Degree Comparison in Nłeʔkepmxcín*

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Abstract: In this paper I present data to illustrate how comparison is expressed in Nłeʔkepmxcín (a.k.a. Thompson River Salish), with a focus on degree-related comparative constructions. Examining the availability of specific degree-based constructions, I conclude that Nłeʔkepmxcín has a positive setting of the *Degree Semantics Parameter* proposed by Beck et al. (2009), and consequently has gradable predicates of type ⟨*d*, ⟨*e*,*t*⟩⟩. Furthermore, I argue that the language also has positive settings of the *Degree Abstraction Parameter* and the *Degree Phrase Parameter*. This conclusion aligns with previous research on Secwepemctsín (Suharwardy 2021), St'át'imcets (Davis & Mellesmoen 2019), and ʔayʔaǰuθəm (Davis & Mellesmoen 2019).

Keywords: Salish, Nłeʔkepmxcín (Thompson River Salish), semantics, degrees, comparison

1 Introduction

There have been four previous accounts that undertake an investigation of degrees and the parameters proposed by Beck et al. (2009) in the Salish family. The first, Reisinger and Lo (2017; henceforth R&L) investigate the Central Salish language ʔayʔaǰuθəm (Comox-Sliammon), arguing that it does not possess gradable predicates, and is negative for the Degree Semantics Parameter (DSP); I will provide an overview of the DSP later in this paper. The second, by the same authors, Lo and Reisinger (2018; henceforth L&R) reanalyzes a specific comparative construction in ʔayʔaǰuθəm, and preforms further tests which indicates that the language might originally have been degreeless, but is in the process of gaining degrees.

Thirdly, Davis and Mellesmoen (2019; henceforth D&M) carry out a comparison of degree-constructions in St'át'imcets (Lillooet) and reanalyze the conclusion R&L (2017) and L&R (2018) came to with regards to ʔayʔaǰuθəm with new data. Comparing the two languages, they conclude that both have positive settings for the DSP and the other degree-related parameters proposed by Beck et al. (2009).

Finally, and most recently, Suharwardy (2021) investigates these same parameters in Secwepemctsín (Shuswap) and concludes that Secwepemctsín is also degreeful, with a positive setting for the DSP. In this paper, using novel fieldwork data, I investigate the Interior Salish language Nłeʔkepmxcín, which to my knowledge has never before been examined with regards to gradable predicates and comparatives. I argue, like the aforementioned D&M (2019) and

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Bernice wishes it to be stated that she is a Kamloops Indian Residential School speaker, relearning her language. She introduces herself thus: *ʔes ʔúməcəms kʷəɬtèzetkʷuʔ təw ɬe ċəɬétkʷu, wéʔe ncitxʷ, ǰuʔ wéʔe cʔex netíyxs, scweʷẃxmx, ǰuʔ tékm he wéʔe ne ʔex xéʔe Nłeʔkepmx ʔe tmixʷs.* 'My traditional name is kʷəɬtèzetkʷuʔ, my home is in Coldwater of 'Nicola' of Nlaka'pamux lands.'
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Suharwardy (2021) on ʔayʔaǰuθəm, St'át'imcets, and Secwepemctsín, that Nłeʔkepmxcín has a positive setting of the DSP, and furthermore, a positive setting for the Degree Abstraction Parameter and the Degree Phrase Parameter also proposed by Beck et al. (2009).

Nłeʔkepmxcín (a.k.a. Thompson River Salish) is a Northern Interior Salish language, spoken in Central and Southern British Columbia, with about 100 fully fluent speakers, and 300 semi-fluent speakers (Gessner et al. 2022). The data in this paper come from online elicitations with two fluent speakers of the language over the course of roughly eight months. One consultant speaks the Nicola Valley dialect and the other the Lytton dialect. These dialects are under-represented in the literature on Nłeʔkepmxcín, most of which are primarily based on the Spuzzum dialect — including the grammar and dictionary of the language, both written by Thompson and Thompson (1992 and 1996, respectively).

This paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, I will briefly outline some of the previous research performed on degree semantics and syntax, with particular attention paid to the parametric approach proposed by Beck et al. (2009). In Section 3, I will then describe and provide examples of degree-based morphology in Nłeʔkepmxcín. Following that, I will focus on specific degree-related constructions in Section 4, culminating with a summary of what these constructions show about the settings of the Degree Parameters in Section 5. Finally, I conclude in Section 6.

2 Degree systems and comparison

The grammar of comparatives has been of interest both to syntacticians and semanticists for the last half-century, first focusing on exploring the syntax and semantics of comparisons (see Bresnan 1973; Corver 1993, 1997; Cresswell 1976; von Stechow 1984; Kennedy 1997, 2006; Heim 1985, 2000). Recently, there has been more research focusing explicitly on developing cross-linguistic approaches and surveys (see Shimoyama 2012; Bobaljik 2012; Bacskai-Atkari 2018).

Central to many proposals on the subject is the idea of *degrees* — the theory that gradable adjectives possess a dimensional scale, on which intervals are marked. Gradable adjectives contain an additional argument of type *d*, and they are therefore considered to be of type ⟨*d*, ⟨*e*,*t*⟩⟩ instead of ⟨*e*,*t*⟩. This argument can then be modified or quantified over by degree operators. Using this degree-scale, (1) could therefore be paraphrased as 'the maximum degree on the scale of height that characterizes Mt. Everest is greater than the maximum degree on the scale of height that characterizes Mt. Fuji'.

(1) Mt. Everest is taller than Mt. Fuji.

A degree-based analysis of gradable adjectives was first proposed for English by Cresswell (1976) and subsequently expanded upon by Kennedy (1997, 2006), von Stechow (1984), and Heim (1985, 2000). However, there are some proposals that argue against a degree-based analysis (most notably Klein 1980), who instead proposes a *vague-predicate* analysis, where gradable adjectives are context-dependent, and any comparison partitions the discourse context so that the gradable adjective is true of one entity or set of entities and false of another. Further, recent authors have proposed different non-degree scales to explain gradability (see Bale 2008; van Rooij 2011). However, despite this debate, degree-based analyses are most commonly adopted.

Particularly significant to analyses of these types is Beck et al. (2009) — the work that a large deal of the analysis in this paper is based upon. In a cross-linguistic study, they claim that languages differ in whether or not they make reference to degrees. In this framework, multiple of the above theories can be correct, but for different languages.

To account for the cross-linguistic variation, Beck et al. (2009) proposes three parameters (see (2) to (4), below). These parameters follow from each other; in other words, only languages with a positive DSP setting can have a positive DAP setting, and only languages with a positive DAP setting can have a positive DegPP setting.

(2) **Degree Semantics Parameter (DSP):**

A language does/does not have gradable predicates (type ⟨*d*, ⟨*e*,*t*⟩⟩ and related), i.e. lexical items that introduce degree arguments. (Beck et al. 2009:26)

(3) **Degree Abstraction Parameter (DAP):**

A language does/does not have binding of degree variables in the syntax.
(Beck et al. 2009:16)

(4) **Degree Phrase Parameter (DegPP):**

The degree argument position of a gradable predicate may/may not be overtly filled.
(Beck et al. 2009:34)

Any language can be examined with regards to these parameters. If a language possesses degree quantifiers such as comparatives, superlatives, or equatives, or syntactic constructions (which I will discuss in greater detail later) such as difference comparatives and comparisons with degree, these indicate the language has a positive setting for the DSP. Examining scope interactions or degree questions (with WH-operators) can determine the setting of the DAP. Finally, the availability of degree questions and measure phrase constructions with overt degree arguments can indicate the setting of the DegPP.

