

Standards of comparison

Chris Kennedy – University of Chicago
ck@uchicago.edu

This talk will address the syntax and semantics of the ‘standard of comparison’, with particular focus on the so-called ‘phrasal/clausal comparative’ distinction: whether the standard corresponds to an NP in the syntax and an individual in the semantics, or a clause in the syntax and a degree description in the semantics. I will provide evidence from an examination of comparatives in English, Japanese, Chinese and several other languages which indicates that this is a genuine point of cross-linguistic variation, with some languages having only the former option and others having both. I then discuss the implications of this distinction for the logical form of comparative constructions in particular languages, and for broader questions about the principles underlying cross-linguistic variation in the expression of comparison.