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Comparison, similarity and simulation in Zaar, a Chadic language of Nigeria

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I. Introduction

This paper discusses the linguistic expression of similarity, *aka* ‘simulative’ in Zaar, a Chadic language spoken south of Bauchi State, in Northern Nigeria. As the Zaar simulative is related to other functional structures, both morphologically (e.g. equative, simulative), or cognitively (e.g. comparison of superiority, *aka* ‘comparative’), these will also be included in the discussion. After a presentation of Zaar and its typological characteristics, stressing the fact that the predicative words expressing the standard of comparison in Zaar are essentially verbs, not adjectives (Section 2), the paper does a quick morpho-syntactic survey of the general cognitive operation of comparison (Section 3), showing how the equative, simulative and simulative structures are based on the preposition *dan*, ‘like’ whereas the comparative structure centers on the verb *mop*, ‘surpass’. Section 4 studies the comparative, while Section 5 focuses on the preposition *dan* and its morpho-syntactic status in relation with the equative and the simulative structures. Section 6 shows how the morphemes *dan*, ‘like’, the quotative *tu*, and the particle *ku* combine to form the simulative marker *dan (ku)tu*. Finally, Section 7 summarises the contribution of Zaar to the study of comparison and similarity.

II. Zaar, a South-Bauchi Chadic language

Zaar, also known as Saya, is spoken by about 150 000 speakers in the South of Bauchi State (Nigeria), in the Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro Local Government Areas¹. Together with 30 or so other related languages first identified by (Shimizu 1978), Zaar forms a sub-branch of West Chadic languages named the South-Bauchi languages². Apart from the dominant languages, i.e. English (official national language) and Hausa (dominant all over Northern half of Nigeria), South Bauchi languages are surrounded by Niger-Congo

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¹ Most of the examples quoted are extracted from a one-hour corpus published by the CorpAfroAs project (Mettouchi, Vanhove, & Caubet 2012), and completed by a two-hour corpus transcribed and annotated with the help of Marvellous S. Davan in November 2012 in Nigeria during a fieldtrip funded by IFRA-Nigeria and the EFL LABEX programme “The Typology and Corpus Annotation of Information Structure and Grammatical Relations”.

Transcription: Zaar is a 3 tone languages with High and Low noted respectively (*á*) and (*à*), and Middle left unmarked (*a*). Contour tones are Rising (*á*) and Falling (*à*). In the examples, the first line gives a broad phonemic transcription, with post-lexical tone realization and segmental assimilations, and the second line gives a morphological analysis. For interlinear glossing, we follow the *Leipzig Glossing Rules* (Bickel, Comrie, & Haspelmath 2008) adapted for the CorpAfroAs project.

Abbreviations. 1.2.3: 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; AOR: Aorist; COP: Copula; CPL: Completive; CTP: Centripetal; DEM: Demonstrative; EMPH: Emphatic; EQ: Equative (copula); FUT: Future; ICPL: Incomplete; IMM: Immediate past; INCH: Inchoative; INDF: Indefinite; IRR: Irrealis; NMLZ: Nominaliser; NP: Noun Phrase; OBJ: Object; OPN: Opener (reported speech); PL: Plural; POS: Possessive; POS: Incomplete; PP: Prepositional Phrase; PRO: Pronoun; PROX: Proximate; PTCL: Particle; QL: Qualitative (copula); QLT: Qualitative (modifier); REL: Relativiser; RES: Resultative; S: Sentence; SBJV: Subjunctive; SG: Singular; SVC: Serial Verb Construction; SVO: Subject-Verb-Object; V: Verb.

² (Newman 1990) classified South-Bauchi languages as the B3 sub-branch of West Chadic. (Newman 2006; 2013) now treat these languages as a third sub-branch (West-C) within West Chadic.

languages in the West (*Izere, Birom*); in the East (*Jarawan Bantu*³); in the South (*Tapshin, Fyem, Kwanka*) and further South-East (*Tarok*). Two isolates inside South-Bauchi languages are *Bankal* in the North and *Boi* in the South.

Four dialects can be distinguished within Zaar, named after the main villages or towns where they are spoken: *Bogoro* (formerly called the Lusa dialect), *Gambar Lere, Marti* and *Kal*. The *Kal* dialect is very close to what is generally called the *Sigidi* or *Gu:s* language, so much so that *Gu:s* can be conflated with the *Kal* dialect of Zaar (cf. Caron 2001).

Most Zaar people of the younger generation are Hausa-Zaar bilinguals. They are schooled in Hausa in primary school, before learning English. The Zaar are Christians and use a Hausa translation of the Bible. The older generation are not fluent in Hausa, whereas the younger educated elite, who often hold positions in the administration, police and education, switch comfortably between Zaar, Hausa and English.

From a typological point of view, Zaar shares with its Hausa ‘big brother’ the main characteristics of most Chadic languages: it is a SVO head-first language where TAM is conflated with the exponent of the subject function into a pre-verbal pronominal clitic. Contrary to Hausa, this pre-verbal complex does not include the expression of focus. This same portmanteau morpheme can be omitted in sequential clauses – a phenomenon different from subordination, and appearing in narration to indicate consecutive events – and in Serial Verb Constructions (more on SVC in section 4 on the comparative). Zaar uses prepositions and the genitival modifier follows the noun it modifies. There is no case marking of object and subject. Zaar does not use relative pronouns, but has a relative subordinator *dan*, different from interrogative pronouns, which will be discussed in Section 7. Qualification is expressed either by a limited set of adjectives referring to age, size and colour, or more commonly by verbal predication, and more precisely by quality verbs. This preference for verbal predication of quality is manifest in comparison.

