

COMPARISON DEGREE OF ADJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

There are many topics and materials of English which can be taught at school to university. One of the most interesting materials is about comparison. Comparison is the process for comparing thing, person or places through the level of quantity, quality or relation. In comparison degree, there are some rules that must be followed in changing the adjectives form. The discussions of this study are focused on the definition and the form of degree of comparison, and also the students' understanding in the form of degree of comparison. The data in this study were taken from twelve students of eighth grade students by giving them two worksheets about comparison degree. The technique which is used in analyzing the data is qualitative. The data will be analyzed based on theory of comparison degree especially about the form of comparative and superlative degree to know the students' understanding about comparison degree. Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the eighth grade students had known about the comparison, but they must be more aware in changing the basic form of adjectives into the comparative and superlative form. Therefore, the students need to study more about the rule of changing the basic form of adjective into the comparative and superlative form.

Key words: Adjective, comparison degree, comparative degree, superlative degree

ABSTRAK

Terdapat berbagai macam topik dan materi bahasa Inggris yang bisa dipelajari di sekolah sampai tingkat universitas. Salah satu materi yang paling menarik adalah tentang perbandingan. Perbandingan adalah sebuah proses membandingkan sesuatu, orang ataupun tempat dalam hal kualitas, kuantitas ataupun tingkat hubungan. Dalam perbandingan, ada beberapa aturan yang harus diperhatikan dalam mengubah bentuk kata sifat sesuai dengan tingkat perbandingannya. Pembahasan dalam tulisan ini menitikberatkan pada definisi dan bentuk – bentuk perbandingan serta pemahaman siswa terhadap bentuk – bentuk yang ada dalam perbandingan. Data dalam tulisan ini diambil dari 12 orang siswa SMP yang duduk di kelas delapan. Teknik yang digunakan dalam analisa data adalah teknik kualitatif. Data yang diperoleh akan dianalisa berdasarkan teori tingkat perbandingan terutama tentang perubahan bentuk dasar kata sifat menjadi bentuk komparatif dan superlatif untuk mengetahui kemampuan siswa dalam tingkat perbandingan. Berdasarkan hasil analisa, dapat disimpulkan bahwa siswa kelas delapan telah mengetahui tentang materi perbandingan, akan tetapi siswa harus lebih berhati-hati dalam mengubah kata sifat dalam tingkat perbandingan komparatif dan superlatif. Oleh sebab itu, siswa harus lebih banyak mempelajari aturan-aturan dalam mengubah kata sifat dalam perbandingan.

Kata kunci: Kata sifat, perbandingan, perbandingan komparatif, perbandingan superlatif.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

English is an International language that can be used by many people in many countries to do communication. They communicate to each other in order to convey their meaning to others. Generally, to have interaction to each other from different countries, people all around the world mostly speak in English in their daily activities. Therefore, learning English is very important. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language that can be learnt from kindergarten to university. There are many topics and materials of English which can be learnt at school to university. One of the most interesting materials is about comparison.

Comparison is the process for comparing thing, person or places through the level of quantity, quality or relation. When we start to learn about comparison, we have to know about adjective and adverb. In [grammar](#), adjective is used to [modify](#) a [noun](#) or [pronoun](#), in order to give more information about the noun or pronoun's referent such as its material, color, dimensions, position, state and other characteristics both permanent and temporary. Its position is before the noun modifies, but it also fills other positions (1972: 109). Besides that, Paul Roberts says that adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun (1954: 91). Many words in English function as both adjectives and adverbs. The best way to tell whether a particular word is an adjective or an adverb in a given sentence is to determine what its function in the sentence. In this case we have to remember the fundamental distinction between an adjective and an adverb; adjectives modify noun and pronoun; adverbs modify everything else.

There are some rules that we have to follow when we want to compare the level of quantity, quality or relation of thing, person or place. Therefore, it will be very interesting to discuss comparison to give more information about the definition of comparison and the form of comparison to help students in understanding the comparison.

1.2 Statements of Problem

Based on the background of the study, statement of problem can be formulated as follows:

1. What is degree of comparison?
2. What are the form of degree of comparison?
3. How are the students' understanding in the form of degree of comparison?

1.3 Objective of Study

The objectives of study are presented as follows:

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to find out the students understanding in the comparison degree of adjective.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explain about degree of comparison.
2. To explain about the form of degree of comparison.
4. To find out the students' understanding in the form of degree of comparison.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Adjectives

Sargeant, explain that adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. They give you more information about people, places, and things (2007: 32). In addition, Eastwood said that adjectives are words like *short*, *old*, *cheap*, *happy*, *nice*, *electric*. Most adjectives

express quality; they tell us what something is like.

