

# Similative and Equative Constructions in Japhug

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*This paper documents equative, similative, comparative and superlative constructions on the basis of a corpus of narratives. It reveals a previously unsuspected wealth of constructions: no less than three main types of superlatives, and four types of equatives are attested, some including additional subtypes.*

## Introduction

This paper<sup>1</sup> deals with equative and similative constructions in Japhug. It comprises five sections. First, I present general information on the Japhug language and its morphosyntax. Second, I provide an account of degree, comparative and superlative constructions, which have similarities, and even overlap with, equative constructions. Third, I discuss similative constructions and how they relate to the equative constructions presented in section 4. Fourth, I describe the four types of equative constructions in Japhug. Fifth, I show some data on property equative constructions, which are not normally used in Japhug but have been collected using a novel method of elicitation.

## 1. Background

Japhug is a Gyalrong language (Trans-Himalayan, Gyalrongic; see Sun 2000 and Jacques & Michaud 2011 for more information on the classification of this language) spoken in Mbarkham county, Rngaba prefecture, Sichuan province (China), by less than 10000 speakers.<sup>2</sup>

Japhug and other Gyalrongic languages are polysynthetic, with a very rich and irregular morphology, and are highly head-marking (Jacques 2013b, Sun 2014), unlike some better known Trans-Himalayan languages such as Chinese or Burmese.

In this section, I discuss four topics of Japhug morphosyntax that are relevant to the description of the constructions studied in the paper: the definition of the word class ‘adjective’ in Japhug, general information on grammatical relations, orientation prefixes and possessive prefixes.

### 1.1. Adjectives

In Japhug, adjectives are a sub-class of stative verbs. They are conjugated and take TAM and person indexes for one argument. They can be distinguished from other stative verbs, like copulas, existential verbs and some modal auxiliaries by the fact that the tropative derivation can be applied to them (Jacques 2013a).

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<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Graham Thurgood, Yvonne Treis, Brigitte Pakendorf and one anonymous reviewer for useful comments on this paper. Glosses follow the Leipzig glossing rules. Other abbreviations used here include: AUTO spontaneous-autobenefactive, CISLOC cislocative, FACT factual/assumptive, GENR generic, IFR inferential evidential, INV inverse, LINK linker, SENS sensory evidential, SFR sentence final particle, TRANSLOC translocative, TROP tropative. Chinese borrowings in Japhug are indicated in pinyin between chevrons. The examples are taken from a corpus that is progressively being made available on the Pangloss archive (Michailovsky et al. 2014, [http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/pangloss/corpus/list\\_rsc.php?lg=Japhug](http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/pangloss/corpus/list_rsc.php?lg=Japhug)). This research was funded by the HimalCo project (ANR-12-CORP-0006) and is related to the research strand LR-4.11 ‘Automatic Paradigm Generation and Language Description’ of the Labex EFL (funded by the ANR/CGI).

<sup>2</sup>Previous work on this language includes a grammar (Jacques 2008), a dictionary (Jacques 2015), and a series of articles on specific grammatical topics (see for instance Jacques 2013b, 2014, 2016c).

In Japhug, it is possible to build a transitive verb meaning ‘to find X, to consider as X’ out of any adjective by means of the *nr-* prefix, as *mpɛɛr* ‘be beautiful’ *nr-mpɛɛr* ‘find X beautiful’ or *ɛqraʁ* ‘be intelligent’ *nr-ɛqraʁ* ‘find X intelligent’.

- (1) *kuuki*            *nr-χpi*                    *pu-feat-a*            *ki*                    *wuma*    *zo*  
 DEM:PROX    2SG.POSS-story            PFV-tell-1SG    DEM:PROX    really    EMPH
- u-ɲu-tu-nr-mpɛɛr*                    *nr*  
 QU-SENS-2-TROP-be.beautiful    if  
 ‘If you find the story that I told you beautiful (then let him go)’ (14-05-12 fushang  
 he yaomo, 67)

This derivation cannot be applied to copulas or existential verbs.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2. Flagging and person indexation

A conjugated verb form without overt arguments is the minimal complete sentence in Japhug, and grammatical relations are mainly expressed by person indexation, which includes up to two arguments following a direct/inverse system (on which see Sun & Shidanluo 2002, Jacques 2010, Gong 2014).

