英語の比較対照構造と関連する構成

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English Comparative Correlatives and Related Constructions

This article argues that the introduction of \textit{the + COMPAR(ATIVE)} of Comparative Correlatives (CC's) just indicates the beginning of the construction and its ending is the performance issue due to the fact that CC's do not always consist of two clauses but may consist of “more than three clauses.” I also discuss discourse properties of CC’s and show the meaning of CC’s might be expressed by VP’s like \textit{Double your gun, double your fun!} and related constructions such as CC's without \textit{the} and repetition of NP’s like \textit{More Stores, More Choices}. I also criticize den Dikken (2005) by showing the example of \textit{the + COMPAR} coming at the end of the clause without being fronted.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will describe the properties of English Comparative Correlatives (henceforth, CCs) as in (1). I also consider CC-like constructions without the definite article “the” in the form of “More NP, More NP” as shown in (1b). Note that the latter is similar to French CCs in that \textit{the} is missing (N.B. den Dikken (2005:528)).

(1) a. The more Ashenden knew Ivy Bishop the more he liked her. \[S: 244\]
  
  b. More Stores, More Choices. \[Ad\]

Secondly, I argue that “associational semantic rule” operating in Gil’s (2005) IMA Languages – an early stage of language (e.g. Riau Indonesian) – survives in CC’s. I point out that counterfactual interpretation makes Association Operator difficult to operate in the case of CC’s (cf. Jackendoff 2005:501). In early stages of the language acquisition, language expressions including CCs are bound to the particular scene before one’s eyes and counterfactual interpretation emerges as more complex form-meaning association in the later stages. Thirdly, I argue that the meaning of Comparative Correlatives might be expressed by the juxtaposition of appropriate “verbs” instead of adjectives like \textit{Double your gun, double your fun!} and related constructions such as CC’s without \textit{the} and repetition of NP’s like \textit{More Stores, More Choices}.

Fourthly, I claim that the introduction of “the+comparative” form just indicates the beginning of CC’s and the closing of the construction is the matter of pragmatics,

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because CCs are not restricted to the two-part structure (the first clause C1 \textit{the more you eat} and the second clause C2 \textit{the less you want}) as argued by Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:501) and den Dikken (2005) but there are “tripartite” structure CC’s as shown below.

(3) The more he tried to call up a clear picture of her, the more his memory failed him, the farther she faded away, leaving him nothing to catch and hold.  \[SC:7\]

Next, I touch on the discourse properties of CC’s based on Renkema’s (2009:41) notion of Adjunction. And CC’s are instances of Kajita’s (1977) notion of form-meaning discrepancy because the form “the + comparative, the + comparative” is not that of a typical conditional sentence introduced by \textit{if} but semantically the first clause corresponds to an \textit{as}-clause or an \textit{if}-clause and the second clause provides the meaning supplemented by adverbs like \textit{correspondingly} (N.B. Jackendoff 2005).

Finally, I cast a doubt on den Dikken’s (2005:502ff., 506) claim that a syntactic representation of CC’s is that of genuine correlative constructions, the first clause being relative clause adjoined to the second clause, the fronting in relatives is obligatory based on Dutch and German facts as well as Jesperssen (1961:5.381) observation that \textit{the + COMPAR} in the first clause is often followed by the complementizer \textit{that} … taken as the ‘relative,’ illustrated in “the more queynte crekes that they mak …”

However, I point out the fact that the position of \textit{the + COMPAR} might make it impossible to the complementizer \textit{that} or the relative pronoun \textit{which} to follow, like “it only set up him the more and made him themore diligent to avoid betraying …” Once the conjunction \textit{and} is deleted in this example, you might obtain a CC-like structure. I would argue that the complementizer \textit{that} or the relative pronoun \textit{which} does not modify the whole “the + COMPAR + NOUN” but only the NOUN part, independent of the CC-structure.

Note that the first work which deals with CC’s is McCawley (1988). Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:501) surveys previous analyses of CC’s in the framework of generative grammar.

2. The Descriptive Data of CCs

The shortest form of CCs is the proverb like following, which happen to appear in an elementary school textbook in the US.

(1) The more, the merrier.

Historically speaking “the” of \textit{the + COMPAR} was an degree adverb (originated from OE “se” meaning “with that” in proverbs like “The sooner, the better,” according to \textit{The Kenkyusha Dictionary of English Linguistics and Philosophy} (1982: 293).