2.2 Comparison Degree of Adjectives

Comparison degree of adjective can be divided into three forms. The three forms known under the heading of degrees of comparison: (1) the basic form (positive degree), this form having no features of comparison or it does not indicate any comparison; (2) the comparative degree form, this form is having the feature of restricted superiority (which compare two elements (comparing three or more things); (3) the superlative degree form, it is having the feature of unrestricted superiority (comparing three or more things). Howard Sargeant says that to compare two people or things, use the comparative form of an adjective. The comparative form is usually made by adding *er* and *more* to the adjective. Meanwhile, to compare three or more people or things, use the superlative form of an adjective. The superlative form is usually made by adding *est* and *most* to the adjective (2007: 39-41). The form of comparison degree of adjectives can be changed regularly (regular comparison) and irregularly (irregular comparison).

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 Comparison Degree of Adjectives

Eugene Ehrlich says that adjectives have three comparative forms: absolute, comparative, superlative to indicate greater and lesser degrees of quality described. The comparative form of the great majority of adjectives can be achieved in two ways by adding *-er* to the absolute or by adding the adverb *more*. Similarly, the superlative can be achieved in two ways: by adding *-est* to

the absolute or by adding the adverb *most*. Some adjectives change forms radically to express comparison: *good, better, best, bad, worse, worst* (1991: 99). In addition, the comparative form is used to discuss two items or individuals and superlative form is used to compare more than three items or individuals. Eastwood (2002: 280) states that a comparative or superlative adjective can come in the same position as other adjectives.

Attributive: *a softer metal the most specialized services*

Predicative: *Gold is softer. Which building is tallest?*

We usually put *the* before a superlative adjective.

Jupiter is the biggest planet.

Jupiter is (the) biggest.

In general, short adjectives which are used in comparison should take *er/est* while long ones take *more/most*. One-syllable adjectives count as short and three-syllable adjectives count as long. Most two-syllable adjectives count as long but not all of them.

3.2 The Form of Comparison Degree

3.2.1 Regular Comparison

Generally, regular comparison means that the basic form of adjective regularly changed by adding *-er and more* for comparative degree and *-est and most* for superlative degree. Monosyllable adjectives will use *-er* (comparative) and *-est* (superlative). Meanwhile, two or more syllables adjective will be added by *more* (comparative) and *most* (superlative), but not all of them. Therefore, there are several rules that must be followed:

- a) The basic form of one syllable adjective ends with 'e' regularly changed by adding *-r* for comparative degree and adding *-st* for superlative degree. This form can be seen as follow:

Wide is an adjective which has one syllable and ends with 'e', the form will be *wide+r* (*wider*) for the comparative and *wide+st* (*widest*) for the superlative. Other examples of this form can be seen below:

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>Nice</i> → <i>nice + r</i> → <i>nicer</i> | } | <i>Comparative degree</i> |
| 2. <i>Close</i> → <i>close + r</i> → <i>closer</i> | | |
| 3. <i>Large</i> → <i>large + r</i> → <i>larger</i> | | |
| 4. <i>Safe</i> → <i>safe + r</i> → <i>safer</i> | | |

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 5. <i>Nice</i> → <i>nice + st</i> → <i>nicest</i> | } | <i>Superlative degree</i> |
| 6. <i>Close</i> → <i>close + st</i> → <i>closest</i> | | |
| 7. <i>Large</i> → <i>large + st</i> → <i>largest</i> | | |
| 8. <i>Safe</i> → <i>safe + st</i> → <i>safest</i> | | |

- b. The basic form of one syllable adjective ends with a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, the final consonant is double before *-er* for comparative form and *-est* for superlative form.

Sad is an adjective which has one syllable and ends with single consonant preceded by a single vowel. Therefore, the final consonant must be double before *-er* for comparative form and *-est* for superlative form. The form will be *sad(d)+er* (*sadder*) for the comparative and *sad(d)+est* (*saddest*) for the superlative. Other examples are:

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>Slim</i> → <i>slim(m)+er</i> → <i>slimmer</i> | } | <i>Comparative degree</i> |
| 2. <i>Thin</i> → <i>thin(n)+er</i> → <i>thinner</i> | | |
| 3. <i>Wet</i> → <i>wet(t)+er</i> → <i>wetter</i> | | |
| 4. <i>Big</i> → <i>big(g)+er</i> → <i>bigger</i> | | |

