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Comparative Analysis of Adjectives In English

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU). Mastery of adjective comparison is important to improve English skills, both oral and written. The research uses a qualitative approach with an interview method to 20 students from various study programs. Interview questions include the use of adjectives in positive, comparative, superlative, as well as irregular adjectives and their exceptions. The results of the study revealed that students experienced difficulties related to the use of irregular adjectives, exceptions in the formation of comparisons, long adjectives, lack of practice and practice, and the influence of the mother tongue. These findings provide valuable information for the development of more effective teaching methods in the topic of adjective comparison in UIN SU. In addition, this research contributes to enriching English learning literature, especially in the context of Indonesian higher education.

Keywords: *Adjective Comparison, English, Qualitative Study, Interview, State Islamic University of North Sumatra.*

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INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language that is widely spoken all over the world. English proficiency is one of the essential skills for individuals to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, both in academic and professional contexts. One of the crucial aspects of mastering English is an understanding of grammar, including the use of adjectives. Adjectives are a class of words that function to describe or give quality to nouns. In English, adjectives have different levels of comparison, namely positive, comparative, and superlative. Positive levels are the basic forms of adjectives, such as "tall," "small," and "beautiful." Comparative level is used to compare two or more things, while superlative level is used to express the highest or lowest level of a quality. (Hendrawati, 2019)

The use of comparative adjectives in English has a consistent rule of formation, although there are some exceptions and irregular adjectives. Generally, adjectives that consist of one syllable or two syllables with consonant suffixes are added the suffix "-er" for the comparative level and "-est" for the superlative level. Meanwhile, adjectives that consist of two or more syllables with vowel endings are added the previous word "more" for the comparative level and "most" for the superlative level. However, there are some adjectives in English that do not follow the rules of the formation of comparisons regularly. Adjectives such as "good," "bad," and "little" have irregular comparative and superlative forms. In addition, there are exceptions in the formation of adjective comparisons, such as the adjective "old" which has an irregular comparative form but a regular superlative form. (Suryana & Septian, 2019)

Understanding the comparison of adjectives in English is important to improve language skills, both oral and written. The use of adjectives that are appropriate and in accordance with the level of comparison can help convey meaning more clearly and effectively. Therefore, research on the use of comparative adjectives in English has relevance in the context of language learning and teaching.

This research was conducted at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU), one of the oldest public universities in North Sumatra that has an English study program. The purpose of this study is to analyze the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at UIN SU. By using a qualitative approach and interview method, this study seeks to identify the patterns and difficulties experienced by students in using adjective comparison. The importance of this research lies in its potential to provide valuable information regarding students' understanding of the comparison of adjectives in English. The findings of this study can be the basis for the development of more effective teaching methods, especially in the topic of adjective comparison. In addition, this research also contributes to enriching the literature on English language learning, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

Comparison of Adjectives in English

Adjectives are a class of words that function to describe or give quality to nouns. In English, adjectives have different levels of comparison, namely positive, comparative, and superlative. Positive levels are the basic forms of adjectives, such as "tall", "small", and "beautiful". Comparative level is used to compare two or more things, while superlative level is used to express the highest or lowest level of a quality. For example, "taller" (taller) and "tallest" (tallest). (Suharti, 2020)

Rules for the Formation of Adjective Comparisons

Generally, adjectives that consist of one syllable or two syllables with consonant suffixes are added the suffix "-er" for the comparative level and "-est" for the superlative level. For example, "tall" becomes "taller" and "tallest", while "small" becomes "smaller" and "smallest". (Nur Aini et al., 2021) Meanwhile, adjectives consisting of two or more syllables with a vowel suffix are added the previous word "more" for the comparative level and "most" for the superlative level, such as "beautiful" to "more beautiful" and "most beautiful" (most beautiful). However, this rule does not always apply because there are some exceptions. For example, the adjective "good" has the comparative form "better" and the superlative "best", which does not follow the general rules of the formation of adjective comparisons (Mandasari et al., 2022)

Irregular Adjectives

There are some adjectives in English that do not follow the rules of the formation of comparisons regularly. Adjectives such as "good", "bad", "little", "much", and "far" have irregular comparative and superlative forms. For example, "good" becomes "better" and "best", while "bad" becomes "worse" and "worst". These irregular adjectives often cause difficulties for learners of English as a foreign language because they have to memorize forms that do not follow the general rules. (Mandasari et al., 2022)

