

SMALLER THAN SMALL COMPARATIVES: THE CASE OF BASQUE

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ABSTRACT. Adjectival comparatives like *txiki baino txikiago* ‘smaller than small’ in Basque exhibit some striking properties that present a challenge for previous analyses of inequality comparatives. The research on this unstudied type of adjectival comparatives in Basque – henceforth SMALL comparatives – is especially interesting due to the rich morphology and freedom of word order that Basque displays. These two properties are vital for the testing of the hypotheses on the structure of these comparatives. First, the examination of the underlying structure of the standard of comparison reveals that these adjectival modifiers are inequality comparatives with a phrasal standard. Second, the study of the extraction constraints of the standard and the particular distribution of SMALL comparatives evidence the fact that the standard marker in these comparatives behaves as a coordinating conjunction, and that these modifiers can appear inside a Determiner Phrase, in contrast with previously analysed adjectival comparatives. These properties are explained by assuming the *functional* analysis of adjectives and comparative markers (*-ago* ‘-er, more’), and proposing a *coordination analysis* of these phrasal comparatives. The study of SMALL comparatives hence shows that the coordination analysis of comparative structures is necessary not only for clausal comparatives (Napoli & Nespors 1986 for Italian; Sáez 1992 for Spanish; and Lechner 2004 for English and German) but also for phrasal comparatives such as SMALL comparatives.

Keywords. adjectival comparatives; inequality comparative structures; Basque; coordination; phrasal standards; clausal standards

RESUMEN. Las comparativas adjetivales como *txiki baino txikiago* ‘más pequeño/a que pequeño/a’ en euskara no han sido previamente estudiadas. Estos modificadores – en lo sucesivo denominados comparativas PEQUEÑAS – son de gran interés debido a que presentan unas propiedades singulares que suponen un desafío para los análisis actuales de las estructuras comparativas de desigualdad. El estudio del comportamiento de estas comparativas en euskara es particularmente interesante ya que esta lengua permite el libre movimiento de sus constituyentes y presenta una morfología rica que serán clave para testear las hipótesis sobre la estructura interna de estas construcciones. Concretamente, nos centraremos en el análisis de su particular distribución, y la estructura sintáctica y las limitaciones de movilidad que muestra su estándar de comparación. Este estudio nos revelará que las comparativas PEQUEÑAS son estructuras comparativas de desigualdad que cuentan con un estándar no oracional y una estructura de coordinación, y que, además, pueden situarse dentro del Sintagma Determinante, a diferencia de las comparativas adjetivales estudiadas hasta ahora. Para explicar las propiedades distintivas de estas comparativas de desigualdad en euskara, asumo que los adjetivos y los marcadores comparativos (*-ago* ‘más’) son *cabezas funcionales*, y propongo un *análisis de coordinación* de estas comparativas no oracionales. El estudio de las comparativas PEQUEÑAS evidencia la necesidad de analizar las construcciones comparativas como estructuras con coordinación en comparaciones con estándar no oracional, y no solo en comparativas con estándar oracional como se había propuesto hasta ahora (Napoli y Nespors 1986 para italiano; Sáez 1992 para español; y Lechner 2004 para inglés y alemán).

Palabras clave. comparativas adjetivales; estructuras comparativas de desigualdad; euskara; coordinación; estándares no oracionales; estándares oracionales

LABURPENA. Orain arte desberdintasun konparazioen egitura aztertu duten analisiek arazo handiak izan dituzte euskarazko *txiki baino txikiago* bezalako maila konparazioen propietate bereizgarriak azaltzeko. Maila konparazio mota hau – hemendik aurrera konparazio TXIKI deituko duguna – euskaraz aztertzea bereziki interesgarria da hizkuntza honek esaldiko sintagma batzuen mugimendu askea onartzen duelako eta morfologia aberatsa duelako. Euskarak dituen ezaugarri hauek baliatuz, konparazio TXIKIen portaera ikertu da. Zehazki, konparazio TXIKIen banaketa berezia, haien erreferentziaren mugikortasun eza, eta erreferentziaren barneko egitura aztertu dira. Azterketa honekin, konparazio TXIKIen erreferentzia ez dagoela perpaus batetik eratorrita erakusten da, baita egitura hauek juntagailuekin (hots, koordinazio egiturekin) oso harreman berezia daukatela. Honez gain, konparazio TXIKIak Determinatzaile Sintagma barnean eraiki ahal dira, orain arte deskribatutako maila konparazioak ez bezala. Maila konparazio hauek dituzten ezaugarri bereizgarriak azaltzeko, lan honetan adjektiboak eta konparazioaren markatzailea (-ago) *buru funtzionalak* direla onartzen da eta konparazio TXIKIek koordinazio egitura dutela defendatzen da. Konparazio TXIKIen gaineko ikerketak konparazio egituren koordinazio analisia behar dela erakusten du, ez perpaus batetik eratorrita dauden konparazioentzat bakarrik (Napoli & Nespor 1986 lanean proposatu zena italierarako; Sáez 1992 espainolerako; eta Lechner 2004 ingelesa eta alemanerako), baizik eta perpaus batetik eratorrita ez dauden konparazioentzat ere bai.

Gakohitzak. adjektibo konparazioa; desberdintasuneko egitura konparatiboak; euskara; juntagailuak; perpaus batetik eratorritako erreferentziak; perpaus batetik eratorrita ez dauden erreferentziak

1. Introduction

The expression of comparison¹ in general and adjectival inequality comparison in particular exhibits a great amount of cross-linguistic (Beck, Oda & Sugisaki 2004, Kennedy 2007) as well as intra-linguistic variation (Pancheva 2006, Merchant 2012, Vela-Plo 2018). These different points of variation have led linguists to focus on the syntactic and semantic representation of comparative structures, and on their typological classification. Some of the questions that have arisen concern the underlying structure of the standard or reference of comparison (introduced by the standard marker *than* in English) and its relation with the comparative marker (portrayed by the morpheme *-er* in English adjectival comparatives). Among the questions that linguists have to answer regarding comparatives, we find the following ones. Is the standard of comparison a phrasal element, or is it derived from a clause in adjectival comparatives such as (1a-c)? Does the standard marker introduce an

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embedded constituent or a coordinated one? How does the comparative marker combine with the gradable base? There are different views on these issues, which remain a topic of great debate.

- | | | <u>base + comparative marker</u> | <u>standard marker</u> | <u>standard</u> |
|-----|----|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) | a. | Ann is tall + er | than | him. |
| | b. | Mikel is old + er | than | I thought he would be. |
| | c. | The sofa is long + er | than | the door is wide. |

This paper concentrates on a specific type of inequality comparative construction with an adjectival base. Due to space limitations, I will examine these constructions only in Basque. The study of comparatives in this language is especially interesting for our purposes for two reasons. First, its rich morphology will let us clarify the structure that underlies these constructions; in particular, the ergative case morphology attested in subjects of transitive predicates will serve us as a test to check the clausal status of some constituents. Second, Basque displays a very flexible word order and it is generally grouped as a free word order language, with its linearization depending considerably on information structure (de Rijk 1969). Despite its freedom of word order, we will see that the Basque comparatives under study show some striking restrictions with respect to movement. Hence, these two properties will be vital to test the hypotheses on the structure of comparatives that are present in the literature.

The particular constructions under examination are illustrated in (2)-(3). I will henceforth refer to them as SMALL comparatives. SMALL comparative constructions are not language-specific. We can find these adjectival comparatives in other languages such as English or Spanish. See Vela-Plo (in prep) for a detailed analysis of the comparative syntax of these constructions.