Overt noun phrases take case markers such as the ergative/instrument *kuu*, the genitive *yuu* and the dative *u-ɛki*. There are no prepositions. Comitative adverbs are built by means of a prefix and are in the process of being grammaticalized as a quasi-case marker (Jacques 2017).

## 1.3. Orientation prefixes

All finite verb forms, except the factual non-past, require an orientation prefix (Table 1). Motion verbs and concrete action verbs are compatible with all prefixes, but most verbs can only take one or two orientation prefixes. For those verbs, the possible orientations are lexically specified; for instance *ndza* ‘eat’ and *ts<sup>hi</sup>* ‘drink’ take the ‘up’ and ‘towards east’ orientations respectively; ‘eat’ can also appear with the ‘downstream’ orientation in the case of meat-eating animals.

	Perfective (A)	Imperfective (B)	Perfective 3→3’ (C)	Evidential (D)
up	tɣ-	tu-	ta-	to-
down	pu-	pju-	pa-	pjɣ-
upstream	lɣ-	lu-	la-	lo-
downstream	t <sup>h</sup> u-	c <sup>h</sup> u-	t <sup>h</sup> a-	c <sup>h</sup> ɣ-
east	kɣ-	ku-	ka-	ko-
west	nu-	ɲu-	na-	ɲɣ-
no direction	jɣ-	ju-	ja-	jo-

Table 1. Orientation prefixes in Japhug Rgyalrong

<sup>3</sup>The verb *maʁ* ‘not be’ has a tropative form *nrɣ-maʁ* ‘consider to be unjustified’, which however derives from its secondary meaning ‘be incorrect’.

Some particular constructions however can override the lexically selected orientation and impose a specific one; this is the case of one of the superlative constructions described in this paper (section 2.3.3).

#### 1.4. Possessive prefixes

Nouns and nominalized verb forms can take a series of possessive prefixes related to the pronouns, as indicated in Table 2.

Free pronoun	Prefix	Person
azo, aj	a-	1SG
nɔzo, nɔj	nɔ-	2SG
uɔzo	u-	3SG
teizo	tei-	1DU
ndzizo	ndzi-	2DU
zɔni	ndzi-	3DU
izo, izora, izɔra	i-	1PL
nuɔzo, nuɔzora, nuɔzɔra	nu-	2PL
zara	nu-	3PL
	tu-, tɔ-	indefinite
tuɔzo	tu-	generic

Table 2. Pronouns and possessive suffixes

The degree nominals, which are used in many of the constructions described in this paper (sections 2.1.2, 4.2 and 5) are derived from adjectives by prefixing the nominalizing prefix *tu-* (also used to make action nominals) together with a possessive prefix coreferent with the subject.

## 2. Related constructions

Before presenting equative constructions, I provide a brief account of three types of related constructions: degree, comparative and superlative, some of which present commonalities with the constructions described in section 4.

### 2.1. Degree construction

The degree of an adjectival predicate can be expressed in two ways, either with a degree adverb, or using the nominalized degree construction.

## 2.1.1. Degree adverb

The degree adverb construction is very common cross-linguistically; it involves the adverb *wuma* ‘really, very’ (often with the emphatic marker *zo*), which can appear either close to the adjective (as in 2) or separated from the verb by a noun phrase as in (3).

- (2) tee    nuunu    wuma    zo    teur            ri  
 LNK    DEM    really    EMPH    be.sour:FACT    but  
 ‘It is very sour.’ (09 mi, 67)

- (3) nɣzo    nu    wuma    zo    nɣ-ma            pu-dɣn            ú -ɣu?  
 2SG    DEM    really    EMPH    2SG.POSS-work    PST.IPFV-be.many    QU-be  
 ‘You had a lot of work, didn’t you?’ (conversation, 2015)

Although *wuma* ‘really, very’ is borrowed from Tibetan *ŋo.ma* ‘true, real’, this word is not used in this way in Tibetan languages as far as I know, and despite the deep typological and lexical influence of Tibetan on Japhug, the expression of degree in Tibetan uses unrelated constructions (Simon & Hill 2015).

