Section 12  adjectives, adverbs and comparison

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possible further activities

Writing advertisements  Get students to write advertisements for an imaginary product, with as many as possible of the adjectives on this page (or other adjectives of their choice).

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language notes

In some languages, adverbs of manner have the same form as adjectives. This can lead to occasional mistakes even at advanced level:

*He explained it quite tactful.

In informal American English, this adverbial use of adjective forms is not uncommon:

Pick it up real careful.
Drive friendly.

Some non-European languages have very few adjectives. In these languages, what we consider 'adjectival' meanings may be expressed by verbs or nouns – so the equivalent of She’s tall might be something like ‘She talls’ or ‘She has tallness’. Speakers of such languages may have occasional problems with part-of-speech assignment even at advanced level, using verbs or nouns where adjectives are appropriate, or vice versa.

*The operation was very problem.  *The surgeons encountered several problematic.

possible further activities

Choosing a characteristic  Tell students to imagine that they can only be one of the following. Which would they choose?

lovely  friendly  lively

Now tell them to imagine that they have to be all but one of the following. Which would they drop?

cowardly  silly  ugly  lonely

Internet  Tell students to look for examples of “happy smile”, “friendly smile”, “smiled happily” and “smiled friendly” on the internet. How many do they find of each? What do the results tell them?

Weather forecast  Ask students to forecast tomorrow’s weather, completing one of the following sentences:

It’s likely / quite likely / unlikely to (+ verb) …
It’s likely/unlikely to be (+ adjective) …
There’s likely to be (+ noun) …

Mime: ‘look’ + adjective  Get students to suggest adjectives that can follow ‘look’. Then get them (perhaps in pairs or groups) to mime some of these. The others decide what the adjective is, and say ‘You look cold/hot/tired/bored/interested/excited/intelligent/stupid/worried …’.

Acting out adverbs  Make a set of cards with verbs, and a separate set with adverbs. Give each student one of each (either preselected or chosen at random). Students have to act the two-word expression; the class guess what is being acted. (‘You’re walking slowly.’ ‘You’re singing badly.’ ‘You’re talking quietly.’) If a student feels he/she can’t act the expression in question, offer another choice.

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.  ➔ Section 12 continues
possible further activities

Observation: pairs of adjectives  How many things can students see in the classroom, or through the window, that can be described with two or more adjectives, including one showing the colour? ('a big white table' ‘two small black leather handbags’ ‘a dirty long blue bus’)

Wishes  Get students to tell you something that they’d like. They must use adjectives from at least three of the categories listed at the top of the page: ‘other’, ‘colour’, ‘origin/place’, ‘material’, ‘purpose’. ('I’d like a big pink leather hat').

Internet  Get students to check which is more frequent: “big green” or “green big”.

language notes

The use of well and ill before nouns is becoming somewhat more common.

possible further activities

The meaning of ‘a mere’  This is a useful expression that students may not be familiar with. Explain the meaning (‘nothing more than a’) and get them to look in their dictionaries to see what words it commonly occurs with. Then ask them which of the following expressions they think are normal English:

d) a mere beginner  a mere detail  a mere tractor  a mere interruption  a mere distraction
   a mere house  a mere $20  a mere breath of wind  a mere earthquake  a mere cold

possible further activities

Expressions with participles  How many expressions can the class think of beginning ‘a falling’ and ‘a broken’? Examples of possible answers:

d) a falling leaf  a falling rock  a falling star (also called ‘a shooting star’)  a falling body
   a broken bone  a broken promise  a broken glass  a broken home  a broken engagement

What about ‘a dripping’? (‘A dripping tap’ is the only common collocation.)

language notes

This can be a sensitive area for language use. Some blind, deaf or otherwise disadvantaged people dislike general labels like ‘the blind’ or ‘the deaf’, feeling that such labels have a derogatory implication – they suggest, perhaps, that the people concerned belong to an abnormal group, separate and distinct from the ‘normal’ population. Many people therefore prefer less absolute terms like ‘partially sighted’, ‘with hearing difficulty’; or expressions that are felt to be less negative in tone (‘the disabled’ rather than ‘the handicapped’).