- (2) Elur maluta *txiki baino txiki-ago* bat ikusi dugu.²
 snow flake small THAN small-ER one seen have
 ‘We have seen a smaller than small snowflake.’
- (3) Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda *luze baino luze-ago-a* izango da.
 dancers.GEN performances.GEN list long THAN long-ER-D be.FUT AUX
 ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than long.’

SMALL comparatives are very common in both oral and written forms; in fact, (3) is an example obtained from a newspaper.³ Nonetheless, Basque grammars have not documented this particular type of adjectival comparatives and there is no formal analysis of these constructions so far.

The sentence in (2) includes an adjectival complex *txiki baino txikiago* ‘smaller than small’ that behaves as a noun modifier within the nominal domain, that is, in an attributive use. In contrast, the SMALL comparative *luze baino luzeagoa* ‘longer than long’ has a predicative use in (3), where the adjectival complex is related to the nominal (the external subject) through the copula *da* ‘is’.

² The abbreviations used in the glosses go as follows: ER comparative marker, THAN standard marker, D determiner, ERG ergative, GEN genitive, PART partitive, LOC locative, INST instrumental, AUX auxiliary, FUT future, COMP complementizer, BUT adversative coordinator.

³ Basque Heritage Elkarte (2017, March 1). Jaialdiak, Museko Nazionala eta Euskal Herrirako bidaia berri bat, Guillermo Larregui EEaren eskutik. *Euskal Kultura*. Retrieved from <http://www.euskalkultura.com/euskara/>

The distinction between the attributive and predicative uses of adjectival modifiers does not bear on the linear position of the adjectival complex with respect to the modified noun, namely, pre-nominal or post-nominal (see Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stavrou 2007 for discussion). Concretely, both uses of the adjectival complex under analysis in this paper are post-nominal in Basque. Recall that Basque is a head-final language in which the verb, even if it is a copula, takes its arguments to the left in the canonical word order. Nevertheless, the attributive function of the adjectival complex in (2) can be distinguished due to the use of the numeral *bat* ‘one’, which marks the rightmost boundary of the Determiner Phrase (DP) acting as the subject of the clause. The use of such post-adjectival numeral would not be licit in the example in (3), where the adjectival complex is predicated of the subject DP.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no in-depth description nor formal analysis of this kind of adjectival constructions presented in (2)-(3). We can only find brief mentions to the existence of these structures in de Rijk (2008) for Basque and Vidal, Leonetti & López (2011) for Spanish. However, these adjectival complexes have not received any attention in the literature on the syntax and semantics of comparative constructions in any language.

In the present paper, I argue that SMALL comparatives should be considered a new subtype of adjectival inequality comparatives. The comparative nature of these constructions is substantiated by the following arguments.

First, SMALL comparatives display common comparative morphology: either the regular comparative marker *-ago* (which behaves like the comparative morpheme *-er*) is attached to the adjectival base of the comparison, as in (4), or the irregular comparative form of the adjective is used, as in (5).

- | | <u>standard cluster</u> | | <u>comparative cluster</u> |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| | <u>standard</u> | <u>s.marker</u> | <u>base + comparative marker</u> |
| (4) | txiki-a | baino | txiki-ago-a |
| | small-D | THAN | small-ER-D |
| | | | ‘smaller than small’ |
| (5) | on-a | baino | hobe-a |
| | good-D | THAN | better-D |
| | | | ‘better than good’ |

Second, as in other types of inequality comparatives, the standard marker *baino* (literally) ‘than, but’ is present in SMALL comparatives. This element introduces the standard of comparison in Basque inequality comparatives.

Third, as documented in Basque diachronic usage-based dictionaries (*Orotariko Euskal Hiztegia*), adjectival modifiers like *ona baino hobea* in (5) have the interpretation ‘better than just good, very good’. Hence, these adjectival comparatives imply that the nominal has some property to a degree that exceeds the positive or basic degree associated to that adjective⁴. Consequently, the meaning of the adjectival complex in (2) could be paraphrased as *smaller than simply small*, and that of the example in (3) as *longer than just long*.

Furthermore, a final and very distinct property of SMALL comparatives is the obligatory identity between the adjective in the standard and that in the base of the comparison. The contrast between (3) and the ungrammatical (6a-b) evidences this requirement. I will leave a detailed analysis of this requirement for future research.

⁴ I will leave for future research the discussion of the potential semantic analysis of these constructions.

- (6) a. *Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda luze bainozabal-ago-a
 dancers.genperformances.GEN list long THAN extensive-ER-D
 izango da.
 be.FUT AUX
 ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be more extensive than long.’
- b. *Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda zabal baino luze-ago-a
 dancers.genperformances.GEN list extensive THAN long-ER-D
 izango da.
 be.FUT AUX
 ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than extensive.’

In the following sections, I will describe the properties of SMALL comparatives in Basque, which have remained undocumented so far. As a first approach to these comparatives, I will focus on Basque SMALL comparatives, for this language is extremely valuable for elucidating the structure underlying these constructions, and particularly, to clarify whether they have a clausal or phrasal standard, and whether they involve a subordination or coordination structure.

With this purpose, I will compare SMALL comparatives with other instances of adjectival comparison also present in Basque. On the basis of this, I will discuss the implications that derive from the empirical observation of this specific type of comparatives with respect to the general debate on the structure of inequality comparative constructions. Concretely, I will first argue that the adjectival comparative constructions under analysis ((2)-(3)) always have a phrasal standard. Crucially, in contrast with previously attested adjectival comparatives in Basque, SMALL comparatives are not derived from a clausal source. We will also see that the analysis of SMALL comparatives has some fundamental implications for the debate on the nature of the standard marker. I will show that the distinct properties that these comparatives display can only be accounted for if we take the standard marker to be a coordinating conjunction. My analysis thus offers supporting evidence for the *coordination hypothesis* of comparative structures. Although this proposal has been previously endorsed by Napoli & Nespors (1986), Sáez (1992), and Lechner (2004), among others, to account for the characteristics of some comparatives with a clausal standard in Italian, Spanish, and English and German, respectively, this paper advocates for a coordination analysis of comparatives with a phrasal standard⁵.

⁵ As noted by a reviewer, this proposal was first put forward by Napoli (1983). This author defends a coordination analysis of the nominal and adjectival comparatives in (i) and (ii), respectively, that does not involve Conjunction Reduction, i.e. of comparatives with a base-generated phrasal standard.

- (i) The team made *more noise than headway*.
 (ii) Mary is *more clever than smart*.

Sáez del Álamo (1992) offers a similar proposal for phrasal comparatives such as (iii) in English and Spanish, for which the author proposes a comparative coordination analysis. See also Vela-Plo (2018, April) for supporting evidence for the proposal that the counterparts of the nominal comparatives in (i) and (iii) in Basque should get a comparative coordination analysis.

- (iii) *More students than teachers* are vegetarian.

However, Napoli (1983) and Sáez del Álamo (1992) do not include the adjectival comparatives under examination in this paper under their target data.