There is ongoing debate over how well these parameters account for variation across languages, and whether the diagnostic degree-based structures are applicable in all languages. There have been several cases where a language has been analyzed as having one setting for these parameters, but later reanalysis casts doubt on the proposed setting — such as in Japanese, which is proposed to be [-DAP] by Beck et al. (2009), but an examination of island sensitivities by Shimoyama (2012) indicate it might actually be [+DAP]. Or the debate mentioned in the opening section of this paper over whether ʔayʔaǰuθəm is [-DSP] (R&L 2017) or [+DSP] (D&M 2019). However, questions regarding the validity of the Degree Parameters are beyond the scope of this paper.

3 Comparative constructions in Nłeʔkepmxcín

In this section, I will provide data to illustrate how simple comparatives, equatives, and superlatives are formed in Nłeʔkepmxcín.[1]

[1] I use the following abbreviations: AFF = affective, AUT = autonomous, CHR = characteristic, DEM = demonstrative, DET = determiner, D/C = determiner/complementizer, DSCR = descriptive, DVL = developmental, CTR.MID = control middle, EMPH = emphatic, EV = evidential, FMV = general formative, FUND = fundamental, IM = immediate, INS = instrument, INT = introductory predicate, LOC = locative, NMLZ = nominalizer, OBL = oblique, PL = plural, PRP = proportional, RSL = resultive, TR = transitive.

3.1 Comparatives

In the detailed grammar of Nłeʔkepmxcín, Thompson and Thompson (1992) provide the following example of a comparative construction:[2]

(5) *xʷúy̓ceʔ ʔə smaʕmáʕs ʔə maʕxetn tu ʔə sḵʷáḵʷes.*
xʷúy̓ceʔ ʔe=s=maʕ~máʕ=s ʔe=maʕ-xe-tn tu
more DET=NMLZ=AUG~light.up=3POSS DET=light.up-foot-INS[moon] than
ʔe=s-ḵʷáḵʷes
DET=NMLZ-sun
'The moon was brighter than the sun.' (Thompson & Thompson 1992:161)

The comparative above is similar to the comparatives reported in the closely related languages Secwepemctsín and St'át'imcets, which use the comparative words *p'7e7cw* 'more' and *p̓aʔxʷ* 'more', respectively, followed by a nominalized clause (D&M 2019; Suharwardy 2021). However, my consultants more typically did not use *xʷúy̓ceʔ* 'more' followed by a nominalized clause, although they did consider (5) to be acceptable. Instead, they almost ubiquitously used a form in which the gradable adjective is the main predicate, with the preposition *tu* (*təw*) 'than' connecting the objects under comparison and serving as the only overt comparative word in the sentence.

(6) *c̓éɬt ʔə máʕxetn* ***tu*** *ʔə sḵʷáḵʷes.*
c̓éɬ-t ʔə=máʕ-xe-tn **tu** ʔə=s-ḵʷáḵʷes
chill-IM DET=light.up-foot-INS[moon] **than** DET=NMLZ-sun
'The moon is colder than the sun.' (BP)

(7) *c̓loxʷ ʔə sḵʷáḵʷes ʔeɬ nkʷəkʷúsn̓* ***tu*** *ʔə máʕxetn.*
c̓loxʷ ʔə=s-ḵʷáḵʷes ʔeɬ n-kʷə~kʷúsn̓ **tu** ʔə=maʕ-xe-tn
hot DET=NMLZ-sun and LOC-AFF~star **than** DET=light.up-foot-INS[moon]
'The sun and stars are hotter than the moon.' (BP)

(8) *ɬáq̓t* ***tu*** *ʔə ntəqcíntn ʔə sqyéytn.*
ɬáq̓-t **tu** ʔə=n-təq-cín-tn ʔə=s-qy-éytn
wide-IM **than** DET=LOC-touch-mouth-INS[door] DET=NMLZ-damp-food[salmon]
'The salmon is wider than the door.' (BP)