## 2.1.2. Nominalized degree construction

Another construction expressing degree in Japhug involves nominalizing the adjectives by means of the nominalization prefix *tu-* and adding a possessive prefix coreferent with the subject (see section 1.4), as in the form *u-tu-teur* ‘its (degree of) sourness’ in example (4), followed by a predicate expressing the degree such as *saɣaɣ* ‘be extremely’ in this example. Other possible predicates include *te<sup>h</sup>om* ‘be too much’ or *naɣteuɣ* ‘be identical’; in the latter case it becomes an equative construction (see section 4.2). As shown in (5), the degree nominal (*u-tu-teur* ‘its (degree of) sourness’) can be followed by the marker<sup>4</sup> *kuu* and a full clause describing the degree of the property described by the adjective (‘so X that Y’).

- (4) mte<sup>hi</sup>                    u-mat                    rca  
 sea.buckthorn    3SG.POSS-fruit    UNEXPECTED

u-tu-teur                    saɣaɣ  
 3SG-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.sour    be.extremely:FACT  
 ‘The fruit of the sea-buckthorn is very sour,’ (‘The degree of sourness of the fruit of the sea-buckthorn is extreme’, 09 mi, 65)

<sup>4</sup>This marker is formally identical, and historically related to, the ergative *kuu*; see Jacques (2016b) for a more detailed discussion.

- (5) [u-tu-t̥eur]                      ku            [tu-kuur                      u-ŋgu  
 3SG-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.sour    ERG    INDEF:POSS-mouth    3SG-inside
- lú-wy-rku                      q<sup>h</sup>e    maka  
 IPFV:upstream-INV-put.in    LNK    at.all
- ɲu-su-xmuzyut                      q<sup>h</sup>e,    tu-p<sup>h</sup>ŋbu                      ra    kuɲɲ  
 IPFV-CAUS-be.evenly.distributed    LNK    INDEF:POSS-body    PL    also
- ɲu-sux-t̥eur                      ku-fse                      ɛti]  
 IPFV-CAUS-be.sour    NMLZ:S/A-be.like    be:affirm:FACT
- ‘(The fruit of the sea-buckthorn) is so sour that when one puts it in one’s mouth, it makes it completely (sour), and it is as if one’s (whole) body became sour.’ (09 mi, 66)

This construction is common in Japhug (Jacques 2016b: 8) and attested in other Rgyalrong languages such as Tshobdun (Sun 2006: 911).

## 2.2. Comparative

The comparative construction in Japhug can be illustrated by example (6): the standard is marked by the postposition *sɿz* ‘than’ specifically used in this construction, and the comparee is marked by the ergative *ku*. In comparative constructions, it is common for ergative or instrumental markers to be used with the standard, but this use on the comparee is unexpected (Jacques 2016b).

- (6) u-ɰi                                      sɿz                                      [u-pi  
 3SG.POSS-younger.sibling    COMPARATIVE    3SG.POSS-elder.sibling
- nu]    ku    mɲɛɲ  
 DEM    ERG    be.beautiful:FACT
- ‘The elder one is more beautiful than the young one.’ (elicited)

## 2.3. Superlative

There are no less than three constructions expressing superlative meaning in Japhug: a degree adverb meaning ‘most’, a possessed subject participle (‘Y is the X one of ...’) and a relative clause with a negative existential verb (‘There is no X one like Y’).

### 2.3.1. Degree adverb

The degree adverb superlative with *stu* ‘most’ is a familiar construction, illustrated by example (7) with an adjective in finite form (factual non-past).

- (7) nu            ɲyɿt̥eu            nu-ŋguuz                      stu            xtei                      lo  
 DEM    bird            3PL.POSS-among            most    be.small:FACT    SFP
- ‘It is the smallest of all birds.’ (hist-24-ZmbrWpGa, 126)

The form *-ɲguz* is the irregular fusion of the relator noun *-ɲgu* ‘inside’ and the locative *zu* (it is thus a particular case of locative superlative construction, also found in many languages, e.g. Kambaata in this volume, Treis to appear).

Most examples of this construction appear however with adjectives in subject participle form,<sup>5</sup> prefixed with *ku-* as *ku-ɲɻn* ‘the evil/terrible one’ in (8).