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:514) also notes that “The appears to be a specifier of \textit{more} and \textit{less}, in alternation with other specifiers such as \textit{much}, \textit{far}, and \textit{a lot}. (Jespersen (1949: 509-12) points out that it bears no diachronic relation to the definite article…)).” However, I point out the existence of related constructions which lacks \textit{the in the + COMPAR(ATIVE)}, as in the following examples.

(2) More silence. More swallowing. \[TW:364\]
(3) More matches, more pages — a contained blaze right there on the table. [WJ: 254]
[Micronesia Mall (Guam) Advertisement 2018]

When clauses are incorporated into such fragments, CCs consisting of the two parts still lacks “the,” as in the following example:

(5) “Sooner you go,” Holmes said, “sooner I can get back to it.” [BB: 109]

Adding the, which I suppose to be the marker indicating the comparison of two or more things, yield the standard CCs.

(6) Seems like the more money they have, the bigger the things they like to collect.

[FA:122]

“The + comparative clause” looks like an inverted clause. Note in passing, Stainton (2006: 81) argues that exclamatory sentences like the following, taken from Porter and Zanuttini (2005), are not clauses syntactically.

(7) The strange things he says.

(Stainton 2006: 81)

I would like to point out this sentence resembles CC’s like (5), in that both have undergone inversion. Tentatively, it might be proposed that the basic form of CC is the short comparative (correlative) “the + COMPAR, the + COMPAR” like “the more, the better,” and that the clauses are juxtaposed after each the + COMPAR, yielding the longer version of CCs as the derived form. This analysis might explain why the superlative form is not allowed in CC’s. Namely, since we have assumed that the basic form is comparative, the superlative might not be generated as a derived form (cf. Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:500).

(8) a. *The most you want, the least you ate.  
    (superative)  
    (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:500)

b. If/*as you had eaten more, you would want less.  
    (counterfactual)  
    (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:500)

As for the reason why the counterfactual form is not allowed in CC’s, I speculate that “the + COMPAR, the + COMPAR” is usually uttered in the actual situation under one’s nose and conditioned by the outside world setting, and so the counterfactual interpretation is hard to obtain.

(9) *The more you would want, the less you would eat.  

    (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:500)

Consider attested examples like the following, which is the commercial break of the baseball batting practice machine for children aired in English speaking countries.

(10) ESPN Better Batter Baseball automatically reloads. So you can hit more. The more you hit, the better you get. HOME RUN!! 
    (shown on an electric bulletin board) 
    ESPN Better Batter Baseball. 
    [“ESPN Better Batter Baseball,” commercial break NBC, 2009]

The footage shows a very young boy, wearing a headgear and a baseball uniform, strikes back baseballs one after another, pitched from the machine made of plastic, which is automatically loaded with baseballs, hung from the ceiling. Then, the catchphrase “The more you hit, the better you get.” is narrated, an electric bulletin board displays “HOME RUN!!” and the name of
the product “ESPN Better Batter Baseball” is announced. TV viewers might connect visual information provided by the TV monitor before their eyes with the auditory information given by the narration, and infer that the boy improved his skill of batting thanks to the batting practice machine through inference or association. But the (negative) counterfactual interpretation, “If you hit more balls using this machine, you would get better in your skill in batting,” might be hard to come by because the intention of the commercial message is to convey the positive message that “If you purchase this Better Batter Baseball and practice batting with it, your batting skill will certainly improve. So be sure to buy this product.”


Or one might argue that the domain where Association Operator operating in IMA Language, early human language (e.g. Riau Indonesian), survives is seen in CCs as the mere juxtaposition of the clauses in the form of “the + COMPAR + clause₁, the + COMPR + clause₂ … the + COMPR + clauseₙ.” The interpretation of CC’s is heavily context-dependent and restricted by “Information Flow (Gil 2005:259),” usually disallowing the reversal of the first clause of CC and the second clause of CC (e.g. the more, the merrier vs. *the merrier, the more). The interpretation of CC is the result of selecting the most suitable interpretation of the scene before one’s eyes is obtained by applying the association operator (N.B. Gil 2005:255). The commercial message is designed to lead the viewer to associate the purchase of Better Batter Baseball and the improvement of one’s batting skills. The (negative) counterfactual interpretation “as there is not Better Batter Baseball at hand, you would not improve your batting skills” hardly crosses the viewer’s mind because it forces the viewer to abandon the positive interpretation that Better Batter Baseball ensures the improvement of batting skills first and to construct the counterfactual interpretation instead. As supporting evidence I cite the following example which indicates that CC’s are basically used to give a description that conforms to reality, not unreality.

