



THE 10th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE (ICESS-2025)

**"Education and Teaching for
Tomorrow: Adapting to Global Changes"**

23rd March 2025

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
SONGKHLA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY**



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DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT SKILLS IN USING SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ACCORDINGLY IN ENGLISH SENTENCE STRUCTURES

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Abstract

The use of subject-verb agreement is one of the basic skills that is important in using English correctly. However, English learners, especially non-native speakers, often have problems in choosing verbs that agree with the subject in sentence structures. This article aims to study the problems that learners face in using subject-verb agreement and propose ways to develop such skills through effective teaching methods.

This research uses qualitative and quantitative methods by collecting data from tests, questionnaires, and observations of learners' English usage behaviors. The sample group is grade 4 students of the 2024 academic year at Wichianchom School. The results showed that factors affecting errors in using subject-verb agreement include lack of understanding of grammar rules, complexity of sentence structures, and influence from the mother tongue.

From the results of this study, teaching methods that can help develop learners' skills are proposed, including using games and activities that stimulate learning, practicing through exercises that focus on actual use, and using technology to enhance understanding. The results of the study indicate that adjusting the teaching format appropriately can help reduce learners' errors and promote more accurate use of English.

Keywords: Subject-verb agreement, English grammar, Skill development, English teaching

Introduction

Grammar is an essential part of learning English. Rifiyanti & Dewi (2022) argue that grammar in English is concerned with the structuring of words and sentences to produce a meaning. This will apply to all learned language competencies, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Students must comprehend and apply English in order to improve the skills (Febriyanti, 2019). Grammar is also known as a sentence structure. Different languages have different structures. Language learners may struggle to understand the systems of the target language due to variations in grammar (Setiyadi, 2020). For instance, language learners who possess a mother tongue without tenses may find it difficult to master tenses in a new language. Most Thai students find English difficult since the Thai language lacks tenses, unlike English. Many non-English speaking nations teach English as the main foreign language, and in many of these nations, studying and evaluating English grammar is seen as a significant component of English education (Pandapatan, 2020).

One of grammar's rules is the subject-verb agreement rule. This is essential knowledge for everyone studying English. The subject and verb must concur for there to be subject-verb agreement. Yule (2006) defines the subject of a sentence as the first noun or pronoun identifying who or what is performing an activity conveyed by the verb. Then refers a verb that indicates something about the sentence's subject and expresses actions, occurrences, or states of being (Hudson, 1999). Agreement implies suitability or compatibility. In English, the term "subject-verb agreement" is defined as a subject and verb combine to make a statement accurate. A subject-verb agreement, defined by Susfenti (2020), is an agreement among the subject and the verb. Similar to Henry's definition of subject-verb agreement (2017), subjects and verbs must constantly concur on the number. A verb can change its form not only to express time, but also to indicate the number of subjects it possesses.

Additionally, when the plural/singular idea is utilized, the subject-verb agreement refers to the unity of subject and verb. Singular subject indicates that the verb is singular. Similarly, a plural subject requires a plural verb. (Azar, 2002). Thus, it is necessary to master the singular/plural form, master the subjects, and master the verbs to form a good subject-verb agreement. It implies that the subject determines how the verb takes on a different form in a phrase. A subject-verb agreement requires that the subject and the verb agree. As stated by Kurniawan and Seprizanna (2016), depending on whether the subject is singular or plural, a verb will either be singular or plural.

Many teachers of English in Thailand claim that subject-verb agreement is a very common mistake among students (Cunningham 2013, 11). However, it is not clear how common these errors are or under what language conditions they are most frequently elicited. The aim of this study is therefore to find out how well students in upper-primary school can be seen to master the use of subject-verb agreement and to propose methods to help them understand and correctly to apply subject-verb agreement in English structure.

In this article, the author has compiled concepts about English grammar, guidelines for developing the use of verbs to be consistent with the subject for learners, so that school administrators or related persons can apply them to further develop the quality of learners.

