

THE COMMON ERRORS IN SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN READING CLINIQUE CENTER

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Abstract

The researcher pursued the study in the common errors of language learners on subject-verb agreement because Filipino Students learning English have well-formed speech habits in the native language which are totally different in form, meaning and distribution. In the evident that language teaching in the Philippines has not been efficient and effective enough to meet the expectation that English is mastered by the students if it is to become functional for a lifetime. The actual respondents of the study were grouped according to gender and section. The researcher used a descriptive research design to determine the students' common errors in Subject-Verb Agreement. The items in the test were based on the descriptions of Subject-Verb Agreement errors found in the Harbrace College Handbook and in the Grammar Journal for Subject-Verb Agreement. The objective of the study is to determine the types of Subject-Verb Agreement errors frequently committed by the combined population of the students in Reading Clinique Center.

Keywords: *Subject Verb Agreement, Language Learning, Second Language, Common Errors, English Language Learners*

INTRODUCTION

"Filipinos have long stood out for their competence and proficiency in English today, many of even our college graduates are no longer fluent in speaking, reading and writing the language", thus said by Edgardo J. Angara in his editorial column on Manila Bulletin Online March 6, 2001. The statement made by Angara should serve as an eye opener on the real situation of the English proficiency level of the Filipino students nowadays. It is shameful that Filipinos, who were known to be good English speakers' decades ago, are now having difficulties in the use of the language. Thus, who is to blame for this degrading issue? This deterioration in English proficiency is a direct consequence of the deterioration of our educational system both in private and public schools with experienced English teachers leaving for better- paying jobs overseas, 75 percent of the country's annual 400,000 college graduates have "substandard English skills." Agreement between a verb and its subject in terms of person (first, second, or third) and number (single or multiple) is termed subject-verb agreement or concord. Which means that either they are both singular or both plural. It's important to maintain consistency when using tenses and verb tenses, and for subjects and verbs to have the same number (singular or plural). Therefore, a singular subject requires a single verb, and vice versa (Yustisia, 2018). Many of the students are found unable to see the concordance where the form between subjects of the sentences indefinite pronouns is, nouns which are plural in form but singular in meaning and nouns that are plural in form but can be either singular or plural in meaning depending upon the idea contained in the sentences. Learners find it difficult to articulate clearly their thoughts when they are made to construct sentences on the level of discourse such as definition, description, cause-effect relationship and implications.

On the Teaching and Learning of English Grammar

The role of grammar in the instruction and acquisition of a second language has been hotly debated for decades. It's possible that the age-old question of whether or not and how much grammar instruction should be provided will never be settled. The importance of teaching grammar to children is seen to be lower than that of teaching

it to adults, and its role in listening and reading is thought to be less than its role in writing. (Ji, 2018). When students make these kinds of mistakes, it's thought that they either don't understand the concept very well or were taught by rote memorization instead of practicing. Also, mistakes with punctuation are one of the most common ways to mess up English grammar. Punctuation is the use of certain marks to separate sentences and clauses and to make the meaning clearer. Some of these marks could be used too much, wrongly, or not at all. (Murshidi, 2014) The correctness point of view assumes that grammar is a set of absolute rules which the language must adjust. The attitude is that these rules were laid down by some authorities that based them on reasons which they cannot question. When a speaker or writer uses language that is not in accord with those fixed rules, the correctness point of view assumes that he is guilty of bad grammar. As (Stanley, 2019) stated, the difficulty of entering educational administration is the wall that always goes up between theory and practice. As a teacher, you can never get enough practice in front of a class. He also added he break down the day by listing what went well, what might have been done better, and what he won't be doing again. You're putting it to use right now. It's a never-ending game of trial and error till you discover something that seems to work, and once you do, you tend to stick with it for the rest of your life. The first step toward the solution of any problem, according to Daizell, is to recognize its existence, and nowhere is this true than with the problem of change in the English language. Concomitant with vocabulary change comes constructional change, and it is here that we find the greatest area of difficulty.