(11) “Quit crying, Mr. Kaltenborn. The sooner you answer my questions, the sooner we’ll let you go.” [WJ: 115]

Here, the policeman’s remark is toward the suspect, Kaltenborn, taken to the police station based on the assumption that the suspect is supposed to confess frankly. Namely, there is no implication that “as Kaltenborn does not tell the truth, he will not be freed.” I have already pointed out the might be omitted in such a case:

(12) “Sooner you go,” Holmes said, “sooner I can get back to it.” [BB: 109]

The next example describes the footage that a dishonest policeman urges Tilly, a female drug addict on probation, to tell the truth by saying “the sooner you confess to a crime, the sooner you can dope yourself cocaine.”
(13) And I know you want to geez, so the sooner you talk to me, the sooner you can. [WJ: 183]

Furthermore, the next example describes the scene before the character in the novel employing a CC.

(14) Corben heard him yell out another name, “Wasseen,” followed by a barked order that echoed down the stairwell. The pockmarked shooter outside was probably telling the third man to come up and join in.

The more, the merrier.

Not. [TS: 173-174]

The scene describes an increase in the number of armed mercineries opposite the door behind which Coben hides himself; Coben make a sardonic remark using CC (“The more, the merrier”) and then deny it.

One of the obvious example which shows that CC’s are used to describe before one’s very eyes would be on-the-spot broadcasting of the different martial arts tournament, as in (14). D.C. is the name of a martial artist.

(15) The more D.C. can turn into this type of fight, the better. [UFC Unleashed 2016 #1]

The next extract from a novel describes Ashenden, under medical treatment in the sanatorium, giving his impressions of Ivy Bishop, a lady in the same sanatorium at the same period.

(16) The more Ashenden knew Ivy Bishop the more he liked her. [S: 244]

Note in passing, the use of CC’s might express the increased sense of urgency:

(17) A whisper of footfalls along the outer corridor told me where my stalker was. A few aisles away, he turned and began slipping back up toward the studies. The closer he came, the deeper I withdrew back among the shelves. I had, at all costs, to keep bookshelves between him and me. [SS: 77]

3. More Descriptive Data of CCs

More attested data is given below. Takao Yagi (1987:120) notes that either the main clause or the subordinate clause or both of them are contracted in Comparative Correlatives.

(1) The more, the better.

The first clause is the complete sentence and the second one is the reduced clause in the following attested examples.

(2) a. The more time goes by, the better. [WJ: 164]

b. The more D.C. can turn into this type of fight, the better. [UFC Unleashed 2016 #1]

There are numerous instances of “the + comparative” in which the same comparatives are repeated.

(3) “Quit crying, Mr. Kaltenborn. The sooner you answer my questions, the sooner we’ll let you go.” [WJ: 115]

(4) And I know you want to geez, so the sooner you talk to me, the sooner you can. [WJ: 183]

In the following example the character Han infers and explains the motive behind people who collect things with use of CC, which is more persuasive than explaining by logic.

(5) They were now hurrying down a
passageway ... “People have funny hobbies,” he explained as he kept moving fast. “Some are collectors. There are those who collect different kinds of galactic currencies, some who collect liquor containers, a few who like to accumulate holos of famous entertainers. Seems like the more money they have, the bigger the things they like to collect. There are even a handful who like to collect biological specimens. Those with money collect live ones. Those without money become scientists.” He gestured and they turned a corner. [FA: 122]

An exact opposite view of the possession and the desire is expressed in the following example:


Next, consider the following example:

(7) “The problem was,” Anakin went on, “the more I thought about my mom, the worse I felt. But I would feel better if I thought about Naboo and the palace.”

He didn’t say it outright, but Padmé knew that what he really meant was that he felt better when he thought about her, or at least that he would include her in those pleasant thoughts. [AC: 142]

What this instance of CC expresses is that the only pleasant (positive) things to think about were this city and his mom, but Anakin felt worse (negative) thinking about them on the contrary.

