The Syntax of Comparative Ellipsis Constructions in EkeGusii

Evans Gesura Mecha
Kisii University, Kenya

ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received 31/01/2020
Accepted 14/06/2020

Keywords:
gradability
EkeGusii,
Degree Phrase
ellipsis

ABSTRACT
The degree marker Kogua or Goetani ‘exceed/surpass’ which marks gradability in degree constructions in EkeGusii is morphologically ambiguous between a comparative and superlative reading. The language maps both the comparative and superlative clause in the same way: both constructions attest the projection of a Degree Phrase (DegP) in the extended projection that involves comparative/superlative ellipsis or comparative/superlative deletion. This study notes that the comparative and superlative clauses behave like coordinated clauses besides being subordinative.

1.0 Introduction

Human languages code degrees such as identity, equality and their converses in relation to perceptual data received. Degree phrases and clauses are the surface realization of the perceptual experience of how two or more things differ in degree or scale that inform choices, such as a thing being big and further graded whether it is bigger (comparative degree) or the biggest (superlative degree). The constructions are considered to be universal though they can exhibit some language particular variability which may call for the revision of the linguistic theories put to account for their form and meaning. The degree constructions that will be analysed in this paper are as given in (1) below.

(1)

a. Morara nigo are [DegP omobou mono kogua ombati] (Comparative)

    Morara  n-igo  a-r-e  omo-bou  mono ko-gua
    Morara  FOC-PTL  1SG-is-FV  SAGR-huge  much INF-exceed
    ombati

    ombati

‘Morara is more huge than Ombati’

b. Morara nigo are [DegP omobou kogua kera omonto] (Superlative)

    Morara  n-igo  a-r-e  omo-bou  mono ko-gua
An examination of EkeGusii examples in (1) above indicates that aspects of ellipsis in comparative constructions are similar to some extent to those of Superlative constructions given that they are formed by complements being added to the standard marker kogua/goetania ‘exceed/surpass’ which undergo ellipsis.

The superlative constructions have not been analysed in a similar manner, given that they do not exhibit the same structural characteristics in the languages they have been studied in so far. In this study it is argued that in both cases there is deletion in the comparative or superlative complement which raises the problem of the constructions behaving as if syntactically they are both coordinative and surbordinative as has been argued by Moltmann (1992).

The study of the realization of gaps in comparatives and superlatives in EkeGusii has not been attempted as yet as far as I know. Ellipsis is one of those phenomenon that has begun to be given attention in Bantu languages, in relation to EkeGusii some work is being done on Coordinate ellipsis and sluices (Otieno, 2019), and there is an overview on coordinate ellipsis (cf. Otieno, Gesura & Ongarora, 2019).

This paper aims to analyse the syntactic structure of comparative and superlative ellipsis in EkeGusii is a unified way in the syntax. The work presupposes current developments within the Generative tradition, especially the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1993/97 et.seq.).

2.0 Preliminaries

EkeGusii is a JE42 Bantu language (Guthrie, 1948; Bastin, 2003) spoken in Kenya. The language marks the comparative and superlative degree using lexicalized than-markers or quantity words: kobua or kogua ‘exceed’ and goetania ‘exceeds’ which are mutually exclusive in some contexts, and an equality marker using the similitative/identity comparative buna ‘as, like’.
3.0 Data

The data for this paper was got by eliciting it from an informant in informal conversations. The informant is native speaker and a retired teacher of Kikwetu (of EkeGusii as an indigenous language).

3.1 Degree Constructions in EkeGusii

3.1.1 Comparatives

Comparatives are a subset of degree constructions and they fall into two major categories: equality comparatives in (2) below and inequality comparatives in (3) below. This paper will focus on the syntax of inequality constructions to the exclusion of the equality constructions.

(2) Equality Comparative:

Morara nigo are omonene buna Ombese □ₐ₄.
Morara n-igo a-re omo-nene buna Ombese

Morara FOC-PTL 1SG-is 1SG-big as Ombese

‘Morara ia as big as Ombese’

(□ⱼₑ = are □ₐ₄=d-omonene)

(3) Inequality Comparative:

a. Monari n-igo a-gu-et-e Ombese (ase) obonene

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-exceed-FV Ombese (in) bigness

‘Monari is bigger than ombese’

b. Monari n-igo a-re omo-nene ko-gua Ombese □ₐ₄.

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is 1SG-big INF-exceed Ombese

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1 The Data Presentend will be given word-by-word Glosses using the following abbreviations:

FOC=focus        SG=singular        PTL=particle        NEG=Negation        Numbers 1, 2,…=EkeGusii Noun Class
FV=final vowel   PRES=present       PST=past            PERF=Perfective       SAGR=Subject
INF=Infinitive
'Monari is bigger than Ombese'

\( \Box_{cd} = \text{are d-omonene} \)

EkeGusii inequality comparatives may be typologically be classified as a Type 4 ‘Exceed’/Direct Object Comparatives’ language in relation to inequality comparatives as per Stassen (1984, 1985). Stassen’s typology focuses on inequality comparatives and is based on 110 languages which are categorized in six types of comparative constructions, viz fixed case comparatives which consist of Adverbial Comparatives (that are further subcategorized into separative (Type 1), allative (Type 2) and locative (Type 3) comparatives) and direct Object Comparatives (Type 4); against derived case comparatives which consist of conjoined (Type 5) and particle (Type) comparatives. Under type 4 languages, that involve the standard Noun Phrase (NP) being realized as a direct object of a special transitive verb, which has the meaning of ‘to excel’, ‘to exceed’, to be more than’ or ‘to surpass,’ we have Swahili which is a Bantu language that shares some features with EkeGusii. In swahili the comparative predicate consists of a mainverb which is subordinated with an ‘exceed’-verb which is succeeded by a NP, as in the example in (4) below.