III. A brief overview of comparison in Zaar

The linguistic expression of similarity, or similitive, is part of the broader conceptual category of comparison. Comparison presupposes an entity, called the comparee, in relation with some property, state or, more rarely, a dynamic state of affairs. The comparee is the argument of a predicative word – most often an adjective – representing a parameter of comparison applied to it, relative to some standard.

*“The **comparative** degree of some predicate – typically an adjective – marks this predicate as applying to its argument (the comparee) to a higher extent than the standard; e.g. smaller. [...] A **comparison of equality** is one that ascribes to the comparee the same value of the parameter of comparison as to the standard.” (Cuzzolin & Lehmann 2000, 1212 ff.)*

In the comparative degree, some languages mark a difference between the **comparison of superiority** (*more intelligent than*) and the **comparison of inferiority** (*less intelligent than*). In Zaar, such a contrast does not exist, and the comparison of minority is expressed through the negation of the comparison of equality (*not as intelligent as*).

As a consequence, we will focus on the comparison of equality (generally called ‘equative’ in typological studies) and the comparison of superiority, which, likewise, we will call ‘comparative’ for convenience sake.

³ The name Jar, or Jarawa is misleading since it refers to different populations, speaking different languages: the Jarawan Dutse (Mountain Jars) speak Zarek (Zere, Zarek, Afizere, Ifizere), a Benue-Congo language, and the Jarawan Kogi (Plain Jars), speaking Jàâr (Zhar), a Bantu language, commonly called Jarawan Bantu. Finally, the Jerawa are another population, speaking Zele, a Benue-Congo language from the Kainji group (Shimizu 1975).

A good starting point for the typological study of comparison is given by English, with a clear morphology expressing the various logical articulators of comparison, such as (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998)'s descriptive framework for the study of equatives and similatives, which we will use for this work on Zaar:

(1) **EQUATIVE**

| | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>My sister</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>as</i> | <i>intelligent</i> | <i>as</i> | <i>you.</i> |
| Comparee | Parameter | Marker | Parameter | Standard | Standard |
| | | | | Marker | |

The same framework can be adopted for the comparative:

(2) **COMPARATIVE**

| | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>My sister</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>more</i> | <i>intelligent</i> | <i>than</i> | <i>you.</i> |
| Comparee | Parameter | marker | Parameter | Standard | Standard |
| | | | | Marker | |

This first dimension of contrast (equality vs. inequality) intersects with the contrast between scalar and non-scalar comparison (Huddleston & Pullum 2008, 1099 ff.), producing the different types of comparison in (3) below:

(3)

| | | |
|------------|---|------------------------------------|
| | equality | inequality |
| scalar | equative (as ... as) | comparative (more ... than) |
| non-scalar | identity (<i>same as</i>) similative (<i>like</i>) | difference (different from) |

This contrast between scalar and non-scalar comparison has been used in the literature, although in different terms, to explain e.g. the difference between equatives and similatives:

“Semantically, the difference between equatives and similatives is not so much that similatives express approximate similarity, while equatives express true equality, but rather that similatives express identity of manner, whereas equatives express identity of degree or extent, or in other words, similatives express quality while equatives express quantity.” (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998, 313)

These five types of comparison are basically expressed as follows in Zaar :

(4)

| | | |
|------------|--|---|
| | equality | inequality |
| scalar | equative : <i>dan</i> , ‘like’ | comparative : <i>mop</i> , ‘exceed’ |
| non-scalar | identity : <i>nàmbón</i> , ‘one’ similative : <i>dan</i> , ‘like’ | difference : <i>mari</i> , ‘different’ |

As can be seen in table (4), there is a strong resemblance between the equative and the similative, both expressed through the preposition *dan*, ‘like’, as opposed to the expression of the comparative through the verb *mop*, ‘exceed’, while identity and difference are lexicalised through the use of the numeral *nambon*, ‘one’ and the adjective *mari*, ‘different’ respectively.

The identity of the preposition *dan*, ‘like’ needs further consideration, taking into account the possible links with three other words and their variants: the adverb *dan* (var. *da*⁴), ‘again’; the relative subordinator *dan* (var. *da*), ‘that’; and the deictic adverb *dân* (var. *dâni*), ‘there’.

⁴ Nasal phonetic variants are common in Zaar; e.g. the variation of the morpheme *kutu/kutun*, ‘as if’. (cf Section 8).

The tonal, morphological and semantic differences between the deictic adverb *dān/dāni* and the similative preposition *dān*, ‘like’ are too important to consider them to be either variants of the same word or to be otherwise related.

In the same way, although relative markers are often derived from deictic determiners in Chadic languages (Frajzyngier 1996), the falling prosody and the adverbial function of *dān* militate against its relationship with the relative subordinator *dān*. In Section 7, we analyse the relative and temporal clauses as complements of the preposition, and the relative and temporal subordinator *dān* as a grammaticalisation of the similative preposition *dān*, ‘like’.