In the following example, CC is used to give a “brief” but effective warning, and then the same content is repeated in the conditional.

(8) “You need to go to the Senate right away. Tell them I insist that they take action against The First Order. The longer they bicker and delay, the stronger the Order becomes.” She leaned toward the other woman. “If they fail to take action soon, the Order will have grown so strong that the Senate will unable to do anything. It won’t matter what they think.” [FA: 153]

In the next example the professor uses CC to refute Father Brown according to Grice’s (1975) maxim of quality, citing proper evidence.

(9) ‘After all,’ said Father Brown. ‘Apparitions are only appearances. I suppose you’d say the Family Ghost is only keeping up appearances.’

The Professor’s gaze ... suddenly ... fixed and focused itself as it did on a dubious medium ...

‘Appearances!’ he muttered, ‘crikey, but it’s odd you should say that just now. The more I learn, the more fancy they lose by merely looking for appearances. …’ [BOB: 54]

Consider the following example from the perspective of the connectivity of the discourse.

(10) I used to want to save the world. This beautiful place. But I know so little then. It is a land of beauty and wonder, worth cherishing every way. But the closer you
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get, the more you see the great darkness simmering within. And mankind?
Mankind is another story altogether.
What one does when faced with the truth is more difficult than you think.
I learned this hard way a long, long time ago. And now, I will never be the same.

— Diana, Princess of Thermyscira

[WW]

With recourse to Renkema’s (2009:41) notion, CC corresponds to Elaboration at the level of Adjunction. That is, CC adds more information to C[oncept] “the world (This beautiful place. A land of beauty and wonder).” “I” add the details C (“the world”) that the great darkness is simmering within it. This is the answer to the question “Please, tell me more about C?” (N.B. Renkema 2009:42).

The same type of example, which implies negative connotations through CC, is shown below:

(11) I’m going home! Mills thought again, the idea sitting uncomfortably in his own beer-addled brain. Home had been a calming concept for all three of his combat tours, but the longer he’d spent out here, the more alien a place home became. [K: 37]

C₂ is blended with emphatic sentence construction “it ~ to…” in the following instance:

(12) “And the longer they waited, the more difficult it became to find a way to announce it.” [TS: 609]

Raising (14a) and CC (14b) are blended in the example (13) shown below:

(13) The larger the group, the more likely men are to speak.

[The New York Times, Week in Review, May 1, 2016, p.2]

(14) a. Men are (more) likely to speak. ← It is (more) likely that men speak.
b. The larger the group, the more men speak.

Finally, let me point out the example of “the + COMPAR + NP, the + COMPAR + NP,” as shown below:

(15) “Hence, this factor in the likelihood of confusion lies in (Xiaomi’s) favour – the lesser the similarity between the marks, the lower the likelihood of confusion,” said Ms Tan in decision grounds last week.

[The Straits Times, Friday, August 18, 2017, B1]

4. Previous analysis of CCs


(1) The kinder you are to him, the more he imposes on you. (McCawley 1988: 176)

McCawley (1988) supports Fillmore (1987) claiming that CC’s inherit properties of the more basic constructions based on English, German, and Mandarin Chinese.

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:504-507) adopt the “left-subordinate hypothesis,” arguing that CC consists of two clauses, the first one being C₁ and the second one being C₂, and that
C₁ is the subordinate clause and C₂ is the main clause on various evidence. Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:504-507) gather various pieces of syntactic evidence for Left-Subordinate Hypothesis including the linguistic fact that it is possible to form a tag question based on C₂ but not one based on C₁ (e.g. The more we eat, the angrier you get, don’t you? vs. *The more we eat, the angrier you get, don’t we?). However, I argue in this paper that CC’s might not complete with two clauses but might consist of three clauses, thus the introduction of the + COMPAR just shows the beginning of the construction.

(2) The more he tried to call up a clear picture of her, the more his memory failed him, the farther she faded away, leaving him nothing to catch and hold. [SC: 7]

When one wants to express the relation between the subordinate clause and the main clause by using comparative forms, he/she should use the overt subordinate conjunction.

(3) As the world gets smaller, business opportunities get bigger.

