

A Study of Special Sentence Patterns in English Comparative Construction

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Abstract

Some special ways of English comparative degree are introduced in this article to explain their uses through example sentences, whose aim is to help the learners completely understand and take better advantage of this special grammar points.

Key words: Comparative degree; Sentence pattern; Special use

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INTRODUCTION

Most adjectives and adverbs are gradable and can be used in comparative construction. The English learners are often familiar with the basic comparative construction of English adjectives and adverbs, but in the actual reading and using they can not apprehend fully and translate precisely in regard with some special forms of comparative constructions. In the course of grammar learning generally the learners only learn some more typical example sentences while there exist more various types of comparative construction in the actual languages. Therefore it is necessary for the learners to pay more attention to the irregular sentence patterns and master the rules of some special forms so as to understand and use them correctly. The following is for the special use of comparative construction of adjectives

and adverbs with the explanation of the example sentences.

1. THE SPECIAL COMPARATIVE PATTERNS IN THE ORIGINAL LEVEL OF ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

1.1 “as...as” Construction

The basic pattern of “as...as” construction is “as+adjective/adverb+ as”. For example, “John is as bright as Bob.” “John behaves as politely as Bob.” These sentences can be negated to produce either “John is not as bright as Bob” or “John doesn’t behave so politely as Bob.” “Less...than”, this structure can also be used to express the negative meaning. Like the following sentence: “John is less bright than Bob.” “John behaves less politely than Bob.”

There are also some cases in which the subjects of the comparative and the main clause are identical but the comparative elements are different, which can be translated into “both...and”. Look at the following example sentences. “Mary was as brilliant as she was beautiful.” This sentence means “Mary is both beautiful and brilliant.” “Mary was not as / so brilliant as she was beautiful.” The sentence means “Mary was beautiful but she was not brilliant.” “This desk is as long as it is wide.” The sentence means that the length and width of the desk are the same.

There are also cases where both the subjects and the comparative elements are different. For example:

“This desk is not twice as wide as that one is long.” (这张课桌的宽度并没有那张课桌长度的两倍。)

“Tom was as base and untrustworthy as Bob had been upright and honorable.” (汤姆卑鄙龌龊，不像鲍博正直可敬。)

The “as ...as” structure is used to express the superlative degree.

For instance: “Nothing in my life shook me so deeply as my first visit to China.” The sentence is equal to the

meaning “My first visit to China shook me the most deeply.” (我对中国的首次访问给我留下最深的印象。)

“Einstein was as famous a scientist as ever lived in his times.” This sentence means “Einstein was the most famous scientist in his times.” (爱因斯坦是他那个时代最有名的科学家。)

The similar sentence likes “You are as bright as any in the class.” The sentence means that “you are the brightest in the class.” (你是这班上最聪明的。)

1.2 “As much A as B” Structure

The structure likes “as much (A) as B” expresses the meaning of “not only B but also A”. For example, “She is as much interested in sports as in music.” The meaning of this sentence is that “She is not only interested in music but also sports.” (她不仅对音乐感兴趣, 对体育也同样感兴趣。)

In the sentence “It is as much your responsibility as mine.” With the meaning that “this is not only my duty but also yours.” (这不仅是我的责任, 同样也是你的责任。)

1.3 Not so Much A as B

In the structure like s “not so much (A) as (B)”, it can be used to express the meaning of “would rather B than A”.

For instance: “He is not so much a writer as a reporter.” (与其说他是作家, 不如说他是作者。)

This sentence can be explained that “he would rather be a reporter than a writer.” The example sentence likes “the young guy is not so much unintelligent as uneducated.” (与其说这小子不聪明, 不如说他未受过教育。)

The sentence means that “the young guy would rather be uneducated than be unintelligent.”

2. SOME SPECIAL SENTENCE PATTERNS IN THE COMPARATIVE DEGREE

2.1 The Basic Structure “the Comparative Degree of Adjective or Adverb + Than”

The basic sentence pattern model of this structure is like “the comparative degree of adjective or adverb plus than clause”. For example: “Tom is *brighter than Bob*.” “Tom behaves *more politely than Bob*.”