Concepts of Subject-Verb Agreement

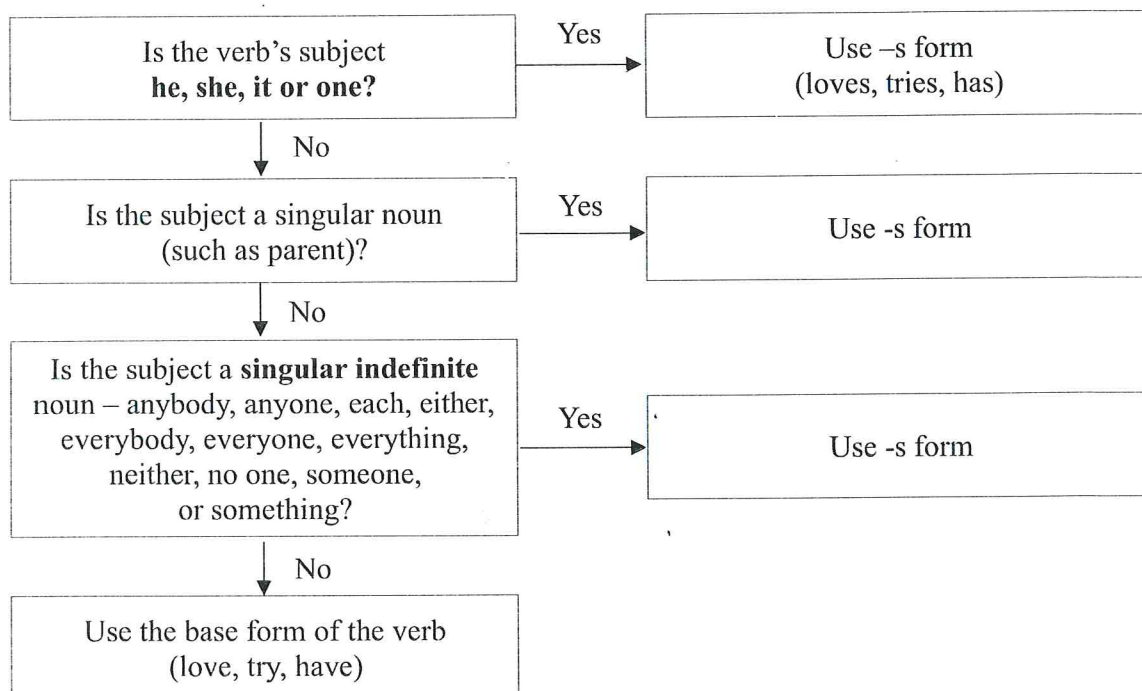
Most native English speakers know the standard verb-subject combinations by ear. Examples of these combinations are he talks, not he talk and she has, not she have.

However, if you don't trust your ear or you find simple sentence formations confusing, just follow these simple rules and you will be ready to write flawless sentences in no time.

In the present tense, verbs agree with their subjects in NUMBER (singular/plural) and in PERSON (first, second, or third). The present tense ending-s (or-es) is used on a verb if the subject is THIRD PERSON SINGULAR. Otherwise, the verb takes NO ENDING

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
First Person	I	Love	We	Love
Second Person	You	Love	You	Love
Third Person	He/She/It	loves	They	love

If the concept still confuses you, try answering the following questions to understand when to use the –s (or –es) form of a present tense verb.



From Hacker, D. (2006). *The Bedford handbook* (7th ed.). Boston: Bedford/ St. Martins.

After learning the basic fundamentals of subject-verb agreement, read and understand these special rules and after some practice, forming correct sentences will be easy.

1. Make the verb agree with its subject, not with the word in between

High levels of pollution **cause** damage to the respiratory tract

The subject is **levels**, NOT pollution

2. With subjects joined with or, nor, either...or, or neither... nor, make the verb agree with the part of the subject **NEARER** to the verb

A driver's license or credit card **is** required

See, the term "driver's license" was not used in making the verb agree the sentence. Instead, it was the term "credit card"

Neither the lab assistant nor the students **were** able to download the information

3. Treat most indefinite pronouns as SINGULAR

Anybody	Each	Everyone	Nobody	Somebody
Anyone	Either	Everything	No one	Someone
Anything	Everybody	Neither	Nothing	Something

Everybody who signed up for the snowboarding trip **was** taking lessons

Everyone on the team **supports** the coach

4. However, a few indefinite nouns such as ALL, ANY, NONE and SOME may be singular or plural DEPENDING on the noun or pronoun they refer to.

Some of our luggage **was** lost

None of his advice **makes** sense

5. Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb

There **are** surprisingly few children in our neighborhood

There **were** a social worker and a crew of twenty volunteers at the scene of the accident

6. Words such as athletics, economics, measles and news are usually SINGULAR, despite their plural form

Statistics **is** among the most difficult courses in our program

7. Titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases are SINGULAR

Lost Cities **describes** the discoveries of many ancient civilizations

Delmonico Brothers **specializes** in organic produce and additive-free meats.

