

## The Strategy of Comparative Constructions in Enlhet

This study investigates comparative constructions in Enlhet, a language of the Enlhet-Enenlhet family predominantly spoken by the northern Enxet people in Paraguay, within a typological framework (Stassen 1995; Comrie 2022). Enlhet is characterized as a predicate-initial language (Kalish 2010). Data for this study were collected using fieldwork methods, specifically online elicitation involving translation tasks, judgment tasks, and storyboard panel tasks.

Analyzing entity and event comparatives, I identify four major strategies employed in Enlhet for expressing comparisons. These strategies include (i) particle-comparison *selhteek* (e.g., (1)), (ii) location-comparison using *kooneng* ‘under’ and *nenga'took* ‘nearby’ (e.g., (2) and (3)), (iii) intensification-comparison *angkook* (e.g., (4)), and (iv) juxtaposition comparison, illustrated through negation and antonym property concepts (e.g., (5) and (6)).

- (1) **CONTEXT** The man is 180 cm. The woman is 160 cm.  
*apketketsek ma'a enlhet selhteek ang kelvaana'a*  
 ap-ket-ketsek **ma'a** a(-)-enlhet **selhteek** ang-kelvaana'a  
 M-RED-tall INDEX M-man.M PARTICLE F-woman.F  
 ‘The man is taller than the woman.’
- (2) **CONTEXT** The man sold 20 potatoes. The woman sold 5 potatoes.  
*lha'mook apkelhakhaam peheya' enlhet, kooneng lhaang kelvaana'a.*  
**lha'mook** ap-kel-ha-khaam peheya' enlhet, **kooneng**=lha ang-kelvaana'a  
 QUANT.AUG M-PL-sell-NMLZ potato man.M, UNDER=PST F.woman.F  
 ‘The man sold more potatoes than the woman.’
- (3) **CONTEXT** The man ran two miles. The woman ran one mile.  
*makhay' alhta apya'askama enlhet, nenga'took alhtang kelvaana'a.*  
**makhay'**=alhta ap-ya'as-kama enlhet, **nenga'took**=alhta ang-kelvaana'a  
 far=PST M-go-NMLZ man.M NEARBY=PST F-woman.F  
 ‘The man ran/went more than the woman (ran/went more distance).’
- (4) **CONTEXT** Aldo is 170 cm. Pedro is 200 cm.  
*apvena'teem Aldo, apketketsek apankook Pedro.*  
 ap-vena'teem Aldo, ap-ket-ketsek ap-**angkook** Pedro  
 M-tall Aldo M-RED-tall M-DEG Pedro  
 ‘Pedro is much taller than Aldo.’
- (5) **CONTEXT** The man ran 100 meters in 70 seconds; the woman ran 100 meters in 80 seconds.  
*pat apkenyeem enlhet, paej kalhnook enlhet apketkok.*  
**pat** apkenyeem enlhet, **paej kalhnook** enlhet apketkok  
 FAST M-run.NMLZ man.M NEG EQUAL man.M M-young  
 ‘The man ran faster than the boy.’

(6) **CONTEXT** The man saw 20 foxes; the woman saw 12 foxes.

*lha'mook pkelvetay' maaleng enlhet, a'netoo lvetay' kelvaana'a.*

**lha'mook** ap-kel-vetay' maaleng enlhet, **a'netoo** ap-kel-vetay' kelvaana'a  
many M-PL-see fox.F man.M a few F-PL-see woman.F  
'The man saw more foxes than the woman.'

In (1), similar to English *-er/more*, *ma'a* functions as an index (or degree morpheme) to elaborate a comparative construal. Likewise, in (4), the degree word *angkook* addresses the inequality, signaling a comparison. It's noteworthy that property concepts of comparison (e.g., *vena'teem* 'tall' and *pat* 'far') and quantifications (e.g., *lha'mook* 'more' and *a'netoo* 'a few') can appear at initial positions, serving as syntactic predicates regardless of the types of comparatives used, for example, entity, event, or amount comparatives.

Moreover, the index of the degree morpheme *ma'a* does not occur when used to answer a degree interrogative construction, exemplified in (7), where the property concept appears in a bare form without any indices.

(7) **CONTEXT** The man is 160 cm. The woman is 175 cm.

**Q: lha' atketsek ke'?**

lha' at-ketsek ke'?  
who F-tall Q  
'Who is taller?'

**A: atketsek kelvaana'a.**

at-ketsek kelvaana'a  
F-tall woman.F  
'The woman is taller.'

Overall, this research reveals four primary comparison strategies in Enlhet: (i) particle-comparison *selhteek*, (ii) location-comparison *kooneng* 'under', *nenga'took* 'nearby', (iii) intensification-comparison *angkook*, and (iv) juxtaposition comparison. These findings enhance our understanding of how the northern Enxet people in Paraguay convey comparisons. Future investigations will explore the potential presence of an index of the degree morpheme *ma'a* in Enlhet comparatives, shedding light on its nuanced role in enhancing expressiveness.

## **REFERENCES**

- Croft, William. 2022. *Morphosyntax*. University of Cambridge Press.
- Kalisch, Hannes. 2010. Los constituyentes de la cláusula enlhet (enlhet-enenlhet). Esbozo de una cláusula omnipredicativa. *AMERINDIA* n° 33/34, 109-150.
- Stassen, Leon. 1985. *Comparison and Universal Grammar*. Blackwell Publishing.