The paper is divided as follows. Section 2 briefly presents previous descriptions of Basque inequality comparatives and a proposal on the nature of the Basque standard marker *baino*. In Section 3, I identify some previously unnoticed properties of SMALL comparatives that radically contrast with the descriptions of inequality comparatives in Basque grammars. The empirical observations presented there suppose a challenge for the previous proposal on the syntax of inequality comparatives in Basque. In section 4, I present a proposal for the analysis of SMALL comparatives as phrasal comparatives in which the standard marker behaves as a coordinating conjunction that is able to account for the distinctive properties of these adjectival comparatives. Section 5 concentrates on the non-comparative uses of the Basque standard marker *baino*, and draws a parallelism between the comparative function of this element and its uses as an adversative coordinator. Section 6 concludes the paper with a summary of the main claims.

2. Previous descriptions of Basque comparatives

This section introduces two characteristics that Basque inequality comparatives have been argued to exhibit, the clausal or reduced-clausal origin of the standard of comparison, and the freedom of movement of the standard cluster ([XP *baino*]).

First, descriptive grammars have noted that the standard marker *baino* can take a clausal complement, as in (7), (8) and (9a).

- (7) [Espero genuen baino] 100 pertsona gehi-ago etorri dira.
Expected AUX.COMP THAN 100 people many-ER come AUX
'A 100 more people than we expected have come.'
- (8) [Balio du-en baino] merke-ago erosten saiatuko da.
cost AUX-COMP THAN cheap-ER buying try-FUT AUX
'(S)he will try to buy it cheaper than it costs.'
- (9) a. [Zu-k dituzu-n baino] askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut ni-k.
you-ERG have.COMP THAN many books many-ER have I-ERG
'I have many more books than you have.'
- b. [Zu-k baino] askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut.
you-ERG THAN many books many-ER have
'I have many more books than you (have).'

This property has led Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina (2003) and Goenaga (2008, 2012) to propose that the standard in Basque might always derive from a clausal source. For example, (9b) could be argued to derive from the clausal comparative in (9a). This proposal goes along with the view within the literature on comparatives that defends the clausal-only origin of standards of comparison in languages such as English or German (*cf.* Lechner 2004 for discussion on this topic and further references). Proponents of the clausal-only analysis of standards of comparison argue that the apparent phrasal nature of comparatives like (10) in English is due to an ellipsis process. This deletion operation targets the clausal complement of *than* and leaves a single remnant in the standard, which leads to its phrasal look.

- (10) I have more books than you (have).

Secondly, Basque is a head-final language where constituents can be easily displaced. This freedom of word order is illustrated in inequality comparatives by the possibility of dislocating the standard cluster ([XP *baino*]; Euskaltzaindia 1999;

Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003; Goenaga 2008, 2012)⁶. Compare the previous example in (9b) or (12a) with a base-generated standard, with the sentences in (11) and (12b), respectively, in which the standard appears clause-finally.

- (11) [...]i Askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut [zu-k baino]i. (cf. 9b)
 many books many-ER have you-ERG THAN
 ‘I have many more books than you (do).’
- (12) a. Elur maluta hau [beste guztiak baino] txiki-ago-a da.
 snow flake this [other all THAN] small-ER-D is
 ‘This snowflake is smaller than all the others.’
 b. Elur maluta hau [...]i txiki-ago-a da [beste guztiak baino]i.
 snow flake this small-ER-D is other all THAN
 ‘This snowflake is smaller than all the others.’

Previous descriptions of Basque inequality comparatives have argued that standards of comparison in this language have a clausal (or reduced clausal) origin and that the standard cluster can be easily dislocated. In order to account for these properties and following similar proposals for other languages (for example, Chomsky’s 1977 analysis of English *than*), Goenaga (2008, 2012) categorises the Basque standard marker *baino* as a postposition heading a PP.

In the next section I show that SMALL comparatives do not fit in previous descriptions of Basque inequality comparatives with a clausal standard and that the standard marker cannot be categorised as an adposition in these constructions. Hence, an alternative analysis is proposed in Section 4 to account for the properties of SMALL comparatives.

3. Novel observations: SMALL comparatives in Basque

In spite of the fact that SMALL comparatives have the appearance and interpretation of common comparative constructions, as discussed in Section 1, these constructions display several properties that crucially contrast with the previously described characteristics that inequality comparatives present in Basque. In the following subsections, I will define the peculiar properties that SMALL comparatives show.

⁶ Further syntactic constraints might disallow the dislocation of standards in some comparative constructions. Regarding movement restrictions on the standard cluster in inequality comparatives, see Section 3.2 and footnote 19. Regarding equality comparatives (i), the genitive origin of the equative marker *bezain* ‘as’ has been argued to block the movement of the standard cluster (cf. Goenaga 2008, 2012). The following minimal pair provided by a reviewer illustrates this point:

- (i) a. Zerrenda hau [beste hori (d-en) bezain] luzea da.
 list this other that (is-comp) as long is
 ‘This list is as long as that one.’
 b. *Zerrenda hau luzea da [beste hori den bezain].

The equality marker *bezain* can be morphologically decomposed into *bez* (common to many equality markers: adverbial *bezala* ‘as much’, nominal *bezainbeste* ‘as many’) and *hain* ‘so’. Goenaga (2008, 2012) argues that *hain* was a genitive form in its origins (*hain* < *har* (‘that’) + *-en* (genitive)). This author tentatively proposes that the movement restriction of the standard cluster in equality comparatives is due to a constraint on movement of genitives, which cannot be dislocated from its pre-adjectival position in Basque.

3.1. *Distribution*

In a common adjectival comparative construction as the one in (13), we can observe that the standard cluster cannot remain adjacent to the comparative cluster (13a). As the linearizations in (13b) and (13c) suggest, the standard cluster seems to escape a DP-internal position in attributive adjectival comparatives.

- (13) a. *[Hiru liburu [zu-k baino] merke-ago] aurkitu ditut nik.
 three book you-ERG THAN cheap-ER found AUX I-ERG
 ‘I’ve found three cheaper books than you have.’
 b. [Zu-k baino] hiru liburu merke-ago aurkitu ditut nik.
 you-ERG THAN three book cheap-ER found AUX I-ERG
 ‘I’ve found three cheaper books than you have.’
 c. Hiru liburu merke-ago aurkitu ditut nik [zu-k baino].
 three book cheap-ER found AUX I-ERG you-ERG THAN
 ‘I’ve found three cheaper books than you have.’

In contrast, the standard cluster in SMALL comparatives remains DP-internally, as suggested by the bracketing presented in (14)-(15).

- (14) [noun SMALL comparative [Elur maluta [[txiki baino] txiki-ago] determiner bat DP] ikusi dugu.
 snow flake small THAN small-ER one seen have
 ‘We have seen a smaller than small snowflake.’
 (15) [Eskaintza [handi baino] handi-ago-a DP] dugu ikasle-gai guztiontzat.
 offer big THAN big-ER-D have student-future every.for
 ‘We have a bigger than big offer for all prospective students.’

3.2. *No freedom of word order*

Although previous descriptions on Basque comparatives noted the possibility of dislocating the standard in this language, SMALL comparatives represent an exception to this description. In contrast with (11) and (12) in Section 2, the standard cluster cannot be dislocated in SMALL comparatives, as illustrated by the minimal pair in (16a-b).

- (16) a. Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda luze baino luze-ago-a izango
 dancers.GEN performances.GEN list long THAN long-ER-D be.FUT
 da.
 AUX
 ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than long.’
 b. *Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda luze-ago-a izango da [luze
 dancers.GEN performances.GEN list long-ER-D be.FUT AUX long
 baino]
 THAN
 Intended: ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than long.’