(4) Mti huu ni mrefu ku-shinda ule

Swahili

Tree this is big INF-exceed that

‘This tree is taller than that tree’ (Stassen, 1985, 44:(21))

The typology given by stassen does not cover the entire range of comparative constructions in Kiswahili though, nor does it make the association of the similarity that is possible with the form of the superlative in the language. I will not go into that in this paper.

The EkeGusii standard marker kobua ‘exceed’ can be combined with buna in the surface to mark comparison as in the sentences in (5) below

(5) a. Monari nigo are omonene kobua buna areenge

Monari n-igo a-re omo-nene ko-bua buna

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is 1SG-big INF-exceed as/like a-re-eng-e \( \Box_{cd} \).

1SG-is-PST-e

‘Monari is bigger than he was’

\( \Box_{cd} = \text{are d-omonene} \)

b. Obuya bwa ombese nigo
‘The goodness of Ombese is more than Monari thinks’

\((\square_{ce}=\text{bore} \quad \square_{cd}=d-\text{obonge})\)

In the example given in (5) above the comparative construction licences a case of Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE) in the comparative ellipsis site.

The standard marker \textit{Goetania} ‘surpass/exceed’ functions as comparative quantifier as shown in the examples in (6-7) below:

(6) \textit{Mokua nasoma ebitabu ebiinge goetania} \(\square_{cd} \text{ bombera}\)

\textit{Mokua n-a-som-a ebi-tabu ebi-inge go-etania} \textit{mokua FOC-1SG-read-FV 7PL-book 7PL-many INF-exceed}

\textit{bombera}

two

‘Mokua read more than two books’

\((\square_{cd}=d-\text{ebitabu})\)

(7) a. \textit{Mokaya nasoma ebitabu ebinge goetania} \(\square_{cd} \text{ Sorobea} \square_{ce}\)

\textit{Mokaya n-a-soma e-bitabu e-binge goetania Sorobea}

\textit{Mokaya FOC-1-read 7PL-book 7PL-many INF-exceed sorobea}

“Mokaya read more books than Sorobea”

\((\square_{cd}=d-\text{ebitabu}) \quad (\square_{ce}=\text{asoma})\)

b. \textit{Mokaya nasoma ebitabu ebinge goetania} \(\square \text{ Sorobea asoma}\)

\textit{Mokaya n-a-soma ebi-tabu ebi-inge go-etania \(\square \text{ Sorobea} \)}
Mokaya FOC-1-read 7PL-book 7-many INF-exceed sorobe

a-som-a

1SG-read

“Mokaya read more books than Sorobe”

(□_{cd}=d-ebitabu)

3.1.2 Superlatives

The only difference between the comparative clause and the superlative clause is that the latter involves the use of quantifier predicate phrases which bear arguments that are modified by adverbs like kera ‘every’ as in (8) below.

(8) a. Mokua nigo akonyua erongori enyinge mono kogua kera omonto \( \Delta_{se} \Delta_{sd} \)

Mokua nigo a-ko-nyu-a e-rongori e-nyinge Mokua FOC-PTL 1SG-INF-drink-FV 11PL-gruel 11PL-much

Monoko-gua kera omo-nto

Most INF-exceed every 1PL-person

‘Mokua drinks much more gruel than every person’

b. Mokua nigo aanchete erongori mono kogua kera omonto anchete \( \Delta_{sd} \)

Mokua nigo a-anch-et-e e-rongori mono

Mokua FOC-PTL 1SG-INF-drink-PERE-FV 11-gruel much ko-gua kera omo-nto a-nch-et-e

INF-exceed Every 1PL-person 1SG-INF-drink-PERF-FV

‘Mokua drinks much more gruel than every person’

c. Mokua nigo akonyua \( \Delta_{sd} \) kogua kera omonto \( \Delta_{se} \) erongori (RNR & ATB)

Mokua nigo a-ko-nyua ko-gua kera omo-nto

Mokua FOC-PTL 1SG-INF-drink-FV INF-exceed every 1PL-person e-rongori
11-gruel

'Mokua drinks much more gruel than every person'

d. *Mokua nigo anchete $\Delta_{sd}$ kogua kera omonto anchete erongori.* (RNR)

\begin{verbatim}
Mokua n-igo  a-nch-et-e  ko-gua  kera omo-nto

Mokua FOC-PTL  1SG-like-FV  INF-exceed  very  1PL-person  a-nch-et-e  e-rongori
\end{verbatim}