2.2 The Structure of “More/Less/Fewer + Noun + Than Clause”

The second mode of “more...than” is shown with the structure of “more/less/fewer + noun + than clause”. Please look at the following example. “She has written *more essays than he*.” “I spent less money on clothing than my sister.” “There are fewer visitors today than yesterday.”

2.3 The Structure of the Comparative Degree of Adjective + Noun + Than Clause

The third mode of “more...than” structure is the comparative degree of adjective + noun + than

clause. The following sentences are embodied in this structure.

(a) My brother has a larger house than mine.

(b) The slaves were given worse food than that for their master’s dogs.

This kind of structure can be transformed into noun phrase + more...than, in which the comparative degree of adjective acts as the post-modifier. The example sentence like the following: “My brother has a house larger than mine.” “Tom is a worker more efficient than Jack.”

2.4 The Structure of “the + Comparative Degree of Adjective or Adverb + of Phrases

The fourth mode of “more...than” structure is expressed with the structure of “the + comparative degree of adjective or adverb + of phrases. For example:

(a) Tom is the brighter of the two boys.

(b) John behaves (the) more politely of the two boys.

2.5 The Structure of “More/ Less + of +Noun. + Than Clause”

The fifth mode of “more...than” structure is expressed with the structure of “more/ less + of +noun. + than clause”. The following sentences are embodied this structure.

He is more/ less of a poet than his brother.

= He is more/ less poetlike than his brother.

The structures of “more+adjective+than+adjective” and “more+noun+than +noun” can be translated into the meaning of “would be rather... than...” The example sentences are as follows.

(a) “John is more daring than quick-witted.” The sentence means that “John would rather be more daring than he is more quick-witted.” (与其说约翰脑子灵活, 不如说他胆大。)

(b) “George is more intelligent than aggressive.” The whole sentence wants to express that “George is more intelligent than he is aggressive.” (与其说乔治言行放肆, 不如说他聪颖过人。)

(c) “He is more a poet than a writer.” In other words, “he is a poet rather than a writer.” (与其说他是一名作家, 不如说他是一名诗人。)

“The present crisis is much more a political than an economic crisis.” The whole sentence wants to say that “the present crisis is a political one rather than an economic one.” (当前的危机与其说是经济危机, 不如说是政治危机。)

While the structures of “less+adjective+than +adjective” and “less +noun+than +noun” have the contrary meaning. For example:

“John is less daring than quick-witted.” This sentence just expresses the meaning of “John is more quick-witted rather than he is daring.” (与其说约翰胆大, 不如说他脑子灵活。)

“The present crisis is much less a political than an economic crisis.” The meaning of the sentence is that “the present crisis is an economic one rather than a political

one.” (当前的危机与其说是政治危机, 不如说是经济危机.)

2.6 The Phrase “More Than” Can Express the Negative Concept With the Meaning of “Almost Not”

The example sentence is like “My trip to America is more than sightseeing.” The sentence means “my trip to America is not only for sightseeing.” (我去美国不仅仅是游览观光而已.)

Another sentence likes “that is more than I can describe.” The whole sentence means that “that is almost not what I can describe.” (那简直不是我所能描述的.)

2.7 Not More/ -Er Than And No More/ -Er Than

The former can be translated into “A is not + adjective comparative degree than B” while the latter can be explained in this way that “A and B are the same not + adjective”. For example, “Tom is not more intelligent than Bob.” The sentence means that “compared with Bob, Tom is not intelligent.” (汤姆不比鲍博聪明.)

“Tom is no more intelligent than Bob.” This sentence means both Tom and Bob are not intelligent. (汤姆和鲍博一样不聪明.)

The phrase “no more...than” is equal to “not...any more than”. For instance, “A whale is no more a fish than a horse is.” The sentence means “that both whale and horse are not fish.” (鲸和马同样不是鱼.)

2.8 The “More...Than” Structure

It also can be used to show the superlative degree. For example: “George did more work this morning than anyone else.” This sentence means “George did the most work.” “This car runs faster than any other car in the garage.” The sentence is equal to “this car runs the fastest of all the cars in the garage.”

