GLT1021: Inferring Certainty & Comparisons

PART A: INFERRING CERTAINTY

When reading or listening, we often need to interpret how sure the writer or speaker is about something — not just what they say, but how strongly they believe it. Writers often use modal verbs, adverbs, or phrases to show certainty or uncertainty.

Degree of certainty	Common expressions / modals	Example
Certain	must, definitely, clearly, obviously, no doubt, be sure that	She **must** be at the office — her car is parked outside.
Fairly certain	probably, likely, seems to, appears to	He's **probably** gone home early.
Uncertain / Speculative	might, may, could, possibly, it's not clear, it seems that	She **could** be waiting for your message.

Task 1: Identify certainty levels

Decide how certain each speaker/writer is. Choose from: **Certain** / **Fairly certain** / **Uncertain**. Write your answers below.

a) The meeting must have finished by now — the lights are off.

Certainty level: _____ Reason: _____

b) She might have misunderstood your message.

Certainty level: _____ Reason: _____

c) They definitely didn't agree with the proposal.

Certainty level: _____ Reason: _____

d) It seems that the results were affected by weather conditions.

Certainty level: _____ Reason: _____

e) He can't be serious about leaving the project.

Certainty level: _____ Reason: _____

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Task 2: Reading for inference

Although the research appears to suggest a link between screen time and sleep quality, it's not entirely clear whether other factors, such as stress or diet, could also be influencing the results. The authors believe further studies are likely needed to confirm their findings.

Questions:

1. How confident are the researchers about their results?

Answer: _____

_____

2. Which phrases show uncertainty?

Answer: _____

_____

3. Why do they think more research is necessary?

Answer: _____

_____

PART B: INFERRING COMPARISONS

Writers often compare two or more ideas to show differences, similarities, or evaluations. When you infer comparisons, you interpret what the writer is suggesting or implying through those comparisons.

Function	Common comparative structures	Example
Showing difference	more/less + adjective + than, not as...as	Online classes are **less** interactive **than** face-to-face sessions.
Showing similarity	as + adjective + as, similarly, likewise	The new software works **as efficiently as** the old one.
Making evaluations	far more, slightly less, much better/worse	This version is **far more** accurate than the previous one.

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Task 3: Identifying comparisons

For each sentence, identify what is being compared and what the writer implies.

a) Compared to last year's presentation, this one was much more engaging.

What's being compared: _____

Implied meaning: _____

b) Her explanation was as clear as a textbook example.

What's being compared: _____

Implied meaning: _____

c) The city feels more alive at night than during the day.

What's being compared: _____

Implied meaning: _____

d) His new job is not nearly as stressful as his previous one.

What's being compared: _____

Implied meaning: _____

e) This study is far more comprehensive than the earlier research.

What's being compared: _____

Implied meaning: _____

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Task 4: Reading for inference

While both online and traditional classrooms offer valuable learning experiences, online platforms provide greater flexibility and access to resources. However, traditional settings often encourage stronger social interaction and immediate feedback from instructors.

1. What two things are being compared?

Answer: _____

_____

2. What advantages are suggested for each?

Answer: _____

_____

3. Does the writer seem to prefer one? How can you tell?

Answer: _____

_____

Task 5: Write your own comparisons

Write two comparison sentences about university life.

1. _____

2. _____

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