Finally, the cognitive relationship between repetition and identity or similitude argues in favour of a lexical connexion with the adverb *dān/dā* ‘again’:

(5) *Máman sumí yá dā:lí gón dān.*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------|------|--------|----------|----|------------|-------|-----|---|
| má | mán | su | =mí | ká | dǎ:l | -i | gón | dān |
| 1PL.FUT | come | return | =1PL.OBJ | at | open space | -INDF | QLT | again |

We will go back to another [tale] again (SAY BC NARR 01 SP1 001).

However, the grammaticalisation path is not clear from the clause-final adverb *dān* to the homophonous preposition *dān*. The relative scarcity of documentation of related Chadic languages concerning similitude and comparison makes it difficult to get any extra information that would help. The only related lexeme is found in Miya with the verb *dām(ā)*, ‘equal, reach, be as...’, contrasting with the verb *rà*, ‘exceed’ (Schuh & Ciroma Tilde Miya 2010). There exists no such verb in Zaar, which would contrast with *mop*, ‘surpass, exceed’ (cf. Section 4). It is tempting to imagine that such a verb **dān* has existed, and given birth to the preposition *dān*, ‘like’ and the homophonous adverb *dān*, ‘again’ before disappearing. Unfortunately, nothing more can be said concerning a possible etymology or grammaticalisation path for all the uses of *dān*.

Before moving on to the following sections for the study of the comparative (Section 4) and the equative/similative (Section 5), let us see how identity and difference are expressed through the adjectives *nāmbón*, ‘one, single’ (Ex. 6) and *mari*, ‘different’ (Ex.7):

(6) *Tá wá:ní mi:tsə nāmbón?*

| | | | |
|---------|---------|------|---|
| tá | wa: | -ni | mi:tsə nāmbón |
| 3PL.FUT | perform | INCH | burial one |

Will they do the same funeral? (SAY BC INT 02 SP2 40).

(7) *Ma:ndə sé: tə jǒldī yá dātāpi wón mari.*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|----------|--------|-----|----|--|------|-----|-----------|
| ma:ndə | sé: | tə | jǒl | -dí | ká | dātāpm | -i | wón | mari |
| fight | only if | 3SG.SBJV | go out | CTP | at | road | INDF | QLT | different |

Fighting must arrive in a different way. (SAY BC INT 05 Morals SP1 149).

IV. Comparative

The comparative (comparison of superiority) in Zaar is based on the verb *mop*, ‘surpass, exceed’,⁵ a labile verb which can be intransitive, monotransitive or ditransitive. The basic transitive use of the verb is exemplified in (8).

(8) *Kádā: ɣà dū: tə móp karfīwā:n.*

| | | | | | |
|------|----------|-------|---------------|--|---------|
| kádā | à: | ɣa | dū: tə | mop karfī | =wā:n |
| NEG3 | 2SG.SBJV | drink | beer 3SG.SBJV | surpass strength | 2PL.POS |

⁵ The verb 'surpass' is the frequent means in African languages from various families to code comparison of superiority.

Don't drink more beer than you can stand. [*lit.* Don't drink beer so that it should exceed your strength]. (SAY BC INT 05 Morals SP1 035).

The intransitive use of **mop** expresses set comparison (comparative of absolute superiority):

(9) *Gjò: ʔəndá wò mop de:dé:jo:?*

| | | | | | |
|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|------|
| gjò: | =kəndá | wò | mop | de:dé: | o: |
| which | =COP2 | 3SG.FUT | surpass | exactly | EMPH |

Which one will be most suitable? (SAY BC CONV 01 SP2 021-2).

This verb is used in two different strategies for comparison in Zaar: the Serial Verb Construction Strategy, and the ditransitive strategy.

A. Serial Verb Construction Strategy

Looking superficially like the equative/similative structure (see Section 5 below), the comparative use of the SVC is exemplified in (10) below:

(10) *Á: wò colák mop kə.*

| | | | | |
|----|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| â: | wò | ʔfolák | mop | kə |
| ah | 3SG.FUT | be smooth | surpass | 2SG.OBJ |

Eh, he will look nicer than you. (CONV 02 SP1 111)

Although it appears in the same position as the preposition **dan**, ‘like’ of the equative/similative structure, **mop** is a verb: **kə** in (Ex.10) is a 2nd person singular Object Pronoun, belonging to the paradigm of verb complement pronouns, whereas prepositions in Zaar take Independent Pronouns as complements, e.g. **dan kyá:ni**, ‘like you’. This comparative structure uses a Serial Verb Construction (SVC) strategy, as characterised in (Aikhenvald & Dixon 2006, 1):

“A serial verb construction (SVC) is a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualised as a single event. They are monoclausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value.”

In this construction, the first verb (**ʔfolák**, ‘be smooth’) is the major verb, an intransitive quality verb⁶ which functions as the comparative predicate, and expresses the parameter. The second verb (**mop**, ‘surpass’), is the minor verb, and functions as the standard marker. It is a transitive verb which takes the standard as a direct object. The resulting structure is shown in the table below, with the translation of ‘Mopshi is taller than Dəndá’:

| (11) | Comparee | Parameter | Standard Marker | Standard |
|------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | NP | PRO V ₁ | V ₂ | NP |
| | Mopʃi | á lû: | mop | Dəndá |
| | Mopshi | is tall | surpass | Dəndá |

⁶ There exist ‘true’ adjectives Zaar, but they don’t appear in comparisons where synonymous quality verbs are used, e.g. **lar** ‘be red’ is substituted for ‘**za**’, ‘red’.

