Comparative morphemes are additive particles: English *-er*/*more* vs. Chinese *gèng* and Korean *te*

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SICOGG26/WAFL18

August 23rd, 2024

What are morphemes like English *-er*/*more* doing?

- Many languages (e.g., English, French) require the use of a comparative morpheme in the comparative use of gradable adjectives:

(1) a. Lucy is tall.   **Positive**: tall
     b. Lucy is taller than Mary is.   **Comparative**: taller

(2) a. Lucy has many books.   **Positive**: many
     b. Lucy has more books than Mary does.   **Comp.**: more

(3) **French data**

     a. Jean est   grand.
         John be.3SG tall
         'John is tall.'   **Positive**: grand 'tall'

     b. Jean est   plus grand que   Pierre.
         John be.3SG more tall   what Peter.
         'John is taller than Peter.'   **Comp.**: plus+grand 'taller'

What are morphemes like English *-er*/*more* doing?

- However, many other languages (e.g., Chinese, Korean) don't make a distinction between the comparative vs. non-comparative use.
  I.e., a morpheme like English *-er* is not required for the comparative use.

(4) **Chinese data**

    a.   Lèlè gāo ma?
           Lèlè tall Q
           'Is Lèlè tall?'   **Positive**: gāo 'tall'

    b.   Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ gāo   ma?
           Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ taller Q
           'Is Lèlè taller than Mǐmǐ?'   **Comp.**: gāo 'taller'

(5) **Korean data**

    a.   Chelswu-nun (ki-ka)   khu-ta.
           Chelswu-TOP height-NOM big-DECL
           'Chelswu is tall.'   **Positive**: khu- 'tall'

    b.   Chelswu-wa Mina-pota (ki-ka)   khu-ta.
           Chelswu-TOP Mina-STDD height-NOM big-DECL
           'Chelswu is taller than Mina.'   **Comp.**: khu- 'taller'

Research questions

- Does the meaning of comparison hinge on morphemes like *-er*/*more*?
- If not,
  - What lexical items are responsible for comparison?
  - Then what does *-er*/*more* do?
- How about languages like Chinese and Korean?

Take-home messages

- Does the meaning of comparison hinge on morphemes like *-er*/*more*?
  - No.
- What lexical items are responsible for comparison?
  - Gradable adjectives, which encode (strict or non-strict) inequalities
- What does *-er*/*more* do?
  - They are additive particles like *another*, denoting an increase anaphoric to a contextually salient base item.
- How about languages like Chinese and Korean?
  - In these languages, gradable adjectives encode inequalities in a strict way, making the use of an *-er*-like morpheme unnecessary.
  - These languages have optional morphemes:
    - ★ Chinese *gèng* works like additive particle *moreover*, updating a threshold for the positive use of gradable adjectives (and leading to an interpretation similar to **implicit comparison**).
    - ★ Korean *te* is yet different …

Outline

Canonical analysis: *-er*/*more* performs comparison

- A **gradable adjective** relates a degree and an entity.

(6) $[\![\text{tall}]\!]_{\langle d,et \rangle} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda d.\lambda x.\text{HEIGHT}(x) \geq d$ a relation between d and x
$\rightsquigarrow$ the height of x reaches the degree d, i.e., x is tall to degree d

- Major non-comparative uses of gradable adjectives:

(7) $[\![\text{Lucy is POS tall}]\!] \Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lucy}) \geq d^c_{\text{POS}}$ **Positive use**
(i.e., the height of Lucy reaches the contextual threshold of being tall.)

(8) $[\![\text{Lucy is 5 feet 8 inches tall}]\!] \Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lucy}) \geq 5'8''$ **Measure**

(9) $[\![\text{how tall is Lucy}]\!] \Leftrightarrow \lambda d.\text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lucy}) \geq d$ **Degree question**

(e.g., Cresswell 1976, Hellan 1981, von Stechow 1984, Heim 1985, Kennedy 1999, Beck 2011)

Canonical analysis: -er/more performs comparison

- **Comparative morpheme** -er/more performs comparison by expressing the relation '>' between two degrees.