(9) *zéxtwiʔx ʔə sqyéytn tə tʔústks ʔə smúɬəc* ***tu*** *ʔə sqyéytn tə tʔústks ʔə ƛ̓uʔsqáyxʷ.*
zéx-t-wiʔx ʔə=s-qy-éytn tə=tʔústk-s ʔə=s-múɬəc
long-IM-DVL DET=NMLZ-damp-food[salmon] OBL=catch.fish-3POSS DET=NMLZ-woman
tu ʔə=s-qy-éytn tə=tʔústk-s
than DET=NMLZ-damp-food[salmon] OBL=catch.fish-3POSS
ʔə=ƛ̓uʔ-s-qáyxʷ
DET=FUND-NMLZ-man
'The salmon that the woman caught is longer than the salmon that the man caught.' (BP)

[2] Since Thompson and Thompson wrote their grammar, the categorization and spelling of several words and standard abbreviations for glosses has changed somewhat. I have made the requisite adjustments in any glosses presented in this paper.

In these sentences, *tu* 'than' serves as the introduction to the *standard of comparison phrase*, or the object against which the *target* object is compared. The standard of comparison typically follows the target — as in a *than*-phrase in English — although it can sometimes precede it without changing the meaning of the sentence, as shown in (8), above.

3.2 Superlatives

There are a couple of strategies that my consultants have used to express a superlative meaning. The first is a simple intensifier *néxʷm* 'it exceeds, is excessive' (frequently reduced to *ném* or *ném̓*).[3] This intensifier is frequently paired with a stressed intonation pattern that emphasizes the intensifier, establishing the intensified adjective as particularly noteworthy in the context.

(10) ***ném*** *nukʷ péti ʔə tk sp̓áq̓m.*
né-m nukʷ péti[4] ʔə=tək=s-p̓áq̓-m
exceeds-CTR.MID EV pretty DET=DSCR=NMLZ-blossom-CTR.MID
'The flower is very pretty.'
Prompt: 'The flower is the prettiest.' (KBG)

(11) ***ném*** *x̱ʷənt ʔə q̓ázix ʔə smíyc.*
né-m x̱ʷən-t ʔə=q̓áz-ix ʔə=s-míyc
exceeds-CTR.MID rapid-IM DET=jump-AUT DET=NMLZ-deer
'The deer is a very fast jumper.'
Prompt: 'The deer is the fastest jumper.' (KBG)

The other way to form a superlative in Nłeʔkepmxcín is to construct a comparative in which the standard of comparison is all relevant items in the context, frequently *tékm* 'all', *sʔíxʷɬ* 'some, others', or a comparison to all similar entities in the context.[5]

(12) *ƛ̓áxt ʔə Alice tu ʔə* ***sɨ̓xʷɬ.***
ƛ̓áx-t ʔə=Alice tu ʔə=**s-ɨ̓xʷɬ**
tall-IM DET=Alice than DET=**NMLZ-some**
'Alice is taller than the rest.'
Prompt: 'Alice is the tallest.' (BP)

(13) *łq̓íʔq̓eʔt ʔə Ella tu ʔə* ***tékm****.*
łq̓<íʔq̓eʔ>-t ʔə=Ella tu ʔə=**tékm**
short<PRP>-IM DET=Ella than DET=**all**
'Ella is shorter than all.'
Prompt: 'Ella is the shortest.' (BP)

[3] This is a common strategy to form superlatives in St'át'imcets (D&M 2019).
[4] The root *péti* is not in the dictionary, and likely a borrowing from English *pretty*.
[5] This is the most common strategy to form superlatives in Secwepemctsín (Suharwardy 2021), and is also relatively common cross-linguistically (Bobaljik 2012).