(8) *kuɕuŋgu tɕe <aizheng> kɻ-ti pu-me tɕe,*  
 long.ago LNK cancer NMLZ:P-say PST.IPFV-not.exist LNK

*kɻ-ku-nɻndza nu stu zo ku-ɲɻn*  
 PFV-NMLZ:S/A-have.leprosy DEM most EMPH NMLZ:S/A-be.evil

*kɻ-pa pu-ɲu*  
 NMLZ:P-consider PST.IPFV-be

‘In former times, nobody talked about cancer, and leprosy was considered to be the most terrible (of all diseases).’ (hist-25-khArWm, 35)

It is also possible to find this construction with oblique participles, as in (9), the only such example in the corpus.

(9) *stu u-sɻ-dɻn nu stɻmku nura*  
 most 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:OBLIQUE-be.many DEM prairie DEM:PL

*ɲu-nu*  
 be:FACT-PL

‘The places where most of them are are the prairies.’ (hist-19-qachGamWntoR, 24)

### 2.3.2. Possessed participle

Another possibility to express superlative meaning is with an adjective in participial form with a third plural possessive marker, as in (10).

(10) *tɕe pɻa tʰamɕɕt ɻu nu-ku-mpɕɕɻ nu*  
 LNK bird all GEN 3PL.POSS-NMLZ:S/A-be.beautiful DEM

*rmɻβja ɲu-ɲu*  
 peacock SENS-be

‘The peacock is the most beautiful of all birds.’ (24-ZmbrWpGa, 84)

This construction is less common, and mainly occurs with the adjectives *mpɕɕɻ* ‘be beautiful’ and *mna* ‘be well’.

### 2.3.3. Relative clause

A more idiomatic way of expressing superlative meaning in Japhug is by means of a negative existential verb combined with a relative clause (indicated between square brackets in the

<sup>5</sup>For an account of participial forms and a definition of subjects and objects in Japhug, see Jacques (2016c,a). See also Sun (2003, 2014) with a slightly different terminology on Tshobdun and other Rgyalrong languages.

following examples) and an adjunct with the participial form of *fse* ‘be in this way, be like (this)’, as in (11). This construction is a particular use of the equative construction described in section 4.1.<sup>6</sup>

- (11) ama a-pi k<sup>h</sup>u nu tɛ<sup>h</sup>indza  
 surprise 1SG.POSS-elder.sibling tiger DEM why
- ku-tu-nɣp<sup>h</sup>up<sup>h</sup>ɣo tɛɛ nɣzo ku-fse  
 PRS.EGO-2-flee.here.and.there LNK 2SG NMLZ:S/A-be.like
- [ku-sɣɣmu] me  
 NMLZ:S/A-be.dreadful not.exist:FACT  
 ‘Brother tiger, why are you running away like that, you are the most dreadful (animal).’ (literally ‘There is no one dreadful like you’) (2005khu, 25)

This construction is potentially ambiguous (*ku-sɣɣmu* me can be interpreted as meaning both ‘it is the most dreadful’ or ‘there is nothing dreadful’), and when the relative clause contains a finite main verb (when the relativized element is the object, the semi-object or the goal see Jacques 2016c), it is possible in some cases to use orientation prefixes to disambiguate. In example (12), the verbs *tso* ‘understand’ and *suz* ‘know’ in the superlative construction take the ‘up’ prefix *tu-* instead of the expected ‘towards east’ (*ku-tso* IPFV: east-understand ‘he understands’) and ‘down’ (*pju-suz* IPFV: down-know ‘he knows’) prefixes that they respectively select to build most tenses (see section 1.3).

With the ‘up’ prefix *tu-* as in (12), only the superlative interpretation is possible, while with the ‘down’ prefix *pju-* as in (13) the superlative interpretation is excluded, and only the negative existential one is found.

I interpret this difference as a matter of semantic scope. In (12), the adjunct *nu ku-fse* ‘like that’ is outside of the scope of the negation, and the negation applies to the minimal relative clauses<sup>7</sup> *tu-tso-a* ‘(that) I understand’ and *tu-suz-a* ‘(that) I know’ (‘[there is nothing that I understand/know] like that’) exclusively.

- (12) azo nu ku-fse zo maka [tu-tso-a]  
 1SG DEM NMLZ:S/A-be.like EMPH at.all IPFV:up-understand-1SG
- me, [tu-suz-a] me  
 not.exist:FACT IPFV:up-know-1SG not.exist:FACT  
 ‘This is what I know best.’ (‘There is nothing that I understand, that I know better than that.’ 140519 yeying, 62)

With the ‘down’ prefix *pju-* on *suz* ‘know’ as in (13), the scope of the negation is different: it applies to the whole constituent indicated between square brackets (‘there is nothing like that that I know’).

