

**A SEMANTIC STUDY
OF COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS
IN SELECTED LITERARY TEXTS**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Council of the College of Arts in
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ABSTRACT

This study semantically analyzes comparative constructions which have been approached to from other perspectives than semantics. Recently, semantics was inserted in the applications of logical form (language) which is supposed to ensure a one-and-only meaning for each sentence. This has to be applied on texts with a high degree of ambiguity like colloquial language (mainly analyzed pragmatically) and literary language (the high form of language) which was applied in the study. Such kinds of ambiguity are heavily available in the comparative clause especially the quantifier expressions.

Since the quantifier expressions solve the problem of ambiguity in the comparative clause, they deserve to be studied and semantically analyzed. Moreover, they themselves might cause some ambiguity troubles when the members of a plural noun that follows them are not known whether to be equals or not.

There is another problematic issue: how can one compare an adjective to a verb phrase, like comparing the number of the audience to what the singer expected?

This all can be solved by looking at gradable adjectives as being ordered on a scale that is not divided into accurate points. Instead, it is so flexible that it causes overlapping areas called intervals, i.e. the area between two points of a scale is an

interval which is often not determined. If they are determined, then this is done by virtue of quantifiers.

Since the study is new in its type, the best model to be followed for analysis has been Schwarzschild and Wilkinson (2001) because it treated comparatives from a logical point of view. The authors resorted to logical forms to represent comparatives so that to avoid such semantic problems as ambiguity. Thus, entities under comparison have been substituted by variables. The relations between such variables have been represented in terms of mathematical symbols.

The study comprises three chapters; chapter one gives an account of the semantic literature in relation to comparative constructions; it mentions an introduction to the case of the study followed by explanations of some semantic terms. Then, there is a classification of the types and functions of comparative constructions from a semantic point of view.

Chapter two displays the interrelation between semantics and other linguistic branches. The two main branches related to semantics are syntax which is the matrix that governs sentence structure and pragmatics which shares semantics the study of meaning although from another point of view – of speakers and hearers.

The core of the study – the analysis of the data is available in chapter three which holds a detailed semantic analysis of the data involved as far as the problem of the study is concerned. A

handful of phenomena are tackled within the scope of comparative constructions particularly in the comparative clause rather than the main clause of comparison.

Intervals have been heavily depended on in the relevant data, where writers were enabled to compare noun phrases to verb phrases.

Quantifiers in comparatives are most available in descriptive essays, for they strengthen the writer's ability in holding comparisons.