(10) $[\![$ Lucy is tall**er** than $\underbrace{\text{Mary is \sout{tall}}}$ $]\!] \Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(L) > \text{HEIGHT}(M)$

comparison standard

LF: $[$ -er $[$ λd.Mary is d-tall $]$ $]$ $[\lambda d'$.Lucy is d'-tall $]$
(i.e., lambda abstraction happens at both the matrix and the *than*-clause, leading to two sets of degrees)

(11)   a. $[\![$-er$]\!]_{\langle\langle dt\rangle,\langle dt,t\rangle\rangle} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda D_1.\lambda D_2.\text{MAX}(D_2) > \text{MAX}(D_1)$
$(\text{MAX} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda D.\iota d[d \in D \wedge \forall d'[d' \in D \to d' \le d]])$

(see e.g., Beck 2011)

b. $[\![$-er$]\!]_{\langle\langle dt\rangle,\langle dt,t\rangle\rangle} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda D_1.\lambda D_2.\exists d[d \in D_2 \wedge d \notin D_1]$

(see e.g., Schwarzschild 2008)

- However, there are empirical challenges ...

Challenge 1: *-er/more* is not always required for comparison

- Comparison is essentially establishing an ordering.
- All uses of gradable adjectives involve comparison, but the use of *-er/more* is not always required.
  I.e., *-er/more* is not a necessary component of comparison.

(12)   a.   ⟦Lucy is POS tall⟧ ⇔ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq d^c_{POS}$

Positive use

      b.   ⟦Lucy is $5'8''$ inches tall⟧ ⇔ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq 5'8''$ **Measure**

      c.   ⟦how tall is Lucy⟧ ⇔ $\lambda d.$HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq d$ **Degree Q**.

      d.   ⟦Lucy is as tall as Bill (is)⟧ ⇔ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq$HEIGHT(Bill)

Equative

      e.   ⟦Lucy is taller than Mary (is)⟧ ⇔ HEIGHT(L)$>$HEIGHT(M)

Comparative

Challenge 2: evidence from minimal pairs

- Minimal pairs indicate that the use of *-er*/*more* does not bring comparison, but rather affects (i) what constitutes the comparison standard and/or (ii) the size of the differential.

(13)   a.   Mary is not tall. <u>Lucy is tall</u>. $\leadsto$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\geq d^c{}_{\text{POS}}$

        b.   Mary is not tall. <u>Lucy is taller</u>. $\leadsto$ HEIGHT(L) $\geq$ HEIGHT(M)

(14)   a.   Compared to Mary, <u>Lucy is tall</u>.   **Implicit comparison**

                                        $\leadsto$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\geq d^c{}_{\text{POS}}$

        (i)   Compared to 2-year-old toddlers, Lucy is tall.

        (ii) (Even) compared to professional basketball players, Lucy is tall.

        b.   Compared to Mary, <u>Lucy is taller</u>.   **Explicit comparison**

                                          $\leadsto$ HEIGHT(L) $\geq$ HEIGHT(M)

(See Kennedy 2007 on crisp judgment)

Challenge 3: evidence from antonyms

- The lexical meaning of gradable adjectives includes already inequalities, and antonyms encode inequalities of different directions.

(15)   a. $[\![\text{tall}]\!]_{\langle d,et \rangle} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda d.\lambda x.\text{HEIGHT}(x) \geq d$
       b. $[\![\text{short}]\!]_{\langle d,et \rangle} \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda d.\lambda x.\text{HEIGHT}(x) \leq d$

Interim summary

- The essence of comparison is to establish inequalities.
- The lexical semantics of gradable adjectives already contains inequalities.
- Naturally, expressing the meaning of comparison should essentially be based on the meaning of gradable adjectives, not necessarily involving *-er/more*.

Outline

English comparatives vs. Chinese comparatives

(16) a. Lucy is tall**er** than Mary is.   HEIGHT(L)>HEIGHT(M)

       b. Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ gāo.

          Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ taller

          'Lèlè is taller than Mǐmǐ.'   HEIGHT(L)>HEIGHT(M)

(12) a. ⟦Lucy is POS tall⟧ ⟺ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq d^c_{POS}$

                                              Positive use

       b. ⟦Lucy is $5'8''$ inches tall⟧ ⟺ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq 5'8''$ **Measure**

       c. ⟦how tall is Lucy⟧ ⟺ $\lambda d.$HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq d$ **Degree Q**.

       d. ⟦Lucy is as tall as Bill (is)⟧ ⟺ HEIGHT(Lucy)$\geq$HEIGHT(Bill)

                                              Equative

       e. ⟦Lucy is taller than Mary (is)⟧ ⟺ HEIGHT(L)>HEIGHT(M)

                                            Comparative

- Our proposal on the meaning of gradable adjectives:
  ‣ English gradable adjectives encode a non-strict inequality, and with the use of *-er*/*more*, comparatives express a strict inequality.
  ‣ Chinese gradable adjectives directly encode a strict inequality.