1SG-like-Fv  11-gruel

'Mokua likes gruel than every person'

(9)  

a. *Mokua osomire ebitabu ebinge kogua kera omonto asomire $\Delta_{sd}$*

\begin{verbatim}
Mokua o-som-ire  e-bi-tabu  e-binge  ko-gua
Mokua 1SG-read-PERF  7PL-book  7PL-many  INF-exceed kera  omo-nto  a-som-ir-e

every  1PL-person  1-read-PERF-FV
\end{verbatim}

'Mokua has read many books than every person has read’

($\Delta_{sd}=d$-ebitabu)

b. *Mokua osomire ebitabu ebinge kogua kera omonto $\Delta_{se} \Delta_{sd}$*

\begin{verbatim}
Mokua o-som-ire  e-bi-tabu  e-binge  ko-gua

Mokua 1SG-read-PERF  7PL-book  7PL-many  INF-exceed kera  omo-nto

every  1PL-person
\end{verbatim}

'Mokua has read many books than every person’

($\Delta_{se}=asomire \ \Delta_{sd}=d$-ebitabu)
4.0 Theoretical Framework

The paper presupposes the analytic mechanisms for minimal computation posited in the Minimalist Program by Chomsky (1993 et. Seq.). The derivation of the degree constructions is driven by the basic operation of Merge. The notion of merge is divaricated along the levels of derivation, which begin with the derivation of categories in the Lexicon using pair merge (cf. Chomsky 2019 a; 2019b) then pushed to the Numeration which consists of the syntactic objects from from work spaces that involve computation as per the Phases in first merge undergoing further merge till the desired construction is externalized. Pair merge involve the merging of the roots with relevant features to form sets that are sent to relevant workspaces (or numerations).

In the framework developed in Problems of Projection (POP) (Chomsky, 2013), the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) interface is considered to be the basic driver of how syntactic objects are derived. The faculty of language is involved in compositionality processes, that merge the meanings or thoughts into syntactic objects using the available objects. It is here then assumed that the faculty of language consists of a semantic component, the C-I Interface, and the articulated form is the result of how the form is configured by the Sensory-Motor interface and unambiguously interpreted upon externalization. The derivation of the constructions will be demonstrated in section (5.0) below.

5.0 Syntax of EkeGusii Comparative Ellipsis (Degree) Constructions

Degree constructions, here comparatives and superlatives, are accorded a unified analysis by the construal of a functional projection, Degree Phrase, in the literature (cf. Bresnan, 1973; Corver, 1997; Lechner, 2004). In the analysis of EkeGusii data the degree head (Deg) is an ampty slot to which a standard marker rises in the syntactic computation by the dictates of I-semantics or the conceptual-intentional interface. The standard marker kogua or goetania ‘exceed’ is ambiguous between a comparative and superlative reading. The syntax and semantics of the clause rather than the morphological features determine whether the superlative or comparative feature is interpretable in the output. The distiction is determined by whether the complement of kobua is an argument that is assigned the functional role Object, that calls for a comparative reading; or it is succeeded by a positive or negative polarity item that licences a superlative reading.

In the derivation of the comparative clauses, the root clause is generated from a separate lexicon, in that it consists of an independent exotic C-T, with two phases, and the comparative clause is capital merged with it in a new workspace which introduces the comparative Kobua ‘exceed’ at the root as per the extension condition. The comparative and superlative constructions are not products of what was referred to as ‘first merge’. The first bit of the clause, which is an IP phase comes from a distinct workspace, with its own lexicon, and is merged to the new phase, the CP.

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2 This is line with the view that the computation of the chains is determined exocentrically rather than endocentrically (by the lexicon) as Chomsky (20) holds in his paper Problems of Projection: Extensions.
The degree Phrase of the root clause does not express the superlative or comparative degrees, hence we can assume that it consists of a degree phrase slot that is empty and can only be valued once the necessary semantic valuation has been done upon transfer to the CI-interface. The degree valuation of the adjective in the root clause cannot be a product of base generation because that would involve some kind of look-ahead aspect of the derivational process. Hence, the superlative or comparative features are introduced in further internal merge of the root clause and the comparative clause. The measure quantifier is introduced in the narrow syntax by pair merging it with the Adjective. The analyses in the literature label the final spellout as an AP, hence assuming that the degree Phrase is deleted at the S-M interface before externalization. The projection of the degree features are checked, though not as proposed in feature checking theory (Chomsky, 1997)), under the head, Deg⁰, is given as in (10 a and b) below.

(10) a. …[CP [C [AP [DegP₁ [Deg⁰ <+ comparative/ superlative>] ][ IP [NP [N …[v* [COP [AP[DegP₂ [Deg⁰ d-x ]]]]]]]]]]]]]

The choice of which of the phrases is projected to the output is usually determined by two considerations, whether one feature is stronger than the other in the case of feature weighing considerations, or which of the categories is the highest. The issue as to whether the Adjective Phrase or the Degree Phrase is the one which is projected seems not to be an issue that some analysts worry over. Below we argue that the degree phrase is the one which is projected in the root clause rather than the AP order to meet the homomorphic relationship between the semantics and syntax.