<sup>6</sup>No construction exactly identical to the Japhug one is found in Gorshenin’s (2012) survey of superlatives, though it is close to the type described in his section 3.2.5.

<sup>7</sup>In Japhug finite clauses without any relativizer can be used to built object relative clauses, see Jacques (2016c).

- (13) [azo nuu ku-fse pju-suz-a] me  
 1SG DEM NMLZ:S/A-be.like IPFV:down-know-1SG not.exist:FACT  
 ‘I know of no such thing.’

This contrast cannot however be generalized to all verbs; more research is necessary to ascertain the extent, and the functional explanation for this puzzling phenomenon.

### 3. Similative

In Japhug, the main similative construction involves the verbs *fse* ‘be like (this)’ (intransitive stative) and *stu* ‘do (this) way, do like (this)’ (transitive). These verbs can occur in a serial verb construction, having the same core arguments and TAM values as the main verb, as illustrated by (14) (TAM: imperfective; Person: 3pl → 1sg) and (15) (TAM: factual non-past; Person: 1sg). It is possible to insert a linker between the two verbs of the serial construction, as in example (14).

- (14) azo kuuki ntsu kú-wy-stu-a-nuu tee,  
 1SG DEM:PROX always IPFV-INV-do.like-1SG-PL LNK

kú-wy-znuuk<sup>h</sup>ruum-a-nuu  
 IPFV-INV-punish-1SG-PL  
 ‘They punished me like this.’ (Gesar, 278)

- (15) azo nuu sjiɛɾ zo kuteu ki fse-a  
 1SG DEM night.and.day EMPH here DEM:PROX be.like:FACT-1SG

ndzur-a ntsu ju-ra tee,  
 stand:FACT-1SG always SENS-have.to like  
 ‘I have to stand like this night and day.’ (The divination, 2002, 44)

The standard (the demonstrative pronouns *kuuki* in (14), and *ki* in (15)) cannot be indexed on the verb. The verb *stu* ‘do (this) way, do like (this)’ is thus secundative ditransitive, taking the standard as its theme.

The equative construction in *fse* ‘be like (this)’ (section 4.1) is a particular case of this serial verb construction, when the main verb is an adjective.

With dynamic verbs, the standard is almost always a demonstrative as in (14) and (15) above. Exceptions include 16, where the standard is the noun *turme* ‘man’. In this example, the verb *fse* ‘be like (this)’ takes the sensory form (with the *ju-* prefix), while the main verb is in a periphrastic sensory form, combining the verb in the imperfective (*tu-ndze* ‘it eats’) with an auxiliary in the sensory form.

- (16) pri nuu ku, turme ju-fse tee, tɣ-rɔku tei  
 bear DEM ERG man SENS-be.like LNK INDEF.POSS-grain also

tu-ndze, ɛa tei tu-ndze, ... ju-ŋgrɿl  
 IPFV-eat meat also IPFV-eat SENS-be.usually.the.case  
 ‘The bear, like a man, eats grains and meat.’ (21-pri, 17)



## 4. Entity equative

This section discusses the entity equative constructions, i.e. constructions expressing that two entities have a property in equal degree ('X is as Y as Z'). It differs from the parameter equative, treated in section 5, expressing that the same entity has two properties in equal degree ('X is a Y as he is Z'). In the following, I adopt the terminology proposed by Haspelmath & Buchholz (1998), as illustrated by the English example (17).

- (17) John            is    as                            intelligent  
       COMPAREE                    PARAMETER.MARKER    PARAMETER
- as    Paul  
       STANDARD.MARKER    STANDARD

There are no less than four distinct constructions expressing argument equative meanings in Japhug.

### 4.1. *fse* 'be like'

One equative construction is built with the verb *fse* 'be like (this)' (or more rarely *naχteuy* 'be identical' and *afsuja* 'be of the same size'). The verb *fse* 'be like (this)' is stative, but takes two arguments (respectively the comparee and the standard). Since it is syntactically linked to the standard, it is analyzed here as the standard marker rather than as the parameter marker.