The phrase “all the more...” can be explained “much more”. Look at the example sentence “As a result, the rich became all the richer.” the meaning of the sentence is “as a result, the rich became much richer.” (结果富的更富.)

The sentence like “That will make the work all the more difficult”, which means “that will make the work even more difficult.”

The phrase “so much the+ comparative degree” can be used to express the meaning “so better, so worse”. In this phrase the comparative degree is “better or worse”. For instance, “If he will help us, so much the better.” This sentence means “if he will help us, it will be better.” (如果他肯帮忙就更好了.)

“If he doesn’t work, so much the worse.” this sentence means that “if he doesn’t work, the condition will be worse.” (如果他不工作, 情况就更糟了.)

The phrase “none the +comparative degree”: “None the” is equal to “not at all, not in any way”. “none the less” can be used as adverbial with the meaning of “still”.

For example, “He is none the happier for his wealth.” The sentence means that “He is not happy at all for his wealth.” (他并未因为有了财富而更快乐.)

“He is none the worse for falling into the river.” this sentence means that “although he falls into the river, he is still good.” (他掉到河里, 但什么事也没有.)

The example sentence like “You have faults, but I love you none the less.” The sentence just means that “although you have faults, I still love you.” (你虽然有缺点, 但我依然爱你.)

Comparative degree plus comparative degree means “more and more”. Look at the example sentence. “Your English is getting better and better.” (你的英文越来越好.)

“It’s becoming more and more difficult to find a job.” (找工作越来越难了.)

The phrase “more or less” means “generally”.

For example, the question is more or less settled. The meaning of the sentence is that the question is generally settled. (这个问题大体上已经解决.)

Another example is that “We’ve succeeded in the first stage, more or less.” This sentence expresses the meaning that “generally we have succeeded in the first stage.” (在第一阶段我们大体上算成功了.)

In the structure “the + comparative degree+sentence, the+ comparative degree +sentence” to express the meaning of “more and more” for example, “Actually, the busier he is, the happier he feels.” (事实上, 他越忙越高兴.) “The more they talked, the more encouraged they felt.” (他们越说越感到鼓舞.)

The phrase “more (less) than”: Look at the example

(a) It’s more than ten years since we parted. (我们分手已十多年了.)

(b) He is more than a friend to me. (他对我不止是一个朋友.)

(c) The lightest weighs less than 50 kilograms. (最轻的不到50公斤.)

3. THE COMPARATIVE SENTENCE PATTERN IN THE COMPARATIVE RELATION

The word “What” sometimes also can express the relation of comparison to show the same point or similarity between two things. This kind of use of “what” is often applied in the written language in order to emphasize the rhetorical effect with the implication of a figurative speech, equal to “as”. The meaning of “what” is “like”, or “just as”. There are altogether three situations for the use of what. The first pattern is “A is to B what C is to D”. For example, “twelve is to two what twenty-four is to four.” (十二比二就等于二十四比四.)

The second type is “what C is to D, A is to B”. For instance: “What food is to the body, a book is to the mind.” (书籍对于思想犹如食物对于身体.)

The third sentence pattern is like “what C is to D, that A is to B”. The example is “what the gun is to a soldier, that the pen is to a writer.” (作家的笔犹如战士的枪.)

4. THE COMPARATIVE USAGE IN THE STRUCTURE OF NON-COMPARATIVE DEGREE

In English some adverbs, adjectives and prepositions also have the comparative meaning especially when there is not obvious comparative object. Using the adjectives and adverbs is much purer and more meaningful of the comparative degree. The use of comparison of some adverbs, adjectives and prepositions about position are listed as follows.

4.1 Some Adverbs of Degree

The words like “incomparably, relatively, fairly quite, rather, comparatively” and so on are combined with adjectives to express the meaning of comparison. For instance, “It is a set of comparatively new furniture in our house.” The sentence means that “It is a set of newer furniture in our house.” (这是我们家里比较新的一套家具.)

Another example, “at the meeting, the leader analyzed problems in a relatively all-sided way.” The sentence means that “at the meeting, the leader analyzed problems in a more all-sided way.” (在会上, 领导比较全面地分析了问题.)

“The socialist system is incomparably superior to the capitalist system.” That means “the socialist system is better than the capitalist system.” (社会主义制度比资本主义制度具有无比的优越性.)