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| 5. <i>Slim</i> → <i>slim(m)+est</i> → <i>slimmest</i> | } | <i>Superlative degree</i> |
| 6. <i>Thin</i> → <i>thin(n)+est</i> → <i>thinnest</i> | | |
| 7. <i>Wet</i> → <i>wet(t)+est</i> → <i>wettest</i> | | |
| 8. <i>Big</i> → <i>big(g)+est</i> → <i>biggest</i> | | |

Exception for those which ended by 'ow'

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 9. <i>Low</i> → <i>low+er</i> → <i>lower</i> | } | <i>Comparative degree</i> |
| 10. <i>Slow</i> → <i>slow+er</i> → <i>slower</i> | | |

11. *Low* → *low+est* → *lowest*
 12. *Slow* → *slow+est* → *slowest* *Superlative degree*

- c. The basic form of one or two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is change into 'i' before adding the suffix *-er* and *-est*.
- d. *Happy* is an adjective which has two syllables and ends with 'y'. Therefore, 'y' must be changed into 'i' before adding *-er* for comparative form and *-est* for superlative form. The form will be *happy(i)+er* (*happier*) for the comparative and *happy(i)+est* (*happiest*) for the superlative. Other examples are:

1. *Busy* → *bus(i)+er* → *busier*
 2. *Easy* → *eas(i)+er* → *easier*
 3. *Dry* → *dr(i)+er* → *drier*
 4. *Lazy* → *laz(i)+er* → *lazier* *Comparative degree*

5. *Busy* → *bus(i)+est* → *busiest*
 6. *Easy* → *eas (i)+est* → *easiest*
 7. *Dry* → *dr(i)+est* → *driest*
 8. *Lazy* → *laz(t)+est* → *laziest* *Superlative degree*

- e. Use *more* and *most* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives.

1. *Precious* → *more precious*
 2. *Handsome* → *more handsome*
 3. *Exciting* → *more exciting*
 4. *Beautiful* → *more beautiful* *Comparative degree*

5. *Precious* → *most precious*
 6. *Handsome* → *most handsome*
 7. *Exciting* → *most exciting*
 8. *Beautiful* → *most beautiful* *Superlative degree*

- f. Two syllables adjective ending in ER, Y, LE, OW and those with the stress on the second syllable usually add *er* and *est* their comparative and superlative:

1. *Clever* → *clever + er* → *cleverer*
 2. *Pretty* → *pretty + er* → *prettier*
 3. *Simple* → *simple + er* → *simpler* *Comparative degree*

4. *Narrow* → *narrow* + *er* → *narrower*

5. *Clever* → *clever* + *est* → *cleverest*

6. *Pretty* → *pretty* + *est* → *prettiest*

7. *Simple* → *simple* + *est* → *simplest*

8. *Narrow* → *narrow* + *est* → *narrowest*

} *Superlative degree*

3.2.2 Irregular Comparison

A few adjectives don't form their comparative and superlative forms in any of the usual ways. The comparative and superlative forms of these adjectives are different words, they called irregular forms. They have their own form. The form can be seen below:

9. *Good* → *better*

10. *Bad* → *worse*

11. *Little* → *less*

12. *Many* → *more*

13. *Far* → *further*

} *Comparative degree*

14. *Good* → *best*

15. *Bad* → *worst*

16. *Little* → *least*

17. *Many* → *most*

18. *Far* → *furthest*

} *Superlative degree*

Those are the form of degree of comparison which can be divided into regular and irregular form of comparison. The regular form must be based on the short and long syllable of adjectives in which short adjectives take *er/est* while mostly long ones take *more/most*. One syllable adjectives count as short and three-syllable adjectives count as long. Most two-syllable adjectives count as long but not all of them.

3.3 The Student's Understanding in The Form of Degree of Comparison

This research will discuss about students' understanding about the form of comparative and superlative. Therefore, some students will be distributed a questioner about their knowledge of

comparison. If they have knowledge about comparison, then they have to answer worksheets about degree of comparison. The worksheets then will be analyzed to know what errors made by the students.

In this section, the data will be presented to know the answers of the students. There

are sixteen questions about comparative and sixteen questions about superlative which are taken from ESL library.com.

The first worksheet is about comparative:

a. In Canada, January is _____ than March.

Students' answer: colder

The answer is correct. The students change the word *cold* into *colder*, since *cold* has one syllable which only need to add *-er* to make the comparative.

b. I think that good health is _____ than money.