8. Treat collective nouns (e.g. team, audience, crowd, class, family) as SINGULAR unless the meaning is clearly plural

1) SINGULAR

Collective nouns nearly always emphasize a group as a UNIT

The class **respects** the teacher

The board of trustees **meets** in Denver twice a year

2) PLURAL

Occasionally, a collective noun is treated as plural to draw attention to the INDIVIDUAL members of the group

The class **are** debating amongst themselves

If that is the case, it is better to change it to:

The class members **are** debating amongst themselves

The Errors in Using Subject-Verb Agreement

Saadiyah and Kaladevi (2009) in their investigation of students' written work found out that errors with subject-verb agreement were among the common mistakes made. They state that investigating grammatical errors will help not only Thai teachers to recognise the importance of errors as one of the challenging areas in their teaching practice.

Also, Stapa and Izahar (2010) conducted a study analysing the writing of students whose first language was not English at the postgraduate level, and the findings reveal that learners still face difficulties in subject-verb agreement rules. Learners were found to make mistakes in all

five categories of subject-verb agreement, namely: the agreement of person, the agreement of number, the agreement of subject, the agreement of coordinated subject, and the agreement of notion and proximity. This supported the study by Surina and Kamaruzaman (2009) who state that the majority of the students in Thailand have problems with their subject-verb agreement in their writing. They mention that:

In English language, grammar rules are very important and have to be mastered by all learners. In the topic of subject-verb agreement, the subject must agree with the verb. A singular subject is followed by a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb. This rule only applies in the simple present tense. On the other hand, in the simple past tense, the main verbs, 'was' and 'were' need reconsideration. This is the general rule for subject-verb agreement, which is also represented by its sub-rules. As a result, based on the observation, it is obvious that students made mistakes in both general and sub-general rules of subject verb agreement in their writing. (Surina & Kamaruzaman, 2009, p. 190)

The Methods for developing the using Subject-Verb Agreement

To develop learners' skills in this area, the following guidelines can be applied in educational institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

1. Organizing learning activities that emphasize practice (Active Learning)

Learning through activities that encourage learners to participate can help learners understand and remember the rules of using Subject-Verb Agreement better. Examples of activities include:

- Grammar games, such as a game to match the subject with the correct verb
- Interactive exercises, such as having learners fill in the correct verb in the blank
- Role-playing, where learners create conversations and use verbs in accordance with the subject

2. Using technology and digital media in teaching

Technology can help make learning grammar more interesting and effective, such as:

- Online learning applications and platforms, such as Kahoot, Quizizz, or Grammarly, that allow learners to practice and review grammar rules by themselves
- Videos and interactive media to explain the rules of Subject-Verb Agreement through easy-to-understand examples

3. Designing a curriculum that emphasizes step-by-step practice

Learners should be trained in the use of Subject-Verb Agreement systematically. By dividing learning into levels, such as:

- Basic level: Understanding the basic rules of Subject-Verb Agreement
- Intermediate level: Practicing using in more complex sentences, such as cases with modifiers between the subject and the verb
- Advanced level: Applying in writing and real communication, such as essays and presentations

4. Using blended learning

A combination of classroom and online learning gives learners more opportunities to practice. For example:

- Using Flipped Classroom learning, where learners study grammar rules from videos at home before doing practice activities in class

- Creating E-learning Modules for review and doing exercises outside of class time

5. Teacher development and teaching supervision

To make teaching effective, teachers should be developed in modern grammar teaching techniques, such as:

- Workshops on English grammar teaching techniques
- Sharing experiences and good practices among teachers
- Regular teaching supervision to improve the quality of teaching

Conclusion

Developing the skill of using verbs in accordance with the subject in English is important for the language ability of learners whose native language is not English. The development guidelines above can help learners understand the lesson and use English more correctly. This can be observed from the results of the teachers' activities. Each activity will observe or view the results of behavior both before and after. Therefore, teachers can see the students' behaviors change for the better in learning English in the matter of using verbs in accordance with the subject of the sentence. Ultimately, the learning outcomes are continuously improved. In addition, this knowledge can be applied to communicate in daily life effectively. School administrators and related persons can apply these guidelines to develop the quality of learners and increase the efficiency of English teaching at the school level systematically.

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