

## Word-classes in English for Political Studies

### ADJECTIVES (QUALIFIERS)

- ✧ gives much information about a noun (e.g., *soft skills, white coffee, black Friday, hard work, tough talks, steady growth*);
- ✧ no gender at all;
- ✧ singular and plural forms are always the same;
- ✧ when a modifier, it has attributive position, that is always comes before the noun (modified), but ... **pay attention to collocations such as *attorney general*<sup>1</sup> and *secretary-general*<sup>2</sup> (exemplifying the so called “anastrophe” or “inversion”) → see page 2;**
- ✧ uses the adverbs *very, really, highly, extremely* or *truly*, called *intensifiers*, to make an adjective stronger → absolute superlative;

It is **extremely important** to follow the directions exactly.

Many people in rural areas are **extremely poor**.

We have **very little** information at present on the incident.

This is a **very important** part of our marketing.

It's **really hard** to find a decent job these days.

I'm **really sorry**.

She had a **highly successful** career as a news reporter.

The US car market is **highly competitive**.

- ✧ higher, lower, same degree comparative;

<sup>1</sup> Procuratore generale – In GB: **Attorney General** è il principale magistrato della Corona, nominato dal Primo Ministro. In USA: **Attorney General** è la più alta carica di funzionario di giustizia a livello federale, a capo del dipartimento di giustizia federale.

<sup>2</sup> Segretario generale.

- ✧ absolute, relative superlative;
- ✧ short and long adjectives must be distinguished in order to build up higher degree comparative and superlative forms; in fact, short adjectives have a specific paradigm using the endings *-er* and *-est* respectively, whereas long adjectives are preceded by *more* and *the most* respectively<sup>3</sup>.

## Adjectives – Predicative position

- After the so-called *link verbs*, that is verbs used to join an adjective or noun complement to a subject, adjectives have a predicative position.
- Common examples of *link verbs* are: to be, to seem, to look, to appear, to become, to taste, to sound, to feel, to get.
  - She *looks* tired
  - I *feel* happy
  - It *sounds* good
  - He's *getting* older

## Some examples of anastrophe or inversion

- ✓ governor-general<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ Director general<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ Directorate general<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ an heir apparent<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ heir presumptive<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lower degree comparatives and same degree comparatives are formed regardless of the length of adjectives; they are always built up as follows: less + adj. (+ than)/ not so + adj. (+ as); as + adj. + as; e.g.: *less large (than)*; *not so large (as)*; *as large as*; *less difficult than*; *not so difficult (as)*; *as difficult as*.

<sup>4</sup> Governatore generale, viceré che rappresenta la monarchia nelle antiche colonie e nel reame del Commonwealth.

<sup>5</sup> Direttore generale.

<sup>6</sup> Direzione generale, ciascuno dei 26 dicasteri in cui è strutturata la Commissione Europea.

<sup>7</sup> Erede legittimo.

- ✓ president elect<sup>9</sup>
- ✓ body politic<sup>10</sup>
- ✓ fee simple<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ court martial<sup>12</sup>
- ✓ battle royal<sup>13</sup>
- ✓ air conditioning<sup>14</sup>

Pay attention to the **plural form** of such word-clusters or syntactic collocations, it is advisable to look up the dictionary: e.g. *attorney general*, pl. *attorneys general/attorney generals*; *secretary general*, pl. *secretaries general/secretary generals*.

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<sup>8</sup> Erede presunto.

<sup>9</sup> Presidente eletto che non ha ancora assunto le funzioni.

<sup>10</sup> Lo Stato.

<sup>11</sup> Proprietà assoluta.

<sup>12</sup> Corte marziale.

<sup>13</sup> Lotta accanita.

<sup>14</sup> Aria condizionata.

