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Cantonese Equative Constructions in Typological Perspective

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What are Equative Constructions?

Equative Constructions

- “Equative constructions express situations in which two referents have a gradable property to the same degree.” (Haspelmath et al. 2017: 10)

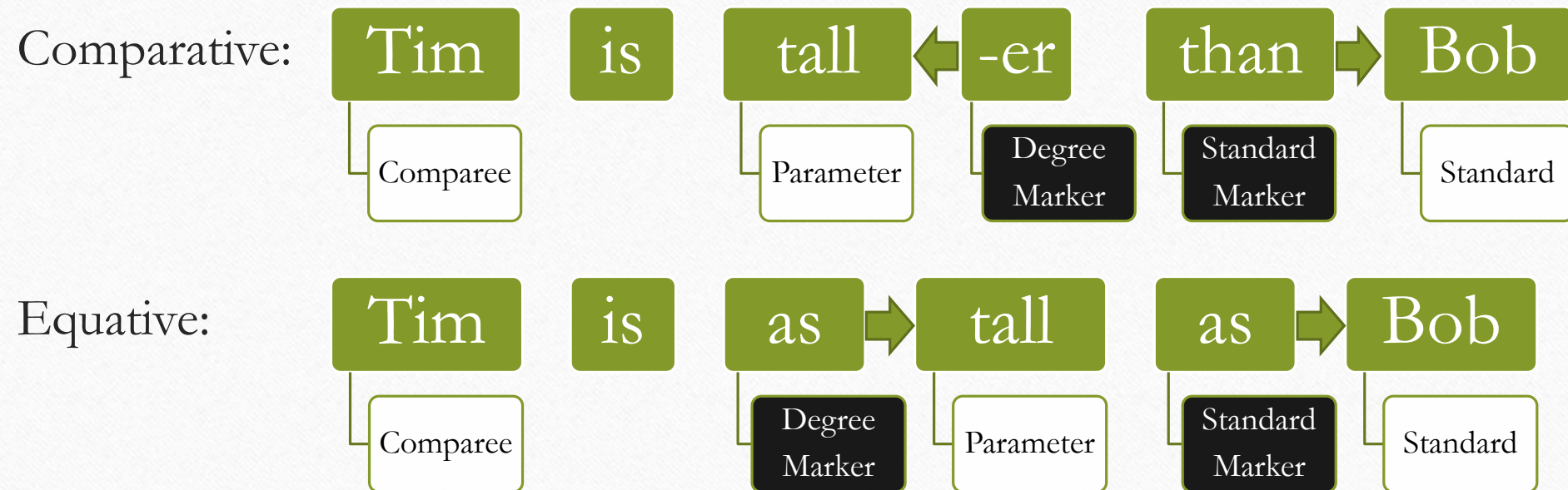
e.g. ‘Tim is as tall as Bob.’

‘Tim’ and ‘Bob’ have the gradable property ‘tallness’ to the same degree.

- Also known as comparative constructions of equality

Equative Constructions

- Similar to comparative constructions: (1) Comparee (2) Standard (3) Parameter



Haspelmath et al. (2017):
Typology and Generalizations of Equative
Constructions in the World's Languages

Typology of Equative Constructions in the World's Languages (Haspelmath et al. 2017)

-
- | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| • Type 1: | only standard marker | “Kim is tall [like Pat].” |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Type 2: | degree marker
&
standard marker | “Kim is [equally tall] [as Pat].” |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|
| • Type 3: | unified comparee and standard
&
degree marker | “[Kim and Pat] are [equally tall].” |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Type 4: | ‘reach/equal’ as primary predicate | “Kim [reaches/equals Pat] in height.” |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| • Type 5: | ‘reach/equal’ as primary predicate
&
unified comparee and standard | “[Kim and Pat] are equal (to each other) in height.” |
|-----------|--|--|
-
- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--|
| • Type 6: | ‘reach/equal’ as secondary predicate | “Kim is tall [reaching/equaling Pat].” |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--|
-

Generalizations of Equative Constructions in the World's Languages (Haspelmath et al. 2017)

Missing pattern

- Generalization 1: No language has only a degree-marker, leaving the standard unmarked (“Kim is [equally tall] Pat”).

Word order (for Type 1 & Type 2)

- Generalization 2: If the parameter follows the standard, then the language generally has dominant object-verb order.
- Generalization 3: If the standard precedes the parameter, then the standard-marker generally follows the standard, and if the standard follows the parameter, then the standard-marker generally precedes the standard.

What Types of Equative Constructions Exist in Cantonese?

Cantonese Type 2 Equative Construction

- degree marker & standard marker
(x2)

我嚟日同你一樣咁忙。

ngo5 cam4jat6 tung4 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4

I yesterday with you equally so busy

SM DM1 DM2

‘I was as busy as you yesterday.’