(11) a. …[AP omotambe [DegP [Deg⁰ <+ comparative> d-omotmbe [CP [C kobua [IP [NP x [[AP omotambe [DegP [Deg⁰ d-omotmbe]]]]]]]]]]]

b. … [DegP [AP omotambe[Deg⁰ <+ superlative> d-omotambe[CP kobua [NP kera x]]]]]

The syntax of the comparatives is given in this paper as involving the projection of the Degree Phrase for comparatives and the superlatives in the output as analysed below in sections (5.1 and 5.2) respectively.

5.1 Formation of Comparative Constructions

In the literature, the focus has been on the grammatical properties of comparatives. Comparative clauses are considered to bear empty elements that are due to the effects of reduction processes such as comparative deletion (CD) (see 2a-c below), Comparative Verb Gapping (CVG) or Comparative Ellipsis (CE)(cf. Lechner, 2018; Kennedy & Merchant, 2000). The literature on ellipsis posits that comparative deletion is determined by the same principles that constrain Across the Board Movement (ATB), Gapping and Right Node Raising (RNR) in coordinate ellipsis constructions. The issue of such constructions depending on conjunct reduction is discussed below.
5.1.1 Comparative Deletion

Consider the process of deriving the comparative sentence as given in (12) below:

(12) Moraa n’ omotambe kobua Nyanchama.

Moraa is tall exceed Nyanchama

‘Moraa is taller than Nyanchama’

() WS1a [Moraa n’omotambe]

WS 1b [Nyanchama n’ omotambe]

MERGE (Moraa n’ omotabe, Nyanchama n’ omotambe, kobua, WS2)→

{ {kobua {Moraa n’omotabe Nyanchama n’omotambe kobua} }}

LABEL: [IP [NP Moraa [Cop n’ [AP omotambe [DegP [d-omotambe [IP

[ Nyanchama [Cop n’ [omotambe [CP [Comp Kobua] ] ] ]]]]]]]

IM (kobua, Moraa n’omotambe Nyanchama n’omotambe kobua)→

{ Kobua { Moraa n’omotambe <kobua> Nyanchama n’omotambe kobua} }

LABEL: [IP [NP Moraa [Cop n’ [AP omotambe [DegP d-omotambe[CP [Comp kobua [IP

[NP Nyanchama n’ [AP omotambe [DegP d-omotambe [CP [Comp

Kobua] ] ] ]]]]]]

SPELL-OUT:

A-P: Moraa n’omotambe kobua Nyanchama

C-I: [IP Moraa [Cop n’ [DegP d-omotambe [ CP [Comp kobua [IP

Nyanchama] [DegP d-omotambe]]]

SEM: Moraa omotambe <d-tall_M > kobua Nyanchama omotambe<d-tall_N>

where (d-tall_M > d-tall_N)

The externalized construction involves the deletion of the copies and the verbal extension and its Adjunct at the point of spell-out to the Sensory-Motor interface. In the output, the construction that is interpreted does not consist of an adjective phrase, but only the degree phrase. This is usually not evident in analyses that conflate the adjectival feature. So how is the adjectival feature rendered visible in the output? This could be due to the deletion of the AP and feature inheritance by the DegP, a process similar to what happens when the CP is deleted upon the internal merge of the nominal that occupies the subject position to fulfill the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) as per Chomsky (1995; 2000).
In the examples given below, the sentences involve the deletion of the implicitly degree marked elements that are deleted in the comparative clause.

(13) Comparative Deletion

a.) Enyomba eye nigo ere enene kobua Enyomba eria □ce□cd

E-nyombe e-ye n-igo e-re e-nene ko-bua

E-nyomba SG-house SAGR-this FOC-PTL SAGR-big INF-exceed SG-house e-ria

SAGR-that

‘This house is bigger than that one’

b.) Enyomba eye nigo ere enene kobua enyomba eria ere □cd

E-nyombe e-ye n-igo e-re e-nene ko-bua

7SG-house SAGR-this FOC-PTL 7SG-is SAGR-big INF-exceed

e-nyomba e-ria

SG-house SAGR-that

‘This house is bigger than that one’

c.) Enyomba eye nigo ere enene kobua enyomba ya Nyaboke □ce□cd

E-nyombe e-ye n-igo e-re e-nene ko-bua

7SG-house SAGR-this FOC-PTL 7-is SAGR-big INF-exceed

e-nyomba ya Nyaboke

SG-house SAGR-that

‘This house is bigger than that one’

The comparative in EkeGusii are considered in this study to be derived in by the process of comparative deletion licenced by the overt realization of the marker Kogua ‘exceed/surpass’ as in (14 a and b) below

(14) a. Monari n-igo a-re’ omo-tambe mono.

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is-Fv 1-tall very

‘Monari is very tall’

b. Monari nigo are omotambe kobua Ombese □cd
Monari nigo a-r-e omo-tambe ko-bua Ombese

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is-fv 1SG-tall INF-exceed Ombese

‘Monari is taller than Ombese’

(◻_{CD} = d\text{-}are omotambe)

c. Monari nigo are omotambe kogua kera omonto ◻_{CD}.