Exceptions in the Formation of Adjective Comparisons

In addition to irregular adjectives, there are also exceptions in the formation of adjective comparisons in English. For example, the adjective "old" has an irregular comparative form, i.e. "older", but the superlative form is regular, i.e., "oldest". Another example is the adjective "near" which has the comparative form "nearer" and the superlative "nearest". In addition, there are adjectives that do not have a level of comparison because of their absolute or non-comparable nature. (Mind, 2018) For example, adjectives such as "perfect," "unique," "complete," and "eternal" do not have a comparative or superlative form because a thing cannot be more perfect, more unique, more complete, or more eternal than others (Rusydah, 2020)

Difficulties in the Use of Adjectives Comparative

Previous research has shown that the use of comparative adjectives in English often causes difficulties for learners of English as a foreign language. This difficulty can be caused by several factors, such as: (Islamiyah & Fajri, 2019)

- 1) Differences in grammatical structure between mother tongue and English. Some languages do not have the same adjective comparison system as English, so learners can experience confusion in understanding this concept.
- 2) Lack of understanding of the rules for the formation of adjective comparisons. While there are general rules, the presence of exceptions and irregular adjectives can confuse learners.
- 3) Lack of practice or practice in using adjective comparison. Students may understand concepts theoretically, but are less skilled in applying them in oral and written communication.

- 4) Native language interference. Learners can get caught up in the mistake of getting carried away by the structure of their native language in using adjective comparisons in English.

The Importance of Understanding Adjective Comparison

Understanding the comparison of adjectives in English is important to improve language skills, both oral and written. The use of adjectives that are appropriate and in accordance with the level of comparison can help convey meaning more clearly and effectively. In addition, the mastery of comparative adjectives also has implications in academic and professional contexts, where accurate written and oral communication is indispensable. In an academic context, the use of appropriate adjectives can help students in compiling scientific papers, such as papers, research reports, or theses. While in a professional context, mastery of adjective comparison can help individuals in communicating effectively with colleagues, superiors, or clients. (Azizah, 2021)

Research on Adjective Comparison

Several previous studies have examined the comparison of adjectives in English from various perspectives. For example, conducting qualitative research on the misuse of adjective comparisons in student essays. (M.Hum, 2023) The results of the study show that the most errors occur in irregular adjectives and their exclusions. Meanwhile, (Kurniawan & Nufus, 2020) conducted a case study on the teaching strategy of comparative adjectives in English in high schools. The findings of the study reveal that the use of contextual methods and intensive practice can help improve students' understanding of adjective comparison. In addition, the research conducted by (Rumokoy, 2018) analyzing the misuse of comparative adjectives in the writings of students majoring in English. The results show that the most common error occurs in the formation of comparative and superlative levels for adjectives consisting of two or more syllables. For example, students often make mistakes in using the form "more intelligent" or "most intelligent" for the adjective "intelligent".

In the context of this study, the analysis of the comparative use of adjectives in English by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU) is important to find out the patterns and difficulties experienced by students. The findings of this study can be the basis for the development of more effective teaching methods, especially in the topic of adjective comparison in the UIN SU environment. By looking at previous studies, it can be concluded that the comparison of adjectives in English is a topic that is still a challenge for learners of English as a foreign language. Therefore, further research is needed to identify difficulties and find appropriate solutions in teaching adjective comparison, both in the context of secondary and higher education.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied through the exploration of perspectives and participant experiences (Izza Naufal Abshari et al., 2023)

Data Collection Methods

The method used to collect data in this study is interviews. Interviews are an appropriate method to obtain in-depth information from participants about the topic being researched. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 20 students from various study programs at UIN SU. (Rahmawati et al., 2023)

Interview questions will include the use of adjectives in positive, comparative, and superlative levels, as well as irregular use of adjectives and their exceptions. The interview questions will be designed in such a way as to provoke an in-depth response from the participants about their understanding and experience in using adjective comparisons in English.

Research Participants

The participants in this study are 20 students from various study programs at UIN SU. The selection of participants will be carried out using the purposive sampling technique, where participants are selected based on certain criteria that are in accordance with the purpose of the research. The criteria used in the selection of participants include: (Wahyuni, 2022)

- 1) Students are active at UIN SU.
- 2) Have taken courses related to English.

- 3) Be willing to participate in the interview.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis methods. Thematic analysis involves the process of encoding and identifying themes that emerge from the data. The steps in thematic analysis include:

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the data (read the interview transcript repeatedly).
- 2) Creating the initial code.
- 3) Look for potential themes.
- 4) Review existing themes.
- 5) Define and name themes.
- 6) Compile reports.

The thematic analysis process will be carried out iteratively, where the researcher will move back and forth between data, code, and theme to ensure that the research findings truly reflect the data obtained from the interview.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data in this study, triangulation of data sources will be carried out. Triangulation of data sources involves collecting data from several different sources to obtain diverse perspectives on the phenomenon being studied. In this study, triangulation will be carried out by comparing data obtained from interviews with various participants.