(14) *xeʔe ʔə smíyc ʔə x̱ʷənt tə q̓ázix tu* ***tékm ʔə spzúʔ.***

xeʔ-e	ʔə=s-míyc	ʔə=x̱ʷən-t	tə=q̓áz-ix	tu	**tékm**
DEM-FMV[6]	DET-NMLZ-deer	DET=rapid-IM	OBL=jump-AUT	than	**all**
	ʔə=s-pzúʔ				
	DET=NMLZ-animal				

'The deer is a faster jumper than all animals.'
Prompt: 'The deer is the fastest jumper.' (BP)

It is unclear whether the choice of strategy to form the superlative is due to dialectical differences or speaker preference, but both the consultants seemed to accept the other's strategy, making agreeable noises such as "mm-hmm" (KBG) or comments like "I think I said almost the same thing" (BP) in response to the other's volunteered sentences.

3.3 Equatives

Looking now at equatives, these expressions are created using the word *c̓íc̓iye* 'similar, same' in the position of the main predicate, which is followed by the gradable adjective. Much like comparatives, the standard of comparison is introduced with *tu*, although simple equative-like phrases can be formed without the use of a comparison, as in (16), similar to the difference in English between (15a) and (15b):

(15) a. The door is as tall as the window.
b. The door and the window are the same height.

(16) ***c̓íc̓iye*** *ʔə maʔas ʔə Mars ʔeɬ ʔə Jupiter.*

c̓í~c̓iy-e	ʔə=mʔaʕ-s	ʔə=Mars	ʔeɬ	ʔə=Jupiter
AUG~same-RSL	DET=light.up-3POSS	DET=Mars	and	DET=Jupiter

'Mars and Jupiter are the same brightness.' (BP)

(17) ***c̓íc̓iye*** *ʔə ƛ̓áxts ʔə sk̓ʷúk̓mit tu zéxts ʔə tépəl.*

c̓í~c̓iy-e	ʔə=ƛ̓áx-t-s	ʔə=s-k̓ʷúk̓ʷm-ʔit	tu	zéx-t-s
AUG~same-RSL	DET=tall-IM-3POSS	DET=NMLZ-small-agent	than	long-IM-3POSS
	ʔə=tépəl			
	DET=table			

'The child is as tall as the table is long.'
Literally: 'Same is the tallness of the child than the longness of the table.' (BP)

(18) ***c̓íc̓iye*** *ʔə ƛ̓áxts ʔə sk̓ʷúk̓ʷmiʔt tu ʔə nteqcíntn.*

c̓í~c̓iy-e	ʔə=ƛ̓áx-t-s	ʔə=s-k̓ʷúk̓ʷm-iʔt	tu
AUG~same-RSL	DET=tall-IM-3POSS	DET=NMLZ-small-agent	than
	ʔə=n-teq-cín-tn		
	DET=LOC-touch-mouth-INS		

'The child is as tall as the door.'
Literally: 'Same is the tallness of the child than the door.' (BP)

[6] The general formative (FMV) *-e* is a suffix recorded at the end of many words, but its function has not of yet been analyzed, and requires further study.

4 Degree constructions

In this section, I will first provide an inventory of specific degree-constructions in Nłeʔkepmxcín, following the example of Beck et al. (2009). For each construction, I will provide a brief description and an English equivalent before the Nłeʔkepmxcín examples.

Note that some of the constructions below use measurement units to explicitly rank degrees on a gradable scale. There are no direct translations for many commonly used English units in Nłeʔkepmxcín like meters, kilograms, miles, degrees Celsius, etc. (although there are units for measures of time, such as days, months, and years). I also did not wish to attempt to elicit sentences using the English units, both because my consultants were somewhat resistant to using English degree loans, and because I did not want to potentially affect the consultants' judgment of the degreefulness of a sentence due to using loaned degree-words from a degree-based language. However, I saw some success using measurements such as *loaves of bread*, *arm-spans*, and the measurement that my consultants were most comfortable with, *hand-spans* or, more simply, *hands.*[7]

4.1 Difference comparative (DiffC)

Difference comparatives (also sometimes called differential comparatives) are sentences in which two sets of degrees are being explicitly compared on the same scalar dimension — for example, width, depth, height, etc.

(19) Reed's dog is one foot taller than my dog.