Monari n-igo a-r-e omo-tambe ko-gua every Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is-FV 1SG-tall INF-exceed omo-nto

‘PL\text{-}person’

‘Monari is the tallest (than every person)’

(◻_{CD} = d\text{-}are omotambe)

Such an analysis will work for the positive degree clause as given in (15) below.

(15) [IP [DP Monari [r[FacP n-igo [AgrSp\text{-}a- [v_p [\text{Cop} -\text{re} ' [\text{DegP} [\text{Deg} [\text{Ap omo-tambe} [QP[Q mono]]]]]]]]]]]]]]

The positive clause does not project an than-XP phrase as in comparative clauses. For the inequal comparative clause we have the following analysis as in (16) below.

(16) a. Monari n’ ononene kobua osoro

Monari n’ omo-nene ko-bua Osoro □.

‘Monari is bigger than Osoro’

b. Monari n’ [\text{DegP} [\text{Ap ononene}] [\text{Deg} \text{Deg}^{+\text{comparative}}[\text{than-XP kobua Osoro}]]]

The comparative deletion approach to comparative formation was proposed by Bresnan (1973). Comparative deletion (CD) is considered to be an obligatory process that involves the removal of the gradable property from the comparative complement (referred to as than-XP). The functional node is proposed to account for a constituent that gave Ross (1967) a problem in labelling in his discussion of the process of ‘tree prunning’. The example of the representation by Ross of the comparative structure in English in (17) below.
(17) John is taller than Bill

$$[S [NP John [VP [is [Adj Adj] taller [er [than [NP Bill]]]]]]]$$

The analysis offered by Ross is based on the idea that comparatives, using English data with morphemes -er...than (referred to as inequalities in current literature) and 'as...as' (equitives) are Relative-Clause-like constructions that involve ‘Pronominalization-like rules’, that is, S-deletion under identity that obeys a set of constraints\(^3\) given in Chapter 4 of Ross (1967). The process of deleting the comparative element in than clauses. The process of comparative deletion consists in reordering a kind of underlying construction in which the standard particle is raised out of the deletion context.

(18) \[Monari \text{nigo are omotambe kogua Ombese \(\Box_{cd}\)}\]

Monari n-igo a-re omo-tambe [\(\Box_{cp}\) ko-gua

Ombese ]

Monari FOC-PTL 1SG-is 1SG-tall

Ombese INF-exceed

‘Monari is taller than Ombese’

\(\Box_{cd}=\text{are d-omotambe}\),

Comparative Deletion also occurs in constructions that bear Reciprocals (19b) and Reflexives in (19a) below.

(19)a. \[Maria \text{nigo eanchete kobua Nyaboke \(\Box_{ce}\)}\]

Maria n-igo e-anch-et-e ko-bua

Nyaboke

Maria FOC-PTL REFL-like-PERF-FV INF-exceed Nyaboke

‘Maria likes herself More then Nyaboke’

\(\Box_{cd}=\text{d-eanchete}\)

b. \[Abamura \text{nigo baanchaine kobua abasubati \(\Box_{ce}\)}\]

\(^3\) The constraints include: The Complex NP Constraint (CNPC), a Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC) and the Sentential Subject Constraint (SSC). They are restated below respectively:

The Complex NP Constraint (CNPC) Ross (1967: 161)

No element contained in the sentence dominated by a NP with a lexical head noun may be moved out of that noun phrase by a transformation
Aba-mura n-igo ba-ancha-ine ko-gua

1PL-boy FOC-PTL 1PL-like-RECIP INF-exceed

aba-subati

1PL-girl

‘Boys like each other more than girls’

(□_{cd} = d-baanchaine)

c. Mokua na Nyaboke nigo baanchaine kobua

Mokua na Nyaboke n-igo ba-ancha-ine ko-bua

Mokua and Nyaboke FOC-PTL 1PL-like-RECIP INF-exceed

Onsoti na Kerubo □

Onsoti and Kerubo

‘Mokua and Nyaboke like each other than Onsoti and Kerubo’

(□_{cd} = d-baanchaine)

5.1.2 Comparative Ellipsis

Comparative ellipsis (CE) involves the deletion of any sentential element which is not the comparative nominal in the comparative clause as shown in the cluses in a & b in (20) below. The complex case is that of the RNR example in (20c) in which an element in the root clause is deleted and by extension it flouts the Antecedent Containment Deletion constraint (ACD).

(20) Comparative Ellipsis

a) Moraa nigo aanchete obokima kobua □_{ce} □_{ce} omochere (ATB & Gapping)

Moraa n-igo aa-nch-et-e obo-kima
ko-bu-a Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV 14PL-porridge INF-exceed

omo-chere

3PL-rice.

