

Original Research Article

Comparative and Superlative Adjectives in Sereer Siin: A Syntactic Analysis

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Abstract: The main objective of the descriptive analysis is to present a grammar that will be used as a mechanism to explain the grammatical functioning of a language. This study aimed at describing the syntactic structure of sentences containing comparative and superlative adjectives in Sereer-Siin, a negro African language spoken in Senegal, especially in the areas of Fatick, Fimela, Mbour, Diourbel and Thiès. This language is composed of seven varieties of dialects such as Singadum, Hireena, jegem, Farajuca, Ool, Joolbaas and Njagañaaw. The study involved seven informants as resources persons from the different dialects. It revealed that Sereer-Siin language uses the comparatives *moj* to express superiority, *moj....adar* to express inferiority and *ne* to express equality. As far as the expression of superlative is concerned, it as well uses the two first comparatives. However, *moj* is placed before adjectives, *moj....adar* envelops adjectives in both sides and as for the comparative *ne*, it can be placed before or after adjectives according to the speaker's choice. But, when the comparative *ne* expresses proximity or distance, it must be positioned before adjectives.

Keywords: Comparative, superlative, adjective, Sereer-Siin, syntax, language.

INTRODUCTION

To describe a person or thing means the fact of saying that they have more of a particular quality than someone or something else.

In this case, we use comparative and superlative adjectives.

However, before proceeding, there is need for a brief overview of the Sereer language.

Sereer language is one of the major native languages being spoken in Senegal.

According to Greenberg, it belongs to the West Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo (Greenberg, J. Harold. 1963). Sereer language is divided into two groups such as Sereer-Siin and Seereer-Cangin. However, in this study, we use the first group which is composed of seven varieties of dialects: Singadum, Hireena, jegem, Farajuca, Ool, Joolbaas and Njagañaaw. Sereer-siin people occupy the areas of Fatick, Fimela, Mbour, Diourbel and Thiès.

There have been many studies on Sereer-Siin language and they mainly focus on fields such as morphology (Fall. 1973; Faye, S. 1982 1985 & Ngom, M. 2006), phonetics (FAYE, S., & DIJKSTRA, H. 2004) and morphosyntax (Faye, W. 1979). Nevertheless, there is any study about this language that deals with comparative and superlative adjectives.

The aim of this article is to describe the grammatical functioning of the syntactic structure of sentences.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is descriptive-analytical. The data analyzed here were collected from a primary source.

This kind of source means my own experiences as a native speaker of Sereer-Siin. However, to avoid being subjective rather than objective, I was obliged to find seven informants from the different dialects composing Sereer-Siin. These informants are resources persons who master perfectly their own dialects and live in the areas of Somb

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(Fatick), Simal (Fimela), Thiadiaye, Joal (Mbour), ndondol (Diourbel), Mbaan, Njagañaaw (Thiès).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study presented in the following sections show that Sereer-Siin language has three different comparative such *moj*, *moj....adar* and *ne*. It as well reveals that the first comparative is placed before adjective to express superiority and the second expressing inferiority envelops adjectives in both sides. As far as the expression of superlative is concerned, the two first comparatives are as well used. And as for the comparative *ne*, its position depends on the speaker's choice, that is to say it can be placed after or before adjectives. But, this is not possible when it expresses proximity or distance where it must only be positioned before adjectives.

Comparison to the higher degree

To express superiority in Sereer-Siin, meaning a person, animal or thing is superior to someone, another animal or something, we uses the word *moj* + adjective. It is similar to *short adjective + er* or *more + long adjective + than*.

- Ndol *moj* ñof pis
N-ADV-ADJ-N
“A hare is faster than a horse”
- Assane *moj* magin a birame
N-ADV-ADJ-CM-N
“Assane is fatter than Birame”
- Mii *moj* xababu a Omar
P.PRON-ADV-ADJ AAC-CM-N
“I am more talkative than Omar”

Comparison to The Same Degree

In Sereer-Siin, to form comparison of equality, meaning a person, animal or thing is equal, identical or equivalent to someone, another animal or something, we use adjective + *ne* + name or *ne* + name + adjective. It is similar to *as + adjective + as*.

- Ka balig *ne* Aida
P.PRON-ADJ-CONJ-N
“He/she is as black as Aida”
- Pis ne *ne* auto ñoftu
N-CM-CONJ-N-ADJ AAC
“The horse is as fast as a car”
- Aby *ne* Daba xedtu
N-CONJ-N-ADJ ACC
“Aby is as ugly as Daba”

But, the comparison of equality may indicates proximity (*ne*) or distance (*na*). In this case, one of the elements being compared is not known because it is not linguistically mentioned. However, the speaking

subjects only know it for participating in the enunciation proceeding. Here, the only possibility to be used is *ne* + adjective.

- Suk le *ne* rabtu
N-CM-CONJ-ADJ ACC
“The ram is as short as this”
- dok ale *na* yajtu
N-CM-CONJ-ADJ ACC
“The room is as large as that”

Comparison To The Lower Degree

To express inferiority, meaning a person, animal or thing is inferior to someone, another animal or something, Sereer-Siin uses *moj* + adjective + the suffix *adar*. This is similar to *less+ adjective + than*.

- Sacc *moj* feladar malo
N-ADV-ADJ-NEG.M-N
“Couscous is less succulent than rice”
- Yacine *moj* xedadar a Awa
N-ADV-ADJ-NEG.M-CM-N
“Yacine is less uglier than Awa”
- Tening *moj* xiijaradar a ndella
N-ADV-ADJ-NEG.M-CM-N
“Tening is less tired than Ndella”

Superlative Form

To form Sereer-Siin superlative, meaning a person, animal or thing is above or below everybody or everything else, there is practically any modification. We just have to use the forms of superiority and inferiority as they have already been explained before. This form is similar to *the most + long adjective, short adjective + est* or *the least + adjective*.

- Tambacouda *moj* god
N-ADV-ADJ
“Tambacouda is the *farthest*”
- Njarka *moj* ndof Senegal
N-ADV-ADJ-N
“Njarka is the craziest in Senegal”
- Babu *moj* xupaladar a Njajen
N-ADV-ADJ-NEG.M-CM-N
“Babu is the most eccentric in Njajen Family”

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have used a descriptive analysis to explain the syntactic structure of comparative and superlative adjectives in Sereer-Siin. At the same time, this foray into Sereer-Siin's comparison system permits to raise a number of issues for further research.

The study re-visits the different aspects of comparison existing in the language, and proposes not only *moj*, *moj.....adar* and *ne* as three two main comparatives, but also specifies their normal position toward adjectives.

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NB:

N : Noun
ADV : Adverbe
ADJ : Adjective
CM : Class Marker
AAC : Accomplished
P.PRON : Personal Pronoun
CONJ : Conjunction
NEG.M : Negative Morpheme