Introduction. Equative constructions and result constructions pose an interesting puzzle in some varieties of P’urhepecha, an indigenous language of Mexico spoken mainly in the state of Michoacán. In these varieties, both constructions contain the word xani in the main clause and (for some speakers) a right-peripheral phrase introduced by the element es(i)ka or es(i)ki:

\[ \text{ Equatives: } \text{Pablu ara-si-∅-ti } xani \text{ platanu-eecha-ni eska Claraa.} \]

\[ \text{Result constructions: } \text{Pablu ara-si-∅-ti } xani \text{ platanu-eecha-ni eska p’amenchanta-si-∅-ti.} \]

\[ \text{‘Paul ate as many bananas as Clara.’} \]

\[ \text{‘Paul ate so many bananas that he got sick.’} \]

A question therefore arises as to whether these degree constructions look so similar in the relevant varieties because they have a similar semantics.

To answer this question, I provide a compositional semantic analysis of both constructions based on data elicited from native speakers. The results are described below.

Equatives. Adopting the general approach to degree constructions put forth in Heim (2001) and used for crosslinguistic comparison in Beck et al. (2009), I argue that the analysis of English as-equatives extends straightforwardly to P’urhepecha xani-equatives. The main empirical question here is what relation holds between the two degrees that are compared: \([\leq]\) or \([\geq]\). In other words, does (1a) entail that the number of bananas Paul ate (call it \(p\)) is equal to the number of bananas Clara ate (c), or does it entail that \(p\) is greater than or equal to \(c\)? I show that, despite initial appearances, the right relation is \([\geq]\) as in English.

Result constructions. Xani–result sentences such as (2) have the entailments in (3):

\[ \text{ Juanu xani iostara-si-∅-ti eska u-a-∅-ti andaxa-ni basu-eecha-ni.} \]

\[ \text{‘John is so tall that he can reach the glasses.’} \]

(3) a. The corresponding absolute sentence is true. \((2) \models \text{John is tall.}\)

b. The embedded clause conveys a true proposition. \((2) \models \text{John can reach the glasses.}\)

c. Informally, the denotations of the main and embedded clauses stand in a cause–effect relationship. \((2) \models \text{John can reach the glasses because he is tall.}\)

Interestingly, (3a) is only an entailment in P’urhepecha, not a semantic presupposition.

Conclusion. Despite the surface similarity between equative sentences like (1a) and result sentences like (1b), the constructions they instantiate—and the versions of the degree word xani they use—have rather different semantics. It is implausible that the two constructions can be given a unified analysis on which xani spells out the same nugget of meaning in each. I discuss the implications of this result for 1) the role of xani in P’urhepecha grammar (which extends far beyond the constructions investigated here); 2) the proper analysis of the syncretism in (1) as it occurs in other languages; and 3) the question of why languages so often seem to have fewer degree words than they have degree construction meanings to express.
References