Cantonese Type 3 Equative Construction

- unified comparee and standard & degree marker
(x2)

[我同你]／[我哋]一樣咁忙。

ngo5 tung4 nei5 / ngo5dei6 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4

[I and you] [we] equally so busy

CS DM1 DM2

‘You and me / we are equally busy.’

Cantonese Type 6-Like Equative Construction

- ‘reach/equal’ as secondary predicate (+ degree marker x2)
(>‘resemble’)

佢好似你一樣咁好人。

keoi5 hou2ci5 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 hou2jan4

s/he resemble you equally so nice

‘R/E’V DM1 DM2

‘S/he is as nice as you.’

- Peyraube (2018): a new type

Cantonese Equative Construction with the ‘Have’ Verb

我個細女有張枱咁高喇。

ngo5 go3 sai3 neoi2 jau5 zoeng1 toi2 gam3 goul laa3
I CLF young daughter have CLF table so tall SFP
‘HAVE’V DM

‘My younger daughter is as tall as a table now.’

- See also Chao (1968) and Peyraube (2018)

Cantonese Equative Construction with Only Degree Marking

佢豬咁蠢。

keoi5 zyul gam3 ceon2

s/he pig so stupid

DM

‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’

Does Cantonese Conform to
the Generalizations of Equative Constructions?

Generalizations of Equative Constructions in the World's Languages (Haspelmath et al. 2017)

Missing pattern

- Generalization 1: No language has only a degree-marker, leaving the standard unmarked (“Kim is [equally tall] Pat”).

Word order (for Type 1 & Type 2)

- Generalization 2: If the parameter follows the standard, then the language generally has dominant object-verb order.
- Generalization 3: If the standard precedes the parameter, then the standard-marker generally follows the standard, and if the standard follows the parameter, then the standard-marker generally precedes the standard.

Cantonese does not conform to all these generalizations

Generalization 2: Word Order (for Type 1 & Type 2)

- If the parameter follows the standard, then the language generally has dominant object-verb order.

Cantonese type 2 equative:

我嚟日同你一樣咁忙。

ngo5 cam4jat6 tung4 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4

I yesterday with you equally so busy

SM DM1 DM2

‘I was as busy as you yesterday.’

➤ Cantonese is a V-O language.

Generalization 3: Word Order (for Type 1 & Type 2)

- If the standard precedes the parameter, then the standard-marker generally follows the standard, and if the standard follows the parameter, then the standard-marker generally precedes the standard.

Cantonese type 2 equative:

我嚟日同你一樣咁忙。

ngo5 cam4jat6 tung4 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4

I yesterday with you equally so busy

SM DM1 DM2

‘I was as busy as you yesterday.’

Word Order of Cantonese Type 2 Equative: Exceptional but Expected

- The exceptional word order seems a pan-Sinitic phenomenon.
- Haspelmath et al. (2017) notice the exceptional word order of Sinitic languages.
 - “Not surprisingly, the Chinese languages are exceptions to this generalization, as they are also exceptional with respect to other word-order generalizations.” (Haspelmath et al. 2017: 26)
 - See Dryer (2003) for discussion of other unusual aspects of Sinitic word order.

Generalization 1: Missing pattern

- No language has only a degree-marker, leaving the standard unmarked (“Kim is [equally tall] Pat”).
 - “This is quite surprising, and we have no explanation for the generalization.” (Haspelmath et al. 2017: 25)
- Equatives with only a degree marker are logically possible but virtually unattested.
 - Equatives with only a standard marker (i.e. Type 1) are common in the world’s languages.

Generalization 1: Missing pattern

- No language has only a degree-marker, leaving the standard unmarked (“Kim is [equally tall] Pat”).

Cantonese equative with only degree marking:

佢豬咁蠢。

keoi5 zyul gam3 ceon2

s/he pig so stupid

DM

‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’

今日冰河時期咁凍。

gam1jat6 bing1ho4 si4kei4 gam3 dung3

today glacier period so cold

DM

‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’

More Details of the Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: Demonstrative of Degree

- 咁 *gam3* is a demonstrative of degree (like *so* in English; 這麼、那麼 in Mandarin; こんなに、そんなに、あんなに in Japanese)
 - Demonstratives of degree and manner are commonly used as equative degree markers in European languages

佢豬咁蠢。

<i>keoi5</i>	<i>zyu1</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>ceon2</i>
s/he	pig	so	stupid
		DM	

‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’

今日冰河時期咁凍。

<i>gam1jat6</i>	<i>bing1ho4</i>	<i>si4kei4</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>dung3</i>
today	glacier	period	so	cold
			DM	

‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: No Coordinate Relation

- The comparee and the standard are juxtaposed in the surface structure but they are not in a coordinate relation; otherwise the equative belongs to type 3.

