from the following four parameters: (i) the basic elements of comparative sentences, i.e. the comparee, predicate, standard and marker of standard; (ii) comparative expressions without a marker of standard; (iii) the marking direction of the marker of standard, i.e. whether the marker of standard is head-marking or dependent-marking; (iv) the positions of the standard and marker of standard, which is related to Greenberg UG 22 (shown in (4) below) and Dik’s Relator Principle (1997); and (v) the negative forms of comparative sentences.

(4) No. 22. If in comparisons of inequality the only order, or one of the alternative orders, is standard-marker-adjective, then the language is postpositional. With overwhelmingly more than chance frequency, if the only order is adjective-marker-standard, the language is prepositional.

In this paper, the three types of comparative sentences in Hui’an Southern Min will be examined based on the parameters (i) (iii) and (iv) mentioned above. In other words, in Section 2 below, the three types of comparative sentences will be discussed in terms of (a) the main elements of comparative sentences, including the five elements put forward by Heine (1997) and the two elements we suggested above (i.e. measure expression and comparative aspects); (b) the direction of marking, including the marking direction of the marker of standard and the degree marker; and (c) the ordering of the predicate, standard and marker of standard. In addition, the reason why there co-exist three types of comparative sentences will be discussed in Section 3. Section 4 will be a conclusion part, summarizing our basic findings and the research worthy of further studies.

2. Three types of comparative sentences

2. 1. Comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate

Before discussing this type of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min, we would like to first introduce the basic comparative sentences in Modern Mandarin, which also use 'pi3' (i.e. *bǐ* 比) as marker of standard, with a structure of 'comparée *bǐ* 比 standard predicate'. The example is given in (5).

- (5) wǒ bǐ nǐ gāo
 I compare you tall
 'I am taller than you'

In (5), *wǒ* 'I', *bǐ* 'compare', *nǐ* 'you' and *gāo* 'tall' are the comparée, marker of standard, standard and predicate, respectively.

This structure, in fact, also can be found in Hui'an Southern Min when the informants are asked to translate the Mandarin sentences into Hui'an Southern Min version, but can not be found in the spoken data we collected. In addition, all the examples of this structure can be replaced by 'comparée *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate', which is much more natural for the native speakers in Hui'an County. Thus, we suggest that the occurrence of 'comparée *pi3* standard predicate' in Hui'an Southern Min only dues to the influence of Modern Mandarin.

Thus, we focus on examining 'comparée *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' in this section. The following are two examples.

- (6) u4 pi3 bo2 khaʔ6 ho3
 have compare no comparatively good
 'Something is better than nothing'

- (7) tsit7 liu3 hue1 pi3 hit7 liu3 hue1 khaʔ sui3 tsit7 pa5 pə5
 this CL flower compare that CL flower comparatively beautiful one hundred times
 'This flower is one hundred times of beautiful than that one'

In examples (6) and (7), as with suffix '-er' and adverb 'more' in English, *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' is obligatorily used as degree marker to modify the predicate, i.e. *ho3* 'good' and *sui3* 'beautiful', in the pre-predicate position, which is head-marking. *Pi3* 'compare', as marker of standard, used to introduce the standard, is dependent-marking. Thus, 'comparée *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' is double-marking. In addition, the standard is put between the marker of standard and the predicate, i.e. 'marker of standard-standard-predicate', which is the same as that in 'comparée *bǐ* 比 standard predicate' in Modern Mandarin, but not compatible with Greenberg UG 22. Liu (2003) points out that this type of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min satisfies Dik's Relator Principle.

tsit7 pa5 pə5 'one hundred times' in (7) is a measure expression, denoting the degree of difference between the comparée *tsit7 liu3 hue1* 'this flower' and the standard *hit7 liu3 hue1* 'that flower'. The measure expression is optional, thus, can be absent as in (6).

The comparative aspect is covert in both (6) and (7), which can be deduced from the predicate. For example, *sui3* 'beautiful' in (7) indicates that the comparée *tsit7 liu3 hue1* 'this flower' and the standard *hit7 liu3 hue1* 'that flower' are compared in terms of the appearance.