Students' answer: more important

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the word *important*. Since *important* has more than one syllable, in which use *more* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the comparative.

c. I can't carry my suitcase. It's much _____ than yours.

Students' answer: more heavy

The answer is incorrect. The students add *more* to the adjective *heavy*. *Heavy* has two syllables, but the basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is changed into 'i' before adding the suffix *-er* for the comparative. Therefore, the correct answer is *heavier*.

d. I can afford to buy a new bike but not a new car. A car is _____ than a bike.

Students' answer: more expensive

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the adjective *expensive*. Since *expensive* has three syllables, in which three syllables adjectives needs to use *more* for the comparative.

e. You look _____ than the last time I saw you. Have you lost weight?

Students' answer: thinner, thiner

Thinner is correct and thiner is incorrect.

The basic form of one syllable adjective ends with a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, the final consonant is doubled before *-er* for comparative form. Therefore, the final consonant in adjective *thin* must be doubled, and the correct answer is *thinner*.

f. I couldn't get a seat in the restaurant. It was _____ than usual.

Students' answer: more crowded

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the word *crowded*. Since *crowded* has more than one syllable, in which use *more* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the comparative.

g. Mountains are _____ than hills.

Students' answer: higher

The answer is correct. Adjective *high* has one syllable and monosyllable adjectives will use *-er* for comparative.

h. He got a very good mark on his exam. The exam was _____ than he had expected.

Students' answer: more easy

The answer is incorrect. Adjective *easy* has two syllables and ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant. Therefore, its comparative form don't use *more* but by adding suffix *-er* in which 'y' is changed into 'i' before adding *-er*.

i. You should go to the doctor. Your cold is _____ than it was a few days ago.

Students' answer: bader

The answer is incorrect. A few adjectives don't form their comparative form in any of the usual ways. The comparative of these adjectives are different words, they called irregular forms. They have their

own form. In this case, adjective *bad* become *worse* for the comparative.

j. There is a lot of crime in the big cities. They are _____ than the small town where I live.

Students' answer: more dangerous

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the adjective *dangerous*. Since *dangerous* has more than one syllable, in which use *more* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the comparative.

k. I don't understand this lesson. It is _____ than the last one we did.

Students' answer: more difficult

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the adjective *difficult*. Since *difficult* has three syllables, in which use *more* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the comparative.

l. I can't study in this room. It's too noisy. I'm going to have a _____ place.

Students' answer: more quiet

The answer is incorrect. Monosyllable adjectives will use *-er* for comparative not *more*. Therefore, the comparative of quiet is *quieter*.

m. Our apartment is far from everything. We want to move to a _____ location.

Students' answer: more convenient

The answer is correct. The students add *more* to the adjective *convenient*. Since *convenient* has more than one syllable, in which use *more* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the comparative.

n. Orange juice is _____ than coke.

Students' answer: more healthy

The answer is incorrect. The basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is change into 'i' before adding the suffix *-er*. Therefore, *healthy* becomes *healthier* instead of *more healthy* in comparative form.

o. The store is having a great sale today. Most _____ televisions are _____ 25% _____ than they were yesterday.

Students' answer: cheaper

The answer is correct. Monosyllable adjective *cheap* will use *-er* for comparative.

p. The doctor told me that I can go back to work if I feel _____ tomorrow.

Students' answer: gooder, better

The answer *gooder* is incorrect. Meanwhile, *better* is correct. A few adjectives don't form their comparative form in any of the usual ways. Its comparative are different words, they called irregular forms. They have their own form. In this case, *good* will change into *better* for the comparative.

The second worksheet is about superlative:

1. Yesterday was _____ day of the year. I almost froze to death walking home from school.

Students' answer: the coldest

The answer is correct. Cold is monosyllable adjective and it will use *-est* for superlative.

2. That was _____ movie I've ever seen. I almost walk out in the middle.

Students' answer: the badest

The answer is incorrect. A few adjectives don't form their superlative forms in any of the usual ways. The superlative forms of these adjectives are different words, they called irregular forms. They have

their own form. In this case, adjective *bad* will change into *worst* for the superlative.

3. Please give me your recipe. That is _____ cake I've ever eaten.

Students' answer: the most delicious

The answer is correct. The students add *the most* to the adjective *delicious*. Since *delicious* has more than one syllable, in which *the most* is used to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the superlative.

4. Jerry is _____ student in our class. He gets the top grades in every course.

Students' answer: the smartest

The answer is correct. Adjective *smart* has one syllable and one syllable adjective will use *-est* for superlative.

