

## 1 Preliminaries

English has a rich system of specialised syntax and morphology for the expression of comparisons of various types. The two inflectionally marked terms in the system of **grade**, exemplified in such forms as *bigger* and *biggest*, have the expression of comparison as virtually their only use, and one of the three major kinds of finite subordinate clause – the type of clause underlined in *She is much bigger than she was then* or *She went to the same school as I went to* – is reserved for the expression of comparison.

We use the traditional terms **comparative form** and **superlative form** for the inflectional categories *bigger* and *biggest*, and **comparative clause** for subordinate clauses like *she was then* and *I went to*.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is concerned with constructions containing these categories and others bearing significant syntactic resemblances to them. In this preliminary section we introduce the main subtypes of comparative construction and a number of syntactic categories needed for their description.

### 1.1 Two cross-cutting distinctions: scalar vs non-scalar, equality vs inequality

Two intersecting dimensions of contrast yield the four types of comparative construction shown in [1]:

[1]	EQUALITY	INEQUALITY
SCALAR	<i>Kim is <u>as old as</u> Pat.</i>	<i>Kim is <u>older than</u> Pat.</i>
NON-SCALAR	<i>I took the <u>same bus as</u> last time.</i>	<i>I took a <u>different bus from</u> last time.</i>

#### ■ Scalar vs non-scalar

**Scalar** comparisons are concerned with relative position on some scale, such as that denoted by *old* in [1]; *old* is a gradable adjective and scalar comparison is one type of grading, potentially more complex than grading by means of such degree adverbs as *very*, *quite*, *rather*, etc., but of the same general kind.

**Non-scalar** comparisons, by contrast, are concerned not with grading but with such issues as identity and likeness. *Bus*, for example, is not gradable, and the non-scalar

<sup>1</sup>Recall that on our analysis (see Ch. 11, §8.1) *than* is a preposition taking the comparative clause as its complement, not part of the subordinate clause as in traditional grammar.