

ERROR TYPES IN SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT**Hafizah Rifiyanti, Dyah Utami Dewi**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the types of errors in subject-verb agreement. The basic mistakes made by students in subject-verb agreements are a lack of knowledge about sentence patterns and their types. The study applied a qualitative descriptive method. The study is to describe and classify the errors made by the students and identify which parts of the subject-verb agreement have the most errors. The data collection technique of this study is by collecting the results of a worksheet assessment on subject-verb agreement given to 89 students. The data is analyzed by investigating what types of errors the students make and what factors often occur in subject-verb agreement. The results of this indicate that there are errors made by students including: singular subject must agree with a singular verb as well as a plural subject must agree with a plural verb, errors in a compound subject, errors in using the verb of the form have, and errors in *be* verb. The study implies that grammar and sentence construction, particularly subject-verb agreements, are basic chapters that must be trained continuously and become an important fundamental goal before students learn other things in English.

Keywords: error, subject, verb, agreement

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the most important thing to understand in learning English. This will apply to all language competencies mastered, in the ability to read, listen, write, and speak. One of the rules in grammar is subject-verb agreement. It is very basic knowledge to know the English language. Grammar is a system of rules (and exceptions to those rules) that reveals and structures meaning in language and is made up of two things: syntax and morphology. (Eunson, 2020). The rules in grammar must be studied so that the desired communication can be achieved correctly and according to its purpose (Rifiyanti, 2020). Grammar is considered a very scary thing for English learners, considered full of rules and complexities. There are many challenges in grammar that we have to learn to achieve accurate and effective results (All, n.d.)

Errors in subject-verb agreement often occur in students who study English thus they need to understand that the grammatical structure and vocabulary in Indonesian and English have different rules. Common mistakes often occur among the students when the subject and the verb of a sentence do not agree in number, this is an issue called subject-verb agreement. In the principle of English grammar, between subject and verb require an agreement. The singular subject must accept the singular verb as well as the plural subject must accept the plural verb. This is a general rule in subject-verb agreement (Eunson, 2020).

Previous research was conducted to examine the written subject and verb agreement errors made by students and the results of the study reveal that many students still make mistakes in agreeing on subject and verb, especially in the present tense (Nurjanah, 2017). The research was conducted as well as to investigate the errors among the theses and resulted that the errors major by interlingual and intralingual in subject-verb agreement (Pangga et al., 2018). An analysis of subject-verb agreement errors among ESL learners has resulted in a conclusion that the learners to avoid using the complex rules of SVA including the agreement with the coordinated subject with indefinite expression (Stapa & Izahar, 2010). Another result of research has concluded that the students still need more instruction and practice in using subject-verb agreement in their writings (Sutomo, 2011).

Considering the importance of this matter in learning English and the students often make mistakes in the subject-verb agreement material, the writer conducted a study to see what factors often cause errors and to identify the errors in subject-verb agreement. By understanding the difficulties and obstacles experienced by students, teachers or lecturers can make lesson plans on target so that learning objectives can be achieved (Rifiyanti & Dewi, 2022).

METHOD

Research Design

The study applied qualitative descriptive method The study is to describe and classify the errors made by the students and identify which parts of the

subject-verb agreement have the most errors. The data collection technique of this study is by collecting the results of a worksheet assessment on subject-verb agreement given to 89 students in semester 2(two) from the study programs of Informatics and Information System (TI & SI), Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kosgoro 1957, Jakarta. Besides, the material of assessment is The source of the material used to carry out the subject-verb agreement assessment comes from the self-teaching unit: Subject-Verb Agreement (Agreement, 2018). The data analysis of this study is purely data-derived from assessment results, in which the subject-verb agreement rules make the most mistakes by students. Then the data was analyzed by investigating what made the students make mistakes (Eunson, 2020).

Samples/Participants

Samples or participants of this study are 89 students of Informatics and Information System study programs (TI & SI), Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kosgoro 1957, Jakarta.