When the comparative aspect is overt in this type of comparative sentences, it can be put in three different positions: (a) before the comparée, as in (8) below; (b) between the comparée and the marker of standard, as in (9) and (c) between the standard and the degree

³ Mandarin has four citation tones: *yinping*, *yangping*, *shangsheng* and *qusheng*, which are labeled by ˊ, ˋ, ˊˊ and ˋˋ, respectively.

marker, as in (10).

(8) *tsə5 tshia1 kŋ3-tsiu1 pi3 tsuan2-tsiu1 khaʔ6 ke1 si2-kan1*
take bus PN compare PN comparatively more time
'It takes more time to Guangzhou than to Quanzhou'

(9) *ua3 tha3 pi3 i1 khaʔ6 ho3*
I study compare he/she comparatively good
'I study better than him/her'

(10) *kən1-lin2 pi3 ku4-lin2 huaŋ1 khaʔ6 thau5*
this-year compare last-year wind comparatively strong
'The wind of this year is stronger than that of last year'

In (8), the comparative aspect *tsə5 tshia1* 'take bus' is put before the comparee *kŋ3-tsiu1* 'Guangzhou'. In (9), the comparative aspect *tha3* 'study' is between the comparee *ua3* 'I' and the marker of standard *pi3* 'compare'. In (10), the comparative aspect *huaŋ1* 'wind' is between the standard *ku4-lin2* 'last year' and the degree marker *khaʔ6* 'comparatively'. It can be seen that the comparative aspect is used as the topic in terms of its syntactic status. Thus, the positions of the comparative aspect also indicate the different positions of the topic in Hui'an Southern Min.

2.2. Comparee predicate *khu5* standard

This type of comparative sentences is restricted to compare between two demonstratives or demonstrative phrases in Hui'an Southern Min, as in (11).

(11) *tsait7 tua5 khu5 hai1*
this big from that
'This one is bigger than that one'

In (11), both the comparee and the standard are encoded by the demonstratives, i.e. *tsait7* 'this' and *hai1* 'that', respectively. In addition, *tua5* 'big' and *khu5* 'from' are the predicate and the marker of standard, respectively.

khu5 'from' used as marker of standard, can also be found in other Min dialects, e.g. in Eastern Min (Zhao, 2002) and Northern Min (Yuan, 1989), in which it also can be used to compare two persons. In Ancient Chinese, *khu5* 'from' (i.e. *qù* 去) can be used as a verb showing a comparison between two places. Thus, we suggest that the marker of standard *khu5* 'from' in Hui'an Southern Min, Eastern Min and Northern Min, grammaticalized from its use as a verb showing a comparison between two places.

The measure expression is absent, and the comparative aspect is covert in this type, since this type of comparative sentences has become less popular and is mainly used for encoding simple comparison of inequality.

khu5 'from', as marker of standard, is used to introduce the standard (e.g. *hai1* 'that' in (11)) which means that this type of comparative sentences is dependent-marking. In addition, different from 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate', in 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard', the marker of standard is put between the predicate and the standard, i.e. 'predicate-marker of standard-standard', which is not compatible with Greenberg UG 22.

2.3. Comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard

The following are four examples of this type of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min.

(12) *tsai7 khaʔ6 tua5 hai1*

this comparatively big that
'This one is bigger than that one'

(13) *ken1-lin2 khaʔ6 kuã2 ku4-lin2*

This-year comparatively cold last-year
'This year is colder than last year'

(14) *a1 bu3 khaʔ6 ai5 tsia1 in1-iã3*

Prefix mother comparatively love eat child
'Mother loves eating more than the child'

(15) *un3 tsit7 tshu5 tshen1-tshai3 maʔ6 khaʔ6 u4 aŋ1 tsia1 len3 khau3-men5*

we here family casually also comparatively have can eat you outside
'We here have more things to eat than you outside'

According to the examples above, the comparee and standard can be realized as demonstrative (e.g. *tsai7* 'this' and *hai1* 'that' in (12)), noun (e.g. *ken1-lin2* 'this year' and *ku4-lin2* 'last year' in (13) and *a1 bu3* 'mother' and *in1-iã3* 'child' in (14)), or 'pronoun + demonstrative' (e.g. *un3 tsit7 tshu5* 'we here' in (15)).

The most important feature of this type of comparative sentences is that the marker of standard is absent. The degree marker *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' is used to modify the predicate, which suggests that this type of comparative sentences is head-marking.