Lexical semantics of gradable adjective *tall*/*gāo*
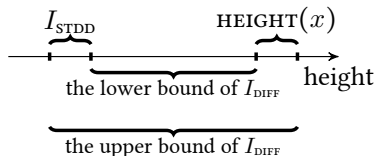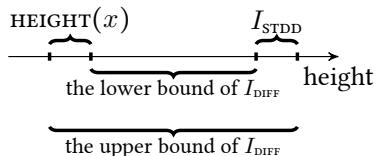
The meaning of *tall*/*gāo*   The meaning of *short*/*ǎi*

(17) $[\![\text{tall}]\!] \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda I_{\text{DIFF}}.\lambda I_{\text{STDD}}.\lambda x.\underbrace{I_{\text{DIFF}} \subseteq [0, +\infty)}_{\text{non-negative presup.}}. \text{HEIGHT}(x) \subseteq \iota I[I - I_{\text{STDD}} = I_{\text{DIFF}}]$ English

(i.e., the height of x reaches the comparison standard, I_{STDD}.
$\rightsquigarrow$ the difference between them, I_{DIFF}, is non-negative)

(18) $[\![\text{gāo}]\!] \overset{\text{def}}{=} \lambda I_{\text{DIFF}}.\lambda I_{\text{STDD}}.\lambda x.\underbrace{I_{\text{DIFF}} \subseteq (0, +\infty)}_{\text{positive presup.}}. \text{HEIGHT}(x) \subseteq \iota I[I - I_{\text{STDD}} = I_{\text{DIFF}}]$ Chinese

(i.e., the height of x exceeds the comparison standard, I_{STDD}.
$\rightsquigarrow$ the difference between them, I_{DIFF}, is positive)

Lexical semantics of gradable adjective *short*/*ǎi*
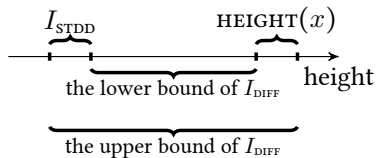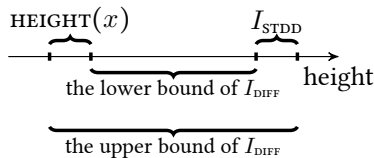
The meaning of *tall*/*gāo*   The meaning of *short*/*ǎi*

(19) $[\![\text{short}]\!] \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \lambda I_{\text{DIFF}}.\lambda I_{\text{STDD}}.\lambda x. \underbrace{I_{\text{DIFF}} \subseteq [0, +\infty)}_{\text{non-negative presup.}}.\ \text{HGHT}(x) \subseteq \iota I[I_{\text{STDD}} - I = I_{\text{DIFF}}]$ English

   (i.e., the height of x does not exceed the comparison standard, I_{STDD}.
   $\leadsto$ the difference between them, I_{DIFF}, is non-negative)

(20) $[\![\text{ǎi}]\!] \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \lambda I_{\text{DIFF}}.\lambda I_{\text{STDD}}.\lambda x. \underbrace{I_{\text{DIFF}} \subseteq (0, +\infty)}_{\text{positive presup.}}.\ \text{HEIGHT}(x) \subseteq \iota I[I_{\text{STDD}} - I = I_{\text{DIFF}}]$ Chinese

   (i.e., the height of x is below / does not reach the comparison standard, I_{STDD}.
   $\leadsto$ the difference between them, I_{DIFF}, is positive)

The positive use of gradable adjectives

- In the positive use,
  - the comparison standard is the contextual threshold
  - the difference cannot be specified by a numerical value, but can be modified by modifiers like *very*, *quite*, etc.