佢豬咁蠢。

keoi5 zyul1 gam3 ceon2
s/he pig so stupid

DM

*佢同豬咁蠢。

**keoi5 tung4 zyul1 gam3 ceon2*
s/he and pig so stupid

‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’

今日冰河時期咁凍。

gam1jat6 bing1ho4 si4kei4 gam3 dung3
today glacier period so cold

DM

*今日同冰河時期咁凍。

**gam1jat6 tung4 bing1ho4 si4kei4 gam3 dung3*
today and glacier period so cold

‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: No Coordinate Relation

- The comparee and the standard are juxtaposed in the surface structure but they are not in a coordinate relation; otherwise the equative belongs to type 3.

佢豬咁蠢。

<i>keoi5</i>	<i>zyu1</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>ceon2</i>
s/he	pig	so	stupid
DM			

*豬佢咁蠢。

<i>zyu1</i>	<i>keoi5</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>ceon2</i>
pig	s/he	so	stupid

‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’

今日冰河時期咁凍。

<i>gam1jat6</i>	<i>bing1ho4</i>	<i>si4kei4</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>dung3</i>
today	glacier	period	so	cold
DM				

*冰河時期今日咁凍。

<i>bing1ho4</i>	<i>si4kei4</i>	<i>gam1jat6</i>	<i>gam3</i>	<i>dung3</i>
glacier	period	today	so	cold

‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: Describing a High Degree

- This Cantonese equative is limited to exaggeratedly describing a high degree of the property (specified by the predicate) that the comparee has, by saying the comparee has the property to the same degree as a standard that is a typical thing with a extremely high degree of the property.

E.g.	Knowledge	Pigs are very stupid. (culture-dependent)	The glacial period is very cold.
	By saying	‘S/he is as stupid as a pig.’	‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’
	What is meant	‘S/he is very stupid.’	‘Today is very cold.’

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: Describing a High Degree

今日冰河時期咁凍。

gam1jat6 bing1ho4 si4kei4 gam3 dung3

today glacier period so cold

DM

‘Today is as cold as the glacial period.’

*今日噶日咁凍。

**gam1jat6 cam4jat6 gam3 dung3*

today yesterday so cold

Intended: ‘Today is as cold as yesterday.’

Cantonese Equative with Only Degree Marking: 'Ghost' as the Standard

- 鬼 *gwai2* 'ghost' can be used as the high-degree standard for any gradable property.

條毛巾鬼咁濕／乾。

tiu4 mou4gan1 gwai2 gam3 sap1 / gon1

CLF towel ghost so wet dry

'The towel is very wet/dry.' (Lit. 'The towel is as wet/dry as a ghost.')

- Other types of equatives in Cantonese do not allow this use of 鬼 *gwai2* 'ghost'.

Do Other Sinitic Languages Allow Equatives with Only Degree Marking?

- Further investigation is needed to clarify this issue.
 - Not allowed in Standard Mandarin

*他豬那麼／一樣笨。

**tā zhū nàme / yīyàng bèn*

s/he pig so equally stupid

Intended: 'S/he is as stupid as a pig.'

*今天冰河時期那麼／一樣冷。

**jīntiān bīnghé shíqī nàme / yīyàng lěng*

today glacier period so equally cold

Intended: 'Today is as cold as the glacial period.'

Comparison of Equative Degree Marking in Cantonese and Mandarin

Some Observations on Equative Degree Marking in Cantonese

- Cantonese equative constructions may contain two degree markers.

- Adverbial ‘Equally’
- Demonstrative of Degree
- Which is compulsory? Both? None?

佢好似你一樣咁好人。

keoi5 hou2ci5 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 hou2jan4
s/he resemble you equally so nice
‘R/E’V DM1 DM2

‘S/he is as nice as you.’

我噶日同你一樣咁忙。

ngo5 cam4jat6 tung4 nei5 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4
I yesterday with you equally so busy
SM DM1 DM2

‘I was as busy as you yesterday.’

[我同你]／[我哋]一樣咁忙。

ngo5 tung4 nei5 / ngo5dei6 jat1joeng6 gam3 mong4
[I and you] [we] equally so busy
CS DM1 DM2

‘You and me / we are equally busy.’

Degree Marking in Type 2 Equatives

- Cantonese: ‘Equally’ & Degree Demonstrative

貓仔其實同狗仔 { *∅ / *一樣 / *咁 / 一樣咁 } 得意。

*maaulzai2 kei4sat6 tung4 gau2zai2 { *∅ / *jat1joeng6 / *gam3 / jat1joeng6 gam3 } dak1ji3*
kitten actually with puppy equally so equally so cute

‘Kittens are actually as cute as puppies.’