Further, Stanley emphasized that English is changing its shape according to the whims or fancies of those who use it. Unfortunately, this inescapable and indisputable fact is frequently overlooked by those studying English as a second language. As a result, they may form a completely erroneous idea of the nature of grammar. Second language learners consider grammar as unchangeable laws which language must unquestionably follow if it is to be judged correct. Grammatical sentences are those that are in accord with the rules and principles of the syntax of a particular language, while ungrammatical sentences violate one or more syntactic rules or principles. The basic order in English clauses is subject – verb object, articles like “the” and “a” precedes the noun they modify auxiliary verbs like “is” precede the main verb. Stanley, finally stated that grammar is a description of how language is used. It is the use of language which determines its “correctness”. It is simply the codification of the patterns of language that have evolved through usage and are accepted as correct. Generally, it is usage, or the rule of the majority, which determine the correctness or incorrectness of the language being used.

Communication serves many purposes, some of which are aimed at changing or even changing how people act. In particular, communication is used to share feelings and ideas with others for a variety of reasons, such as to inspire, motivate, give orders, entertain, direct, control, inform, and educate. You can't have good communication without both verbal and nonverbal forms. (Al-alawneh, M et al. 2019) A magazine article stated that one's speech habits serve as a source of the extent of the learners' errors. Some errors are also available in their written work. These errors emanate from the increasing degrees of complexity. The learners' version of the new language is characterized by a creation of a deviant structure. He commits errors involving lack of agreement between the subject and the predicate verb because he tends to employ rules on number of nouns, which he has previously learned, or which are governed, by other kind of rules. (Psychology, Linguistics and Language Teaching) According to Al-alawneh, some English instructors do base their lessons on students' specific strengths and limitations as reflected in their oral and written communication. Students' writing mistakes should be tallied, and training should be given to the whole class on the most prevalent, severe faults alone.

One way to achieve this aim is to teach the language in a functional way, and functional teaching requires that a very careful plan be set up whereby all desirable grammar items are covered in a systematic way. Educational psychologist and modern language methodologies agree that this concept based on the principles of specificity of the learning is the best way to improve a child's ability to express himself as it gives a great deal of practice in self-expression. It sets up a situation in which the pupil will need to use particular construction, which is to be learned. Its practice is all on practical experience, making the grammar principle function.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher pursued the study in the common errors of language learners on subject-verb agreement because Filipino Students learning English have well-formed speech habits in the native language which are totally different in form, meaning and distribution.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in the theory of Bergmann and Senn which assumed that agreement in English refers to grammatical form and choice of what must occur together. Subjects and verbs match when there is an agreement between them. The above-mentioned theory presents the idea that a subject and a verb are the two basic components of a statement. If these two components lack concordance in form, then some rules in Subject-Verb Agreement are ignored or not understood. This situation hinders the achievement of communicative competence. Further, the study was guided by Gleason's common and accepted premise that grammar teaching should help eliminate errors in language use. Teachings should focus on the rules which should be an antidote to the most common and serious errors that a major purpose of the English instruction is to teach "good error free" language. Likewise, he believes that the principal design in the grammar of any form of construction. Whether it is right or not, the plain way of doing this is to lay down rules and to illustrate the rules by examples. But besides showing what is right, the matter may be further explained by pointing out what is wrong.

According to this theory, grammar teaching should produce language competence in the learner and that the specific rules of grammar or the accepted usage associated with the language one speaks must be intensively taught to the appropriately applied. One's knowledge of the rules could make him identify the right from the wrong. With the above theory used in Subject - Verb Agreement, it would mean that the emphasized and given importance so that errors agreement should be avoided. [Dedeaux's](#) profound declaration states that difficulties are present in the learning process and so learning must not only focus on what is right, mistakes may also be pointed out, awareness of these errors may help in the achievement of correct language habit formation. Regarding Subject - Verb Agreement, Perrie and Smith explain that singular subject takes singular verb and plural subject take plural verbs. Subjects indicating the person speaking to person, spoken to, or the person or thing spoken about may require different verb forms. This correspondence in form between related words in the statement is called agreement. Problems of Subject - Verb Agreement rarely arise in typical sentence patterns. But case must be taken with compared subjects that follow the verbs are separated from it.

