Preface

As a cover term for a number of semantic approaches that center around the notion of "degree," Degree Semantics has received much momentum in recent years. Research findings in the framework have not only greatly deepened our understanding of a wide variety of phenomena ranging from gradability, to comparison, to modification, to exclamation, and to degree questions, but also left fundamental impact on the development of linguistic theory. To bring to light most recent developments conducted in this framework from languages in East Asia and to underscore what suggestions and implications an East Asian perspective may have for future study, an international workshop, "Degrees and Grammar: An East Asian Perspective" (DeG 2019) was held at Nanjing University from March 16–19, 2019, organized by Qiongpeng Luo (Nanjing University), Zhiguo Xie (The Ohio State University), and Xiao Li (City University of New York). Generously supported by the Institute of Linguistics at Academia Sinica, the workshop was the first of its kind that brought together exciting and stimulating research on, among other topics, gradability, comparison, modification, degree exclamation, etc. in Chinese and other East Asian languages. Five of those works, all of which have undergone rigorous selection and peer review, are presented in this issue. We believe that this collection of papers will provide inspiration for future in-depth studies on degree-related constructions in and beyond East Asian languages.

Luo, Xie and Li's paper discusses some fundamental issues as well as several unresolved questions of degree-based theories in contemporary linguistics from the perspective of East Asian languages, with a view to pointing out some directions for future research. They first focus on several controversies surrounding the studies of comparative constructions in the literature, i.e., phrasal comparison vs. clausal comparison, individual comparison vs. degree comparison, big DegP vs. small DegP, the points of cross-linguistic variation, etc. They then expand the discussion to comparative constructions and other degree-related constructions in Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and demonstrate how an East Asian perspective offers novel insight into those controversies and uncovers considerable in-depth commonality underlying a variety of degree-related constructions cross-linguistically. Their paper is concluded with some suggestions for directions for future within- and cross-linguistic research.

Sawada's paper investigates the role of comparison through a detailed analysis of the meaning and use of the Japanese utterance comparative expressions *sore-*

yori-(*mo*) 'than that' and *nani-yori-*(*mo*) 'than anything'. The comparative expressions *sore-yori-*(*mo*) and *nani-yori-*(*mo*) can compare individuals at the semantic (at-issue) level as well as the utterances (speech acts) at the level of conventional implicature (CI). Sawada argues that the utterance comparative expression *sore-yori-*(*mo*) conventionally implies that the utterance *U* in "*sore-yori-*(*mo*) *U*" is more important than the previous utterance, and that the utterance comparative expression *nani-yori-*(*mo*) conventionally implies that *U* in "*nani-yori-*(*mo*) *U*" is more important than any alternative utterance. Sawada contends that the pragmatic effects of utterance comparative expressions arise because of the interaction between their scalar meanings and the general pragmatic principles of relevance/ Question Under Discussion and manner. Finally, Sawada compares Korean and English speech, and shows that utterance comparison is pervasive across languages. Sawada's paper contributes to our understanding of the role of comparison in discourse structure and provides a new perspective on the ontological issues of speech acts.

Chen's paper presents a compositional analysis of the fact that Mandarin individuating classifiers are systematically optional in various degree constructions, by taking a mixed approach incorporating the insights from the view that Mandarin nouns denote kind terms and individuating classifiers offer the level of individuation and the view that (bare) numerals do not encode the cardinality function. By considering (bare) numerals as degree terms, the mixed approach advocated here embraces the hypothesis that the locus of variation between English and Mandarin lies in neither the semantics of nouns nor that of numerals, but in the measure operators: these linguistic elements (including sortal/ individuating classifiers) are necessary to mediate between numerals and nouns to avoid the semantic type-mismatch. The proposed analysis of individuating classifiers not only explains the role of Mandarin individuating classifiers in degree constructions (i.e., their syntactic optionality, along with a semantic variation in the dimension of comparison), but also closely connects with the idea about quantity judgments that comparative constructions can be used as a reliable diagnostic of the mass-count distinction in natural languages beyond English. Specifically, the fact that Mandarin unclassified nouns allow both cardinality and non-cardinality monotonic dimensions in a variety of degree constructions on the basis of quantity judgments indicates that they are mass-count neutral. Some factors leading to the individuation of nouns are also discussed in Chen's paper.

Cao and Luo's paper presents a formal analysis of the *xiang...yiyang* 'like...the same' scalar equative construction in Mandarin Chinese (MSEs). In the standard degree-based approach, scalar equatives are widely assumed to express an asymmetrical linear ordering between two degree-denoting descriptions such that the degree to which the comparee possesses is at least as great as the degree to which

the standard possesses. However, this standard analysis would fall short of MSEs, which display a cluster of properties that are unexpected on the standard account: (i) MSEs disallow differentials; (ii) MSEs cannot take measure phrases as the standard; (iii) MSEs in general do not license NPIs in the standard phrases, and (iv) MSEs disallow factor phrases that express multiplication of numerical values. They propose that unlike scalar equatives in English (ESEs), where the comparison of equality is based on asymmetrical linear ordering of the degrees as points, MSEs recur to degrees as kinds, and consequently, the comparison of equality in the latter is based on instantiation of the degree-kinds, namely, equality of properties. The commonalities and differences between MSEs and ESEs suggest that, despite the fact that degrees and properties are semantic objects of distinct types, the underlying connection between them runs deep and fundamental.

Zhang's paper considers the semantics of degree achievement in Mandarin Chinese. In the paper, she argues that these so-called de-adjectival 'degree achievements' in Mandarin are actually reflexive comparatives, which compare the present state with a previous state of the same individual rather than comparing two different individuals. She proposes that in Mandarin de-adjectival "degree achievements" are actually stative predicates that describe the current state of an object in a given property with an increased value compared to a previous state in time. Because the comparison is between two states at different temporal points, a degree-achievement reading can be inferred. The predicate itself remains largely stative, as it is not compatible with the durative phrase with a dynamic change reading, and it is compatible with time as a comparative standard. Unlike the English degree achievements, these predicates are incompatible with the for-phrase with the degree-achievement reading precisely because they lack the dynamic eventive meaning, not because they are telic. In this analysis, the variable telicity pattern can also be explained similarly by the different scale structures associated with the adjectival cores. Zhang's study also testifies another type of cross-linguistic strategy to express change, that reflexive comparatives are used instead of English-style verbal degree achievements.

It has taken us more than three years to edit this special issue. There are many people to whom we are very thankful for their time and patience. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the editorial board of *Language and Linguistics*, in particular to the former chief editors Jo-wang Lin and Henry Y. Chang as well as the current chief editor Edith Aldridge, who have not only made this project of publication possible, but have given us many generous guidance during this painstaking process of guest editing. We are very grateful to all the speakers at DeG 2019, the contributors to this issue, and the anonymous reviewers. We also want to extend our warmest thanks to the editorial assistants Jen-Hui Wang and Ya-Chu Yang for their timely and useful help on editorial matters. Last but far

from the least, we are deeply indebted to Chris Kennedy, Jo-wang Lin and Xingwu Xu (in alphabetical order), without whose generous support and help, the workshop "DeG 2019" would not have been so successful and fruitful as it turned out to be.

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