



VERBAL LIVE PREP 2.0

Repeating Verbs in Comparisons



Pre-requisite: SC Session 3

Parallelism

COMPARISONS – TO REPEAT OR NOT TO REPEAT THE VERB

Hi folks,

While reviewing comparison sentences, people are often confused whether they should repeat the verb in the comparison or not. For example, which of these are correct?

Jack cooks better Italian food than his wife.
= Jack cooks cook better Italian food than his wife does.

Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife.
Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife is.

1. Jack cooks better Italian food than his wife.
2. Jack cooks better Italian food than his wife does.

Both the sentences above convey the same meaning, and hence are considered interchangeable. In this case, “does” is optional. However, we cannot say the same about the following two sentences:

1. Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife.
2. Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife is.

In this post, we will review why the sentences in first set are interchangeable and why the sentences in second set are not. The basic governing principle is that the sentence must be able to communicate the meaning without any ambiguity.

WHEN IN COMPARISONS WE DO NOT NEED TO REPEAT THE VERB?

When the sentence expresses the meaning without any ambiguity, we do not need to repeat the verb. Lets consider the first set of sentences:

Jack cooks better Italian food than his wife.

In this sentence the two entities being compared are:

- Jack cooks
 - BETTER THAN
- His wife cooks

The verb “cooks” is not repeated for “wife”. Eliminating the verb as is done in this case is allowed and results in a precise sentence.

Now lets see whether this sentence has some other meaning? Can the comparison be between the following two entities? **Jack cooks BETTER**

- Italian food
 - THAN
- His wife

Jack cooks Italian food – But can Jack really cook his wife? This comparison is clearly non-sensical unless Jack is a cannibal (!!)

Thus, when the sentence can communicate one and only one logical meaning, we **do not need to repeat** the complete verb or the helping verb.

WHEN IN COMPARISONS DO WE NEED TO REPEAT THE VERB?

When there is ambiguity in the meaning of the sentence, we need to repeat the verb to express the intended meaning. Let’s consider the second set of sentences:

Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife.

In this sentence the two entities being compared are:

- Jack is LESS afraid of dark
 - THAN
- His wife is

So we are comparing the extent of fear of darkness – Jack is less afraid of dark. His wife is more afraid of dark.

Now let’s see whether this sentence has some other meaning? Can the comparison be between the following two entities? **Jack is LESS afraid of**

- dark
 - THAN
- his wife

Jack is afraid of dark – Jack is also afraid of his wife. This comparison clearly makes sense.

Thus, in this case, the sentence communicates two vastly different comparisons. Therefore if the sentence is written with the verb omitted, then there will be ambiguity in the meaning since we will not know which meaning to consider. Thus, in such cases, we need to correct the sentence such that it clearly communicates one and only one meaning.

If we repeat the verb, then we will be able to communicate one and only one meaning:

Jack is less afraid of dark than his wife is.

In this sentence the two entities being compared are:

- Jack is **LESS** afraid of dark
 - **THAN**
- His wife is

TAKE AWAY

The sentence should convey the meaning unambiguously. So a comparison sentence should communicate one and only one meaning. If upon reading a comparison sentence in which the second verb has been omitted, you feel that there are two possible interpretations, then this sentence is incorrect. You need to select the answer choice that clarifies the comparison.