	Higher degree comparative	Superlative
<b>short adj.</b>		
✓ cheap	cheap <b>er</b> (than)	<b>the</b> cheap <b>est</b>
✓ early	earli <b>er</b> (than)	<b>the</b> earli <b>est</b>
✓ high	high <b>er</b> (than)	<b>the</b> high <b>est</b>
✓ tough	tough <b>er</b> (than)	<b>the</b> tough <b>est</b>
✓ simple	simpl <b>er</b> (than)**	<b>the</b> simpl <b>est</b> **
✓ risky	riski <b>er</b> (than)***	<b>the</b> riski <b>est</b> ***
✓ common	common <b>er</b> (than)****	<b>the</b> common <b>est</b> ****

\*\* You can also use **more simple** and **the most simple**.

\*\*\* You can also use **more risky** and **the most risky**.

\*\*\*\* You can also use **more common** and **the most common**.

### long adj.

✓ expensive	<b>more</b> expensive (than)	<b>the most</b> expensive
✓ difficult	<b>more</b> difficult (than)	<b>the most</b> difficult
✓ profitable	<b>more</b> profitable (than)	<b>the most</b> profitable

The adjectival paradigm of a short qualifier can be described as **synthetic**; while the adjectival paradigm of a long qualifier can be described as **analytic** or **periphrastic**.

Please, pay attention to the following “irregular” adjectival paradigms:

- ✓ **bad / ill, worse (than), the worst**
- ✓ **good, better (than), the best**
- ✓ **far, farther/further (than), the farthest/furthest**
- ✓ **little, less (than), the least**
- ✓ **late, later/latter (than), the latest/the last**
- ✓ **much, more, the most**
- ✓ **near, nearer (than), the nearest/the next**
- ✓ **old, older/elder (than), the oldest/the eldest** → *elder / the eldest* gave origin to the collective noun **the elderly** (= old people or animals) such as in:

“[...] Most of these protesting women work in Polish households caring for **the elderly** and sick, often with no formal contract, merely on the basis of verbal agreements with the adult children of those needing care.”

The same happens to:

- ✓ **further**, that can act as an independent adjective, thus meaning “additional / extra / other”, as in *a further 10%, further changes, further discussions, further information, without further delay*; or an adverb, thus meaning “additionally / furthermore / moreover”;
- ✓ **least**, that behaves as an independent adverb in the grammatical collocation **at least** (ITA = “almeno”);
- ✓ **former** and **latter** in the pronominal expression **the former** (ITA = “il/la primo/a”) / **the latter** (ITA = “il/la secondo/a”); when occurring alone, **the latter** stands for the Italian “quest’ultimo/a”.

Look at the following examples:

- “[...] Each committee specializes in specific issues and reviews legislation pertaining to those issues. Most House committees are **further** divided into subcommittees. [...]”;
  - “[...] It would be of interest to investigate **further** the net impact from **further** expansion of part time employment opportunities on labour force participation, in terms of the average hours worked per person of working age. [...]”;
  - “Iran’s president visits those injured in the port explosion that killed **at least** 40 people”.
  - “**At least** 20 people were feared dead after a boat carrying hundreds of migrants to Europe capsized in stormy seas near the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to authorities. [...]” (source: *The Guardian*, “At least 20 migrants feared dead after boat capsizes near Lampedusa”, November 24, 2019);
  - “Reporting is not espionage – but history shows that journalists doing **the former** get accused of **the latter**”.
  - “Volkswagen or Volkswagen? Less of **the former**, more of **the latter**”.
- ✓ Combined with “more”, **further** forms the solid compound adverb **furthermore** (ITA = *inoltre*), a synonym of *moreover*.

## Order of adjectives

- When several adjectives come before a noun, they are usually put in a more or less **fixed order**.
- Adjectives which express **opinions** usually come **before** adjectives that simply **describe**.

### OPINION ADJ. + FACT ADJ. + NOUN

- ✓ A comfortable big hotel
- ✓ A smart middle-aged manager
- ✓ Netflix is my favourite monthly-fee American streaming service.

### Order of fact adjectives:

**SIZE AGE SHAPE COLOUR ORIGIN MATERIAL PURPOSE**

- ✓ A fat old white horse  
S A C
- ✓ A large XVIII-century round brown French wooden writing table  
S A SH C O M P
- ✓ A small new black Italian leather shopping bag  
S A C O M P