This restriction does not seem to be triggered by a ban on extraction from a DP, because the standard cluster in other attributive comparatives can be easily dislocated within the clause, as previously shown in (13).

3.3. *Phrasal standard*

Previous descriptions of Basque inequality comparatives characterised these structures as having a clausal standard to which ellipsis operations could apply. In contrast, Basque SMALL comparatives in attributive position clearly evidence the phrasal status of the complement of *baino*.

Under a reduced clausal analysis of the standard cluster in (14), [*txiki baino*] ‘than small’ would be the reduced version of [[_{CP} *txikia den*] *baino*] ‘than it is small’ in (17). However, two arguments refute this possibility.

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|--------------|--------------|
| (17) | <i>txiki-a</i> | <i>den</i> | <i>baino</i> | > | <i>txiki</i> | <i>baino</i> |
| | small-D | is.COMP | THAN | | small | THAN |
| | ‘than (it) is small.’ | | | | ‘than small’ | |

First, the reduction represented in (17) would require identity of the alleged elided string “it is” with an isomorphic string⁷ related to the comparative adjective “smaller”. This would imply that “smaller” should be embedded in a reduced relative as shown in the simplified representation in (18).

- (18) I’ve seen a snowflake [~~that is smaller than it is small~~].

However, the reduced clausal analysis of the standard in SMALL comparatives is untenable because the distribution of SMALL comparatives does not conform with the distribution of relative clauses (RCs). RCs are prenominal in Basque (*cf.* (19)), in contrast with the postnominal standard cluster in the comparatives under discussion (*cf.* (2)-(3)).

- | | | | | |
|------|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| (19) | [<i>Jonek ezagutzen du-en</i>] | <i>emakumea</i> | <i>Bilbokoa</i> | <i>da</i> . |
| | Jon.ERG know | AUX-COMP | woman | Bilbao.from is |
| | ‘The woman that Jon knows is from Bilbao.’ | | | |

Crucially, all the elements in SMALL comparatives in Basque have to appear in postnominal position, as unmodified (non-comparative) adjectives do. This is evidenced in (20a-b).

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|------------------------------------|
| (20) | a. | * <i>Txiki baino txiki-ago</i> | <i>elur maluta bat ikusi dugu.</i> |
| | | small THAN small-ER | snow flake one seen have |
| | b. | * <i>Txiki baino elur maluta txiki-ago bat ikusi dugu.</i> | |
| | | small THAN snow flake small-ER | one seen have |
| | | Intended: ‘We have seen a smaller than small snowflake.’ | |

The second argument against the reduced clausal analysis of SMALL comparatives concerns the semantic interpretation of these comparatives. The comparative in (18) “a snowflake that is smaller than it is small” – the presumed clausal source of the SMALL comparative in (14) – leads to semantic contradiction.⁸ Note that the semantic

⁷ For more information on what lies under the isomorphic condition on ellipsis (*a.k.a.* identity or recoverability condition on ellipsis), and whether it is licensed by syntactic isomorphism (Fiengo & May 1994, *a.o.*) or semantic isomorphism (Merchant 2001, *a.o.*) see Potsdam (2003) and references therein.

⁸ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for making this observation which supports the claim that the standard in SMALL comparatives cannot be derived from a clausal source.

oddness of (18) contrasts with the felicity of the SMALL comparative in (14) where no contradictory relation arises.

These two arguments show that a reduced clausal analysis (a derivationalist or reductionist analysis, as that proposed for prenominal adjectives by Chomsky 1965; Smith 1961; Lakoff 1971; among others) could not explain the distribution and interpretation of SMALL comparatives.

4. Proposal: phrasal standards and coordination

The particular properties of SMALL comparatives present a great challenge for previous analyses of inequality comparative constructions. In particular, these are the questions that emerge from the description in Sections 2 and 3.

- (i) Why is dislocation of the standard in SMALL comparatives impossible?
- (ii) Why are SMALL comparatives obligatorily postnominal?
- (iii) What is the categorial nature of the standard marker *baino*?

The following subsections (4.1 and 4.2) offer a novel proposal to answer (i), (ii) and (iii). In the following subsections I will defend the proposal that *baino* in SMALL comparatives behaves as a coordinating conjunction and that all the particular properties that these constructions display can be accounted for this analysis.

4.1. Comparative coordination and the categorial nature of *baino* in inequality comparatives

There is a long-standing debate on the categorial nature of standard markers cross-linguistically (*cf.* Stassen 1985, Rullmann 1995). For example, in the literature on English comparatives, the marker introducing the standard of comparison in inequality comparatives has been described as a complementizer (Bresnan 1973), a preposition (Chomsky 1977, den Besten 1978) or as a coordinating conjunction (Napoli 1983, Hendriks 1991).

Proponents of the complementizer or adposition analyses of standard markers assume that the standard is subordinated or embedded within the clause. On the contrary, defenders of the coordinating conjunction analysis support the view that the standard marker acts as a coordinator between the two compared elements. Nevertheless, this latter proposal has been argued to account for the properties of clausal comparatives, but, as far as I know, it has never been argued to apply to phrasal comparatives⁹.

The main proposal that I would like to put forward in this paper is that it is necessary to extend the comparative coordination analysis of clausal comparatives to phrasal comparatives such as SMALL comparatives. In particular, I will show that *baino* in SMALL comparatives can only be categorized as a coordinating conjunction and that all the particular properties that these constructions display are explained as

⁹ I do not consider reduced comparatives like (9b) to be phrasal comparatives, since, as the ergative case marker on the pronoun *zuk* shows, they are derived from a clausal source. I will not dwell on the syntactic properties of *metalinguistic comparatives* like (i) from Bresnan (1973: 275). These comparatives do not behave as common comparatives, as the obligatory appearance of the analytic marker in metalinguistic comparatives indicates (*cf.* (i)-(ii)), in contrast with usual comparatives like (iii).

- (i) I am more angry than sad.
- (ii) *I am angrier than sad.
- (iii) I am angrier than you are.

general restriction on coordinated structures, and concretely, on coordinated adjectives.

In order to support the coordination analysis of SMALL comparatives, in the next subsections I evidence the fact that the complementizer or adposition analyses of *baino* are untenable (Sections 4.1.1. and 4.1.2) and that the coordinating conjunction analysis of the standard marker makes the right predictions (Section 4.1.3) and can be independently supported (Section 4.2.).

4.1.1. *Baino* is not a complementizer

As mentioned in Section 2, the standard marker *baino* can take a clearly clausal standard. In these cases, the verb in the standard appears with the marker *-en* (Euskaltzaindia 1999, Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003, Goenaga 2008, 2012). This is illustrated in (8) and (9), repeated below as (21) and (22). If as standardly assumed in Basque grammars *-en* is a complementizer, then *baino* has to be an element of a different nature.

- (21) [[Balio du-en] baino] merke-ago erosten saiatuko da.
 cost AUX-EN THAN cheap-ER buying try-FUT AUX
 ‘(She) will try to buy it cheaper than it costs.’
- (22) [[Zu-k dituzu-n] baino] askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut ni-k.
 you-ERG have.COMP THAN many books many-ER have I-ERG
 ‘I have many more books than you have.’

In clausal comparatives, the head of CP is occupied by the marker *-en*. Consequently, *baino* has to be sitting in some other syntactic position and cannot be acting as a complementizer.

4.1.2. *Baino* is not a postposition

Adjectives in Basque can take a PP complement, which usually show instrumental case. However, such transitive adjective phrases are confined to predicative position, and are banned in attributive position inside the DP (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003). The minimal pair in (23a-b) illustrates this point.