possible further activities

Good causes  Put students in groups of four or so. Tell each group that they have £1000 (or the equivalent in another currency). They must donate the money to a charity or charities supporting one or more of the following groups:

the blind, the deaf, the disabled, the homeless, the unemployed, the mentally ill

➔ Section 12 continues
They have ten minutes to discuss how much they will give to each of their chosen charities. Then groups tell the class what they have decided. Who gets the most support?

Internet Get students to find out the names of some of the charities in English-speaking countries that support these various disadvantaged groups.

**language notes**

As with structures after nouns, this is one of those areas that are on the frontier between grammar and vocabulary. In order to be sure what structure is used with a particular adjective, it is generally necessary to consult a good dictionary. Some common cases are practised here, and others are listed on pages 308–309.

**possible further activities**

*Personalisation* Get students to complete some or all of the following sentences:
- I’m often critical of …
- I’m anxious to …
- I’m angry about having to …
- I’m proud of being …
- I’m not happy about …

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**possible further activities**

*Personalisation: certainty and completeness* Get students to complete some or all of the following sentences:
- I once completely forgot to …
- I sometimes completely forget to …
- I have definitely decided to …
- I have definitely decided not to …

*Class survey: frequency* Each student writes a question beginning ‘How often do you …?’, about one of the following activities, or some other activity of your or their choice:
- eat red cabbage
- sing in the shower
- eat fruit
- drive fast
- read women’s magazines
- dream in English
- talk to strangers
- read novels
- watch TV
- play basketball

Then students go round asking their questions and noting the answers. Encourage answers with short adverbs of frequency (*always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *occasionally*, *hardly ever*, *never*), but other expressions like ‘once a day’, ‘twice a week’, ‘three times a year’ may be needed as well. Finally students report to the class:
- Mario often eats red cabbage.
- Three students never play tennis.
- One person falls in love twice a week.

**Building sentences: frequency** Write some or all of the following sentences (or others) on cards. Cut each into three as shown and distribute them. Students have to walk round saying (not showing) their sentence components to find the people they need in order to build possible sentences. When they’ve done it, groups of three read out their sentences, making sure they get the order right. (There are quite a lot of possible answers, not all of them sensible.)
- we always cook | soup | beautifully
- we often sing | folksongs | in the bath
- we don’t speak | Japanese | very well
- we write | poetry | at night

➔ Section 12 continues
language notes

Older grammars often say that so … as is normally used after not. In fact, in modern English not as … as is also common and correct.

possible further activities

Extending Exercise 4 Students’ languages certainly have some colourful traditional comparisons. Can they think of some examples and translate them into English? They should use as both times, not just once as in the Texan examples.

language notes

The formation of comparatives and superlatives should cause few problems at this level. Any students who still have difficulty can find the rules in Appendix 2 on page 296.

Personalisation: vocabulary expansion Run over the following adjectives for personality-types and make sure students know them all. Add any that they suggest.

- talkative
- reserved
- shy
- self-conscious
- confident
- over-confident
- aggressive
- quarrelsome
- timid
- nervous
- worried
- calm
- courageous
- critical
- self-critical
- tolerant
- intolerant
- hard-working
- lazy
- tidy
- untidy
- forgetful
- organised
- disorganised
- economical
- extravagant
- optimistic
- pessimistic

Then get students to make sentences about themselves or people they know, on the following pattern:

I’m / X is the (superlative adjective) person in my family / my group of friends / the class.

language notes

These structures may still cause difficulty:

*It’s getting more interesting and more interesting.
*(The) more she is nervous, (the) more she talks.
*Faster we drove, (the) more I got frightened.

possible further activities

Personalisation (1) Get students to complete some of the following sentences, using the double comparative structure practised on this page:

- I’m getting …
- My (name of relation) is getting …
- (Name of person) is getting …
- This town is getting …
- This country is getting …

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.
The world is getting ...
... is getting ...