‘Moraa likes porridge more than rice’

(□_{ce}= Moraa, □_{ce} = nigo aanchete)
b) Moraa nigo aanchete obokima kobua Nyaboke □_{ce}  (Stripping/ Gapping)

Moraa nigo a-anch-et-e obo-kima
ko-bua Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV 14PL-porridge INF-exceed

Nyaboke

‘Moraa likes porridge more than Nyaboke’

(□_{ce}=nigo anchete obokima)

c) Abanto abwo nigo ba anchete □_{ce} kogua baangete amarwa (RNR)

Aba-nto a-bwo n-igo ba-anch-et-e ko-gua
ba-ang-et-e

People those FOC-PTL 1PL-like-PERF-FV INF-exceed 1PL-dislike amarwa

PL-beer.

‘Those people like more than they dislike beer’

(□_{ce}=amarwa)

5.2 The Formation of Comparative Supelative Constructions

The superlative construction is generated by the process of superlative deletion and Superlative Ellipsis in the performance interfaces. The process of superlative deletion involves the deletion of the degree adjective in the superlative clause due to conjunction deletion, whereas the Superlative ellipsis involves the reduction of the clause by deletion of the non-degree marked elements. Both or one of the processes can act on a superlative clause to derive a gapped construction. The process is obligatory, since it is driven by the economy principle of ‘least effort’ and to avoid redundancy. In section 3.2.1 we will consider the cases in which superlative deletion occurs and in 3.2.2 the focus will be on superlative ellipsis.

5.2.1 Comparitive Superlative Deletion

The superlative clause in EkeGusii consists of two degree Phrases, one which is a complement or that serves as the argument of the main verb in the main clause, and the second one which takes absolute indefinite Quantifier Phrase and/or Determiner phrases as arguments to express superlative denotations as in (21) below or Polarity items as arguments to express superlative denotations as in (21) below..

(21)a. Monari nigo are omotambe kogua kera omonTo
The idea of the comparative/Superlative marker being the same licensor of degree deletion in the Ekegusii language opens up the question whether what is considered as comparative deletion should be construed as a universal category.

(22.) Comparative Superlative Deletion

a.) Moraa nigo are omonene kobua □_{SE} kera omonto □_{SE} □_{SD}(ATB & Gapping)

Moraa n-igo a-re ono-nene ko-bu-a

Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV PL-porridge INF-exceed kera omonto

every person.

‘Moraa likes porridge more than everything’

(□_{SD} = Moraa □_{SE} = aanchete)

b.) Moraa nigo are omonene kobua □_{SE} onde bwensi □_{SD}(ATB)

Moraa n-igo a-re ono-nene ko-bu-a

Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV PL-porridge INF-exceed onde bwensi
any all.

‘Moraa likes porridge more than everyone’

(□_{sp} = Moraa □_{se} = aanchete)

5.2.2 Comparative Superlative Ellipsis

The process of superlative ellipsis targets elements in the superlatives other than the degree construction, but it can also work alongside comparative ellipsis. Consider the sentences in (23) below.

(23) Supelative Ellipsis.

a. *Moraa nigo aanchete obokima kobua □_{se} kera egento* (ATB & Gapping)

Moraa n-igo aa-nch-et-e obo-kima ko-bu-a

Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV 14PL-porridge INF-exceed

Kera egento

ev ery thing.

‘Moraa likes porridge more than everything’

(□_{sp} = Moraa □_{se} = aanchete)

d) *Moraa nigo aanchete obokima kobua □_{se} kende gionsi* (ATB/ Gapping)

Moraa n-igo aa-nch-et-e obo-kima ko-bu-a

Moraa Foc-PTL 1SG-like-PERF-FV 14PL-porridge INF-exceed

Kende gionsi

Any all.

‘Moraa likes porridge more than anything’

(□_{se} = Moraa □_{se} = aanchete)
5.3 Structural Ambiguity

In this section we will examine whether the standard Phrase in comparative and superlative clauses in Ekegusii exhibit structural ambiguity as posited by Moltmann (1992) in relation to comparatives. Moltmann assumes that comparatives may have two syntactic structures simultaneously, that is, coordinate structure and subordinate structure.

The argument posited by Moltmann is a reaction to the idea that comparative clauses are basically related to coordination which is still followed by researchers (cf. Lechner 2001, 2004; Hankamer, 1973; Napoli, 1983 to mention a few). In some analyses, the two accounts are assumed to be distinct, with some researchers considering the comparative as having subordinate structure only as posited in Bresnan (1973).

The aspect of comparatives having a coordinate structure is shared by superlatives in EkeGusii. Section 3.3.1 below deals with the coordinate character of comparatives, whereas section 3.3.2 is on the coordinate structure of superlative constructions.