[BBC News, March 4th, 2018]

Syntactically CC’s are the mere juxtaposition. This is the matter of form. Whether the first clause and the second clause might be interchanged or not would be the matter of the information flow (N.B. Gil 2005). Whether the first clause is the subordinate clause and the second clause is the main clause is also the matter of meaning. In other words, the cause and the effect is reflected in the syntactic form in this order but syntactically speaking two clauses of CC’s are formally identical (that is, both clauses are in the form of the + COMPAR). den Dikken (2005:502ff., 506) analyzes comparative correlatives as genuine correlative constructions whose first clause is a relative clause adjoined to the second clause that function as the root of the construction. And den Dikken (2005:506) points out that the fronting in relatives is obligatory based on Dutch and German facts as well as the observation of Jesperrsen (1961:5.381) who points out that the + COMPAR in the first clause is often followed by the complementizer that … taken as the ‘relative.’

(4) a. The more queynte crekes that they make, the more wol I stele whan I take. ‘The more quaint creaks they make, the more I want to steal when I awake.’ (Chaucer, Canterbury Tales; 14th c.)

(den Dikken 2005:502)

b. The more even of fugitive evil which it sees …, may, the more which is disclosed to it …, only the more convinces it that the great mystery of all things will allow of no lasting evil.

(Hunt, Autobiography; 18th c.)

(den Dikken 2005:503)

c. Henceforth the less communication which passes between me and any member of your family the better.

(Kingsley, Hypathia; 19th c.)

(den Dikken 2005:503)

I cast a doubt on den Dikken’s (2005:502ff., 506) claim that syntactic representation of CC’s whose first clause being relative clause adjoined to the second clause based on the data taken from Jesperrsen (1961:5.381) as far as English
is concerned. I argue that the complementizer that or the relative pronoun which does not modify the whole “the + COMPAR + NOUN” but only the NOUN part, independent of the CC-structure. To support this claim, I would like to point out the fact that the position of the + COMPAR make it impossible to the complementizer that or the relative pronoun which to follow in the following example:

(5) It gratified all the vicious vanity that was in him; and so, instead of winning him it only “set him up” the more and made him the more diligent to avoid betraying that he knew she was about. [AT: 128]

(6) cf. … and this seemed to render the prevailing silence and sense of loneliness the more profound. [ibid., 64]

Notice that once the conjunction and is deleted, you might obtain CC-like structure, namely “it only set up him the more, made him the more diligent to avoid betraying that he knew she was about.” My claim is that the + COMPAR might be either fronted or postposed. As indirect evidence to the argument that the conjunction gets sandwiched between two instances of the + COMPAR, observe the following example in which two the + COMAR’s (apparently “non-correlative”) are conjoined across the conjunction yet.

(7) Silas T. Vandam, the millionaire and oil magnet, was a lean man with a long, yellow face and blue-black hair, colours which were the less conspicuous yet somehow the more sinister because his face and figure showed dark against the window and the white warehouse wall outside it; he was buttoned up tight in an elegant overcoat with strips of astrakhan.

[MC: 88]

It might be argued that in this example seemingly non-correlatied two the + COMPAR's are combined across yet. But the following is an instance of inserting the conjunction in the middle of (genuine) CC in 21st century English.

(8) The more she read, though, the more that comfort eroded. [TS: 256]

Thus, what is crucial about the example (5) above is that not only two the + COMPAR's are conjoined by a coordinate conjunction but also the word order is reversal of the standard CC’s, namely a clause1 + the more and a clause2 + the more. In other words, the + COMPAR is not fronted.

Furthermore, den Dikken does not mention the existence of CC’s consisting of three clauses, either.

5. Comparative Correlatives consisting of three clauses – the end of the construction is the matter of performance

Consider the following example of CC, in which multiple instances of the + COMPAR are conjoined.

(1) The less we have to guess as to what goes with what, and the more we can rely on subconscious, automatic processes to arrange the basic information, the faster and more undistracted our speech will be.

Note also that CC’s sometimes emerge continuously.

(2) “But I don’t work miracles. The more time I have to arrange escapades like this, the better. And the fewer of them I have to arrange, better still. As for money, it’s deep but finite. The longer we go, the more police will want you, and the harder—and more expensive—it will get to keep tracking your treasure undercover. So the faster you work, the more likely you are to succeed.” [SS: 142]

But what is crucial to the present paper is shown in the following examples of CC’s consisting of “three” clauses with or without the intervention of the conjunction.

