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A contrastive study of pragmatic and semantic features in typical and atypical comparative constructions across English, Chinese, Russian, and Turkmen: cognitive interpretations explored

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This article presents a contrastive analysis that sheds light on the similarities and differences of comparative constructions in English, Chinese, Russian, and Turkmen, and the reasons behind them from a cognitive perspective. Specifically, based on the analysis of the massive online English, Chinese, and Russian corpora, namely the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the Russian National Corpus, the Center for Chinese Linguistics Corpus, and the self-built Turkmen corpus data, this study focuses on pragmatic and semantic features of typical and atypical comparatives, providing a comprehensive analysis of their resemblances and distinctions. The similarities are chiefly exhibited in the prominent usage of typical comparative constructions, the occurrence of comparative deletion, and atypical semantic features based on the typical ones. The differences mainly lie in the preference for typical synthetic or analytic forms and the distribution between concrete and abstract atypical forms, expression forms of degree semantics in typical comparatives, and semantic types of atypical comparatives. The cognitive interpretations for the similarities of the typical and atypical comparative constructions in the mentioned languages are mainly reflected in human cognition toward the comparatives. The cognitive interpretations for the differences are mainly manifested in the diverse levels of salience and specificity of construal modes in the context of comparison.

KEYWORDS

comparative constructions, contrastive analysis, pragmatics, semantics, cognitive interpretation

1 Introduction

Drawing upon the existing literature on comparatives (e.g., Kennedy, 2000; Heim, 2000; Schwarzschild, 2008; Bhatt and Takahashi, 2011), in this article, the term “typical comparative constructions” is restricted to comparatives of inequality in which at least two participants are compared with regard to a specific property. For instance, in (1), a comparison is made between the height of Anna and Mary:

1. Anna is taller than Mary.

Cross-linguistically, comparative constructions typically encompass four elements: the comparative target (CT), the comparative standard (CS), the standard marker (SM), and the

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**Stefaan Slembrouck, Miriam
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Table of Contents Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English

1. Understanding the eBook Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in a Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English User Reviews and Ratings
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English Free and Paid eBooks
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English Public Domain eBooks
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English eBook Subscription Services
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English Compatibility with Devices
 - Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Interactive Elements Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
8. Staying Engaged with Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Setting Reading Goals Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Contrastive Comparative Study Of Infinitives In English
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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