5.3.1 Coordinate Structure in Comparative Constructions

Napoli (1983) demonstrates that the comparative construction involves coordinate reduction by adducing environments in which one can substitute the conjuncts with the comparative than without loss in meaning. The test works for cases of Comparative Ellipsis in EkeGusii in relation to the universal coordinators, na ‘and’ and gose ‘or’, but not for korende ‘but’ being intersubstitutable with kobua ‘exceed’ as shown in (24) below

(24) (i) a. *Ombese naanchete echae na ΔCEΔCE e-rongori*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>na</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV</td>
<td>9PL-tea</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-rongori</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9PL-gruel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Ombese likes tea and gruel’

b. *Ombese naanchete echae kobua ΔCEΔCE erongori*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>ko-bua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV</td>
<td>9PL-tea</td>
<td>INF-exceed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9PL-gruel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Ombese likes tea than gruel’
(ii)a. \textit{Nyanchera n’ omorabu gose $\Delta_{CE}\Delta_{CE}$ omomwamu.}

\textit{Nyanchera} n’ omo-rabu gose omo-mwamu

\textit{Nyanchera} \textit{is} \textit{1SG-light} \textit{or} \textit{1SG-dark}

‘Nyanchera is brown or black’

b. \textit{Nyanchera n’ omorabu kobua $\Delta_{CE}\Delta_{CE}$ omomwamu.}

\textit{Nyanchera} n’ omo-rabu ko-bua omo-mwamu

\textit{Nyanchera} \textit{is} \textit{1SG-light} \textit{INF-exceed} \textit{1SG-dark}

‘Nyanchera is brown than black’

(iii) a. \textit{Nyanchera naanchete echae korende taancheti erongori}

\textit{Nyanchera} na-anch-et-e e-chae korende

\textit{Nyanchera} \textit{FOC-like-PERF-FV} \textit{9PL-tea} \textit{but} \textit{ta-anch-et-i e-rongori}

\textbf{NEG-like-PERF=FV} \textit{3SG-gruel}

‘Nyanchera likes tea but dislikes gruel’

b. *\textit{Nyanchera naanchete echae kobua taancheti erongori}

\textit{Nyanchera} na-anch-et-e e-chae ko-bua

\textit{Nyanchera} \textit{FOC-like-PERF-FV} \textit{9PL-tea} \textit{INF-exceed}

\textit{ta-anch-et-i e-rongori}

\textbf{NEG-like-PERF=FV} \textit{3SG-gruel}

Nyanchera likes tea than dislikes gruel’

In the examples given in (24) above, the sentences in (i) and (ii) the conjunct is intersubstitutable with the comparative marker \textit{kogua} ‘exceed’. However, the contrastive conjunct does not license reduction and its substitution with the marker renders the sentence semantically ill. The conjunct introduced by the conjunct introduces new information and so the comparative is not isomorphic hence blocking the reduction process.
Lechner (2004:6) posits the notion that comparative ellipsis is a kind of coordinate ellipsis that is subject to coordinate reduction processes such as Gapping, Right Node Raising or Across-the-Board (ATB) movement that involve the process of conjunct reduction. The assumption can be supported by the EkeGusii data which targets only part of the matter in the verbal as is sometimes the case in gapping constructions. The aspect, Conjunct Reduction (CR), is assumed by Lechner to be the preserve of coordinate ellipsis, and the similarity of form exhibited by Comparative Ellipsis construction is an indication that the construction involves a coordination process at some point of its derivation. She formalizes the idea by positing what is referred as the Conjunct Reduction Hypothesis given in (25) below.


CR operations can target comparatives

In this paper we argue that it is the case that phrasal comparatives attested exhibit the same characteristics as that of the Gapping cases in EkeGusii hence they are subject to the CR-hypothesis. The cases that involve Gapping are characterized by aspects such as isomorphism, boundedness and Locality.

In the context of coordinate ellipsis, the elements in the ellipsis site can be isomorphic and bound to the antecedent in the root clauses. The gap created by deletion obeys the constraint of locality in that it is controlled within its domain (we will not consider the effects of long distance in this paper, that will be matter for a paper examining the issue of syntactic islands in degree constructions).

Consider the case of Gapping in (26) below.

(26) a.  *Monari nigo are omonene na Obese boigo Δ.*

    Monari n-*igo*  a-*re*  omo-*nene* na Ombese  boigo

    **Monari**  **FOC-PTL**  **1SG-is**  **1SG-big**  **and**  **Ombese too**

    ‘Monari is big and Obese too’

    (Δ=*

    *nigo are omonene*)

b. Monari [nigo are omonene]

    na Obese boigo [nigo are omonene]
In the comparative ellipsis site in the EkeGusii sentence given in (27) below is symmetrical to the correlate in the root clause, if it is assumed that the sentences are generated in the second syntax, the further syntactic computation that occurs after the subordinating element, *Kogua ‘exceed’* is introduced. The process used to generate the comparative deletion is similar to that of the coordinate ellipsis construction in (26) above.

(27) a. *Monari nigo are omonene kogua Ombese* □_<SUP>ce</SUP>□_<SUP>ce</SUP>□_<SUP>cd</SUP>.