(3) The less we have to guess as to what goes with what, and the more we can rely on subconscious, automatic processes to arrange the basic information, the faster and more undistracted our speech will be. [Ljiljana Progovac. 2015. Evolutionary Syntax. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, p. 175.]

(4) The more incongruous the coincidence, the more instantaneous the decision, the more likely he is to snatch the chance. The accident, the very triviality of the white speck and the hole in the hedge intoxicated him like a vision of the world’s desire. [OD: 82-83]

It might be possible that the first the + COMPAR is a protasis, the second the + COMPAR is an apodosis, then the first and the second instances of the + COMPAR together form a new protasis and the third the + COMPAR becomes a new apodosis in these examples. There is a possibility of “recursion” or “continuation” of the + COMPAR in the way that the first, the second and the third the + COMPAR’s might become a new protasis and the fourth the + COMPAR might become another apodosis and so on. The fact that Comparative Correlatives may repeat the + COMPAR recursively (instead of normal Comparative Correlatives consisting of two clauses) could be explained without difficulty if one takes a point of view not adhering to a conventional idea of “sententialism or sentence primacy” (N.B. Stainton 2006:227).

Even Culicover and Jackendoff (2005: Ch.14) only deal with the form consisting of C₁ and C₂ (namely, two consecutive the + COMPAR’s).

This viewpoint is obvious from the following statement of Culicover and Jackendoff (2005: Ch.14).

(5) We call the two parts of CC the “clauses” of the construction: the first clause (the more you eat in (1a)) is C₁ and the second (the less you want) is C₂.

(Culicover and Jackendoff 2005: 501)

“Sententialism,” in other words a sentence is an upper limit, have shown a strong tendency not to pay attention to discourse which is a connection between sentences. Of course, studies of discourse particles (such as “like, well, and y’know”) have emerged recently, though the basic status of discourse particles are not clear. Discourse particles should be given a status within the whole system. But if you start thinking about it, you will realize that it wouldn’t be incorporated into sententialism.
Syntactic theory has not taken the regularity into consideration. Traditionally, the system of discourse has been separated from sentence grammar. From a viewpoint of dynamic theory of syntax of Kajita (1977), the sequence of “one-word one-utterance”, namely the relation between a word and a word, involves what is equivalent to the relation between S and S. And such an intra-relation develop into a full-fledged sentence later (cf. Gil 2005). Putting it in another way, such an intra-relation contains the inter-clausal-relation. Note, however, some kind of intra-relation will develop into the inter-clausal relation or the complex sentence, but others won’t do so. This is a phenomenon which the traditional grammar has not been taken into consideration. A different perspective comes into view when various linguistic phenomena are considered dynamically. By abandoning the output-oriented approach and taking the process-oriented approach, every linguistic phenomenon should appear differently. Let us consider CCs. The grammarians obsessed with “sententialism,” pace Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), consider the only object of the analysis to be a sentence.” They posit Comparative Correlative Constructions but their notion of “construction” does not specify the end point. The rule to specify the end of the construction is not dealt with by Construction Grammar, in which framework there is no choice but to state that the only position in which the construction ends or closes is the + COMPAR (CP, IP).

(10) \[ CC \] \[ C1/CP \] the more \[ IP \] \[ you want \] \[ C2/CP \] the less \[ IP \] \[ you want \] \]

(Culicover and Jackendoff 2005: 501)

In the discourse, the + COMPAR might repeat any number of times. When the meaning of “correlation/condition” is introduced by the first (the) + COMPAR, the subsequent (the) + COMPAR might repeat endlessly until the continuation of the discourse, containing “the + COMPAR” is stopped. Thus, it is not the case that all clauses that compose CC’s is just two CP’s. However, from the perspective of “sententialism,” “Comparative Correlative” is composed of only two clauses (CP’s). Note in passing Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:502) point out that the recursion of CP is possible when CC as CP is embedded in such main clauses as “I think that ~” (e.g. I think that the more you eat, the less you want.). But Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:502) do not refer to the recursion of CC itself.

Consider again three tokens of “the + COMPAR” or the three-fold stacking of (the) more XP:

(11) The more incongruous the coincidence, the more instantaneous the decision, the more likely he is to snatch the chance. The accident, the very triviality of the white speck and the hole in the hedge intoxicated him like a vision of the world’s desire. Nobody clever enough to see such a combination of accidents could be cowardly enough not to use them!