The subject pronoun of the major verb (Parameter) can be repeated before *mop*, ‘surpass’ (the second verb, and Standard Marker), e.g. in (Ex.12):

(12) *Kə fji vi: kə mop yeli.*

| | | | | | |
|---------|-----|--------|---------|---------|------|
| kə | fji | vi: | kə | mop | yeli |
| 2SG.AOR | eat | speech | 2SG.AOR | surpass | bird |

You are more talkative than a bird. (SAY BC READ 03 Sermon 272)

B. Ditransitive strategy

The ditransitive strategy is the only one available for parameters expressed by non-verbal predicates. The comparative predicator *mop* remains as the single main verb, with the standard as the first object, and the parameter as the second object.

(13) *Nə gyô: yəŋ á mōp kámfi dǎyro:?*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|------|---------|---------|--------|-----|--------|---------|------|
| nə | gyô: | kən | á | mop | kâ:m | -sə | -i | dǎkər | o: |
| COPI | which | COP2 | 3SG.AOR | surpass | friend | -PL | -INDEF | madness | EMPH |

Who is more stupid than his friends? (lit. ‘who surpasses the friends (in) madness?’) (SAY BC READ 08 NAR Men-Naar 38)

The resulting structure is as follows:

| | | | | |
|------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (14) | Comparee | Standard Marker | Standard | Parameter |
| | NP | Pro V | NP ₁ | NP ₂ |
| | <i>Mopfi</i> | <i>mop</i> | <i>Dənda</i> | <i>gya:l</i> |
| | Mopshi | surpass | Dənda | sense |

The same structure can be used with a parameter expressed by a nominalised verb:

(15) *Di:la mōp Zâ:ki sayátkàni ò:.*

| | | | | | |
|--------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|------|
| Di:la | mop | Zâ:ki | sakát | -kòni | o: |
| Jackal | surpass | Lion | be clever | -NMLZ | EMPH |

Jackal is more clever than Lion (lit. Jackal exceeds Lion in being clever).

The parameter is omitted when it can be contextually recovered, as in (Ex. 16), a question typically concluding tales describing a competition among a group of friends, and for which there exist two variants in the corpus, with and without the parameter *kú:skàni*, ‘being evil’:

(16) *Nə nú: yəŋ á mōp kámfi (kú:skàni ò:)?*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| nə | nú: | kən | á | mop | kâ:m | =wòs | kú:s | -kòni | o: |
| COPI | who | COP2 | 3SG.AOR | surpass | friend | 3SG.POS | be evil | NMLZ | EMPH |

Who is more evil than his friends? (SAY BC READ 09 36)

Mupun, another Chadic language from the Angas family spoken south of Zaar, uses the same structures to express comparison, e.g. (Ex.17) for the Serial Verb Construction strategy:

(17) *naloŋ ret met damuan*
 Nalong pretty surpass Damuan
 Nalong is prettier than Damuan

The second complement of the ditransitive strategy is prepositional in Mupun, e.g (Ex.18):

- (18) *damuan met nalong n-ret*
 Damuan surpass Nalong PREP-beauty
 Damuan is more handsome than Nalong (Frajzyngier 1993, 247)

V. Equative/Similative structure

A. Equative

The basic structure of the equative is exemplified in (Ex. 19):

- (19) *Tâ:s Də̀nda á nǰirə̀ dān fə̀mdi.*
 tâ:s də̀nda á nǰirə̀ dān fə̀mdi
 hand.POS Də̀nda 3SG.AOR be cold like ice
 Də̀nda's hand is as cold as ice.

This structure can be represented as follows:

- | | | | | |
|------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| (20) | Comparee | Parameter | Standard Marker | Standard |
| | NP | Pro V | Prep | NP |
| | <i>tâ:s Də̀nda</i> | <i>á nǰirə̀</i> | <i>dān</i> | <i>fə̀mdi</i> |
| | Də̀nda's hand | is cold | like | ice |

It should be noted that the equative in Zaar does not use a parameter marker. Due to the dominantly verbal nature of the expression of quality in Zaar⁷, the comparative predicate which includes the parameter is a quality verb, e.g. *lu:*, 'be tall'; *ʃolák*, 'be smooth'; *sayát* 'be wise', etc.

B. Similative

In English, the difference between the similative and the equative lies in the absence of parameter marker and the use of *like*, a standard marker that is different from the equative *as*. Since the Zaar similative uses the same standard marker as the equative (i.e. *dān*), and the equative does not have a parameter marker either, the same structure is used for the equative and the similative:

- (21) *Á fī ma:ndə̀ dān zá:ki.*
 á fī ma:ndə̀ dān zá:ki
 3SG.AOR do fight like lion
 He fights like a lion.

The only difference lies in the scalar property of the comparative predicate. If it is scalar (e.g. *lu:*, 'be tall'; *sayát*, 'be wise'), the structure will be interpreted with an equative meaning. If it is non-scalar (*fī ma:ndə̀*, 'fight'), it will take a similative meaning. See (Section 6) below for more on this opposition between the similative and the equative.

⁷ There exist 'true' adjectives Zaar (cf. (Ex.13), *yír ɔ̀yi:*, 'black eye'), but they don't appear in comparisons where synonymous quality verbs are used instead, e.g. *lar* 'be red' is substituted for *ʒa*, 'red'.