- (23) a. *Predicative adjectives*
 Emakume-a [bere lan-az PP] harro dago.
 woman-D her work-INST proud is
 ‘The woman is proud of her work.’
- b. *Attributive adjectives*
 *[DP Emakume [bere lan-az PP] harro-a] gaur etorri da.
 woman her work-INST proud-D today come AUX
 Intended: ‘The proud *(of her work) woman came today.’

Recall from Section 3.1 that SMALL comparatives can appear in attributive position (cf. (24) - (25)).

- (24) [DP Elur maluta txiki baino txiki-ago bat] ikusi dugu.
 snow flake small THAN small-ER one seen have
 ‘We have seen a smaller than small snowflake.’

- (25) [DP Eskaintza *handi bainohandi-ago-a*] dugu ikasle-gai guztiontzat
 offer big THAN big-ER-D have student-future every.for
 '(We) have a bigger than big offer for all prospective students.'

Goenaga (2008, 2012) categorized the standard marker *baino* as a postposition and proposed that inequality comparatives involve a PP. This author's analysis combined with the ungrammaticality of PPs with adjectives in attributive position would predict comparatives such as (24) and (25) to be infeasible, contrary to fact. The grammaticality of the SMALL comparatives in attributive position in (24) and (25) sharply contrasts with the ungrammaticality of PP complements of adjectives in attributive position illustrated in (23b).

A reviewer suggests that the contrast between the grammaticality of (24-25) and the ungrammaticality of (23b) might be due to the 'Final-over-Final constraint' (FOFC) or Emonds' (1976) 'Surface Recursion Restriction' (SRR).

Regarding the FOFC, this filter bans a head-initial phrase as the complement of a head-final phrase.

- (26) FOFC: $*[\gamma P [\alpha P \alpha \beta] \gamma]$

This constraint has been argued to explain the unacceptability of sentences such as (27) in English:

- (27) *Mary is a $[\gamma P [\alpha P \text{ proud of her work}] \text{ woman}]$.

Following Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts's (2007) account of FOFC, this filter would ban (27) only if αP were the complement of γ . Nonetheless, although the adjunct or head properties of adjectives have been extensively discussed in the literature (cf. Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stavrou 2007, Cinque 2010, among others), there are strong reasons to reject the idea that adjectival phrases are complements of N (their iterability or non-obligatoriness, among other reasons; cf. Sheehan 2012). Thus, FOFC cannot explain the unacceptability of (23b) or (27).¹⁰

In a similar vein, Emonds' (1976) 'Surface Recursion Restriction' (SRR) (see also Williams' 1983 'Head-Final Filter') bans anything from intervening between a prenominal modifier and the phrase which it modifies. The particulars of this filter were developed in Giorgi & Longobardi (1991) in more general terms as a 'Consistency Principle' (CPri) by which an XP immediately expanding a lexical category on the non-recursive side (the side opposite to that of internal arguments and complements) must be directionally consistent in every projection. Hence, the SRR or the CPri could also account for the unacceptability of Basque (23b) or English (27).

Moreover, these filters could also account for the ungrammaticality of attributive comparatives such as (13a) in Basque or its English counterpart in (28), where the standard cluster intervenes between the nominal *books* and the modifier *cheaper*.

- (28) I've found three cheaper (*than you) books.

¹⁰ In contrast, if nominals are complements of adjectives in DP-internal positions, as argued in this paper (Section 4.3; see also Abney 1987, Alexiadou 2001, and references therein for further arguments on the functional head analysis of adjectives), the unacceptability of Basque (23b) or English (27) would be a direct consequence of the fact that the adjectival head can only take a single complement.

Although the SRR or the CPri could predict the ungrammaticality of DP-internal adjectives with PP complements and DP-internal comparatives with an explicit standard cluster, these filters would incorrectly predict the ungrammaticality of SMALL comparatives in attributive position such as those in (24-25), where the standard cluster also intervenes between the nominal and the comparative adjective.

Hence, neither the FOFC nor the SRR/CPri are able to account for the contrast between the grammaticality of DP-internal SMALL comparatives and the ungrammatical cases of DP-internal modification.

Furthermore, regarding the discussion on the potential postpositional analysis of the Basque standard marker, notice that in predicative contexts it is possible to find an adjective with a PP complement. In this case, one can dislocate the PP complement and pronounce it clause-finally. This property is documented in (29a-b).

- (29) a. *Predicative adjective, base-generated complement*
 Emakume-a [bere lan-az_{PP}] harro dago.
 woman-D her work-INST proud is
 ‘The woman is proud of her work.’
- b. *Predicative adjective, extraposed complement*
 Emakume-a t_i harro dago [bere lana-z]_i.
 woman proud is her work-INST
 ‘The woman is proud of her work.’

Parallel to the mobility of PP complements of adjectives in predicative position seen in (29a-b), an analysis that treats the standard cluster in inequality comparatives as a PP would predict the dislocation of this element to be possible in SMALL comparatives in predicative position. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the ungrammaticality of (30b), this prediction is not borne out.

- (30) a. Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda luze baino luze-ago-a izango
 dancers.GEN performances.GEN list long THAN long-ER-D be.FUT
 da.
 AUX
 ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than long.’
- b. *Dantzarien emanaldien zerrenda t_i luze-ago-a izango da [luze
 dancers.GEN performances.GEN list long-ER-D be.FUT AUX long
 baino]_i
 THAN
 Intended: ‘The list of the dancers’ performances is going to be longer than long.’

The postpositional analysis of *baino* would predict (i) for it to be impossible to find the standard cluster within an attributive comparative and (ii) for the dislocation of the standard cluster to be possible in predicative positions. As observed by the grammaticality of (24) and (25), and the ungrammaticality of (30b), these predictions are not borne out. Hence, these properties of SMALL comparatives pose a problem for postpositional analyses of the standard marker such as Goenaga’s (2008, 2012).

4.1.3. An alternative analysis: *baino* has to be a conjunction

In the previous subsections I have shown that the analysis of *baino* as a complementizer is untenable, and that *baino* in SMALL comparatives does not behave

as a postposition, for it appears with adjectival modifiers in a position where PPs are banned, namely, the attributive position of adjectives. The question that we should consider now is the following. What allows the co-occurrence of two adjectives in attributive position, as it happens in SMALL comparatives? I propose that the answer to this question is adjectival coordination.

While PPs are banned from attributive positions in Basque, coordinated adjectives are allowed in this context. This point is illustrated in (31).

- (31) *Adjectival coordination*
 [DP Elur maluta txiki {eta/baina} polit bat] ikusi dugu.
 snow flake small and/but beautiful one seen have
 ‘(We) have seen a small {and/but} beautiful snowflake.’
- (32) *SMALL comparative*
 [Elur maluta txiki baino txiki-ago bat_{DP}] ikusi dugu.
 snowflake small THAN small-ER one seen have
 ‘We have seen a smaller than small snowflake.’

The distribution of *baino* in inequality comparatives argues against its complementizer or postpositional nature. I propose that its behavior is best described as a coordinating conjunction.

Furthermore, I propose that the use of *baino* as a standard marker in inequality comparatives in Basque is not accidental, since it shares many properties with the (non-comparative) adversative coordinator *baino*. Section 5 will expand on this point.

