

Comprehension of Concordance in Technical English

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1.0 Introduction

The subject and verb agreement or concordance is commonly examined on the basis of either the singularity or the plurality of the noun phrase that assumes the role of a subject in a sentence that conjugates with the appropriate verb form. The collocation of subject and the verb can be made comprehensive only when the sentence is constructed on the principles stated subsequently.

1. The singularity of the noun phrase that acts as the subject collocates with a singular verb. For instance,

- a. Bionics is a study of Biological electronics. (NP–Bionics + VP–is)
- b. It is impossible to measure two physical quantities simultaneously and accurately. (NP–It + VP–is)

Singularity of Subject (NP) + Singularity Verb (VP)

2. The plurality of the noun phrase that acts as the subject collocates only with a plural verb. For example,

- a. Atomic nuclei consist of combinations of protons, or positively-charged particles, and neutrons, or uncharged particles.
- b. Laser rays have medicinal value.

Plurality of Subject (NP) + Plurality Verb (VP)

2.1. Noun Phrase as Subject

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Examining the singularity or plurality of the subject (NP) involves certain strategies. Based on the last phoneme, /s /, of the subject (NP) the singularity / plurality may not be decided. Hence, it becomes crucial to navigate into the strategies that help to examine the singularity / plurality of a subject (NP).

Rule 1: The words like ‘each’, ‘every one’, ‘anyone’, ‘anybody’, ‘someone’ and ‘somebody’ are singular noun phrases that concord only with singular verb, when they act as subjects.

For example:

Each alternate ring **rotates**.

Every alternate stroke on a two-stroke engine **is** a working stroke.

Rule 2: The usage of the conjunction, ‘and’ between two nouns, acting as subject, without the intervention of any of the articles, a /an, the’ make the noun singular. The intervention of any of the articles makes the subject plural.

For example:

The **nut and bolt is** not ready.

A plant cell **and an** animal cell **are** needed for this experiment.

Rule 3: The presence of word phrases like, ‘along with’, ‘as well as’ and ‘besides’ agree only with a singular verb.

For example:

Platinum **along with** gold **is** taken for this research.

Uranium 235 **as well as** Uranium 238 **is** capable of fission.

Rule 4: Generally a singular verb is used with sums of money or period of time.

For example:

Ten million dollars is spent on human genome project.

Four years is the maximum period for pursuing B.E degree in India.

Rule 5: The singularity / plurality of the connectives like ‘that’, ‘which’ and ‘who’ are determined by the nouns that precede them.

For example:

Nuclear fissions release large quantities of energy **which** finally **take** the form of heat energy.

The viscosity of the liquid is another factor **that is** to be measured.

Rule 6: The usage of the phrase ‘one of the’ along with a plural noun agrees only with a singular verb.

For example:

One of the transformers erected in this locality **supports** industrial electric supply.

Rule 7: Some of the collective noun functions both as singular and plural. In such cases the singularity or plurality of the collective nouns that are used as the subjects determine the nature of verbs to be associated with them.

For example:

The **data given in the second sheet** of this Excel File **is** exact.

The **data given in all the sheets** of this Excel file **are** exact.

Rule 8: Two singular subjects connected with ‘or’ / ‘nor’ agrees with a singular verb. If one of the nouns is plural, it occurs as the second noun besides agreeing with a plural verb.

For example:

The service engineer or the lab administrator **is** the right person to solve this problem.

The service engineer or the lab administrators **are** the right persons to solve this problem.

Rule 9: Two singular nouns are connected by ‘either... or’ / ‘neither ... nor’ concords only with a singular verb. If one of the nouns is plural, it occurs as the second

noun besides agreeing with a plural verb. Suppose, 'I' is one of the nouns, then it is used as the second noun and concords with 'am'.

For example:

Either the empennage **or the wings are** damaged in this air craft.

Either you **or I am** ready for the conduct of this project.

Neither the empennage **nor the wings are** damaged in this air craft.

Neither you **nor I am ready** for the conduct of this seminar.

2.2. Noun Phrase Following a Preposition in Subject

With words that indicate portions like 'percent', 'fraction', 'part', 'majority', 'some', 'all' and 'none' the singularity / plurality of the noun that follows the prepositional phrase in the subject decides the singularity or plurality of the verb.

For example:

Ninety percent of the gases are collected through upward displacement of air in the jars kept inside the water.

Ninety percent of the gas is collected through upward displacement of air in the jar kept inside the water.

Majority of the isotopes have been activated artificially by bombardment of stable nuclei.

Majority of the isotope has been activated artificially by bombardment of stable nuclei.

Some substances such as tungsten emit electrons when heated.

Some of the power plant is designed to run continuously.

2.3 Adverbs Preceding the Subject

The words 'here' and 'there' are generally used as adverbs even though they indicate places. It is noteworthy that in sentences beginning with 'here' or 'there', the subject follows the verb thus leading to an inverted structure.

For example:

There was an explosion in the air craft while landing.

Here is the safety valve of the engine.

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3.0. Conclusion

Technical English is perhaps not appreciated for a verbose language but for precision and systematic flow. Technical English is necessary for the following reasons:

1. The efficacy of comprehension and intelligibility of the language for product promotion.
2. The need for simplified description of assembling equipment to infer through user-manuals.
3. The utility of good technical service using a handbook.

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