5. Bob told _____ story last night. I couldn't stop laughing.

Students' answer: the most funny

The answer is incorrect. Adjective *funny* has two syllables but it ends with 'y'. The basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is change into 'i' before adding the suffix *-est* for the superlative form. The form is not *the most funny* but *the funniest*.

6. Whales are _____ animals in the world.

Students' answer: the largest

The answer is correct. The basic form of one syllable adjective ends with 'e' regularly changed by adding *-st* for superlative degree.

7. The Nile is _____ river in the world.

Students' answer: the longest

The answer is correct. Adjective *long* is monosyllable adjectives, therefore it will use *-est* for superlative.

8. Marie is _____ person I know. She has won the lottery four times!

Students' answer: the most lucky

The answer is incorrect. The basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is change into 'i' before adding the suffix *-est* for the superlative form. In this case, *lucky* has two syllables adjectives ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, therefore, *lucky* will change into *the luckiest* instead of *the most lucky*.

9. He is _____ speaker I have ever heard. Half the audience fell asleep during his speech.

Students' answer: the most boring

The answer is correct. The students add *the most* to the word *boring*. Since *boring* has two syllables, *the most* is used to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the superlative.

10. Mount Everest is _____ mountain in the world.

Students' answer: the highest

The answer is correct. Monosyllable adjectives will use *-est* for superlative.

11. That is _____ painting in the art gallery. It's worth a million dollars.

Students' answer: the most valuable

The answer is correct. For adjective which has more than one syllable, *the most* is used to compare most other two-syllable adjectives for the superlative.

12. Bill Gates is one of _____ men in the world.

Students' answer: the richest

The answer is correct. Rich is monosyllable adjectives which use *-est* for superlative form.

13. I finished the exercise in five minutes. It was _____ homework the teacher has ever give us.

Students' answer: the most easy

The answer is incorrect. The basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is changed into 'i' before adding the suffix *-er*. Therefore, *easy* becomes *the easiest* instead of *the most easy* in superlative form.

14. Arthur hates to clean. He has _____ apartment I've ever seen.

Students' answer: the most dirty

The answer is incorrect. Adjective *dirty* has two syllables and it ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant. In this case 'y' is changed into 'i' then it must be added by the suffix *-est* for the superlative form instead of adding *the most*.

15. My dinner only cost \$6.00. That must be _____ restaurant in town.

Students' answer: the cheapest

The answer is correct. Monosyllable adjectives will use *-est* for superlative.

16. I was afraid to turn off the lights last night. That was _____ show.

Students' answer: the most scary

The answer is incorrect. The basic form of two syllables adjective ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant, 'y' is change into 'i' before adding the suffix *-er*.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that adjectives have three comparative forms: absolute, comparative, superlative to indicate greater and lesser degrees of quality described. The comparative form of the great majority of adjectives can be achieved in two ways by

adding *-er* to the absolute or by adding the adverb *more*. Similarly, the superlative can be achieved in two ways: by adding *-est* to the absolute or by adding the adverb *most*. It's called regular form of comparison. Meanwhile irregular form of comparison has its own form such as: (*Good – better – best*), (*Bad – worse – worst*), (*Little – less – least*), (*Many – more – most*), (*Far – further – furthest*).

From this discussion can be seen also that the eighth grade students had known about the comparison, but the students must be more aware in changing the basic form of adjectives into the comparative and superlative form. Most of the students are able to: change monosyllable adjectives which only need to add *-er* or *-est* to make the comparative and superlative form, change the basic form of one syllable adjective ends with 'e' which are regularly changed by adding *-r* or *-st* for comparative and superlative degree and change adjectives which have more than one syllable, in which use *more* and *most* to compare most other two-syllable adjectives.

In the analysis, the errors made by the students are in term of the changing of the adjective which has two syllables ends with 'y' preceded by a consonant. The students prefer to add *more* and *most* instead of change 'y' into 'i' then adding the suffix *-er* or *-est*. Beside that, the errors are also in changing the basic form of one syllable adjective ends with a single consonant preceded by a single vowel. In this case, the final consonant must be doubled before *-er* or *-est*. But, there were not double consonant on the students' answer. The errors were also found in the irregular form of adjective. As we know that a few adjectives don't form their comparative and superlative form in any of the usual ways. Its comparative and superlative are different words, they called irregular forms. They have their own form.

But, the students add *-er* and *-est* for its comparison degree.

Therefore, the students need to study more about the rule of changing the basic form of adjective into the comparative and superlative form.

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