As with 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard', this type is also mainly used for simple comparison of inequality.

3. Why co-exist different types of comparatives?

In this section, we shall discuss the reason why co-exist three different types of comparative sentences by examining the stratification of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min.

3.1. A history of immigrants in Fujian and Hui'an County

Before discussing the stratification of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min, we would like to briefly introduce the history of immigrants in Fujian and Hui'an County.

Immigrants from Northern China move deep into Minnan in Weijin Dynasty (AD 220-419). During the periods of Tang and Wudai Dynasty (AD 618-960), and Southern Sung Dynasty (AD 1127-1279), there are a large amount of northern immigrants coming to Fujian, who lives in a centralized manner with a dominant status. (Ge, 2005)

According to Chen and Wang (1998), the first group of northern immigrants moves into Hui'an in late Donghan Dynasty (AD 25-220)⁴. Subsequently, other four groups of immigrants come to Hui'an in late Jin Dynasty (AD 265-317), Late-Tang Dynasty (AD

⁴ '(AD 25-220)' refers to Donghan Dynasty, but not late Donghan Dynasty. This also applies to the following late Jin Dynasty and late Sung Dynasty.

861-907), Wudai Dynasty (AD 907-960) and late Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279), respectively.

The language used by these immigrants is mainly Mandarin at that time, which undoubtedly has an impact on the language used in Hui'an.

In the following sections, we will examine the stratification of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min based on the history of immigrants mentioned above and the historical development of comparative sentences in Mandarin. 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard' and 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard' will be discussed in Section 3.2 and 3.3, respectively. Section 3.5 will explore the historical layer presented by 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate'.

3.2. Comparee predicate *khu5* standard

From Donghan to Southern and Northern Dynasty (AD 25-589), 'comparee predicate *guò 过* standard' is the dominating type of comparative sentences in Mandarin, where *guò 过* 'surpass' is still a verb. During Tang and Wudai Dynasty (AD 618-960), *guò 过* 'surpass' grammaticalized as marker of standard in comparison of inequality. (Xie, 2003).

Feng (2000) points out that a type of comparative sentences consisting of an adjective (shorten as 'adj.')

and a complement, appears in around Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279). Three examples are also given in Feng (2000), i.e., 'adj. + *dé 得*', 'adj. + *qǐ 起*' and 'adj. + *guò 过*'. We suggest that *得* 'get', *起* 'up' and *过* 'surpass' are all used as marker of standard to introduce the standard. 'adj. + *dé 得*' and 'adj. + *qǐ 起*' still exist in Shandong dialects, whereas 'adj. + *guò 过*' exists mainly in Yue dialects (Feng, 2000).

'Comparee predicate *khu5* standard' in Hui'an Southern Min is similar to 'adj. + *dé 得*', 'adj. + *qǐ 起*' and 'adj. + *guò 过*' in that *khu5* 'from', *得* 'get', *起* 'up' and *过* 'surpass' share the function of introducing the standard in the same construction 'comparee + predicate + marker of standard + standard'. As mentioned in 3.1, there are a large amount of northern immigrants moving to Hui'an from late Tang Dynasty to late Sung Dynasty. Thus, we propose that 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard' appear after Tang Dynasty (AD 618-960), possibly in Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279), and may be an areal variant of 'comparee + predicate + marker of standard + standard'.

3.3. Comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard

Xie (2003) points out that, during the periods of Donghan Dynasty to Tang and Wudai Dynasty (AD 25-960), 'comparee + degree marker + predicate + standard' exceeds 'comparee + degree marker + predicate + *yú 于* 'in' + standard' and becomes a dominating type of comparative sentences, in which the predicate is the verb meaning 'surpass, win', and *yú 于* 'in' is used as marker of standard. In Southern Sung Dynasty (AD 1127-1279), 'comparee *jiào 较* V('surpass') standard' is found in Zhuzi Yulei⁵. In addition, according to Cheng (1984), *jiào 较* 'comparatively', used as degree adverb, becomes common after Tang and Sung Dynasty (AD 618-1279). Furthermore, as stated above, there are a large amount of northern people coming to Hui'an in late Jin Dynasty, late Tang Dynasty, Wudai Dynasty and late Sung Dynasty.

