COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Seventeenth lesson – Dix-septième leçon
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Comparatives

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INTRODUCTION

- **Comparatives** express relative *superiority*, *inferiority* and *equality* between two or more things, people or ideas.

- The **superlative** expresses which object, person or concept is the **most** or **least** of all those being compared.
1. THE COMPARATIVE FORMS

1.1 Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Superiority</th>
<th>Equality</th>
<th>Inferiority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Plus adj. que</td>
<td>Aussi adj. que</td>
<td>Moins adj. que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Plus adv. que</td>
<td>Aussi adv. que</td>
<td>Moins adv. que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Plus de noun que</td>
<td>Autant de noun que</td>
<td>Moins de noun que</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Verb plus que</td>
<td>Verb autant que</td>
<td>Verb moins que</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The comparative forms

1.3 With adverbs

- Paul court *plus vite que* Thoko.
- Paul runs more quickly than Thoko.

- Thoko court *aussi vite que* Paul.
- Thoko runs as quickly as Paul.

- Thoko court *moins vite que* Paul.
- Thoko runs less quickly than Paul.
1. The comparative forms

1.4 With nouns

- *Nelson a plus d’amis que Sam.*
- *Nelson has more friends than Sam.*

- *Sam a autant d’amis que Nelson.*
- *Sam has as many friends as Nelson.*

- *Sam a moins d’amis que Nelson.*
- *Sam has fewer friends than Nelson.*
1. The comparative forms

1.5 With verbs

- Jane lit *plus qu’*Anne.
- Jane reads more than Anne.

- Anne lit *autant que* Jane.
- Anne reads as much as Jane.

- Anne lit *moins que* Jane.
- Anne reads less than Jane.
2. The Comparative of Bon, Mauvais, Bien

2.1 With Bon

- In comparative constructions **bon** (good) is an **adjective** and means **good, suitable, useful**.
  - Its forms are **irregular**.
  - The comparative form of bon is **meilleur**.
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- **Bon** is irregular in the superior comparative.

- In the inferiority or equality constructions, it follows the normal rules.
2. The Comparative of Bon, Mauvais, Bien

- *Tes notes sont meilleures que mes notes.*
  - *Your marks are better than my marks.*

- *Tes notes sont moins bonnes que mes notes.*
  - *Your marks are worse than my marks. (literally less good)*

- *Tes notes sont aussi bonnes que mes notes.*
  - *Your marks are as good as my marks.*
2. The Comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- **Bien** is also used in comparative constructions with *être* (or verbs such as *être*), and means *good, suitable, useful* ...

- *Tes gâteaux sont bien mais mes gâteaux sont meilleurs.*
- *Your cakes are good but my cakes are better.*

- *Ce roman est bien mais la pièce de théâtre est meilleure.*
- *This novel is good, but the play is better.*
2. **THE COMPARATIVE OF BON, MAUVAIS, BIEN**

- **2.2 With mauvais**

  - **Mauvais** (bad) has both **regular** and **irregular** forms for the comparative.
2. THE COMPARATIVE OF BON, MAUVAIS, BIEN

- **Regular forms:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mauvais</th>
<th>mauvaise</th>
<th>mauvais</th>
<th>mauvaises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. sg.</td>
<td>f. sg.</td>
<td>m. pl.</td>
<td>f. pl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- *Mes notes sont plus mauvaises que tes notes.*
  - *My marks are worse than your marks.*
  (literally more bad)

- *Mes notes sont moins mauvaises que tes notes.*
  - *My marks are better than your marks.*
  (literally less bad)

- *Mes notes sont aussi mauvaises que tes notes.*
  - *My marks are as bad as your marks.*
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- **Irregular forms:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pire</th>
<th>pires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m./f. sg.</td>
<td>m./f. pl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- *Mes notes sont pires que tes notes.*
- *My marks are worse than your marks.*
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

2.3 With bien

- When bien (well) is used as an adverb (i.e. when it refers to as verb, it has a special comparative and superlative form: **mieux** (better))

- This irregularity only applies to the constructions of superiority, inferiority and equality.
2. The comparative of bon, mauvais, bien

- *Je danse bien.*
  - I dance well.

- *Je danse mieux que toi.*
  - I dance better than you.

- *Je danse moins bien que toi.*
  - Literally: I dance less well than you.

- *Je danse aussi bien que lui.*
  - I dance as well as him.
3. THE SUPERLATIVE FORMS

3.1 Definition

- Superlatives express **absolute superiority or inferiority**.