4.2. *Comparative coordination*

This subsection gives an answer to the questions formulated at the beginning of Section 4. First, why is dislocation of the standard in SMALL comparatives impossible?

I propose that Basque SMALL comparatives are comparative coordination structures, as previously argued for (some) clausal and phrasal comparatives in head-initial languages like Italian (Napoli 1983), English (Lechner 1999, 2001, 2004, forth.), German (Lechner 2004, Osborne 2009), Spanish (Sáez 1992) or Portuguese (Matos and Brito 2002). I will refer to this proposal as the *comparative coordination hypothesis*. In those comparative constructions to which this proposal applies, the standard marker behaves as a conjunction that syntactically coordinates two elements.

Section 4.1.3. has shown that the distribution and behavior of the Basque standard marker *baino* patterns with that of coordinating conjunctions. If we assume that the *comparative coordination hypothesis* applies to SMALL comparatives and that *baino* actually behaves as a coordinating conjunction in these constructions, the ungrammaticality of the cases in which the standard cluster was extracted or dislocated from its original position could be easily explained. Movement of one of the conjuncts in a coordinated structure triggers a violation of the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Ross 1967). The examples in which the standard of a SMALL comparative is dislocated (documented in Section 3.2) could be incurring in this same violation.

Second, what is the categorial nature of the standard marker *baino*? I claim that the standard marker *baino* in SMALL comparatives behaves as a conjunction that syntactically coordinates two gradable predicates. The importance of this proposal also relies on the extension of the empirical coverage of the comparative coordination hypothesis. So far, this analysis had been argued to explain the characteristics of (some) clausal and phrasal comparatives. As observed in Section 3, SMALL

comparatives are DP-internal phrasal comparatives, and cannot be analysed as reduced clausal comparatives (recall the discussion in Section 3.3). In addition to this, I have shown that it is necessary to analyse the standard marker in SMALL comparatives as a coordinating conjunction in order to account for its distinctive behavior. These two observations require extending the comparative coordination analysis to phrasal comparatives, and, concretely, to SMALL comparatives.

The comparative coordination analysis of SMALL comparatives accounts for the otherwise unexpected properties that these inequality comparatives display. Hence, *contra* Goenaga's (2012) proposal of analyzing *baino* as a postposition introducing a PP, in SMALL comparatives in Basque the standard marker behaves as a conjunction (*baino*&) that syntactically conjoins two gradable adjectives. These comparative structures are thus subject to the constraints that typically apply to coordinated structures and behave as coordinated adjectives.

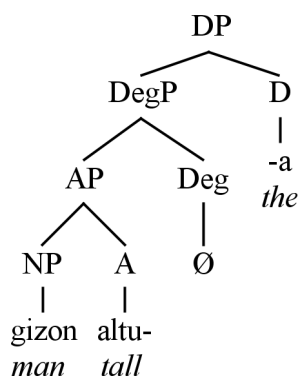
Third, why are SMALL comparatives obligatorily postnominal? SMALL comparatives behave as regular coordinated adjectives. Thus, they are right-adjacent to the nominal element they modify in Basque, as regular coordinated adjectives do in this language.

By extending the comparative coordination analysis to the comparative constructions under discussion, we can easily explain the behavior of SMALL comparatives. The following subsection presents the syntactic analysis of these inequality comparatives.

4.3. Syntax of SMALL comparatives

First, these cases of comparative coordination are analysed following the functional analysis of adjectives, according to which the AP is integrated within the extended projection of the nominal, as first proposed by Abney (1987) for gradable adjectives in English¹¹. Artiagoitia (2006) also argues that the functional analysis of adjectives is necessary in Basque, and that adjectives are part of the extended nominal projection in this language. Following these authors, I will thus assume that adjectives in attributive position are functional heads taking a nominal as its complement, as represented in (33).

(33)



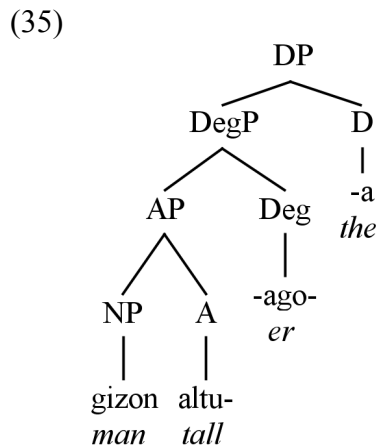
This analysis straightforwardly explains why adjectives are obligatorily postnominal in a head-final language like Basque. Furthermore, the functional analysis of adjectives in this language also accounts for the prenominal location of degree words such as *oso* 'very' when they modify a DP-internal gradable predicate.

¹¹ For further arguments and an extension of the proposal that adjectives can function as functional heads see Alexiadou (2001), who discusses prenominal adjectives in head-initial languages.

Their position is expected if, as standardly assumed, *very* occupies some specifier position to the left of the AP (Artiagoitia 2006).¹²

- (34) a. Oso gizon altua
 very man tall
 ‘A very tall man’
 b. [DP [DegP OSO [AP [NP gizon] altu-] Ø] -a]
 c. *Gizon oso altua¹³
 man very tall
 Intended: ‘A very tall man’

Second, I also assume the functional analysis of degree elements such as the phonologically null *pos*(itive) degree in the unmarked form of gradable adjectives (*cf.* 33) or the comparative marker *-er* in inequality comparatives. As represented in (35), the comparative marker is a functional element heading its own projection, DegP. Proponents of the functional analysis of the DegP such as Kennedy (1999, 2002; also Abney 1987, Corver 1993) argue that the standard cluster [*than* XP] behaves as a selected adjunct.



I will show that this structure derives the right predictions regarding the relative order of the components of the comparative construction within the DP, if we conveniently combine the functional analysis of the DegP with Munn’s (1993, 2000) adjunct analysis of coordination.

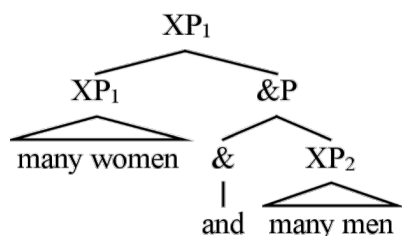
Thirdly, as advanced, I assume Munn’s adjunct analysis of coordination. Munn (1993, 2000) proposed that syntactic coordination is an instance of adjunction of a Conjunction Phrase (&P) to the initial conjunct of a set of conjuncts¹⁴. The tree in (36) offers a simple example of Munn’s proposal.

¹² The reader should refer to Artiagoitia’s (2006) proposal for further arguments on the advantages of the functional analysis of adjectives in Basque.

¹³ Although ungrammatical with a neutral intonation, some speakers find this example grammatical with focalization of the adjective structure. Artiagoitia (2006: 114) in particular marks the example as %, i.e. subject to speakers’ variation. I thank an anonymous reviewer for kindly pointing this out.

¹⁴ For a number of arguments on the superiority of the adjunct analysis of coordination (stemming particularly from the analysis of first versus second conjunct asymmetries) see Munn (1993, 2000, and subsequent work by this author).

