Uni-edit English Writing Tip: Parallel structures Part D — Making comparisons

Level of difficulty: Advanced

Parallel structures Part D — Making comparisons

This is the fourth part in a five part series about using parallel structures. This part focuses on marking comparisons in parallel constructions.

While editing English manuscripts, Uni-edit editors often need to correct sentences for correct usage of parallel structures. Correct use of parallel structures makes the writing easier to read and easier to understand for native-speakers of English and for non-native speakers of English.

When making comparisons, the things you compare should be contained in parallel structures. Using parallel structures is not always possible, but it is possible most of the time.

Here is an example:

Incorrect: My income is smaller than my wife.
English corrected: My income is smaller than my wife's.

Explanation: In the incorrect sentence, it appears as though the size of the income is compared to the size of the wife. This is very odd. In the correct sentence, because of the usage of the possessive ('s), the reader understands that means 'the wife's income'. This meaning is clear. The parallel structure is 'my income' and 'my wife's income'.

Here is another example. Pay attention to the use of the possessive: i.e., 's.

Incorrect: Paul's GPA is higher than Ralph.
English corrected: Paul's GPA is higher than Ralph's.

Explanation: Similar to the above example, the parallel structure is 'Paul's GPA' and 'Ralph's GPA'.

Here is another example below. Pay attention to the use of 'to verb' and the use of 'he'.

Incorrect: In English class, Mike learned to read poems critically and he appreciated good prose.
English corrected: In English class, Mike learned to read poems critically and to appreciate good prose.

Explanation: As Mike has already been introduced as the "actor" in the first part of the sentence, we can avoid using 'he' by using a parallel structure such as '…to read… to appreciate…'. This makes the sentence more natural.

END OF TIP