Thus, we suggest that 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard' in Hui'an Southern Min preserves the form of 'comparee *jiào 较* V ('surpass') standard' in Tang and Sung Dynasty

⁵ Zhuzi Yulei is the records of Zhuxi's lectures.

(AD 618-1279), and then the predicate extends from verbs ('surpass') to adjectives.

3.4. Comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate

According to Xie (2003), *jiào 较* 'comparatively' as degree marker in 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard *jiào 较* predicate' is widely used in Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279), but can be found only in several examples from Yuan to Qing Dynasty (AD 1271-1911), since other degree markers such as *gèng 更* 'more' and *hái 还* 'still' gradually become popular. This is the reason why we find many examples of 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard *gèng 更/hái 还* predicate' in Modern Mandarin.

It is hard, however, to say that 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' in Hui'an Southern Min is directly evolved from 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard *jiào 较* predicate' in Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279), since 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard *jiào 较* predicate' cannot be found in *Li Jing Ji*, which is a play with a mixture of Chaozhou and Quanzhou Southern Min written in Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644). In *Li Jing Ji*, *jiào 较* 'comparatively' functions as degree adverb in 'comparee *jiào 较* predicate'⁶, and *bǐ 比* 'compare' is used to express comparison of equality (Li and Lien, 1995). Thus, we suggest that 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' appears very late, possibly because of the influence by the popularization of Modern Mandarin, in which 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard predicate' is the basic form of comparison of inequality, as mentioned above.

It can also be observed that 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' in Hui'an Southern Min is a combination of 'comparee *bǐ 比* standard predicate' in Modern Mandarin and comparison of inequality featuring *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' as degree marker in Hui'an Southern Min (e.g. 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard'), since *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' is very common in Hui'an Southern Min, and 'comparee *pi* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' is easier to be accepted by native Southern Min people than 'comparee *pi3* standard predicate'. This observation can be verified by the discussion of other linguists who examine comparative constructions in Southern Min, such as Ansaldo (1999).

4. Conclusion

This paper examines three types of comparative sentences which express comparison of inequality in Hui'an Southern Min, i.e. 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate', 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard' and 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard', in terms of (a) the main elements of comparative sentences; (b) the direction of marking and (c) the ordering of the standard and the marker of standard. We find that (i) 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate', as a double-marked comparative construction with the 'marker of standard-standard-predicate' order, is the dominating type of comparative sentences. (ii) 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard' is restricted to comparee between two demonstratives or demonstrative phrases, and is an instance of dependent-marked comparative sentences with the order of 'predicate-standard-marker of standard'; and (iii) 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard' is an example of head-marked comparative construction, in which, *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' is similar to the suffix '-er' and adverb 'more' in English.

We also discuss the reason why there co-exist three types of comparative sentences by

⁶ 'comparee *jiào 较* predicate' is regarded as short comparative sentences by Ansaldo (1999). Actually, *jiào 较* 'comparatively' here is similar to the degree adverb *bǐjiào 比较* 'comparatively' in 'comparee *bǐjiào 比较* predicate' in Modern Mandarin.

examining the stratification of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min. Based on the history of immigrants in Fujian and Hui'an County and the historical development of comparison in Mandarin, we find that (i) 'comparee predicate *khu5* standard' and 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard' may preserve the forms of comparative sentences in Tang and Sung Dynasty (AD 618-1279); and (ii) 'comparee *pi3* standard *khaʔ6* predicate' is a combination of comparative sentences featuring *khaʔ6* 'comparatively' as degree marker in Hui'an Southern Min (e.g. 'comparee *khaʔ6* predicate standard') and 'comparee *bi* 比 standard predicate' used in Modern Mandarin, due to the influence of Modern Mandarin after Qing Dynasty (AD 1644-1911).

The study of comparative sentences in Hu'an Southern Min can be further explored in two aspects: (a) the negative forms of comparative sentences in Hui'an Southern Min. It is worthwhile to investigate how the negative comparison is encoded in Southern Min as well as its pragmatic meaning and function. (b) the relationship between comparison of inequality and comparison of equality, since we find that several marker of standard in Mandarin and Chinese dialects can be used in both comparison of inequality and comparison of equality, e.g. *bi* 比.

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