C. Morphological status of the parameter marker *dān*

Dān is followed in Zaar by different types of constituents, i.e. Noun Phrases, Prepositional Phrases and Clauses. If, as a consequence, it is analysed as changing its lexical category with each context, i.e. as preposition or conjunction, this results in a multiplication of the syntactic functions of *dān*. Instead, using Ockham's razor, and inspired by the discussion of English *than* by (Huddleston & Pullum 2008, 1103), *dān* is here analysed as a preposition taking NP, PP and S-complements:

- (22) NP complement, e.g. *Mopŕi*, a proper noun.

Dəndā á wā: ɣàr dām Mopŕi

| | | | | | |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|------------|-------|
| Dəndā | á | wa: | ɣàr | dān | Mopŕi |
| Dəndā | 3SG.AOR | do | dance | like | Mopŕi |

Dəndā danced like Mopŕi.

- (23) PP complement, e.g. *dàgà Púji*, 'from Tafawa Balewa'

Ri:yəŋ dàgà zúwa Zwà:l dādān á fī: dān dàgà Púji

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|---------|----|------|
| ri: | -kəni | dàgà | zúwa | Zwà:l | dādān | á | fī | -i: |
| walk | -NMLZ | from | around | Zwal | there | 3SG.AOR | do | -RES |

| | | |
|------|------|---------------|
| dān | dàgà | Púji |
| like | from | Tafawa Balewa |

The walk from Zwal there, is like from Tafawa Balewa (CONV03 SP1 206)

- (24) S (clausal) complement, e.g. *á túli:*, 'he arrived'.

Dəŋ á túli: á lən tu voləŋ gùŋ à: fī:

| | | | | | | |
|------|---------|-------|-----|---------|-----|---------|
| dān | á | tul | -i: | á | lən | tu |
| like | 3SG.AOR | reach | RES | 3SG.AOR | go | and get |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-------|---------|----|-----|
| voləŋ | ´ | gùŋ | à: | fī | -i: |
| groundnut | POS | chief | 3SG.CPL | do | RES |

When⁸ he arrived, he found that the King's groundnuts were ripe. (SAY BC READ 06 NAR Longa 053)

VI. Semantics of the Equative/Similative structure

Depending on the semantic and discursive contexts, the equative/similative structure with *dān* will take various meanings. Phrasal complements will induce equative or similative interpretations (both specific and general), as well as a functive interpretation. Clausal complements will induce similative⁹, accord and substitutive meanings.

At phrase level, *dān* appears in exactly the same structure with equatives and similative functions. The difference is due to the semantic nature of the comparative predicator, i.e. the parameter. A scalar parameter will induce an equative interpretation (Ex. 26 & 27); a non-scalar parameter will induce a similative interpretation (Ex. 28). The opposition specific vs. general depends on the specificity of the standard. See (Ex. 26 & 27) for a contrast between specific and general equatives.

⁸ See (Section 7.1) for this use of *dān* introducing a temporal adjunct.

⁹ We have no example of the structure being interpreted as a simile, but there is no reason why it should not.

A. Specific equative

In the following example, the scalar parameter is the quality verb *lu:*, ‘be tall’; and the standard is a referential, individual item against which the comparee is set, i.e. *Dənda*, a person:

(25) *Mopshí á lú: dan Dənda.*

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|------|-------|
| Mopšĩ | á | lu: | đan | Dənda |
| Mopshi | 3SG.AOR | be tall | like | Dənda |

Mopshi is as tall as Dənda.

B. General equative

The following example, a stock Zaar insult, is a general equative where the scalar parameter is the quality verb *baŋ*, ‘be bitter’. The non-specific standard producing a general equative is *ránga*, ‘mahogany’, which stands for the abstract, highest degree of bitterness (a synonym of wickedness).

(26) *Kə baŋ dan ránga.*

| | | | |
|---------|-----------|------|----------|
| kə | baŋ | đan | ránga |
| 2SG.AOR | be bitter | like | mahogany |

You are as wicked as the Devil. (Caron 2005, 9)

C. Similative

In (Ex.27) the similative meanings are produced by the two non-scalar parameters, viz. the action verbs *kítâr*, ‘run’ and *lə*, ‘go to’.

(27) *Tó: yá dɪŋá kítâr dan dũ:n hár yá ĩ:: dan Wũ:r Vùŋ.*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---------|----------|---------|------|-------|-------|---------|----|-----|
| tò: | ká | dingá | kítâr | đan | dũ:ni | hár | ká | lə | -i: |
| DM | 2PL.AOR | continue | running | like | here | up to | 2PL.AOR | go | RES |

| | | | |
|------|----------|-----|------|
| đan | wu:r | ˈ | Vùŋ |
| like | mountain | POS | Vung |

then you would start running like here till you go to... like the Vung Mountain (SAY BC INT 03 Calendar SPI 358-360)

The same similative meaning appears when the standard is expressed by a clause:

(28) Clause level similative: Parameter = S = *Mopshí wá: ngĩl*, ‘Mopshi sang’.

Dənda á wá: lɔ̀r đam Mopshí wá: ngĩl.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|---------|----------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| Dənda | á | wa: lɔ̀r | đan | Mopšĩ | wa: | ngĩl | |
| Dənda | 3SG.AOR | do | dance | like | Mopshi | do | song |

Dənda danced like Mopshi sang.