In the example above, the degree of height (tallness) of Reed's dog is compared to the degree of height (tallness) of my dog. The way in which a DiffC differs from a standard comparative construction is that they do not merely provide relative rankings on the gradable scale, but explicitly specify the difference between the two sets of degrees (one foot, in the above example).

In a language which does not possess explicit degrees, such specific differential comparison between two sets of degrees is not possible, with the closest equivalent in such a system being 'tall' vs. 'not tall'. Difference comparatives are thus crucial evidence for a degree-based system.

These constructions are available in Nłeʔkepmxcín and resemble the basic comparative.

(20) *séye t k kéykix ʔə zéxt tu ʔə sʔíxʷɬ.*
séye t=k=kéy~kix ʔə=zéx-t tu ʔə=s-ʔíxʷɬ
two OBL=DET=PL~hand DET=long-IM than DET=NMLZ-some
'It [a salmon] is two hands longer than the rest.' (BP)

(21) *cúnts k skeʔłes t k kéykix t k wist tu ʔə xéʔə t k sḱíx.*
cún-t-s k=s=keʔłes=[s] t=k=kéy~kix t=k=wís-t tu
say-IM-TR D/C=NMLZ=three=[3POSS] OBL=DET=PL~hand OBL=DET=high-IM than
ʔə xéʔə t=k=s-ḱíx
DET DEM OBL=D/C=NMLZ-fence
'He says it [a different fence] is three hand-spans taller than this fence.' (BP)

[7] It could also be possible to avoid the issue of units using demonstratives such as *this* (or *that*) *much* paired with a gesture (Suharwardy 2021), but due to the online nature of my elicitation sessions, where measure gestures are difficult to portray, I never attempted to elicit constructions such as those.

As noted above, the presence of difference comparisons is strong evidence that Nłeʔkepmxcín is [+DSP], and a degreeful language.

4.2 Comparison with a degree (CompDeg)

A comparison with a degree is a comparative construction wherein the standard of comparison is not an object or entity, but a specific degree, such as the English example below, where the degree to which Brent is tall is greater than the degree of tallness specified as five feet:

(22) Brent is more than five feet tall.

Given the previously mentioned difficulty of finding units that can be used to explicitly demote degrees in Nłeʔkepmxcín, these constructions were somewhat challenging to elicit. However, it was possible to use physical measurements like the hand-span as the standard of comparison, as shown below:

(23) *təteʔe k széxt tu ʔə keʔłés tə səplíl.*
təteʔe k=s=zéx=t tu ʔə=keʔłés tə=səplíl
NEG D/C=NMLZ=long=IM than DET=three OBL=bread
'It [the oven] is no longer than three [loaves of] bread.' (BP)

(24) *xʷúy̓ceʔ tu ʔə ƛ̓áq̓mek̓st t k kéykix ʔə zéxt ʔə sqyéytn.*
xʷúy̓ceʔ tu ʔə=ƛ̓áq̓-m-ek̓st t=k=kéy~kix ʔə=zéx-t
more than DET=cross-CTR.MID-hand OBL=DET=PL~hand DET=long-IM
ʔə=s-qy-éytn
DET=NMLZ-damp-food[salmon]
'The salmon is more than six hand-spans long.' (BP)

The presence of comparisons with a degree is further evidence that Nłeʔkepmxcín is [+DSP].

4.3 Degree question (DegQ)

Degree questions are important with regards to Beck et al.'s (2009) degree parameters, not only for the DSP, but also the Degree Abstraction Parameter (DAP). So not only does the construction require gradable predicates with degrees, but also explicit quantification over the degree argument. Thus, there is a difference between a true degree question (25a) and a similar-appearing construction with a question involving a degree-denoting noun (25b).

(25) a. How (many centimeters) tall is your dog?
b. What is the height (in centimeters) of your dog?