(21) 〚Lucy is POS tall〛   English
$\Leftrightarrow \textsc{height}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq \iota I[I - \underbrace{[d^c_{\text{POS}}, d^c_{\text{POS}}]}_{I_{\text{STDD}}} = \underbrace{[0, +\infty)}_{I_{\text{DIFF}}}]$

$\Leftrightarrow \textsc{height}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq [d^c_{\text{POS}}, +\infty)$

(i.e., the height of Lucy reaches the contextual threshold of being tall)

(22) 〚Lucy hěn POS gāo〛   Chinese
$\Leftrightarrow \textsc{height}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq \iota I[I - \underbrace{[d^c_{\text{POS}}, d^c_{\text{POS}}]}_{I_{\text{STDD}}} = \underbrace{(0, +\infty)}_{I_{\text{DIFF}}}]$

$\Leftrightarrow \textsc{height}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq (d^c_{\text{POS}}, +\infty)$

(i.e., the height of Lucy exceeds the contextual threshold of being tall)

Measurement sentences

- In measurement sentences,
  - the comparison standard is the absolute zero point, i.e., $[0, 0]$
  - the difference is specified by a numerical value, e.g., $5'8''$, $1.7m$.

(23) ⟦Lucy is 5 feet 8 inches tall⟧   English
$\Leftrightarrow$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\subseteq \iota I[I - [0,0] = [5'8'', +\infty) \cap [0, +\infty)]$
$\Leftrightarrow$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\subseteq [5'8'', +\infty)$

(24) ⟦Lucy (yǒu) 1.7 m gāo⟧   Chinese
$\Leftrightarrow$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\subseteq \iota I[I - [0,0] = [1.7m + \infty) \cap (0, +\infty)]$
$\Leftrightarrow$ HEIGHT(Lucy) $\subseteq [1.7m, +\infty)$

Comparatives

- In comparatives,
  - the comparison standard is from the meaning of the *than*-clause (or context)
  - the difference can by optionally specified by a numerical value, e.g., $3''$, $5cm$.

(25) $\llbracket$Lucy is tall $\underbrace{\text{er}}_{(0,+\infty)}$ $\underbrace{\text{than Mary is}}_{I_{\text{STDD}}}\rrbracket$

  $\Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq \iota I[I - \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Mary}) = \underbrace{(0, +\infty)}_{\llbracket\text{er}\rrbracket} \cap [0, +\infty)]$

  $\Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lucy}) \subseteq \iota I[I - \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Mary}) = (0, +\infty)]$

(26) $\llbracket$Lèlè bǐ Mǐmǐ gāo$\rrbracket$

  $\Leftrightarrow \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lèlè}) \subseteq \iota I[I - \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Mǐmǐ}) = (0, +\infty)]$

Comparison in English vs. Chinese

- Within our proposed view, comparison is universally conducted by gradable adjectives
  - ‣ For languages that require the use of *-er* in comparatives (e.g., English): gradable adjectives encode a non-strict inequality
    (In terms of degrees: '$\geq$'; in terms of intervals: '$[0, +\infty)$')
  - ‣ For languages that use the same form for the comparative and non-comparative uses (e.g., Chinese):
    gradable adjectives encode a strict inequality
    (In terms of degrees: '$>$'; in terms of intervals: '$(0, +\infty)$')

Outline

Parallelism between *-er*/*more* and *another*

- *-er*/*more* has an additive use similar to *another* (see also Greenberg 2010 and Thomas 2010):

(27)   **Increase in the domain of entities: Additive use**

    a.   I ate an^x apple. Then I ate **another**^{y} (apple).

               base item   increase

    b. A^x girl, Sue, met **another**^{y} girl, Mary.

          base item   increase

    c.   I ate two^x bars of chocolate. Then I ate (a bit) **more**^{y}.

                    base item   increase

From the additive use to the comparative use of *-er*/*more*

- Additive use of *more*: in the domain of entities
- Comparative use of *-er*/*more*: in the domain of scalar values (i.e., degrees or intervals)

(27c) **Increase in the domain of entities: Additive use**
I ate $\underbrace{\text{two}^x \text{ bars of chocolate}}_{\text{base item}}$. Then I ate $\underbrace{\text{(a bit) } \textbf{more}^y}_{\text{increase}}$.

(28) **Increase in the domain of scalar values: Comparative use**

a. $\underbrace{\text{Mary is tall}}_{\substack{\text{base item: HEIGHT(Mary)}}}$. Sue is tall $\underbrace{\textbf{er}}_{\text{increase}}$. Across sentences

b. Sue is tall $\underbrace{\textbf{er}}_{\text{increase}}$ $\underbrace{\text{than Mary is } \text{tall}}_{\substack{\text{base item:} \\ \text{HEIGHT(Mary)}}}$. Within the same sentence

More uses of *-er*/*more* and *another*

- *-er*/*more* and *another*
  - ‣ denotes an <u>increase</u> in the domain of entities or scalar values
  - ‣ presuppose there is a salient base that the increase is anaphoric to

(29) **Repetitive use of *-er*/*more* and *another***
    a.   Lucy is becoming taller and taller and taller.
    b.   Janice had a little lamb and another and another and another.