Here, the clausal complement of the preposition *đan* exhibits some morphosyntactic reduction with the bare verb *wa:* appearing without repeating the Subject-TAM complex *á* of the matrix clause.

D. Functive

Another function of the structure equative/similative structure is that of **role phrase** (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998), also called **functive** (Creissels 2011), where the NP introduced by *đan* works as a secondary

predication expressing ‘the role or function in which a participant appears’ (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998, 321-4). Only one example of role phrase was found in the corpus:

(29) *Nə myá:ni yəŋ mə mân dən ndwá:tsə mə gəm longa tu à: lǎ:p.*

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|--------|---------|----------|------------|-----------------|
| nə | myá:ni | kən | mə | máni | dən | ndwá:tsə |
| COP1 | 1SG.IDP | COP2 | 1SG.AOR | come | like | old person |
| | | | | | | |
| mə | gəm | longa | tu | à: | lǎ:p | |
| 1SG.AOR | release | rabbit | COMP | 2PL.SBJV | follow | |

"I am the one who came (disguised) as an old man and released rabbits for you to follow. (SAY BC READ 12 NAR Kadi gi kitn 063-5)

E. Substitutive

A noticeable case of semantic inversion is observed in substitutive clauses: the preposition *dən* and the structure of the substitutive clause is identical to that of the similitive. With the proper context, and without changing anything to the structure, the preposition *dən* takes a substitutive meaning (‘instead of’). In the following example, the substitutive interpretation is induced by the 2sg.Aorist *kə* used with the verb *ɲá:r*, ‘thank’ instead of the Completive usually associated with this verb:

(30) Context: [you saw something worthless,] you went and took it too, instead of thanking God [for what you had already.]

kə li:da ngáp kən dən kə ná:r ʃoɲ

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|-----|-------|-------|-------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| kə | lə | -i: | də | ngap | -kəni | dən | kə | ná:r | ʃokn |
| 2SG.AOR | go | RES | again | catch | NMLZ | like | 2SG.AOR | thank | God |

you went and took it too, instead of thanking God (SAY BC READ 05 Song Swari 162)

F. Accord clause

Accord clauses are not distinct formally from other clausal structures using *dən* as a standard marker, as can be seen in (Ex. 31 & 32) below.

(31) *Gədí: lən fi dən gədí: fú:tə .*

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|-----|----|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| gət | -i: | lən | fí | dən | gət | -i: | fu: | =tə |
| woman | -RES | go | do | like | woman | -DIST | tell | =3S.OBJ |

That woman went and did as that [other] woman had told her. [2012-11 like 21 #19/168]

(32) *Dam məná: fu: yə nə:yá:wón myá: sú: à: gámá lǎ:nni: yəndá à: lǎ.*

| | | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| dən | məná: | fu: | =kə | nà:yá:wón | myá: | sú: |
| like | 1SG.REC | tell | =2SG.OBJ | yesterday | 1SG.ICPL | want |

à: gamá la: -ón -ni -i:
2SG.SBJV finish work -PROX -INCH -DIST

kəndá à: lə .
then 2SG.SBJV go .

As I told you yesterday I want you to finish that job before you leave the town. [2012-11 SIM 12]

Their function as manner rather than temporal adjuncts, or frame-setting topics (cf. Section 7 below) derives only from the semantic or informational context.

VII. Grammaticalisation of the equative/similative structure

When followed by a clausal complement, the semantic drift of the preposition can lead on to more grammaticalised meanings, e.g. when used to introduce temporal adjunct clauses, relative clause, and finally, at discourse level, topics.

A. Temporal adjunct

The preposition *ḍan*, ‘like, as’ can function with a clausal complement as a temporal adjunct. The resulting meaning is that of approximate simultaneity between the matrix clause and the adjunct clause.

(33) *Katáyá: fī wūr yá lá:pkân ḍan kə fá:rá ndáyân á lá:pkáni?*

| | | | | | |
|--------------|----|-------|----|--------|-------|
| katáyá: | fī | wuri: | ká | lá:p | -kóni |
| 2SG.REM.ICPL | do | how | at | follow | NMLZ |

| | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|-------|-------|-------|----|--------|-------|
| ḍan | kə | fa:rá | nda | -kóni | ká | lá:p | -kóni |
| like | 2SG.AOR | begin | enter | NMLZ | at | follow | NMLZ |

How did you practice your faith when you converted to Christianity (lit. when you started following)? (SAY BC INT 05 Morals SP2 47)

This temporal transposition of the comparative meaning of *ḍan* is quite common in other languages of the world, and is observed e.g. in English *as*, or in French *comme*, as in the opening verse of Arthur Rimbaud’s *Le Bateau Ivre*:

(34) *Comme je descendais des Fleuves impassibles,*
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs:
 ‘As I was floating down unconcerned Rivers,
 I no longer felt myself steered by the haulers:’ (Rimbaud 2009, 162)

The discursive function of temporal frame-setting, derived from the semantic interpretation of broad simultaneity, can also be narrowed down to a more precise temporal relationship between two events, such as concomitance, which involves both simultaneity and succession: ‘just as S...; after S, then...’. This occurs very often in the discursive context of a narration, characterised by such TAMs as the Aorist (narrative), or the Remote Past¹⁰:

(35) *Ḍan á túlí:ḍi bafī sáy Zhi: wùl fī tu [...]*

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---------|-------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| ḍan | á | tul | -í: | -ḍi | bas | =fī |
| as | 3SG.AOR | reach | RES | CTP | at | 3PL.OBJ |

| | | | | | |
|------|---------|-----|-----|---------|------|
| sé: | ʒi: | ˀ | wul | =fī | tu |
| then | leopard | AOR | say | 3PL.OBJ | COMP |

When he [Dog] arrived near them [the monkeys], then Panther told them to... (SAY BC READ 13 NAR Gung-Meer 013-4)

B. Topicalisation and frame-setting

Dan appears with non-clausal complements in left-dislocated position where the resulting phrase functions as a topic. *Dan* can then be considered as having been grammaticalised into a topic particle, e.g. in (Ex. 36)

¹⁰ This is not possible e.g. in French where *comme* used in temporal clauses requires the use of imperfective TAM’s, e.g. Present, Imperfect, and Pluperfect.

where *đan* is used with the topic particles *ámá*, ‘but’ and *kám*, ‘indeed’, to introduce the contrasting topic ‘Godiya’, the name of a young boy taken as an example when discussing the various types of mourning ceremonies:

(36) *Ámá đan gò:điya kám [...] tá wá:nì mi:tsəy gyàkgyàk kúrùm.*

| | | | |
|------|------|---------|--------|
| ámá: | đan | gò:điya | kám |
| but | like | Godiya | indeed |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|------|--------|------|----------|-------|
| tá | wa: | -ni | mi:tsə | -i | gyàkgyàk | kúrùm |
| 3PL.FUT | perform | INCH | burial | INDF | anyhow | only |

But like Godiya on the contrary [...] they would only be wailing. (INT 02 SP1 367-73)

This left-dislocated position is favoured by temporal adjuncts in Zaar as in French (Ex. 34) above. The subordinate clause introduced by *đan* appears then before the matrix and functions as a frame-setting adjunct:

(37) *Đam míyà: ñá:s tə yáyí: kí: yèl lá: áyà: fì wuri:?*

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|-------|---------|--------|------|
| đan | míyà: | ñá:s | =tə | =káy | -í: |
| as | ICPL.IMM.1SG | tease | =3S.OBJ | =ANAPH | -RES |

| | | | | | |
|---------|-----|------|--------------|----|-------|
| kí: | yel | lá: | áyă: | fì | wuri: |
| 2SG.IMM | see | work | 3SG.ICPL.IMM | do | how |

As I was teasing him about it, did you see what happened? (CONV 01 SP2 106)

C. Relative clause

Finally, the preposition *đan*, ‘like’ has been grammaticalised into the default relative subordinator *đan*, which behaves like the English subordinator ‘that’.

(38) *Mə ñal ləpwón đam má ləyáy.*

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|-------|------|------|---------|----|--------|
| mə | ñal | ləp | wón | đan | má | lə | =káy |
| 1PL.SBJV | look for | place | some | REL2 | 1PL.FUT | go | =ANAPH |

We should look for a place that we will go to. (CONV 01 SP2 028)

Alongside the temporal adjunct structure, this is another extension of the function of the preposition *đan* when it takes a clausal complement. In this case, the resulting prepositional phrase functions as a noun modifier.

It should however be noted that the Zaar relative subordinator *đan* is not a relative pronoun, has no relationship with interrogative pronouns, and does not mark the syntactic function of the modified noun within the relative clause. In (Ex.38) for example, the gap left by the relativised constituent *ləp*, ‘place’ is filled by the locative anaphoric pronoun *=káy*. Consequently, although *đan* is used for both equative, similitive and relative structures, Zaar is characterised as using a preposition, and should not be included in the languages using a relative-based strategy.

VIII. Simulation

Before the final section which summarises the findings concerning comparison and similarity in Zaar, this section focuses on another use of the morpheme *đan* when combined with the quotative *tu* and/or another morpheme, *ku*, producing pretense clauses, or similitives, with the meaning ‘as if... as though...’. The most exhaustive combination is the form *đan kutu* e.g. (Ex. 39):

(39) [...] *vì: ðá: mán mba: bastə ðan kutu mur yə ázù mí dó:lé: káwèy*

vì: ðá à: mán mba: bas =tə
mouth then 3SG.ICPL come be white POS =3S.OBJ

ðan kutu mur kə ázù mí dó:lé: káwèy
like as if man POS fasting seriously merely

[...] his mouth had become dry as if he was fasting seriously. (CONV 01 SP2 126)

Dan kutu can be reduced to *ðan tu*, e.g. (ex. 40) below:

(40) *Á fīm ðan tu ma gəngá.*

á fī =mə ðan tu ma gəngá
3SG.SBJ.AOR do =1SG.OBJ like OPN 1SG.FUT vomit

I feel [lit. 'it does me'] as if I'm going to vomit. (CONV03 SP2 255)

Dan kutu can also be reduced to *kutu*, eg. (ex. 41) below:

(41) *Kí: yèl lá: áyà: fī wuri: Kutu wò ngwá:r.*

kí: yel lá: áyá: fī wuri: kutu wò ngwá:r
2SG.IMM see work 3SG.ICPL.IMM do how as if 3SG.FUT weep

Did you see what he was doing? As if he was going to cry. (CONV 01 SP2 107)

