1 Introduction. Chinese comparatives generally fall into two patterns depending on whether the predicate is gradable or not. If the predicate is a gradable adjective such as gāo ‘tall’, the comparatives assume the structure in (1), whereas if the predicate is a non-gradable VP such as du shū ‘read book’, the comparatives can be realized into two different forms, as shown in (2). In both of the two structures, the gradable adjective duō ‘much’ plays an important role in turning a nongradable predicate into a gradable one. I refer to the Type I structure with a post-verbal duō as the Normal Comparative Construction (NCC), and the Type II structure with a pre-verbal duō as the Differential Comparative Construction (DCC). There are some interesting syntactic and semantic differences between NCC and DCC, which I claim can be explained by hypothesizing that duō in NCC and DCC takes scope over different domains--in NCC, duō has scope over the preceding VP, while in DCC, it has scope over the following V.

2. The Problems. The table in (3) summarizes the major differences between NCC and DCC. i) In NCC, the DP_object after the first occurrence of the verb can only be a bare noun phrase such as shū ‘book’, or possibly a definite NP zhe ben shū ‘this CL book’, but not an indefinite numeral phrase liang be shū ‘two CL book’. In DCC, the DP_object can be an indefinite numeral phrase or possibly a definite NP, but never a bare NP. ii) In NCC, the differential measure phrase can only be a vague quantifier, such as yīxié ‘some’ in (2a) or hēnduō ‘many/much/a lot’, but not a numeral phrase such as liang ben shū ‘two CL book’, which involves a specific number. In DCC, the DP_object after the verb must be interpreted as a differential, and it allows both vague quantifiers and non-vague numeral phrases to be in that position. iii) NCC and DCC carry different presuppositions. For example, (2a) presupposes that both Jack and Jill have read books, but (2b) only presupposes Jack has read books, and it’s possible that Jill could have read something other than books.

3. The Explanation. The hypothesis I argue for is that duō denotes a measure function that maps from a set of events <s, t> to a degree d of those events. d is interpreted with respect to either the cardinality of the events, or the duration of the events, or the quantity of DP_obj. In both NCC and DCC, duō must take scope over cumulative verbal predicates. In NCC, duō scopes over the preceding VP, and it maps from the set of events denoted by the VP to the degree d of the events, as shown in (4a). Given the relation between the nominal reference type of verbal arguments and the temporal constitution of the complex verbal expressions (Tenny 1987, Krifka 1989,1992), the DP_obj in NCC can be a bare NP or a definite NP with an iterative reading of the VP, but not an indefinite numeral phrase, because the latter is quantized. In DCC, duō only takes scope over the V, and it maps from the set of events denoted by the V to the degree d, as shown in (4b). (4b) is based on the VP-shell structure (Larsen 1988), where the classifier of the DP_obj is treated as an event classifier of VP_1, and VP_2 is treated as a differential measure phrase, which predicates the interval between X and Y with respect to the events of reading. Since duō takes scope over different domains in NCC and DCC, the two comparatives have different presuppositions. Furthermore, since the DP_obj in DCC is part of the differential measure phrase VP_2, it can be either an indefinite numeral phrase or a definite NP, but not a bare NP, because the classifier in DP_obj is necessary to specify how the events (denoted by V) are measured.
(1) X bi Y Grable Adjective.
    Jack bi Jill gao
    Jack COMP Jill tall
    ‘Jack is taller than Jill is.’

(2) Type I: X bi Y <V DPobj> V-de duo <Differential Measure Phrase>¹

     COMP read book read-De much some
     ‘Jack reads books <a little> more than Jill does.

Type II: X bi Y duo V DPobject
   b. Jack bi Jill du-le liang ben shu

     COMP much read-asp 2 CL book
     ‘Jack read 2 more books than Jill did.’

(3) The differences between NCC and DCC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>NCC</th>
<th>DCC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) DP object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare Nouns (e.g. shu ‘book’)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite NPs (e.g. zhe ben shu ‘this CL book’)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite numeral Phrases (e.g. liang ben shu ‘two CL book’ or liang xiaoshi de shu ‘two hours De book, etc)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Differential Measure Phrase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague (e.g. yixie ‘some’, hen duo ‘a lot’)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-vague (e.g. liang ben shu ‘two CL book or liang xiaoshi de shu ‘two hours De book)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Presuppositions (ex. (2))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Jack has read books</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Jack and Jill have read books</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) a. NCC

    VP
      VP
        read
        book
        V-de
        duo

b. DCC

    VP
      VP
        read
        book
        nu-CL
        2 CL

Selected References


¹ I use angled brackets to indicate optionality.