

AGREEMENT OF THE SUBJECT WITH THE PREDICATE

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Abstract: This article examines distinguishing parts of the sentence into main and secondary we based on their typical “features”. The reason for calling the subject and the sentence and distinguishing them from all other parts which are treated secondary is that the subject and the predicate between them constitute the backbone of the sentence without them the sentence would not exist at all, whereas all other parts may or may not be there, and if they are there, they serve to or modify either the subject or the predicate, or each other.

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In the English language the predicate agrees with the subject in person and number. Agreement implies that the use of one form necessitates the use of the other, for example a singular subject requires a predicate in the singular subject requires a predicate in the plural.

Example: This evening there was no bright sunset, west and east were one cloud.

According to Kaunshansky’s point of view these cases the predicate does not agree with the subject.

Ex: The Durham family were at breakfast, father mother and seven children

Most sentences aren’t as simple noun + verb. For example, the subject and predicate can be inverted.

In the street hurries the old woman.

Clauses and phrases can sometimes come between the subject and predicate but they don’t change the agreement.

Ex: The governor, who had faced a tough opponent in the lost election, wants to begin his campaign earlier this year” can be simplified to “governor ...wants.

If “each” or “every” precedes a compound subject becomes singular.

Ex: Each boy and girls to go home now”.

Agreement of the predicate with the subject Grammatical Agreement. It means that the verb-predicate agrees with the subject in number and person.

Ex: Our only guide was the stars. The stars were our only guide.

The verb-predicate is used in the singular if the subject is expressed by:

1. An infinitive or infinitives

To love and to be loved was his dream.

2. A clause:

How you persuaded them is beyond my understanding where you found them does not concern us the plural predicate is used. What I say and what I do are my own affair.

3. A numeral expression of arithmetic calculation (addition, subtraction, division).

Two and five is seven.

Ten minus two is eight.

Twenty divided by five equals four.

Note: Multiplication presents an exception as the verb may be in the singular or in the plural
Twice then is/are twenty.

4. The word group “many a + noun”. Many a lie has been told.

5. When here their constructions followed by subjects of different number, the verb-predicate agrees with the first subject:

Here is Tom and James.

There was a young woman and two children in the yard.

6. Plural words and phrases count as singular if they are used as names titles, quotations, etc.

Ex: “Fathers and sons” is the most popular of Turgenev’s novels “Senior Citizens” means people over sixty.

Note: The titles of some works which are collection of stories, etc. however, can be singular or plural:

Ex: The Canterbury Tales exist/ exists in many manuscripts.

Pronouns as subjects

1. Indefinite pronouns (some body, someone, something, anybody, anything); universal pronouns (everybody, everyone, everything, each); negative pronouns (nobody, no one, neither etc.) have a singular predicate: Everyone thinks he has the answer. There was nothing to attract our attention.

Nobody has come except him. However, the negative pronoun none may have a singular or a plural verb-predicate, it depends whether one-person is meant or more than one:

Ex: None of us understands/ understand it.

2. Interrogative pronouns who, what have a singular verb-predicate

Who is this man?

What is there.

If the question refers to more than one-person a plural may be used:

Ex: Who are with him?

Who have agreed to?

3.If the subject is expressed by a relative pronoun (who, which, that) the verb-predicate agrees with its antecedent:

Examples:

It is I who am wrong.

It is you who are wrong.

You are the one who is wrong.

I don't know the boys who live next door.

Shish Kebab is one of those dishes which have to be locked outdoors.

4. The universal pronoun booth has a plural predicate:

Which of these are yours?

Both are mine.

It is claimed that the predicate agrees in number with the subject: when the subject is in the singular, the predicate is bound to be in the singular, and when the subject is in the plural, the predicate is bound to be in the plural as well. However, this statement is very doubtful. This is specially confirmed by sentences confirmed by sentences confirmed by sentences like. My family are early risers, where the plural number in the link verb shows the plurality of the acting persons, though the subject noun is in the singular. Besides it should be noted that this question of concord or no concord is one that belongs to the level of phrases, not to that of the sentence and its part. Thus, there seems to be no valid reason for thinking that the predicate is in any way depend on the subject.

Kobrina expresses the followings about the agreement of predicate with homogenous subjects.

A plural verb-predicate is used in the following cases:

1. With homogenous subjects connected by and.

Sun and Mary are my friends. Note: However with structures where coordinated nouns refer to are thing or person a singular verb predicate is used.

Ex: Bread and butter is not enough for breakfast (one object is meant)

Bacon and eggs makes a traditional English breakfast (one dish is meant).

If the article is repeated, the reference is to two persons or objects and the butter are on the table. (two separate objects are meant).

The painter and the decorator are here. (two people are meant).

1. With homogenous subjects connected by both...and.

Examples:

Both the bread and the butter are fresh.

Both the teacher and the students have come.