Both the standard marker *fse* 'be like (this)' and the parameter can appear in finite form, sharing TAM and person marking as in (18). This is in fact a particular case of the serial verb construction used to express similitive (see section 3). Such examples with finite verb forms are rare in the corpus.

- (18) nuu            li            u-wa            fsuufse            zo  
       DEM            again        3SG.POSS-father    completely.like    EMPH  
       COMPAREE                    STANDARD            PARAMETER.MARKER
- pjɣ-fse                                    pjɣ-sɣjloɣ  
       IFR.IPFV-be.like            IFR.IPFV-be.ugly  
       STANDARD.MARKER    PARAMETER
- '(The frog son) was as ugly as his father.' (hist150818 muzhi guniang, 100)

The verb *naχteuy* 'be identical' used a similar construction requires in addition the comitative *cʰo* on the standard, as shown by example (19).



noun phrase is followed by an adjective (the parameter) in degree nominal form (prefixed with *tu-*) and a possessive prefix (in dual or plural) coreferent with the preceding noun phrase. This nominalized verb and the preceding noun phrase form a larger noun phrase that is the subject of the adjective *naχteuy* ‘be identical’ (the parameter marker)<sup>9</sup> in finite form, as in (21) and (22).

- (21) qaleku<sup>hi</sup> nunu c<sup>h</sup>ondyre βzar nu  
 bird.sp DEM COMIT bird.sp DEM  
 COMPAREE STANDARD.MARKER STANDARD

ndzi-tu-wxti naχteuy  
 3DU.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.big be.identical:FACT  
 PARAMETER PARAMETER.MARKER  
 ‘The *qaleku<sup>hi</sup>* bird is as big as the *βzar* bird.’ (‘The *qaleku<sup>hi</sup>* bird and the *βzar* bird are identical in their degree of bigness’) (hist-23- RmWrcWftsa, 34)

- (22) mɣ-mbro tɾru c<sup>h</sup>o ndzi-tu-mbro  
 NEG-be.high:FACT tree.sp COMIT 3DU.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.high

naχteuy  
 be.identical:FACT  
 ‘It is not high, it (grows) as high as the *tɾru* tree.’ (hist-17-xCAj, 56)

In the second construction,<sup>10</sup> the nominalized parameter takes a possessive prefix only coreferent with the comparee, and the standard together with the comitative (the standard marker) follows the parameter, as in (23).

- (23) qaliaɣ nu u-tu-wxti nu qandzyi  
 eagle DEM 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.big DEM hawk  
 COMPAREE PARAMETER STANDARD

c<sup>h</sup>o naχteuy tsa  
 COMIT be.identical:FACT a.little  
 STANDARD.MARKER PARAMETER.MARKER PARAMETER.MARKER  
 ‘The eagle is about as big as the hawk.’ (19-qandZGi, 36)

In the third construction, the parameter takes a third person singular possessive prefix, and the two comparees are indicated by person indexation on the verb. In (24), the standard and the comparee are the speaker and the addressee; they are not expressed by overt pronouns, but are rather indexed on the verb by the suffix *-tei*.

of the sentence, unlike in the case of other comparative constructions.

<sup>9</sup>The adjective *naχteuy* ‘be identical’ is a denominal verb derived from the non-attested form *\*χteuy* borrowed from the Tibetan numeral *gteig* ‘one’.

<sup>10</sup>This construction is very rare, only two examples are found in the corpus.

- (24) tee      uu-tu-muetar  
 LNK      3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.cold  
 PARAMETER

ɲu-naχteuɣ-tei      tee,      q<sup>h</sup>e  
 SENS-be.identical-1DU      LNK      LNK  
 PARAMETER.MARKER-COMPAREE+STANDARD

nu-tɣjpa      ɲu-rkuun      ma  
 2PL.POSS-snow      SENS-be.few      SFP

‘It is as cold here as it is in your place, you don’t have a lot of snow.’ (‘You and I are identical as to coldness’; conversation, 2014/11)

### 4.3.1 Possessed noun

The possessed noun<sup>11</sup> *u-fsu* ‘of the same size as’ can be used as the standard marker in a construction of Haspelmath et al.’s (2017) type 1 like the one discussed in section 4.1.11.<sup>12</sup> The parameter cannot be expressed in this construction.