- They require the definite article.

- The **definite article** always **agrees** with adjectives and consequently with the subject of the sentence.
3. THE SUPERLATIVE FORMS

- In constructions with adverbs, the adverb follows the verb.

  - Remember that adverbs do not agree with words they refer to.

  - This is why, *le* is the only article form used in superlative constructions with adverbs.

  - This rule applies also to superlative constructions with **nouns** and **verbs**.
# 3. The Superlative Forms – Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Superiority [+] most</th>
<th>Inferiority [-] least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjective</strong></td>
<td>La/le/les plus adj.</td>
<td>Le/la/les moins adj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adverb</strong></td>
<td>Le plus adv.</td>
<td>Le moins adv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noun</strong></td>
<td>Le plus de noun</td>
<td>Le moins de noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb</strong></td>
<td>Verb le plus</td>
<td>Verb le moins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The superlative forms

3.3 With adjectives

- Jane est la plus belle de la famille!
- Jane is the most beautiful in the family!

- Paul est le plus beau de la famille!
- Paul is the most handsome in the family!

- David et Thoko sont les plus intelligents de la famille!
- David and Thoko are the most intelligent in the family!
3. The superlative forms

- Anne est **la moins** intéressant de la classe.
- Anne is the least interesting in the classroom.

- David est **le moins** intéressant de la classe.
- David is the least interesting in the classroom.

- Jono et Clive sont **les moins** sérieux de la classe.
- Jone and Clive are the least serious in the classroom.
3. The superlative forms

Notes:

- In the previous sentences le/la/les plus and le/la/les moins refer to the subject of the sentence.

- Consequently, the definite article agrees in gender and number with the subjects as well as with adjectives related to them.
3. The superlative forms

3.4 With adverbs

- *Dans ma famille, c’est mon frère qui lit le plus vite.*
- *In my family, it is my brother who reads the fastest.*

- *Et c’est ma sœur qui comprend le moins vite.*
- *And it’s my sister who understands the slowest. (literally the least fast)*
3. THE SUPERLATIVE FORMS

Notes:

- In the previous sentences le plus/le moins refer to the adverb (not to subject: son frère/sa sœur).

- This is why the definite article remains le (it never agrees with adverbs).
3. The superlative forms

3.5 With nouns

- *Dans mon quartier, c’est Nelson qui a le plus d’amis.*
- *In my neighbourhood, it’s Nelson who has the most friends.*

- *Et c’est Elouise qui a le moins de succès.*
- *And it’s Elouise who has the least success.*
3. The superlative forms

- In the sentences in the previous slide le plus/le moins refer to the verb (not to subject: Anne, Jane, Pierre, David).

- This is why the definite article remains le (it never agrees with verbs)
4. The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien

4.1 With bon

As with its comparative forms, bon (good) is irregular in its superlative constructions.
4. The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien

- The superlative of *bon* is *le meilleur*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le meilleur</th>
<th>La meilleure</th>
<th>Les meilleurs</th>
<th>Les meilleures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. sg.</td>
<td>f. sg.</td>
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<td>f. pl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien

- Mes notes sont les meilleures.
- My marks are the best.
4. **The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien**

4.2 **With mauvais**

- **Mauvais** (*bad*) has both regular and irregular forms for the superlative
4. The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien

- **Regular forms:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le plus mauvais</th>
<th>La plus mauvaise</th>
<th>Les plus mauvais</th>
<th>Les plus mauvaises</th>
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</thead>
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<td>m. sg.</td>
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<td>f. pl.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien

- **Irregular forms:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le pire</th>
<th>La pire</th>
<th>Les pires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. sg.</td>
<td>f. sg.</td>
<td>m./f. pl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. THE SUPERLATIVE OF BON, MAUVAIS AND BIEN

- Mes notes sont les pires.
- My marks are the worse.
4. THE SUPERLATIVE OF BON, MAUVAIS AND BIEN

4.3 With bien

- The adverb *bien* (*well*) has a special superlative form: *le mieux* (*the best*).

- This irregular form only applies to the construction of superiority.
4. **The superlative of bon, mauvais and bien**

- C’est Marie qui explique **le mieux** la grammaire.
  - It’s Marie who explains grammar the best.

- C’est Paul qui explique **le moins bien** la grammaire.
  - It’s Paul who explains grammar the worst.
C’est tout pour aujourd’hui!

Au revoir!

Merci!