The rules governing Subject - Verb Agreement are simple but what create a pattern with learners are the exemptions to the rules. Teaching and learning must allot more attention and time to these exceptions to achieve grammatical accuracy. Based on the above-mentioned theories, the present study tried to unlock the way of learners to achieve proficiency and accuracy to language use particularly in Subject - Verb Agreement by pointing out the

difficulties. One of the bases of the objectives of the study, the researchers considered the descriptive research design as the most appropriate especially to that the study is comparative in nature. Descriptive research design aims “to describe the status of events, people or subjects as they exist. Best, another authority in research education, describes the descriptive research design as one which is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail, point of views or attitudes that are held, process that are going on, effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing.” The descriptive research design was employed in this present study because there were data gathering, tabulating, ranking and making of generalizations or norms based on the data gathered.

METHODOLOGY

One of the bases of the objectives of the study, the researchers considered the descriptive research design as the most appropriate especially to that the study is comparative in nature. Descriptive research design aims “to describe the status of events, people or subjects as they exist. Best, another authority in research education, describes the descriptive research design as one which is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail, point of views or attitudes that are held, process that are going on, effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing.” The descriptive research design was employed in this present study because there were data gathering, tabulating, ranking and making of generalizations or norms based on the data gathered.

Respondents of the Study

The total of 30 students randomly selected from different grade and year levels. The researcher performed the random sampling by lottery or fish-bowl method. The names of each student from sections from different grade and year level were written in a piece of paper which was rolled. These rolled pieces of papers were placed in a bowl and were then picked out, one piece at a time, until the total number of respondents was reached. The method applied in the selection of the respondents gave each student an equal chance to be included in the study.

As to gender, the respondents were categorized as to male and female of the 30 respondents, 15 or 50% were males and 15 or 50% were females.

As to sections, the respondents were categorized based on their ranking.

Variables	F	%
Gender		
Female	15	50
Male	15	50
Total	30	100
Section		
Grade 5-6	10	33.3
Grade 8-9	10	33.3
Grade 11-12	10	33.3
Total	30	100

Distribution of Respondents Classified According to Categorized of Variables, Gender and Section

The table showed the distribution of respondents as they were further grouped according to the categories of variables gender and section.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers used a 25-item test on subject-verb agreement based on the classification of subject-verb agreement errors found in Harbrace College Handbook and on the persistent problems with subject-verb found in A Grammar Journal for Subject-Verb Agreement. The test consists of two parts. Part 1 gathered information about the respondents Name; Gender: a.) male, b.) female; Section: a.) Grade 5-6, b.) Grade 8-9, c.) Grade 11-12 were reflected in part 1 to guide the respondents of their response in the category of the variables. Part 2 of the instrument used the 25-item researcher made test. The test used a two – choice alternative response format since there are only two alternatives in which the agreement of the subject and verb is determined, and this is either singular or plural. The researcher reviewed several tests in agreement and found out that all these tests were using a two-choice alternative response format.

The researcher administered the test on scheduled dates. The respondents were assured by the researcher that the obtained scores will not affect their grades in English. The test was answered in fifteen minutes and was immediately retrieved. When all tests were gathered, they were checked by the researcher. The respondents were instructed to write the correct response on the space provided in the test paper. The frequencies were converted into percentages and ranking of errors committed by the respondents. Ranking was used to determine the type of subject – verb agreement error which proved to be the most difficult among the students. The results of the statistical treatments served as bases for the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data whereby recommendations and conclusions regarding this study were based.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