Instruments

To support data collection techniques, it is necessary the instrument of research. An instrument is a measuring tool that is used in research to measure natural and social phenomena that are observed (Sugiyono, 2016). The instrument used for data collection in this study is a questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study is purely data-derived from assessment results, in which the subject-verb agreement rules make the most mistakes by students. The data is analyzed by investigating what types of errors the students make and what factors often occur in subject-verb agreement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Subject-Verb Agreement in Present Tense

Subject and verb must agree with one another in number. If the subject is singular, its verb must singular. If the subject is plural, its verb must plural. Thus, in the present tense, if the subject is singular, its verb must add "s" or "es", meanwhile if a subject is plural, its verb does not need to add "s" or "es". Subjects in the first and second person take plural verbs, as does the third person plural. In sentences that talk about someone or something, the difference between the singular and plural forms of a regular verb is just one letter. The singular verb ends in s and the plural form doesn't (Woods, n.d.). Meanwhile, the third person singular takes a singular verb, as illustrated in the chart below:

Tabel 1. Singular and Plural

Person	Singular	Plural
First	I eat	We eat
Second	You eat	You eat
Third	He/She/it eats The bird eats	They eat The birds eat

From the above illustration, the singular verb in the third person adds "s"; he eats, she eats, it eats, the bird eats, but the plural verb removes "s"; we eat, you eat, they eat, the birds eat. These rules do not apply to the first singular person and second singular person, Subject "I" and "You" do not add "s" in their verbs. If the sentence is in negative or interrogative patterns, the helping verbs *do* and *does* are needed and the base form of the verb as well. Therefore, the percentage of errors made by students in this rule is as follows:

Tabel 2. Percentage Errors Incorrect Choice

No.	Questions	Answer	
		Correct	Incorrect
1	All the girls goes to school	52.8%	47.2%
2	The dog (bark, barks) at the stranger	65.2%	34.8%
3	My friends (worry, worries) too much	65.20%	34.80%
4	My sister don't understand.	66.30%	33.70%
5	Olivia (study, studies) every night	71.9%	28.1%
6	Tony likes Mary	71.9%	28.1%
7	You rides with me	73%	27%
8	Sally (run, runs) to the park every day	77.5%	22.5%

Making verb agree with a compound subject

When two nouns combine with the same verb, the subject is compound. Meanwhile, the principle of the compound subject is two or more subjects joined by conjunctions, such as or, and, or nor. In the other words if a sentence has more than one subject with the same verb, those subjects form a compound subject. Example: mom and dad left for work early. Compound subject: mom and dad. Verb: left. Most of the time, making verbs agree with compound subjects is a special case, there are special rules to determine whether the subject is singular or plural. A compound subject is connected by “and”, it counts as a single clause, and the subject is considered a plural subject. Besides, a compound subject is connected by or, either/or, neither/nor, the verb agrees with the closest subject to the verb. For example, a pen or books need to buy. In this sentence, the verb "need" agrees with the closest subject to the verb; the books. Another example: the books or the pen needs to buy, in this sentence, the verb "needs" agree with the subject of the pen which is a singular subject (Find, n.d.). The percentage of students' errors in this rule is as follows:

No.	Questions	Answer	
		Correct	Incorrect
1	The cat or the dogs (is, are) in the yard	61.80%	38.20%
2	The pen or the pencil are fine for the test	67.40%	32.6%
3	Randy and Juan like sports	71.90%	28.1%

Using has or have with the main verb

The helping verbs are verbs to help another verb. The form helping verb *have* has many forms such as has, have, had, or having. The type of helping verbs are always followed by the past participle. The form of the helping verb *has* agreed with the singular subject, and *have* agreed with the plural subject. The result of the questions regarding this rule is as follows:

No.	Questions	Answer	
		Correct	Incorrect
1	Those shoes has been cheaper in the past	61.80%	38.20%
2	The kids have been waiting a long time	76.80%	23.60%

Using be verb in the sentence

be or *to be* is part of verbs; they are is, am, are, was, and were. Using of *be* verb must agree to the subject, In the present tense, the form of to be is *am*, *is*, and *are*. The form of *is* in the present tense is for a singular verb, which means agrees with a singular subject. The form of *am* in the present tense is for the subject pronoun of I, and the form of *are* in the present tense is for plural verb, which must agree with the plural subject or plural nouns. Meanwhile, the *be* verb in the past tense is was and were. The form of *be* verb was is used for the pronoun of I, he, she, and it. The form of be verb *were* is used for the pronoun of we, you, and they (Betty Schramper Azar, Stacy A. Hagen - *Basic English Grammar, 3rd Edition-Pearson Longman (2005).Pdf*, n.d.). To recognize the ability of students in using the subject-verb agreement in *be* verb, the writer has given the questions and the result as follows:

No.	Questions	Answer	
		Correct	Incorrect
1	The Archery (is, are) my favorite hobby.	84.30%	15.7%
2	The photographs are really special.	84.3%	15.7%
3	That book was awesome.	87.6%	12.4%
4	The game (was, were) exciting.	89.90%	10.10%
5	The movie (was, were) incredible.	89.90%	10.10%
6	Ted and Mary (is, are) going to the movies.	94.40%	5.60%

Discussion

The types of errors based on the results of the answers made by the students are agreement errors such as (1) singular subject must agree with a singular verb as well as a plural subject must agree with a plural verb, in this rule, students sometimes did not match the noun to the referring verb. For instance, in the question: the dog (bark, barks) at a stranger, the correct answer in this sentence is barks. In this question, there are still students who answer with the choice of *bark*. In the present tense, if the subject is singular, the verb needs to add 's' or 'es' and in the opposite, if the subject is plural, the verb does not need to add 's' or 'es', these rules apply to all personal pronouns except I and you, which although singular require a plural form of verbs. (2). Errors in a compound subject, making verb agrees with the compound subject. The error seen from the results of the questions answered by the students was recognizing the singular or plural form of the noun subject. A compound subject refers to the subject with two or more parts joined by and, or, either/or, neither/nor, or not only/but also. There are still rules in this case that are not understood by students so they cannot determine the form of the subject noun in singular or plural form. For instance, question: the cat or the dogs (is, are) in the yard, two or more nouns joined by or is a special case. some students still don't understand how to determine singular or plural forms if several nouns are combined using 'or'. In this case, it should be emphasized that if the subject uses the joining word 'or' then the subject that can agree with the verb is the subject closest to the verb, so the correct answer to the above question is *are*. (3) Errors in using the verb of the form have; example for question correct or incorrect: *those shoes has been cheaper in the past*, it can be seen from the answer to this question that there are still students who still cannot determine the singular or plural form of the subject when using a verb from the have form. The verb of have can be has, have, had or having. In the present perfect, the verb has is used for a singular noun or singular subject except I and you such as he, she, it and the verb have is used for plural nouns or plural subject such as we, they, and you. In this question, there are still students who think that *those shoes* is the singular form. (4). Errors in *be* verb, first of all, there are still students who don't know that

be or *to be* is a verb. Next is the error in determining the singular or plural of this type of *be verb*. However, in this case, the number of errors is small.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

In learning English, one of the things that may still make students confused or mistaken is changing the verb in a sentence. This should be a concern for educators to teach from the beginning about the subject-verb agreement. The basic error that often occurs in determining the adjustment between the verb and the subject of a sentence in terms of number, singular, or plural. Likewise, the concept of the subject can be in the form of nouns, pronouns, or other constructions that act as nouns, such as gerunds and infinitives. Many more rules or changes must be understood in this subject-verb agreement so that basic errors do not occur.

The rules that apply in the subject-verb agreement must be understood carefully, for instance, in the present tense, singular verbs are in the base form of the verb with the suffix -s added. As for the plural verb without the suffix -s added (on the contrary, plural subject is added with the suffix-s). This verb rule also applies to the subject in the form of a third person (third person, for example: Budi, Wati) and all personal pronouns (they, we = plural; he, she, it = singular), except I and you. Even though they are singular subjects, I and you are paired with plural verbs. Some of the students still don't understand basic things like this, while in the subject-agreement there are some other rules. Another example, the confusion that can be seen from the answers to several questions by students is about sentences that have a compound subject, Compound subject occurs when more than one noun that acts as a single subject meets and uses a conjunction. What students experience is determining the subject that must be equivalent to a verb, singular or plural.

In conclusion, the basis of knowledge to be able to reach an understanding of the rules in this subject-verb agreement is an understanding of what singular subject, singular verb, plural subject, and plural verb are. Because if the learners

don't recognize what singular and plural are, things that go further will become more difficult to understand.

Suggestions

After analyzing the types of errors made by students in subject-verb agreement, the writer proposes the following suggestions:

1. In the beginning, the students must understand the basic grammar in English, particularly to distinguish the singular and plural either subject or verb, and types of subjects and verb.
2. Recognizing the principle of subject-verb agreement which the subject must agree with the verb in number.
3. Recognizing the rules of subject-verb agreement.
4. Practicing in writing skill is more needed to scrutinize the types of the errors and misunderstanding in subject-verb agreement.

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