Degree questions can potentially be formed in two ways in Nłeʔkepmxcín, the first through a combination of the emphatic and introductory particle combination *c̓-e* followed by the indefinite question particle *héṅ* 'where, which, what'.

(26) *c̓e héṅ ʔə sƛáq̓ts ʔə sqyéytn.*
c̓-e héṅ ʔə=s-ƛáq̓-t-s ʔə=s-qy-éytn
EMPH-INT Q/INDF DET=NMLZ-wide.flat-IM-3POSS DET=NMLZ-damp-food[salmon]
'How wide is the salmon?' (BP)

(27) *c̓e hén̓ ks wísts ʔə ʕiṅʕən̓ tu ʔə tmix*^{w}.

c̓-e	hén̓	k=s=wís-t=s	ʔə=ʕiṅ~ʕən̓	tu	ʔə=tmix^{w}
EMPH-INT	Q/INDF	D/C=NMLZ=high-IM=3POSS	DET=magpie~CHR	than	DET=land

'How high is the magpie above the ground?' (BP)

It is unclear whether this is a genuine case of WH-quantification over the gradable adjective, or a construction similar to (25b), but it is most likely to be an *extent* question along the lines of 'to which extent is the salmon wide' as attested in (Beck et al. 2009).

The second method in which a degree question could potentially be formed is through use of the WH-word *k̓*^{w}*i̓nex* 'how many, how much', which is also used to inquire about mass nouns. The similar words *k̓winc* 'how many', *skənkán* 'how (much)', and *k̓*^{w}*in* 'how many' appear in Secwepemctsín, St'át'imcets, and ʔayʔaǰuθəm, respectively, and also show this quantification, so it is likely that Nłeʔkepmxcín does as well, although I do not have any examples from my fieldwork.

4.4 Measure phrase (MP)

Measure phrases are constructions which possess an explicit measurement ranking on a gradable scale. The number and unit (e.g., *45 centimeters*, as in (28)) overtly fill the degree argument in a measure phrase.[8]

(28) The dog is 45 centimeters tall.

In order to possess measure phrases, a language *must* have a positive setting for the DSP, and have gradable degree scales. It also must have a positive setting for the DegPP, as this parameter allows for the degree argument to be overtly filled. Measure phrases are attested in Nłeʔkepmxcín.

(29) *mús t k səplíl ʔə zéxts ʔə nq̓*^{w}*imíntn.*

mús	t=k=səplíl	ʔə=zéx-t	ʔə=n-q̓^{w}i-mín-tn
four	OBL=DET=bread	DET=long-IM	DET=LCL-cook-INS-INS[oven]

'The oven is four [loaves of] bread long.' (BP)

(30) *ʔupnekst t k keyx ʔə zéxt xeʔe t ʔə x̣*^{w}*áy̓ləm.*

ʔupn-ekst	t=k=keyx	ʔə=zéx-t	xeʔ-e	t=ʔə=x̣^{w}áy̓ləm
both-hand	OBL=DET=hand	DET=long-IM	DEM-FMV	OBL=DET=rope

'The rope is ten hands long.' (BP)

(31) *ʔupnekst t k kéykix ʔə ƛ̓axt ʔə sq̓*^{w}*itéłp.*

ʔupn-ekst	t=k=kéy~kix	ʔə=ƛ̓ax-t	ʔə=s-q̓^{w}i-t-éłp
both-hand	OBL=DET=PL~hand	DET=tall-IM	DET=NMLZ-ripe-IM-plant[bush]

'The berry bush is ten hand-spans tall.' (BP/KBG)

In these measure phrases, the overt degree argument precedes the gradable adjective.

[8] The degree argument can also potentially be filled by a demonstrative, sometimes paired with a gesture, as in *The dog is this tall.*

4.5 Sub-comparative (SubC)

Sub-comparatives are comparatives which involve the comparison of two sets of degrees across two different dimensions, for example, length and height, or width and depth. In English (32), the comparison is between the degree to which the dog is wide, and the degree to which the door is tall. Most sub-comparatives also compare across dimensions that use the same units, e.g., distance in (32), where both degrees could be theoretically measured in meters, inches, etc. Sub-comparatives across different units are rarer and frequently more marginal, as in (33).