When a subject and a verb agree with one another, it is called subject-verb agreement. For clarity's sake, it's important that subjects and verbs coincide on number wherever possible; if the subject is singular, the verb is singular, and if the subject is multiple, the verb is plural. ([Yustisia, 2018](#)). Agreement in English refers to both grammatical form and choices of what must occur together. For example, a verb in the present tense must agree in number with its subject. a third person noun requires an /-s/ form of the verb, plural subjects require the verb "are" and other. Subjects and verbs match when there is agreement between them. This basic rule applies to all subjects and verbs. In an in-depth subject – verb agreement study, the subject of the sentence or clause determines the form of the verb that goes with it. This corresponds of form is called agreement. all problems of subject – verb agreement stem from (1) the inability to determine whether the subject is singular (one) or plural (more than one) or (2) the inability to pinpoint and locate the subject.

Table 2
The Types of Common Subject – Verb Agreement Errors Committed by the Combined Population of Grade 8 Students

Area	Percent	Rank
a. "other words between subject and verb"	49.75	1
b. "subjects joined by 'and' "	43.92	3
c. "inverted word order or there + verb constructions"	29.71	5
d. "relative pronouns used as subjects"	45.1	2
e. "linking verbs"	35.05	4

Subject-verb agreement mistakes are the most common kind of grammar mistake because students often make them because they have a misunderstanding of the rules. This misunderstanding stems from improper instruction, bias toward one's native language, and a lack of experience. In addition, it is important to signal that children be taught norms for punctuation to help them avoid making such mistakes in the first place ([Murshidi, 2014](#)). It's the exceptions that drive students crazy and that's certainly true of Subject – Verb Agreement. The basic rule: if the subject of the sentence is singular, (one thing) the verb is in the s-form. If the subject is plural, (two or more things), the verb has no s. Example: (One dog barks. Two dogs bark.)

1. Compound subjects form a plural, so they agree with a verb without s.
2. Collective nouns refer to the group of people or animals' examples include family, group, committee, class, team, herd and audience. When they are subjects to sentences, their verbs depend on the way the collective noun is being used. When the writer is referring to the group, acting together as a unit, the singular verb is used. When the writer is expressing actions of individuals within a group, the plural verb is used.
3. Indefinite pronouns, including some, none, all, any and most also can take singular when they refer to an amount or portion of the whole and plural when they refer to a countable number.
4. There are few such tricksters to watch out for. Names of the fields of study, such as physics or mathematics usually take a singular verb.
5. Another frequent source of errors is sentences that begin with there or here and for questions. To get the agreement right, keep tract to what the subject is.

White discusses the importance of subject – verb agreement and that the various ways the two elements of speech may fall out of synch. Distance and the order of the use of compound often create the potential for an error. Sentences lose readiness if their subjects and verbs do not agree. Agreement is important in English grammar too and much easier to achieve.

If the subject of your subject is singular, but it's not I or you, the verb needs the s form. Since grammar checkers cannot catch agreement errors, it pays to be alert in the situations that caused them. Here are some:

1. Other words between the subject and the verb. The rhythm of the pounding waves is calming. Waves is the object of a prepositional phrase, not the subject.

2. Ending of subjects and verbs not clearly sounded in rapid speech. "Economist seems concerned".
3. Subjects joined by "and". My best friend and my fiancé hate each other. A compound subject that refers to a single person or unit takes a singular verb.
4. Subjects joined by either or "John or Dorris write to us regularly."
5. Inverted word order or there + verb + subject. "There are several ways to protect yourself from a tornado.
6. Relative pronouns (who, which, that) used as subjects. "It is the doctor who often suggest a diet.
7. Either, one, everybody, all, any, some, none and other such indefinite pronouns. All these are considered singular and so requires singular verb.
8. Collective nouns and phrases refer to group of individual things as a unit. Whether they require a singular or plural verb depends on whether the sentence refers to a group as a whole or to the individual items in the collection.
9. Linking verb include the form of be (am, is, was, were, being, been and verbs referring to the senses (look, feel, smell, sound, taste) and some other such as appears, become, grow, make, prove, remain and seem.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The perception that most of students from different year levels of Reading Clinique Center find difficulty in using S – V Agreement rules is confirmed.
2. The S – V Agreement grammatical structures with the use of other words or intervening expressions are the most difficult to Grade 8 students regardless of their gender and ranking of sections.
3. The problem situations in S – V Agreement used in this study are proven to be persistent errors of Grade 8 students as shown by a very slim difference of the average rank of each area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby raised:

1. The learning center must outline S – V Agreement activities in a systematic manner to cover intensive drills and pattern practices with reference to the problem situations identified in the study to offer their students the venue to strengthen their weaknesses and ultimately form the correct habit of language use. Techniques such as dialogues, poems and riddles, while being used as methods of presentation can well serve as springboard for learning S –V Agreement.
2. English teachers must exert effort to make English classes interesting and worthwhile by providing varied strategies, appropriate instructional devices, well equipped audio – visual rooms and accessible facilities necessary for language teaching and learning. They must serve as springboard for learning S –V agreement.
3. Students at all levels particularly high school and college students must be encouraged to speak and use English not only inside the classroom but also outside class hours. Language



development is a crucial for second language learners; thus, the frequency of practice is a requirement for mastery and permanence of language control.

4. Schools must exhaust all means in helping their students develop high level competence in English grammar particularly in the S –V Agreement. This can be realized by employing better teaching methods and techniques. This can be done by employing language teachers with high competency in English since these teachers may serve as models to their students.
5. Other subject teachers should be made aware and accept their share of responsibility in the second language development of the students so that they must encourage the use of English in their classes.

APPENDIX

RESEARCHER MADE TEST ON SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

PART I. Respondents' Personal Factors

Directions: Please fill up and put a check mark on the space provided to gather the data called for.

Name: _____

Gender:

() male

() female

Grade Level:

() Grade 5-6

() Grade 8-9

() Grade 11-12

Signature: _____

PART II. Subject – Verb agreement Test

Directions: Choose the correct verb form from the choices given inside the parenthesis. Write the answer on the space provided before each number.

AREA A

_____1. Peter, along with his friends, (plan, plans) to visit Boracay.

_____2. A good knowledge of English, German and French (is, are) required for the position.

_____3. The store selling novelties, school supplies and food items (close, closes) at 5:00 p.m.

_____4. Cooking and dancing, as well as singing (is, are) healthy past times.

_____5. His teaching assignment, in addition to his work, (create, creates) burden on his part.

AREA B

- _____1. What I say and what I think (is, are) my own affair.
_____2. His camera, cell phone and money (was, were) confiscated by the police.
_____3. Sprinkles and strawberries (make, makes) great toppings for sundaes.
_____4. The child's aunt and grandmother (give, gives) her those gifts.
_____5. Their pet project and source of income (occupy, occupies) their time.

AREA C

- _____1. Proud of her charm throughout the show (was, were) the beautiful Marie.
_____2. There (is, are) two reasons for misbehavior.
_____3. There (is, are) several ways to protect yourself from flood.
_____4. There (appear, appears) the angels in heaven.
_____5. There (grow, grows) hundreds of trees in the fields.

AREA D

- _____1. It is among the books that (is, are) out of print.
_____2. This is the only store that (give, gives) raffle coupons.
_____3. He is the one of those who (agree, agrees) with my decisions.
_____4. The mayor who (talk, talks) for two hours is Joe Ramos.
_____5. The celebration, which (last, lasts) for five hours is attended by dignitaries.

AREA E

- _____1. His favorite snack (is, are) "Rebisco Crackers".
_____2. Aunt Cory's hair (smell, smells) terrific.
_____3. The students (remain, remains) silent for several minutes.
_____4. She and her friends (look, looks) pretty tonight.
_____5. I believe that women (is, are) helping a lot.

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