- Mandarin: ‘Equally’

小貓其實跟小狗 { *∅ / 一樣 / *那麼 / ?一樣那麼 } 可愛。

*xiǎomāo qíshí gēn xiǎogǒu { *∅ / yīyàng / *nàme / ?yīyàng nàme } kě'ài*
kitten actually with puppy equally so equally so cute

‘Kittens are actually as cute as puppies.’

Degree Marking in Type 3 Equatives

- Cantonese: ‘Equally’ & Degree Demonstrative

貓仔（同）狗仔 { *∅ / *一樣 / *咁 / 一樣咁 } 得意。

*maau1zai2 (tung4) gau2zai2 { *∅ / *jat1joeng6 / *gam3 / jat1joeng6 gam3 } dak1ji3*

kitten and puppy equally so equally so cute

‘Kittens and puppies are equally cute.’

- Mandarin: ‘Equally’

小貓（跟）小狗 { *∅ / 一樣 / *那麼 / ?一樣那麼 } 可愛。

*xiǎomāo (gēn) xiǎogǒu { *∅ / yīyàng / *nàme / ?yīyàng nàme } kě'ài*

kitten and puppy equally so equally so cute

‘Kittens and puppies are equally cute.’

Degree Marking in Type 6-Like Equatives

- Cantonese: ('Equally') & Degree Demonstrative

細佬好似哥哥 { *Ø / *一樣 / 咁 / 一樣咁 } 叻。

*sai3lou2 hou2ci5 go4go1 { *Ø / *jat1joeng6 / gam3 / jat1joeng6 gam3 } lek1*
younger.brother resemble elder.brother equally so equally so capable

'The younger brother is as capable as the elder brother.'

- Mandarin: 'Equally' / Degree Demonstrative

弟弟像哥哥 { *Ø / 一樣 / 那麼 / *一樣那麼 } 能幹。

*dìdi xiàng gēge { *Ø / yīyàng / nàme / *yīyàng nàme } nénggàn*
younger.brother resemble elder.brother equally so equally so capable

'The younger brother is as capable as the elder brother.'

Degree Marking in Equatives with the ‘Have’ Verb

- Cantonese: Degree Demonstrative

嗰條蟲有手掌 { *Ø / *一樣 / 咁 / ?一樣咁 } 長。

go2 tiu4 cung4 jau5 sau2zoeng2 { *∅ / *jat1joeng6 / gam3 / ?jat1joeng6 gam3 } coeng4
that CLF worm have palm equally so equally so long

‘The worm as long as a palm.’

- Mandarin: ('Equally' / Degree Demonstrative)

那條蟲有手掌 { $\emptyset$ / 一樣 / 那麼 / *一樣那麼 } 長。

*nà tiáo chóng yǒu shǒuzhǎng { Ø / yīyàng / nàme / *yīyàng nàme } cháng*
 that CLF worm have palm equally so equally so long

‘The worm as long as a palm.’

Degree Marking in Equatives with Only Degree Marking

- Cantonese: ('Equally') & Degree Demonstrative

間房火爐 { *∅ / *一樣 / 咁 / 一樣咁 } 熱。

*gaan1 fong2 fo2lou4 { *∅ / *jat1joeng6 / gam3 / jat1joeng6 gam3 } jit6*

CLF room furnace equally so equally so hot

‘The room is as hot as a furnace.’

- Mandarin: Not allow this type of equative

Differences in Equative Degree Marking between Cantonese and Mandarin

	Type 2	Type 3	Type 6-Like	Only DM	'Have'
Cantonese	E & D		(E) & D		D
Mandarin	E		E / D	*	(E / D)

Note: E = 'Equally' ; D = Degree Demonstrative

Logical Types of Equative Degree Marking

Number of degree markers	Compulsory double marking	2		E&D	
	Compulsory marking	1-2	E&(D)	E D	(E)&D
		1	E	E/D	D
	Optional marking	0-2	(D⊃E)	(E D) (E&D)	(E⊃D)
		0-1	(E)	(E/D)	(D)
	Zero marking	0		∅	
			E	D	
			Preference for ‘equally’ or degree demonstrative		

Total 15 logical types

Assumptions:

- Only 2 forms:
'equally' and degree demonstrative
- No reoccurrences of any form

Equative Degree Marking in Cantonese and Mandarin

Number of degree markers	Compulsory double marking	2		
	Compulsory marking	1-2		
	Optional marking	1		
	Optional marking	0-2		
	Zero marking	0-1		
		0	E D Preference for 'equally' or degree demonstrative	

Thank you!

ありがとうございます。

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