(32) The dog is wider than the door is tall.

(33) ? The soup is hotter than the sun is bright.

Nłeʔkepmxcín does allow sub-comparatives, which is also an indication that the standard of comparison may be clausal and not merely phrasal, as only languages which allow a clausal standard possess sub-comparatives.

(34) *c̓íc̓iye ʔə l̓áxts ʔə sk̓ʷuk̓mit tu zext ʔə tépəl.*
c̓í~c̓iy-e ʔə=l̓áx-t-s ʔə=s-k̓ʷuk̓ʷm-ʔit tu zex-t ʔə=tépəl
AUG~same-RSL DET=tall-IM-3POSS DET=NMLZ-small-agent than long-IM DET=table
'The child is as tall as the table is long.' (BP)

(35) *l̓áxt ʔə sqaxa tu ʔə słq̓íʔq̓eʔts ʔə səplíl.*
l̓áx-t ʔə=s-qaxa tu ʔə=łq̓<íʔq̓eʔ>-t-s ʔə=səplíl
tall-IM DET=NMLZ-dog than DET=short<PRP>-IM-3POSS DET=bread
'The dog is taller than the bread is short.' (BP)

5 Summary and analysis

From the data presented in Sections 3 and 4, it is possible to analyze Nłeʔkepmxcín with regards to Beck et al.'s (2009) parameters.

Table 1: Availability of degree-constructions in Nłeʔkepmxcín

Degree-Constructions	Allowed?
Difference Comparatives	Yes
Comparison with a Degree	Yes
Degree Questions	Likely
Measure Phrases	Yes
Sub-comparatives	Yes

Based on the presence of difference comparatives, and comparison with a degree, which require an overt degree argument that is quantified over, it is apparent that Nłeʔkepmxcín possesses expressions that refer to degrees and can manipulate degree arguments, and therefore has a positive setting of the DSP.

Turning now to the DAP, Nłeʔkepmxcín allows sub-comparatives, and likely allows degree questions, indicating that it has a positive setting for the DAP as well.

Finally, examining the DegPP, Nłeʔkepmxcín allows the degree argument to be overtly filled in constructions such as measure phrases and difference comparatives, indicating that it also has a

positive setting for the DegPP, and is therefore [+DSP], [+DAP], and [+DegPP]. These results are similar to previous ones from other Salish languages as shown below (Suharwardy 2021; D&M 2019; R&L 2017; L&R 2018).

Table 2: Degree parameter settings in Nɬeʔkepmxcín, Secwepemctsín, St'át'imcets, and ʔayʔaǰuθəm

	Nɬeʔkepmxcín	Secwepemctsín	St'át'imcets	ʔayʔaǰuθəm[9]
DSP	+	+	+	+
DAP	+	+	+	(+)
DegPP	+	+	+	(+)

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, I have provided data to illustrate the typical structures of comparative and degree-based constructions in Nɬeʔkepmxcín, and analyzed the constructions available in the language to show that it has a positive setting for the *Degree Semantics Parameter*, *Degree Abstraction Parameter*, and *Degree Phrase Parameter*. There is still much research to be done on the specific properties of the syntax and semantics of these constructions, including examination of whether the standard of comparison can be both clausal and phrasal, and the syntactic construction of comparative clauses, and whether the morpheme used in the introduction of the standard of comparison is semantically vacuous or not. Though much work remains to be done, this paper can help serve as a starting point, and more generally add to the growing body of work on comparison and degree semantics in Salish languages.

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[9] There is still debate over whether ʔayʔaǰuθəm is (D&M 2019) or is not (R&L 2017; L&R 2018) positive with regards to the degree parameters other than the DSP, however, since the most recent research indicates that it is, I have indicated it as possibly so.

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