In the combination *ðan kutu*, *tu* is identified as the introducer of reported speech. This morpheme could be a word originally meaning 'say' (<*t-; cf. Hausa *t̪ɛ̀:*), which has disappeared in Zaar where the verb *wul/wu* is used instead. *Tu* is the default reported speech opener. It can appear alone, at the beginning of the sentence, without any other verb:

(42) *Kə tú gí: nə ni:? — Tu nə kúnj lù:.*

kə tu gí: nə ni: tu nə kúnj lù:
2SG.AOR get DIST COP1 what? OPN COP1 dry meat

What have you found ? He said it's dry meat. (NARR 03 SP1 202)

Or it can follow a verb or phrase expressing an act of speech, thought, opinion, etc.:

(43) *Dón tá wū tu kà:suwa cá: yuyá y dāngəní.*

dón tá wul tu kà:suwa f̪á: yúkn -í: dāngəní
because 3PL.AOR say OPN market 3SG.ICPL fill -RES now

Because they say that now the market is really big. (CONV 01 SP2 040)

The quotative *tu* is also used to introduce a proper noun:

(44) *Sām gón tu Kèrènké:shè, sām gón tu Dà:gùlāw, sām gón tu Vwà:gàní*

sām gón tu kèrènké:ʃe sām gón tu dà:gùlāw sām gón tu vwà:gàní
name some OPN Kerenkeshe name some OPN Dagulau name some OPN Vwagani

One was named Kerenkeshe, one was named Dagulau, one was named Vagani. (NARR 02 SP1 004)

In the complex morpheme *dan kutu* the notion of simulation is associated more precisely with the morpheme *ku*. *Ku* is never used as an autonomous morpheme in Zaar, and is associated with no other function than the similitive. An equivalent can be found in Mupun, a geographically close language belonging to the Angas Chadic family. In Mupun, there are two preposition expressing non-scalar equality comparison: *too*, ‘as’, expressing similarity; and *ko*, ‘as if’, expressing simulation:

- (45) *wu le siap mopun *too/ko ngu mopun sə*
 3M speak Mupun as if person Mupun DEM

He speaks Mupun as if he were a Mupun person. (Frajzyngier 1993, 283)

Another source for the notion of simulation can be traced to the association of *dan*, ‘like’ and *tu*, the reported speech opener. The combination of comparative and quotative as a strategy to express simulation and other related notions (pretense, hypothesis, or irrealis condition), seems to be a straightforward cognitive operation, as exemplified in (Ex.46) taken from Naija (Nigerian English Pidgin):

- (46) *Lai se na ju bi mi, hau ju fɔ du dis tɪ pas sef?*

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------|-----|---------|-------|------|------|
| lai | se | na | ju | bi | mi | | |
| like | OPN | COP.EQ | 2SG | COP.QL | 1SG | | |
| hau | ju | fɔ | du | dis | tɪ | pas | sef |
| how | 2SG | IRR | do | PROX.SG | thing | EMPH | PTCL |

If you were in my place, how would you have done this very thing? (9JA WAR 12 001)

From these observations, it can be inferred that there exist two competing strategies to form pretense clauses in Zaar, which can also be combined: one involving the combination of the similitive *dan* and the quotative *tu*, and the other involving the “pure” similitive *ku*.

The way the similitive is expressed in Zaar reveals strong tendencies at work all over the language: borrowing from Hausa and other neighbouring languages; fusion between original Zaar strategies and borrowed strategies; and finally, cumulative use of all the available strategies: synonymous morphemes can be used individually or piled up in the same structure.

IX. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the main properties of the expression of similarity in Zaar can be summarised as follows. With reference to the descriptive frame set by (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998), i.e. Comparee – Parameter Marker – Parameter – Standard Marker – Standard, the equative in Zaar does not have a parameter marker. Due to the dominantly verbal nature of the expression of quality in Zaar, the comparative predicate which includes the parameter is a quality verb. The comparison of superiority uses two competing strategies: a Serial Verb Construction Strategy and a Ditransitive Strategy, both based on the verb *mop*, ‘surpass, exceed’. Similitude and equality comparison share the same syntactic frame in Zaar, based on the preposition *dan*, ‘like’. There is no difference in Zaar between specific and general equatives or similitives. This same equative/similitive structure based on the preposition *dan* is used for different functions: role phrases and accord clauses. Surprisingly, in the appropriate context, this similitive preposition can take the substitutive meaning ‘instead of’. Simulation is expressed in various combinations which can involve the similitive *dan* (or its Hausa equivalent *kaman*), with the quotative *tu*, and the specialised morpheme *ku*, probably related to Mupun *ko*. Finally, the similitive structure *dan* + clausal complement, has been extended to take on different grammatical functions that are more loosely connected to the original meaning of similarity: time adjunct (‘as, when’); relative clause. When combined with left-dislocation, the structure <*dan* NP> is used as a topic, and the structure <*dan* S> functions as a frame-setting adjunct.

From a typological point of view, the expression of comparison and similarity in Zaar is quite different from what has been characterised as the “Standard Average European” equivalent (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998, 325-6). The three main differences are (i) the verbal nature of quality in Zaar; (ii) the absence of parameter marker; (iii) the non-relative/interrogative base of the standard marker, which in Zaar is a preposition expressing manner.

Finally, Zaar, a head-initial language, confirms the main typological claim of (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998, 289): “*in head-initial languages the order should be ‘parameter - standard marker – standard’, and in head-final languages the order should be ‘standard - standard marker – parameter’.*”

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