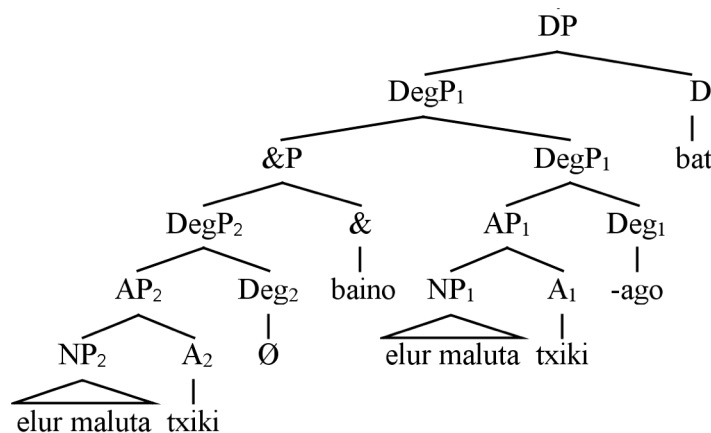
(36)



Regarding the syntax of SMALL comparatives, I propose that the coordinator *baino* takes a Degree Phrase (DegP₂) as its complement and together they form a Conjunction Phrase (&P). This DegP has a null degree head that takes an Adjectival Phrase (AP₂) as its complement. The &P adjoins to the first conjunct (DegP₁), which is headed by the comparative degree head *-ago*. I present this proposal in (37b).

(37) a. Elur maluta *txiki bainotxiki-ago* bat
 snow flake small THAN small-ER one
 ‘A smaller than small snowflake’

b.



Notice that, parallel to DP-internal adjectival coordination, a single instance of the modified nominal is phonetically realized in SMALL comparatives. Thus, the same Conjunction Reduction operation that is at work in coordinated structures seems to apply to these comparative constructions. Compare the SMALL comparative modifying a nominal in (37a) with the example of DP-internal adjectival coordination in (38), repeated from (31).

(38) [DP Elur maluta *txiki {eta/baina} polit bat*] ikusi dugu.
 snow flake small and/but beautiful one seen have
 ‘(We) have seen a small {and/but} beautiful snowflake.’

The proposed structure in (37b) combines the comparative coordination analysis with the functional analysis of adjectives and comparative markers, and it predicts the correct relative order of the components of SMALL comparatives like (37a) with respect to the modified noun in a head-final language like Basque. Treating Conjunction Phrases as adjunction structures and the standard cluster as a selected adjunct of the comparative DegP (following Kennedy 1999), we can immediately account for the coordination properties of SMALL comparatives.

5. Extensions: *baino* in non-comparative settings

In his book on the typology of comparative structures, Stassen (1985) designs a model whose aim is to predict the kind of comparatives that a given language can form depending on its typological properties. The author offers several generalizations on inequality comparative constructions in numerous languages without getting into much detail on the particulars of each language. One of the generalizations that might interest us concerns the observation that the lexical element that introduces the standard of comparison usually has a non-comparative function as a coordinating conjunction. This observation leads Stassen (1985) to formulate a hypothesis on the existence of a certain relation between comparatives and coordinated structures, but the author does not further delve into this abstract hypothesis.

Interesting as it is to our purposes, Stassen (1985) also mentions that the Basque standard marker *baino* has a separate function as an adversative coordinator. This author thus assumes that *baino* in (39a) is equivalent to *baina(n)*, the clausal adversative relator in (39b).

- (39) a. Jakes *baino* lodi-ago da
 Jakes than fat-er is
 ‘(S)he is fatter than Jakes.’
 b. Ethorri da, *bainan* ez gogotik
 come aux but not willingly
 ‘(S)he came, but not willingly.’

Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina (2003) mention that most dialects of Basque in contact with Spanish use clause-initial *baina* (with dialectal variants *bainan*, *baino* and *bena*) and clause-final *baizik*, *ezpada* or *baino* as adversative markers. Whereas dialects in contact with French do not consistently make this distinction. Consequently, the direct correspondence between the Basque standard marker and the adversative marker is not transparent. In the following section, I will argue that despite the fact that this relation is not straightforward, there is evidence that suggests that Stassen’s intuition is correct, and applies to Basque. In order to understand the details of the use of *baino*, I will clarify the typology of adversative coordinators and the related uses of *baino* in the following subsection. The discussion will provide further evidence in favour of the analysis of *baino* as a coordinating conjunction in Basque SMALL comparatives.

5.1. *Typology of adversative markers: Juntagailua baino ez da. ‘It is nothing but a coordinator’.*

Three different semantic types of coordination are usually distinguished: conjunction or conjunctive coordination (*and*), disjunction (*or*), and adversative coordination (*but*). Interestingly, the Basque standard marker *baino* has a non-comparative use as an adversative coordinator. As discussed in Izutsu (2008), there is still no consensus on the classification of adversative relations and adversative markers. In the terminology employed in this paper, adversativity is the property that controls the use of the adversative particle/conjunction *but* and similar particles in other languages that enter in a relation that involves some sense of opposition. We can distinguish several subtypes of adversative coordinators.

DENIAL-OF-EXPECTATION markers restrict the inferences that could be derived from the first statement. As Lakoff (1971) points out, these markers require a

presupposition in the first conjunct which is cancelled by the second conjunct. English *but* (40) or Basque *baina* (41) are used with this purpose¹⁵.

- (40) Jon is rather forgetful, *but* you can trust him.
 (41) Jon nahiko ahazkorra da, *baina* berarekin fidatu ahal zara.
 Jon rather forgetful is BUT he.with trust can AUX
 ‘Jon is rather forgetful, but you can trust him.’

CONCESSIVE markers form another subgroup of adversative coordinators. English *but* and *although* (42) or Basque (-en) *arren* and *baina* (43) are examples of concessive uses of adversative markers.

- (42) Mikel studied hard, *but* he failed the exam.
 (43) Mikelek buru-belarri ikasi zuen, *baina* ez zuen azterketa gainditu.
 Mikel.ERG head-ears study AUX BUT not AUX exam pass
 ‘Mikel studied hard, but he didn’t pass the exam.’

CORRECTIVE markers introduce a relation between a negated proposition and an element that replaces the “wrong” part of that proposition by a correct element. English *but* (44a) or Basque *baino* (45a-b) are used with this purpose. Sentences with a CORRECTIVE marker can be paraphrased with *instead* or *rather* in English (Izutsu 2008), as shown in (38b).

- (44) a. This is not new *but* old.
 b. This is not new; *rather*, it is old.
 (45) a. Hori ez da berria, zaharra *baino*.
 that not is new old BUT
 ‘That is not new but old.’
 b. Ez dugu errukirik eskatzen, justizia *baino*.
 not AUX mercy ask.for justice BUT
 ‘We are not asking for mercy but justice.’

In the above examples of adversative markers in Standard Basque, I have illustrated the normative uses and classification of *baino* and *baina*. *Baino* functions as a CORRECTIVE marker; whereas *baino* has DENIAL-OF-EXPECTATION and CONCESSIVE uses. Although currently Euskaltzaindia (the Academy of the Basque Language) does not include both terms, *baino* and *baina*, as synonyms or equivalents in their normative uses (*Euskaltzaindiaren Hiztegia Adierak eta adibideak* 2012: 85), we can find proof in the literature of the indiscriminate use of both terms in dialectal uses.

¹⁵ We also find other subdivisions such as *additive* markers (labelled semantic opposition markers by Lakoff 1971), *argumentative* markers (Merin 1999) or *counter-expectational* markers (Vicente 2010). See original papers for further discussion on these subtypes of adversative markers.