[OD: 82-83]

The first CP just indicates the beginning of “Comparative Correlative” (that is, the first the + COMPAR provides “condition/protasis”
and only notices that the apodosis ensues. The question of to what extent “the + COMPAR (XP)” continues would be the matter of “performance.” In the above example, the clauses of the indicative mood “The accident, the very triviality of the white speck and the hole in the hedge intoxicated him like a vision of the world’s desire. Nobody clever enough to see such a combination of accidents could be cowardly enough not to use them!” ensue the + COMPAR and lead the discourse to a reality “the criminal decided to take advantage of this chance.”

Finally, I would post another example of threefold “the + COMPAR” below.

(12) The more he tried to call up a clear picture of her, the more his memory failed him, the farther she faded away, leaving him nothing to catch and hold. [SC: 7]

6. The related constructions: How the interpretation of CC’s arises

Let us consider the related construction which is the bare juxtaposition of the two comparative expressions, in which case the derived meaning may be heavily context-dependent. In such a case, the meaning of the simultaneity or the causal relation might be given to two juxtaposed comparative expressions with the recourse to Gil’s (2005:255) notion of “Polyadic Association Rule,” which is the formal representation of the semantic relationship of “having to do with.” In the later stage of the grammar, construction-specific rules of semantic interpretation of CCs develop as the establishment of CC’s. Consider the following examples:

(1) More silence. More swallowing. [TW: 364]
(2) I lit a match and torched a file page: faggot artwork sizzled. More matches, more pages — a contained blaze right there on the table. [WJ: 254]

The first example describes the scene of a loan shark Hobbie reminding a real estate agent of a debt on the phone. The debter panics and makes swallowing sounds, whose sound is transmitted through a telephone wire. Reacting to Hobbie’s threat the real estate agent is speechless and swallows his saliva. The reaction is effectively described through the two juxtaposed comparative phrases.

An associational semantic rule in the sense of Gil (2005) is to give one of the most suitable situational meanings to the expression. Thus, ignoring syntax and focusing only on meaning, verb phrases (instead of adjective phrases) might be able to express the correlative (comparative) meaning. Consider the following example:

(4) Double your gun, double your fun! [click. BBC. May 14th, 2017]

This is a news clip of the comment on virtual reality shooting game. This example shows that the repetition of doubling of quantity yields the causal relation, thus expresses the (comparative) correlative meaning without the use of the + comparative adjective forms. This example means that as the number of the gun increases, the joy increases accordingly. In this case double is a verb, and the first clause is an imperative.

A single the + COMPAR might be used as a
subordinate clause (corresponding to if/as/when clauses) combine with the main clause containing a comparative expression.

(6) He was getting more and more pissed off the more he thought about this mess.

[Bruno. Seven.]

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:505) refers to such an example in which the second clause is CC-clause and the first clause is a comparative phrase in a normal position and name it “the Inverted Comparative Correlative (ICC).”

(7) Mary got angrier and angrier, the more pictures she looked at.

(Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:505)

In the following example the ordinary clause and (the +) COMPAR are also juxtaposed and has the meaning of CC.

(8) They … approached the … ship. It looked larger the nearer they got, not quite Athena’s size, but close. [K: 200]

CC also seems to be related to the following construction because both share “the + comparative.”

(9) He is shy but I love him (all) the more.

(10) I will help him (all) the more for his industry. = … because [(in) that] he is industrious.

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005:514-515) point out that the appears to be the specifier of more/less, that it interchanges with other specifiers like much, far, and a lot and that there is relics related to CC such as none/not much the wiser and all the more in the English language.

7. Concluding Remarks

In this article I have argued that the introduction of “the + comparative” of Comparative Correlatives (CC’s) just indicate the beginning of the construction and that the ending of the construction is the issue of performance on the ground of the fact that CC’s do not always consist of two clauses but that CC’s may consist of more than three clauses. I have also discussed some discourse properties of CC’s in the framework of Renkema (2009). In addition, the meaning similar to/identical with CC’s might be expressed by the juxtaposition of appropriate “verbs” instead of adjectives as well as related constructions like “More NP, More NP.” Then, I have cast doubt on den Dikken’s (2005) analysis based on the fact that the position of the + COMPAR might make it impossible to the complementizer that to follow: … only set up him the more and made him the more diligent to avoid ….

Data Sources


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