(30) **Accumulating increases along with a universal quantifier**
    a.   Every year Mary wrote a more interesting book.
    b.   Everyday there is another story to write.

The semantics of English *-er/more*

- Crucially, the semantics of English *-er/more* is not responsible for comparison (i.e., not responsible for establishing an ordering).
- English *-er/more* is similar to *another* in being an additive particle, denoting an increase on a discourse-salient base.

Outline

Chinese *gèng* and Korean *te* are optional in comparatives

(31) Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ (**gèng**)   gāo.
     Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ MOREOVER tall
     'Lèlè is taller than Mǐmǐ.'

(32) Chelswu-nun Mina-pota (**te**) khu-ta.
     Chelswu-TOP Mina-STDD   big-DECL
     'Chelswu is taller than Mina.'

- The discussion below focuses on Chinese *gèng* (but with some brief comparison between Chinese *gèng* and Korean *te*).

Observations on *gèng* (I): evaluativity (positive inference) about Mǐmǐ's height?

(31)   Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ (**gèng**)   gāo.
       Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ MOREOVER tall
       'Lèlè is taller than Mǐmǐ.'

- Some scholars (Liu 2010, Chen 2023, Chen and Greenberg 2024) claim that the semantic contribution of *gèng* is similar to English *even*, and the above sentence means that Lèlè is even taller than Mǐmǐ, indicating that Mǐmǐ is already tall.
  ↝ Evaluativity: a positive inference about Mǐmǐ: Mǐmǐ is tall.

- Others (e.g., Guo 2022) claim that there is no obvious meaning distinction between the sentence with vs. without *gèng*.
  ↝ The positive inference about Mǐmǐ is an implicature and cancellable

Observations on *gèng* (I): evaluativity (positive inference) about Mǐmǐ's height?

(33)   Mǐmǐ bù   gāo. Lèlè (gèng) gāo   yī-diǎn.
       Mǐmǐ NEG tall. Lèlè taller   a-bit
       'Mǐmǐ is not tall. Lèlè is a bit taller'.
       The presence of *gèng* is optional

(34)   Mǐmǐ hěn   gāo. Lèlè gèng gāo   yī-diǎn.
       Mǐmǐ every tall. Lèlè   taller a-bit
       'Mǐmǐ is tall. Lèlè is even a bit taller'.
       The presence of *gèng* is obligatory or strongly preferred

- The presence of *gèng* does not require positive inference about Mǐmǐ.
- But when there is a positive inference about Mǐmǐ, the presence of *gèng* is required.
- (What about Korean *te*?)

Observations on *gèng* (II): Incompatibility with numerical differentials

- The use of *gèng* is incompatible with numerical differentials (see Ma 2019, Zhang 2023).

(35)   * Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ **gèng**   gāo wǔ límǐ.
       Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ MOREOVER taller five cm
       Intended: 'Lèlè is 5 cm taller than Mǐmǐ.'

- Korean *te* is compatible with numerical differentials:

(36)   Chelswu-nun Mina-pota 2cm te khu-ta.
       Chelswu-TOP Mina-STDD 2cm   big-DECL
       'Chelswu is taller than Mina by 2 cm. '

Observations on *gèng* (III): additive use

- *gèng* also has an additive use (see also Chen 2023, Chen and Greenberg 2024):

(37) Jīnqián mǎi-bú-dào yǒu-yì, **gèng** mǎi-bú-dào àiqíng
      money buy-NEG-get friendship MOREOVER buy-NEG-get love
      'Money cannot buy friendship. Moreover, it cannot buy love.' ⤳
      Love exceeds friendship in being unable to be bought with money.

Summary of the empirical data

- The use of *gèng* in comparatives (Japanese *motto* is similar):
  - *gèng* does not require positive inference
  - a standard with positive inference requires / prefers the presence of *gèng*
  - The use of *gèng* is incompatible with numerical differentials.
- *gèng* also has an additive use.
- Korean *te* is similar to but not exactly the same as Chinese *gèng*.

