14

Comparison, Quantifiers, and Articles Revisited

This chapter deepens three areas introduced at beginner level: comparison structures, quantifier subtleties, and the article system at intermediate level.

14.1 Advanced comparison structures

14.1.1 Modifying comparatives

Grade the size of a difference:

- Big difference: ***much / far / considerably / significantly*** *cheaper;* ***a great deal*** *faster*
- Small difference: ***slightly / a little / a bit / marginally*** *cheaper*
- No difference: ***just as*** *good* ***as****;* ***no*** *better* ***than****;* ***every bit as*** *talented* ***as***
- Multiples: ***twice as*** *expensive* ***as****;* ***three times the*** *size* ***of***

14.1.2 *the + comparative … the + comparative*

The longer *you wait,* ***the harder*** *it gets.* ***The more*** *she earned,* ***the more*** *she spent. The sooner, the better.*

14.1.3 Other patterns

- *comparative and comparative*: *It's getting* ***harder and harder*** *to park here.*
- *superlative + present perfect*: *This is* ***the best meal I've ever had****.*
- *by far* with superlatives: *She is* ***by far the most experienced*** *member.*
- *not nearly / nowhere near*: *The sequel is* ***nowhere near as good as*** *the original.*
- *all the + comparative*: *We lost the match, which made the victory next year* ***all the sweeter****.*

Common Error

- ✗ *This is the most unique design.* — in careful usage, *unique* is absolute; prefer ✓ *a truly unique design* or ✓ *the most unusual design*.
- ✗ *different than* (BrE) — prefer ✓ *different from* (safe everywhere); *different to* is acceptable BrE; *different than* is common AmE, especially before clauses.
- Comparing likes with likes: ✗ *The salary in London is higher than Manchester.* → ✓ *. . . higher than* ***in*** *Manchester / higher than* ***that in*** *Manchester.*

14.2 Quantifiers in depth

14.2.1 *all, whole, every, each*

- *all* + *(of the)* + *plural/uncountable*: *all (of) the students, all day* (= the entire day)
- *whole* with singular countables: *the whole day, a whole week* (*all the day* is unidiomatic)
- *every* for generalization; *each* for one-by-one focus; only *each* can be used of two: *a ring on **each** hand*
- *every* + singular verb, but *every one **of** the students **has**. . .*

14.2.2 *both / either / neither*

***Both** proposals have merit. **Either** date suits me. **Neither** explanation convinced the jury. **Neither of** the explanations **was/were** convincing* (singular verb is more formal). Correlatives: *both . . . and; either . . . or; neither . . . nor*: *She speaks **neither** French **nor** German.*

14.2.3 *most, most of, no, none*

- Generalizing: ***Most** people agree* (no *the*).
- Specific set: ***Most of the** people I asked agreed.* ✗ *Most of people. . .* → ✓ *Most people / Most of the people.*
- *no* + noun; *none of* + noun phrase: ***No** refunds will be given. **None of** the refunds **has/ have** arrived.*

14.2.4 *enough, too, so, such*

- *enough* after adjectives/adverbs, before nouns: *warm **enough**, **enough** chairs*
- *too* + *adjective (+ to-infinitive)*: *It's **too hot to work**.* Note *too* is negative; do not use it for emphasis: ✗ *The view was too beautiful!* → ✓ *really/so beautiful*
- *so* + *adjective; such (+ a)* + *(adjective)* + *noun*: *so expensive; such an expensive city; so much noise; so many options* — with result clauses: *It was **such a** boring film **that** we left early.*

14.3 Articles at intermediate level

14.3.1 Generic statements

Three grammatical ways to generalize:

1. *Ø* + *plural*: ***Tigers** are endangered.* (most natural)
2. *the* + *singular*: ***The tiger** is endangered.* (formal, species as a class)
3. *a* + *singular*: ***A tiger** is a dangerous animal.* (any example of the class)

14.3.2 Institutions, media, and set phrases

- *the* with media and services: *listen to **the** radio, read **the** news(paper), call **the** police* — but *watch **Ø** television.*
- *the* with musical instruments: *play **the** piano* (AmE also *play piano*).
- Fixed pairs without articles: *from top to bottom, hand in hand, day after day, face to face.*
- *the* + adjective = a class of people: ***the rich**, **the unemployed**, **the elderly*** (+ plural verb).

Exercises

Exercise 14.1 Comparison structures

Rewrite keeping the meaning, using the words in brackets.

1. As we climbed higher, breathing became more difficult. (The . . . the)
2. This hotel is much cheaper than that one. (nowhere near)
3. I have never read a more moving novel. (This is. . .)
4. Her flat is double the size of mine. (twice)

Exercise 14.2 Quantifiers

Choose the correct option.

1. (Every / Each) of the twins has a different hobby.
2. I spent the (all / whole) weekend marking essays.
3. (Most / Most of) students found the course useful.
4. There were (so / such) many complaints that the product was withdrawn.
5. The coffee was (too / so) hot that I couldn't drink it.

Exercise 14.3 Articles

Insert *a/an*, *the*, or — (nothing) where needed.

1. _____ unemployed often face _____ discrimination.
2. She plays _____ violin and her brother plays _____ drums.
3. _____ whale is _____ largest mammal on _____ Earth.
4. We watched _____ television all evening, then listened to _____ radio.