- (25) tu-mbro      tee,      turme      u-fsu      jamar  
 IPFV-be.high      LNK      man      3SG.POSS-of.the.same.size.as      about

tu-βze      c<sup>h</sup>a  
 IPFV-grow      can:FACT

‘It can grow high, about as high as man.’ (12-ndZiNgri, 4)

This construction is relatively marginal in Japhug. In the Cogtse dialect of Situ Rgyalrong, a similar construction is reported (Lín 1993: 377).

### 4.4. Denominal adjectives

Japhug has a denominal prefix *aru-/ɣru-* deriving adjectives meaning ‘like X’ out of nouns. I have no examples from narratives, but it spontaneously occurs in conversation in examples such as (26) (which I heard as I was correcting the transcription of a story with my main informant), in a construction combining the degree nominal (2.1.2) with the sentence final particle *nu* used to express surprise. Example (27) illustrates the same form with a non-denominal adjective.

- (26) uu-tu-ɣrusujno      nu!  
 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.like.grass      SFP  
 ‘(She cuts their head as easily) as if it were grass.’ (heard in context)

- (27) uu-tu-mpɛɣɣ      nu!  
 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.beautiful      SFP  
 ‘It/s/he is so beautiful!’

<sup>11</sup>In Japhug, possessed nouns obligatorily take a possessive prefix (see Table 2, section 1.4), here the 3SG *u-*.

<sup>12</sup>Incidentally, note that *fse* ‘be like (this)’, the verb which serves as the standard marker in the construction described in section 4.1, is etymologically related to *u-fsu* ‘of the same size as’.

The more elaborated sentence (28) was given as an explanation for (26).

- (28) *kɣ-p<sup>h</sup>ut* *u-tui-mbat* *ku* *ɲu-ɣrusujno* *zo*  
 INF-cut 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-easy ERG SENS-be.like.grass EMPH  
 ‘It is as easy to cut as if it were grass.’

This unusual equative construction is productive, since it can be applied to nouns from Tibetan or Chinese. It does not fit in any of Haspelmath et al.’s (2017) six types of equative constructions, but resembles the “similative adjective” derivation in *-lágan* in Saami (Ylikoski to appear: 5.1). There are three main differences between the Japhug construction and its Saami equivalent.

1. The denominal adjectives in Japhug are a sub-class of stative verbs, rather than being noun-like as in Saami.
2. The suffix *-lágan* in Saami, like the corresponding equative postposition *láhkai* are historically related to the noun *láhki* ‘mood, manner’, whereas the prefix *aru-* appears to be a combination of the passive *a-* with the denominal *ru-* prefix.
3. The Saami suffix is mainly used in attributive equative constructions, while the Japhug prefix occurs mainly in the degree nominal form illustrated by (26).

## 5. Property equative

Property equative constructions (‘X is as Y as he is Z’) do not occur in the Japhug corpus. This meaning can however be expressed in this language. In order to limit the effect of elicitation, the following procedure was undertaken. I first wrote a Japhug translation of Perrault’s story *Riquet à la Houppe* which contains many examples of property equative sentences. The translation was then corrected with my main informant sentence by sentence. Then, she was asked to retell the story (in six episodes of 3 to 5 minutes) using her own words.

Property equatives, e.g. ‘X is as stupid as s/he is beautiful’ (a sentence occurring several times in the story), can be expressed in Japhug in three distinct ways. First, the possessed noun *u-fsu* ‘of the same size as’ (used in the argument equative construction, section 4.3), follows a degree nominal derived from the first adjective; the second adjective takes a finite form.

- (29) *u-tui-mpɛɣɾ* *ɣu*  
 3SG.POSS-NMLZ:DEGREE-be.beautiful GEN
- u-fsu* *jamar* *ci* *ɲu-k<sup>h</sup>e*  
 3SG.POSS-of.the.same.size.as about INDEF SENS-be.stupid
- ɛti*  
 be.affirm:fACT  
 ‘S/he is stupid to the extent of his/her beauty.’

Second, two adjectives in degree nominal form, the first followed by the comitative postposition *c<sup>h</sup>o*, are subject of the verb *afsuja* ‘be of the same size’. This construction is the equivalent of the argument equative construction in section 4.2.



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