Proposal: the semantic contribution of *gèng*

$$\text{HEIGHT}(\text{Mǐmǐ}) \qquad\qquad \text{HEIGHT}(\text{Lèlè})$$

$I_{\text{POS}}^{c_{>\text{HT}(\text{Mǐmǐ})}}$ \qquad height
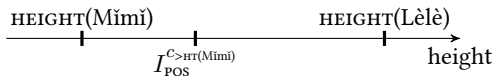
⟦Lèlè bǐ Mǐmǐ gèng gāo⟧: Compared to Mǐmǐ, Lèlè is tall.

(38) a. Lèlè bǐ   Mǐmǐ **gèng**   gāo.
         Lèlè STDD Mǐmǐ MOREOVER tall
         'Lèlè is taller than Mǐmǐ.'

     b. Compared to Mǐmǐ, Lèlè is tall.   **Implicit comparison**
        ↝ Lèlè's height reaches a threshold that Mǐmǐ's height doesn't. (see also
        Sawada 2009)

- The use of *gèng* in a comparative is reminiscent of implicit comparison, involving an update of the threshold for the positive use (see Barker 2002). With the use of *gèng*, a gradable adjective has a positive use.
- ⟦gèng⟧(p)
  ‣ asserts the prejacent p
  ‣ presupposes that the prejacent p and alternatives are associated with scalar values on a scale, and compared with alternatives, p exceeds a positive level that alternatives don't.

Proposal: the semantic contribution of *gèng*
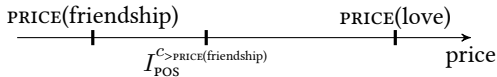
Compared to friendship, love is more precious.

- The additive use of *gèng* involves a contextually salient scale, and the prejacent and its alternatives are mapped onto this scale (see also the meaning of *even* in Greenberg 2018, Zhang 2022).

(39) a. Jīnqián mǎi-bú-dào yǒu-yì, **gèng** mǎi-bú-dào àiqíng
money buy-NEG-get friendship MOREOVER buy-NEG-get love
'Money cannot buy friendship. Moreover, it cannot buy love.'

b. Money cannot buy friendship. **Moreover**, it cannot buy love.
⤳ The preciousness of love reaches a threshold that the preciousness of friendship doesn't.

How the empirical data are accounted for

- The use of *gèng* in comparatives:
  With the use of *gèng*, the sentence is no longer a genuine comparative, but rather like an **implicit comparison** in English, i.e., a positive use
  - *gèng* does not require positive inference
    With an update of the threshold, a previous / out-of-context threshold becomes obsolete anyway.
  - a standard with positive inference requires / prefers the presence of *gèng*
    An update of the threshold (to a higher threshold) relies on the presence of *gèng*
  - The use of *gèng* is incompatible with numerical differentials.
    A *gèng*-sentence is a positive use, not a genuine comparative.
- *gèng* also has an additive use.
  The use of *gèng* maps entities / events onto a salient scale (see also Greenberg 2018, Zhang 2022 on a similar analysis of English *even*).

An interesting consequence of the current proposal: Chinese *gèng* vs. Chinese *hái* in a metaphorical / hyperbolic comparison

- Only the use of *hái*, but not the use of *gèng*, is felicitous for a comparison with metaphorical or hyperbolic meaning.

(40) a. Lèlè bǐ   shīzi **hái** yǒnggǎn.
          Lèlè STDD lion STILL brave
          'Lèlè is even braver than lions.'

     b. #Lèlè bǐ shīzi **gèng** yǒnggǎn.
          Lèlè STDD lion MOREOVER brave
          Intended: 'Lèlè is braver than lions.'
          (According to the proposal on *gèng*, this sentence means
          'compared to lions, Lèlè is brave.' ⤳ there is a threshold of
          courage such that Lèlè's courage reaches, but lions don't)

Outline

Concluding remarks

- Comparison / inequality is universally conducted by gradable adjectives, which encode (strict or non-strict) inequalities.
  - ‣ English gradable adjectives encode a non-strict inequality.
  - ‣ Chinese gradable adjectives encode a strict inequality, making it unnecessary to use an *-er*-like morpheme in comparatives.

- English morpheme *-er*/*more* is an additive particle like *another*, denoting an increase anaphoric to a contextually salient base item.

- Languages like Chinese and Korean also have optional morphemes in comparatives.
  - ‣ In particular, Chinese *gèng* works like additive particle *moreover*, updating a threshold for the positive use of gradable adjectives (and leading to an interpretation similar to **implicit comparison**).
  - ‣ Korean *te* is yet different from Chinese *gèng*.

Thank you!

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For the manuscript of this project, please see
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