- (46) *Examples of a DENIAL-OF EXPECTATION use of baino*¹⁶
- a. *Baño* aldaketa oien ikararik ez zan Euskalerriraño iritxi.
 BUT changes those.GEN fear.PART not AUX to.Basque.Country arrive
 ‘But the fear of those changes did not arrive into the Basque Country.’
- b. Oso aundiak ez dira *baño*/arkaitza bezin gogorrak.
 very big not are BUT rock as hard
 ‘They are not very big but, nonetheless, they are hard as a rock.’
- (47) *Example of a CORRECTIVE use of baina*¹⁷
- Senarrak ezpaitu bere gorputzaren botherea, *baina* emazteak.
 husband.ERG not.have his body.GEN power BUT wife.ERG
 ‘A husband does not have control over his body, but his wife.’
- (48) *Examples of use of baina as standard marker in comparative constructions*
- a. Farra egiteko obiak zerate, tokiya eskeintzeko *baña*.
 laugh make better are place offer.to THAN
 ‘You’re better for having a good time than for offering a place to stay.’
- b. Parisa joan *baña* lenago
 to.Paris go THAN previous.ER
 ‘Before going to Paris’
- c. Ikusi zezakean agurezar bat baztar batean, zaldik eta mandoak *bañan*
 see could guy old one corner one.LOC horses and mules THAN
 atzera-xe-ago.
 back-a.little.bit-ER
 ‘(S)he could see an old guy in a corner, a little bit further back than the horses and mules.’

These examples evidence the (nowadays) unconventional uses of *baino* as a DENIAL-OF EXPECTATION adversative coordinator (46a-b); and the uses of *baina* as a CORRECTIVE coordinator (47) and as the introducer of the standard of comparison in inequality comparatives (48a-c).

In sum, Stassen (1985) observed that in inequality comparative constructions it is common to find languages where the standard marker and (one or some of) the coordinating conjunctions are homonyms. In Basque, particularly, I presented normative uses of *baino* as a CORRECTIVE adversative marker, in which *baino* introduces a relation of contrast between two elements. Moreover, I provided evidence of some unconventional uses of *baino* as a DENIAL-OF-EXPECTATION coordinator. In addition, I showed that the commonly used DENIAL-OF-EXPECTATION and CONCESSIVE coordinator *baina* can be employed as standard marker in inequality comparative sentences in some Basque dialects. Although the relation between the standard marker and the adversative conjunctions in Basque is not straightforwardly transparent in modern Standard Basque, we find mixed uses of *baino* and *baina* as standard marker in inequality comparatives and as an adversative coordinator. This mixed uses are not surprising if we assume that in both their comparative and

¹⁶ Regarding the phonological and orthographic spell out of these forms, we find *baino* spelled as *baño* or *baino*, and *baina* spelled out as *baña* or *bañan* due to the palatalization of the n (/ɲ/) both diachronically and synchronically in different dialects. The examples reflect this variation.

¹⁷ The examples in (46a-b), (47) and (48a-c) are borrowed from the *Orotatiko euskal hiztegia*, a general dictionary of Basque which describes the lexical patrimony of different periods and dialects of Basque. As the examples show, *baino* is widely attested as equivalent of *baina* in its comparative sense. In the examples used in this work, the unconventional use of *baina* as standard marker is specifically related to the Gipuzkoan dialect, generally employed by *bertsolariak* (verse improvisers) or in popular texts.

adversative uses *baino* and *baina* function as coordinators relating two syntactically parallel elements¹⁸. The function of *baino* as a coordinator seems to extend to SMALL comparatives like (2)-(3), for which I have proposed that *baino* behaves as a coordinator relating two adjectives¹⁹.

The treatment of *baino* as a coordinator in SMALL comparatives seems the most plausible analysis given the empirical observations presented in Section 3 and the fact that *baino* and *baina* have been alternating in their coordinator and comparative uses in non-standard dialects of Basque.

6. Conclusion

The distinctive properties of a specific type of Basque adjectival comparatives illustrated in (2)-(3) present a challenge for previous analyses of inequality comparatives in this language. The study of their behavior (their particular distribution, extraction constraints and the phrasal nature of the standard of comparison) reveals that SMALL comparatives are instances of DP-internal

¹⁸ I leave the issue of whether *baino* has some common semantic properties both as an adversative and as a standard marker for further study.

¹⁹ The categorial nature of *baino* in SMALL comparatives is best described as a coordinating conjunction, as evidenced in Section 4.1. Nonetheless, as a reviewer kindly notes, the question of what *baino* is in comparatives with clausal or reduced clausal standards still remains.

Interestingly, in comparatives with reduced clausal standards, the standard cluster can appear in both its base-generated position, as in (9b = i.a) and (12a = ii.a); and in a dislocated position as in examples (11 = i.b) and (12b = ii.b).

- (i) a. [Zu-k baino] askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut.
you-ERG THAN many books many-ER have
'I have many more books than you (have).'
- b. [...]_i; Askoz liburu gehiago ditut [zuk baino]_i.
- (ii) a. Elur maluta hau [beste guztiak baino] txiki-ago-a da.
snow flake this [other all THAN] small-ER-D is
'This snowflake is smaller than all the others.'
- b. Elur maluta hau [...]_i txikiagoa da [beste guztiak baino]_i.

The fact that the standard cluster can be dislocated in these inequality comparatives indicates that this kind of comparative constructions do not involve a coordinated structure. Reduced clausal comparatives in Basque cannot be analysed in terms of comparative coordination since this analysis would incorrectly predict the ungrammaticality of the examples with the permuted standard (i-ii.b). As noted by Ross (1967: 161), "in a coordinate structure, no conjunct may be moved, nor may any element contained in a conjunct be moved out of that conjunct". Hence, an alternative proposal is necessary for reduced clausal comparatives.

Note, however, that (unreduced) clausal comparatives such as (19-20) in Basque pattern with SMALL comparatives in that they do not allow dislocation of the standard cluster. Compare (19-20) with the ungrammatical (iii-iv):

- (iii) *Merke-ago erosten saiatuko da [[balio du-en] baino].
cheap-ER buying try-FUT AUX cost AUX-COMP THAN
'(S)he will try to buy it cheaper than it costs.'
- (iv) *Askoz liburu gehi-ago ditut ni-k [[zu-k dituzu-n] baino].
many books many-ER have I-ERG you-ERG have.COMP THAN
'I have many more books than you have.'

In sum, while the coordinating conjunction analysis of *baino* could be tentatively maintained for (unreduced) clausal comparatives in Basque, the postpositional analysis proposed by Goenaga (2012) cannot be fully discarded for reduced clausal comparatives. Since developing a comprehensive analysis of clausal and reduced clausal comparatives in Basque is beyond the scope of this paper, I leave this for future research.

comparatives with a phrasal standard and a coordination structure. Assuming the *functional* analysis of adjectives and comparative markers, and extending the *coordination analysis* of clausal comparatives (Napoli & Nespors 1986 for Italian; Sáez 1992 for Spanish; Lechner 2004 for English and German) to the nominal domain, I derive the otherwise puzzling properties of these unstudied adjectival comparatives in Basque.

Hence, in addition to identifying and describing a particular subtype of adjectival inequality comparatives that was previously unstudied, this paper offers novel evidence in support of the *coordination hypothesis* of comparative structures. Although this proposal has been previously advocated by Napoli & Nespors (1986), Sáez (1992), and Lechner (2004), among others, to account for the characteristics of some comparatives with a clausal standard, this paper offers supporting evidence for the need of a coordination analysis of comparatives with a phrasal standard (thus endorsing Napoli 1983 and Sáez's 1992 proposal), and, in particular, for SMALL comparatives.

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