2. With homogenous subjects connected by the conjunctions not only...but also, either...or- or neither... nor the verb-predicate agrees with the nearest noun subject. (This is so called "proximity rule").

Ex: Either my parents or my sister is at home.

Neither you nor I am right. Neither I nor I am right. Not only my parents but also my brother knows about it. Is Tom or Mary eager to meet you at the station.

4. With homogenous subjects connected by the conjunction as well as, well as, rather than, as much as, more than the verb predicate agrees with the first one.

My parents as well as my sister are teachers.

My sister are teachers.

My sister as my parents is a teacher.

The manager as well as/ rather than (more than) as much as the members of the board is responsible for the present situation.

Kobrina also implied on notional agreement. In modern English agreement there may be a conflict between form and meaning. It refers first of all to subjects expressed by nouns of multitude, which may denote plurality being singular in form. In such Cases the principle of observed and there appears the so called national agreement.

When the choice of the number is based on the fact whether the group of beings is considered as one whole or, as a collection of individuals taken separately.

Thus the nouns of multitude (band board, crew, committee, crowd, company, clergy, cattle, family, gang, group, guard, Gentry, infantry, jury, militia, police, poltry, team) May have both a plural verb-predicate and a singular one a single invided body or a group of separate individuals.

Ex: A new government has been formed. The government have me to go so I am leaving.

The congregation was small. It was now nearly eleven o'clock and the and the congregation were arriving.....

The crowed was enormous.

The crowed were silent.

Subject expressed by nouns denoting measure weight time etc. have a singular verb-predicate when the statement is made about the whole amount, not about the discrete units.

Ten years is a long time.

Another five minutes goes by.

A million francs is a lot of money.

Notional agreement is also observed with subjects expressed by word groups including nouns of quantity a/the number of... a/the majority of... (a) part of... the bulk of... a variety of... These admit of either a singular or a plural verb-predicate.

Examples:

The number of pages in this book isn't large.

It was Sunday and a number of people were walking about.

Subjects expressed by such invariable plural nouns as goods, contents, riches, clothes, wages, saves, have a plural-verb.

Ex: His wages were only 15 shillings a week.

I asked her what the contents were about.

His clothes were shabby. The goods were delivered on time.

Subjects expressed by such invariable singular nouns as hair, money gate, information, funeral, progress, advice have a singular verb-predicate. These are called "singulariatantum", as they have no plural. Examples:

Her hair is beautiful.

The money is mine.

The gate is open.

Subjects expressed by invariable nouns ending in-s ("pluraliatantum") and denoting an indivisible nation or thing have a singular verb predicate measles, mumps, billiards, domenous, hews, headquarters, works.

Ex: No new works that has been built in our district is very large.

Though nouns in-ics which are names of sciences and other abstract notions have a singular agreement when used in their abstract sense; they may have a plural verb-predicate when denoting qualities, practical applications, different activities etc.

Thus these nouns may be followed by either a singular or a plural verb.

Ex: 1. Statistics is a rather modern branch of mathematics.

2. These statistics show death per 1. 000 of population.

3.Statistics on this subject are available.

4. Tactics is one of the subjects studied in military academs.

Your tactics are obvious. Please don't insult my intelligence.

5. Politics is a risky profession. Politics have always interested me. What are your politics?

6. Ceramics is my hobby.

Where he lives isn't the provinces as for as ceramics are concerned. It's the metropolis.

Subject expressed by substantivized adjectives denoting groups of people (the blind, the mute, the old, the poor, the rich etc.) always take the plural verb-predicate. Example:

He didn't look an important personage, but the eminent rarely do.

It is said that if the subject is expressed by a word-group consisting of two nouns connected by the preposition with or the expression together with, the predicate verb is in the singular.

It should be noted that these word groups are very seldom found in English.

Ex: A woman with a child on the third floor is screaming and waving her free hand frantically (Dreiser).

An engine with a number of trucks was creeping up spluttering and snorting, halting and knocking (Lindsay).

If two or more homogenous subjects are expressed by infinitives the predicate is in the singular.

Ex: to labour in peace and devote her labour and her life to her poor son, was all the widow sought (Dickens).

To leave the quiet court, to gain the strand, to hail a belated handsom was the work of a moment (Thurston).

According to some point of view besides its privileged position in the sentence the subject also plays an important role in a number of different form depending on properties of the subject: Ex:

- a) I/you eat breakfast at 6.30.
- b) we/they eat breakfast at 8.
- c) He/she Ernie eats breakfast at 9.

When the subject refers to either the speaker or the addressee, what we called first and second person, the finite verb in present tense shows no overt morphology, the same is true When the subject is plural.

However when the subject is third person and singular the present tense verb inflects with an 's' The morpheme not only shows the tense therefore, but also the nature of the subject: that is the thirist person singular. This phenomenon is known as argument we say that the verb agrees with the subject. Agreement is a relationship that holds between the subject and the subject and the finite verb.

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