By using a qualitative approach and interview method, this study is expected to provide a deep understanding of the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at UIN SU. The findings of this study can be the foundation for the development of more effective teaching methods in this topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of interview data that has been conducted, several main themes were found related to the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU).

Difficulties in Using Irregular Adjectives

Most participants admitted that they had difficulty using irregular adjectives, such as "good," "bad," "little," and "much." Some participants often make mistakes in forming the comparative and superlative levels for the adjective. For example, they still often use the "more good" and "most good" forms instead of "better" and "best".

Interview excerpts:

Adjectives like 'good' and 'bad' always confuse me. Sometimes I forget its irregular comparative and superlative forms. (Participant 5)

Difficulties in Using Exceptions

In addition to irregular adjectives, participants also experienced difficulties in using exceptions in the formation of adjective comparisons. For example, some participants were wrong in using the comparative form of the adjective "old" when it should be "older" instead of "more old".

Interview excerpts:

I am often confused by adjectives like 'old' that have exceptions in the formation of comparisons. Sometimes I still use the wrong form. (Participant 12)

Difficulties in Using Comparisons for Long Adjectives

Participants also admitted that they often had difficulty forming comparative and superlative levels for adjectives consisting of two or more syllables. They are still often confused in using the words "more" and "most" before the adjective.

Interview excerpts:

Long adjectives like 'intelligent' or 'beautiful' always confuse me in using their comparative forms. I often forget to add 'more' or 'most' in front of it. (8 participants)

Lack of Practice and Practice

Some participants admitted that they lacked practice and practice in using adjective comparisons in English. They realize that theoretical understanding alone is not enough, but needs to be balanced with intensive practice in order to use adjective comparisons well.

Interview excerpts:

I feel that the material on the comparison of adjectives is not practiced in the classroom. We get more theoretical explanations than practice using them in real contexts."(Participant 17)

Influence of Mother Language

Some participants admitted that their native language also affected the difficulty in using adjective comparisons in English. The difference in grammatical systems between the mother tongue and English makes them sometimes stuck in mistakes.

Interview excerpts:

As a speaker of regional languages, I find it a bit difficult to understand the concept of comparative adjectives in English. This system doesn't exist in my mother tongue, so I have to really get used to it." (Participant 3)

The above findings reveal that students at UIN SU still experience various difficulties in using adjective comparisons in English. These difficulties include the use of irregular adjectives, exceptions, long adjectives, lack of practice and practice, and the influence of the mother tongue. These findings provide important information for the development of more effective teaching methods to help students master the topic of comparative adjectives in English.

CONCLUSION

English has become an international language that is widely spoken all over the world. English proficiency is one of the important skills, especially in academic and professional contexts. One crucial aspect of mastering English is an understanding of grammar, including the use of adjectives and their comparisons. Adjectives in English have different levels of comparison, namely positive, comparative, and superlative. Although there are general rules in the formation of adjective comparisons, there are some exceptions and irregular adjectives. Previous research has shown that the use of comparative adjectives in English often causes difficulties for learners of English as a foreign language.

This study aims to analyze the use of comparative adjectives in English by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU). Using a qualitative approach and interview method, this study explores the patterns and difficulties experienced by students in using adjective comparisons. The results of the study show that students at UIN SU still experience various difficulties in using the comparison of adjectives in English. These difficulties include the use of irregular adjectives, exceptions, long adjectives, lack of practice and practice, and the influence of the mother tongue.

- 1) The first findings revealed that most participants had difficulty using irregular adjectives, such as "good," "bad," "little," and "much." They are often mistaken in forming the comparative and superlative levels for the adjective.
- 2) The second finding highlights the difficulty of participants in using exceptions in the formation of adjective comparisons. For example, some participants were wrong in using the comparative form for the adjective "old" when it should be "older."
- 3) The third finding revealed that participants also had difficulty in forming comparative and superlative levels for adjectives consisting of two or more syllables. They are still often confused in using the words "more" and "most" before the adjective.
- 4) The fourth finding shows that the lack of practice and practice is one of the factors that cause students to have difficulty in using adjective comparisons in English. They realize that theoretical understanding alone is not enough and needs to be balanced with intensive practice.
- 5) Finally, the fifth finding revealed that the participants' mother tongue also affected the difficulty in using adjective comparisons in English. The difference in grammatical systems between the mother tongue and English makes them sometimes stuck in mistakes.

These findings provide important information for the development of more effective teaching methods to help students master the topic of comparative adjectives in English. By understanding the patterns and difficulties experienced by students, lecturers and lecturers can design learning strategies that are more contextual, interactive, and practical. In addition, this research also contributes to enriching the literature on English language learning, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia. These findings can be the foundation for further research to explore the right solution in teaching adjective comparison in English.

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