*Mime*  Give out cards with double comparative expressions to small groups of students. Each group has to mime what’s on the card; the others guess what is being mimed.

Suggestions:
- faster and faster  slower and slower  colder and colder
- warmer and warmer  later and later  happier and happier
- more and more tired  angrier and angrier  more and more excited
- more and more beautiful  hungrier and hungrier  older and older

*Internet*  Ask students to find interesting sentences on the internet containing “slower and slower”; “faster and faster”; “more and more expensive” or other double comparatives of their choice.

*Extending Exercise 2*  Bright students may be able to think of a lot more chains of this kind. Make sure they get the word order right where there is a verb and an object: ‘the more races he wins’, ‘the more confidence he gains’, ‘the more responsibility she gets’, ‘the more exercise I take’ etc.

*Personalisation (2)*  Ask students to complete one or more of the following sentences:
- The more I try to …,
- The older I get, …
- The more books I read, …

*Internet*  Ask students to find interesting sentences on the internet beginning “The more we”.

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**possible further activities**

*Social attitudes*  Can students complete any of the following generalisations about the societies they live in or are familiar with?
- Older people tend to …
- Younger people tend to …
- Richer people tend to …
- Poorer people tend to …

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**possible further activities**

*Personalisation (1)*  Ask students to complete one of more of the following sentences:
- I’m happiest when I’m …
- I’m happiest when I can …
- I’m happiest when I don’t have to …

*Internet*  Ask students if they can find a few interesting sentences on the internet beginning “He’s most dangerous when”.

*Personalisation (2)*  Get students to complete the following sentence:
- I’d like to be the first person to …

➔ Section 12 continues
possible further activities

Personalisation: comparatives  If physical comparison is not a sensitive area, put students in groups of three. Each student has to find one way in which he/she is very different from one of the others, using comparatives with modifying expressions (much, far, a little, a bit, a lot etc). (‘I’m much taller than Nadia.’ ‘I’m a bit older than Abbas.’) Alternatively, get students to make similar sentences about members of their families.

Mime: comparatives Students work in pairs, and do exaggerated mimes to show that one is much more X than the other. The class say what is being demonstrated:

Jean is much colder than Andrea. [Jean is shivering as hard as he can.]

Personalisation: superlatives  As before, but now each student has to find one way in which he/she is ‘superlative’ in the group, using modifying expressions (much, by far, quite, almost etc). (‘I’m by far the tallest person in the group.’ ‘I’ve got almost the longest hair.’ ‘My handbag is much the biggest.’)

Home towns etc  Students produce exaggerated statements about their home towns/villages/countries etc. (‘Wuppertal is by far the most romantic spot in Western Europe.’ ‘Yokohama has much the finest architecture in Japan.’ ‘Denmark has easily the best food in the world.’)

possible further activities

‘Such’ or ‘so’?  Say a series of adjectives and noun phrases (the ones on this page and others). Students have to add such or so. Like this:

‘warm’ – ‘so warm’
‘a warm day’ – ‘such a warm day’
‘ideas’ – ‘such ideas’

Keep it going fast, but not so fast that the students get confused.

language notes

The use of like as a conjunction (e.g. like I said; like her life depended on it) is common in informal speech and writing, though in the past it has been regarded as ‘incorrect’.

possible further activities

Colourful comparisons  Do students know the following comparisons?

She was running around like a headless chicken.
He's like a winter’s day: short, dark and dirty.
He smokes like a chimney / drinks like a fish / eats like a horse.

Can they think of any colourful comparisons in their own language(s) and translate them into English?

Internet  Can students find amusing comparisons on the internet beginning “Men are like” or “Women are like”? Do they think any of them are true?

Personalisation: jobs  Ask students to write three completions for each of the following sentences. Help with vocabulary as necessary.

I’d like to work as a …
I’d hate to work as a …