> Monari  n-igo     a-re   omo-nene   ko-gu-a
> Ombese

Monari  Foc-PTL     1SG-is  1SG-big    INF-surpass-FV    Ombese

‘Monari is bigger than Ombese’

(□_<SUP>ce</SUP>=nigo  □_<SUP>ce</SUP>= are  □_<SUP>cd</SUP>= d-omonene)

b. **Syntax**

(i.) *Monari nigo are omonene kogua Ombese* nigo are d-omonene

> [IP [DP Monari [FocP nigo [vP [Cop are [DegP [AP omonene [CP [vP kogua [IP [DP ombese [FocP nigo [vP [Cop are [DegP [AP d-omonene]]]]]]]]]]]]]]]]

(ii.) *Monari nigo are omonene kogua Ombese* are d-omonene

> [IP [DP Monari [FocP nigo [vP [Cop are [DegP [AP omonene [CP [vP kogua [IP [DP ombese [vP are [DegP [AP d-omonene]]]]]]]]]]]]]]

The sentences in (27) involve sentences that are of equal syntactic weigthing, in that the meaning of the comparative clause is not subordinated to that of the root clause. The sentence in (27bii) above exhibits the behavior of a form of phrasal ellipsis by virtue of deleting a clause that is isomorphic to a constituent, that is the entire VP (or I’). The introduction of the comparative *Kogua ‘than’* in the sentence involves a process that can be seen to be analogous to that of coordination. The construction may be considered to involve the process of comparative gapping which is not distinct from the Gapping process in Coordinate Ellipsis in EkeGusii.

3.3.2 **Coordinate Ellipsis in Superlative Clauses**

The subordinator *kogua ‘exceed’* in superlative clauses behaves the same way it does in the comparative in so far as structural ambiguity is concerned. The patterns of coordination observed in comparatives above are replicated to some extent, but the semantic range of superlatives is
limited by the semantic attributes of the types of quantifiers it realizes in the superlative clause. Consider the sentences given in (28) below.

The standard marker Kobua ‘exceed’ can be substituted with the coordinator na as illustrated in the sentences given in (28) below

(28) (i) a. *Ombese naanchete echae na $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SE}$ kende giosi.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>na</th>
<th>kende</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV 9PL-tea</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

giosi

All

‘Ombese likes tea and everything’

b. *Ombese naanchete echae kobua $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SE}$ kende giosi.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>ko-bua</th>
<th>kende</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV 9PL-tea</td>
<td>INF-exceed</td>
<td>any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Giosi

all

‘Ombese likes tea than everything’

(29) (ii) a. *Ombese naanchete echae na $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SE}$ kera egento.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>na</th>
<th>kera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV 9PL-tea</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>every</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

egento

thing

‘Ombese likes tea and everything’

b. *Ombese naanchete echae kobua $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SE}$ kera egento.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ombese</th>
<th>na-anch-et-e</th>
<th>e-chae</th>
<th>ko-bua</th>
<th>kera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ombese</td>
<td>FOC-like-PERF-FV 9PL-tea</td>
<td>INF-exceed</td>
<td>every</td>
<td>egento</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thing

‘Ombese likes tea than everything’

Superlatives are syntactically subject to Conjunct Reduction (CR), and so we can extend Lecher’s CR-hypothesis as follows in (30) below.

(30) **CR-Hypothesis**

CR can target comparatives and Superlatives

In the sentences given in (30) below, conjunct reduced constructions such as Gapping, ATB and RNR are attested in superlative clauses. The sentence are derived by the stated processes of conjunct reduction as hypothesized in (30) above.

(31)

a. **Nyaboke n’omomwamu mono na onde bwensi $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SD}$ (Gapping and Superlative Ellipsis)**

Nyaboke  n’  omo-mwamu  mono  ko-bua  o-nde  bwe-nsi

**Nyaboke**  is  **1Sg-black**  **more**  **INF-exceed**  **1-any 1-all**

‘Nyaboke is darker than everyone’

($\Delta_{SE}=no  \Delta_{SD}=d$-omomwamu)

b. **Nyaboke n’omomwamu mono kobua onde bwensi $\Delta_{SE}\Delta_{SD}$ (ATB)**

Nyaboke  n’  omo-mwamu  mono  ko-bua  o-nde

**nyaboke**  **IS 1-black**  **more**  **INF-exceed**  **1-any**

bwe-nsi

**1-all**

‘Ombese likes tea than everyo’

($\Delta_{SE}=no  \Delta_{SD}=d$-omomwamu)

c. **Nyaboke nigo are omomwamu mono kobua onde bwensi are$\Delta_{SD}$**

Nyaboke  n-igo  a-r-e  omo-mwamu  mono
nyaboke       FOC-PTL       1SG-is-FV       1-black       more
ko-bua       o-nde       bwe-nsi       a-re

INF-exceed   1-any       1-all       1PL-is-FV
‘Ombese likes tea than everything’
($\Delta_{SE} = \text{no} \ \Delta_{SD} = \text{d-omomwamu}$)

6.0 Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed the comparative and superlative clauses as projecting the same structural form with the difference being decided in the Logical form (or the Conceptual-Intentional (C-I) interface) rather than from the phonetic form (or Articulatory-Perceptual (A-P) interface). In accounting on how the structural ambiguity, between coordination and subordination, we argue for the position that the constructions have a coordination syntax that is attested by the constructions realizing constructions such as Gapping, RNR and ATB which are subject to the conjunct reduction constraint. The results reported here will help to extend the typological considerations on degree constructions in Bantu languages.

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