

PhD Project

Comparatives under the microscope (COMIC)

The research group Formal and Computational Linguistics (ComForT) and the Center for Research in Syntax, Semantics, and Phonology (CRISSP) at KU Leuven has a vacancy for a PhD-position in formal linguistics.

Project summary

The COMIC-project will investigate the morphology, syntax, and semantics of adjectival comparative constructions of the type illustrated in (1).

(1) Jill is taller than Fred.

Compared to the positive degree (*Jill is tall*), the comparative construction adds two pieces of material. First, the comparative morpheme *-er* is added to the adjective *tall*, and second, the comparative adjective *taller* introduces the phrase *than Fred*, which contains the comparative standard *Fred*, to which Jill is compared. The comparative standard is introduced by the standard marker *than*. Comparative constructions thus combine **morphological** marking (the *-er*-morpheme), **syntactic** structure (the *than*-phrase), and a **semantic** interpretation, in which two entities are compared with respect to a certain property (in this example Jill and Fred with respect to their height).

Existing approaches typically study the morphology or the syntax or the semantics of comparative adjectives. This has led to a situation where the outcomes of the different perspectives do not properly link up with one another: semantic analyses do not take into account—and are sometimes incompatible with—typological observations and generalisations, and syntactic and morphological approaches are insufficiently informed by the insights of compositional semantics. The COMIC-project aims to fill this gap by developing a fully integrated analysis of these three aspects of comparative constructions.

Read [the full project description here](#). The current opening concerns Work Package 1, which will investigate the morphology of the comparative.

Profile

- an MA degree in Linguistics, or Language(s) with a specialisation in linguistics.
- a curious, enterprising, and creative mind; excellent analytical skills.
- fluency in both written and spoken English. Knowledge of Dutch is an asset but not required at the time of application.
- an interest in relating intricate language data to advanced linguistic theorizing.
- an outstanding record of undergraduate and Master's level work.
- an ability to work both independently and to function in a group.

Offer

ComForT and CRISSP offer an environment where intellectual creativity and independence are encouraged to thrive. They foster the lively exchange of ideas, and provide strong intellectual, moral, and logistical support to its PhD students, postdocs, and other collaborators.

The position starts in October 2020. The PhD-student will be located in Brussels but with frequent activities in Leuven.

Remuneration is in accordance with the official Belgian scales for academic personnel and bursaries, which offer internationally highly competitive pay (see [the KU Leuven jobsite](#) for more information).

Instructions for application

If you are interested, please apply via [the KU Leuven online application tool](#) no later than September 1, 2020. Include with your application a letter of motivation, a CV, a copy of your MA thesis (or a draft thereof), a copy of relevant publications (if any), and the contact details of one or more referents (name, affiliation, email, telephone number).

Contact information

- prof. dr. Guido Vanden Wyngaerd
guido.vandenwyngaerd@kuleuven.be
+32 2 609 88 83
- prof. dr. Dany Jaspers
dany.jaspers@kuleuven.be
+32 2 447 18 92
- prof. dr. Jeroen van Craenenbroeck
jeroen.vancraenenbroeck@kuleuven.be
+32 16 37 79 36