4.2 The Nouns After the Adjective Words Expressing Degree

Words like “relative, fair, comparative” and so on, also have the meaning of comparison. For example, “they have a fair knowledge of English.” The sentence means that “their English is better.” (他们的英语比较好.)

“We made several attempts with relative coolness.” The sentence can be explained that “we made several attempts more calmly.” (我们比较冷静地尝试了几次.)

The example likes “they live in comparative comfort.” The sentence means that “they live more comfortably.” (他们住的比较舒适.)

4.3 Some Prepositions Regarding Position Expressing Degree

Some words like “over, above, before, behind, below, beneath, under” can be used to express comparison in using to show the difference of character and degree. For example, “the output of this year shows a marked increase over last year.” The sentence means that “The output of this year is more than last year.” (今年的产量比去年有显著的增长.) “You are an hour behind your appointed

time.” This sentence means that “you are later than appointed time for an hour. (你比约定的时间晚到了一个小时.)

Another sentence like “A doctor is above a master by one degree.” This sentence can be explained that “A doctor is higher than a master by one degree” (博士学位比硕士学位高一级.)

The sentence likes “A lieutenant is below a captain.” The meaning of it is that “A lieutenant is lower than a captain.” The sentence likes “he is beneath me by two grades in the school.” This sentence means that “he is lower than me by two grades in the school.” (在学校里他比我低两级.)

Another example likes “your name comes before mine on the list.” This sentence means that “your name is more ahead than mine on the list.” (在名单上你的名字比我靠前.)

Another sentence likes “In rank he is under me.” The sentence means that “he is lower than me in rank.” (在等级上他比我低.)

4.4 Some Adjectives in English Ending Worth -or Expressing Degree

Some adjectives in English ending worth -or can be used to express the meaning of comparative degree. “To” is put before the comparable object rather than “than”. Such adjectives as “senior, junior, superior, prior, inferior, anterior, posterior” and so on can be used in this structure. For instance, “her husband is four years senior to her.” which means “Her husband is four years older than her.” (她丈夫比她大四岁.)

Another one sentence like “This machine is superior to that one in many respects.” This sentence means “This machine is better than that one in many aspects.” (这台机器在许多方面比那台机器好得多.)

Another sentence likes “this novel is inferior to what I expected.” This sentence means that “this novel is worse than I expected.” (这本小说比我期望的差.)

4.5 Negative Structures Expressing Degree

When the negative structures like “not to speak of, not to mention, to say nothing of, let alone” and so forth, appear in the sentence, they can express the comparative concept. For example, (a) He cannot afford to buy a bike, not to speak of a car. (他没有钱去买一辆自行车, 就更不必说买一辆车了.) (b) You are too ill to get out of bed, let alone walking. (你病得连床都起不来, 更不用说散步了.) (c) The boy has not learned arithmetic, not to mention algebra. (这孩子算术还没学会, 更谈不上代数了.)

4.6 Some Verb Expressions Expressing Degree

Some verb expressions such as “choose...before, prefer...to, prefer to do rather than do” can express the meaning of “more like” which has the comparative meaning. For instance, (a) The young man chose going to the front before staying at home. (这位年轻人宁可上前

线, 也不愿呆在家里。) (b) The heroine, a girl of strong will, preferred death to surrender. (那位女英雄是一个意志坚强的姑娘, 她宁死不屈。) (c) I prefer to take the whole blame myself rather than allow it to fall on the others. (我宁肯自己承担全部责任, 也不愿把责任推在别人身上。)

In addition, the adjective “preferable” can express the comparative meaning too. For example, “the first method is preferable to the second one.” The sentence means “the first method is better than the second one.” (第一种方法比第二种方法更可取。)

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the comparative structure is one of the important and difficult points in English grammar. Through the illustration of the example sentences above,

the rich varieties of expression about the comparative structure can be shown, which embodies the varieties and complex of languages. The use of special sentence patterns of the comparative structure requires the learners to understand precisely and master the skills. Only in this way can the learners fully appreciate the connotation of the special comparative sentence patterns and translate the sentences precisely and loyally to the original article.

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