


Teaching Learning Subject Verb Agreement: A Comprehensive Guide for ESL Teachers

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT



When the subject of your sentence is a **SINGULAR** noun or pronoun, you must add an **-s** to a present tense verb.

eat	Josie <u>eats</u> too many sweets.
listen; run	Matt <u>listens</u> to music when he <u>runs</u> .
practice	She <u>practices</u> basketball every day.
nap	My dog <u>naps</u> for most of the day.

EXCEPTION When the subject is *I* or *you*, do NOT add an **-s** to a present tense verb.

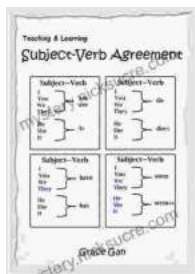
like	I <u>like</u> apples, but you <u>like</u> grapes.
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When the subject of your sentence is a **PLURAL** noun or pronoun, the present tense verb remains the same.

play	Perry and Bella <u>play</u> the violin.
invent	They <u>invent</u> many interesting things.
sleep	Babies <u>sleep</u> a lot.

Subject-verb agreement is a fundamental grammar rule that ensures the subject of a sentence matches the verb in terms of number (singular or plural). Teaching subject-verb agreement to English as a Second Language

(ESL) learners can be challenging, but it is essential for effective communication. This comprehensive guide will provide ESL teachers with the knowledge and resources they need to teach subject-verb agreement effectively.



Teaching & Learning Subject-Verb Agreement

by Konstantinos Mylonas

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Understanding Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement means that the verb in a sentence must match the subject in number. For example:

- The boy **runs** to the store.
- The boys **run** to the store.

In the first sentence, the subject is "boy," which is singular, so the verb "runs" is also singular. In the second sentence, the subject is "boys," which is plural, so the verb "run" is also plural.

Teaching Subject-Verb Agreement

There are several strategies that ESL teachers can use to teach subject-verb agreement:

1. Explicit Instruction:

Explain the concept of subject-verb agreement clearly to students. Use examples and non-examples to illustrate the rule. Provide students with ample opportunities to practice identifying and correcting subject-verb agreement errors.

2. Focus on Singular and Plural Forms:

Help students understand the difference between singular and plural forms of nouns and verbs. Provide them with a list of common irregular plural nouns and verbs to memorize.

3. Use Visual Aids:

Create charts, diagrams, and flashcards to help students visualize subject-verb agreement. For example, you can create a chart that shows the different forms of the verb "to be" for different subjects.

4. Provide Guided Practice:

Provide students with guided practice exercises that allow them to apply the subject-verb agreement rule in context. Give them sentences with missing verbs and have them fill in the correct form of the verb.

5. Use Interactive Games and Activities:

Make learning subject-verb agreement fun by using interactive games and activities. For example, you can play a game where students have to match subjects with the correct verbs or create a sentence-writing relay race.

Common Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

ESL learners often make certain common errors in subject-verb agreement:

1. Proximity Error:

Students may agree the verb with the noun that is closest to it, even if it is not the subject. For example, "The group of students **is** studying for the test." (Incorrect)

2. Indefinite Pronoun Error:

Students may use singular verbs with indefinite pronouns that are plural in meaning, such as "everybody" or "everyone." For example, "Everybody **likes** pizza." (Incorrect)

3. Collective Noun Error:

Students may use singular verbs with collective nouns, which refer to a group of people or things considered as a single unit. For example, "The team **is** playing well." (Incorrect)

Assessment and Feedback

Regular assessment is crucial to monitor students' progress and provide targeted feedback. Teachers can use various methods to assess subject-verb agreement, such as:

1. Grammar Exercises:

Assign grammar exercises that focus specifically on subject-verb agreement. These exercises can be graded to provide students with

feedback.

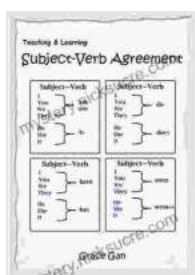
2. Writing Assignments:

Incorporate subject-verb agreement as a criterion in writing assignments. Grade students based on their ability to use subject-verb agreement correctly in their writing.

3. Oral Presentations:

Observe students' use of subject-verb agreement during oral presentations. Provide feedback on their errors and areas for improvement.

Teaching subject-verb agreement to ESL learners requires patience, clear instruction, and consistent practice. By using effective teaching strategies, focusing on common errors, and providing targeted feedback, ESL teachers can help their students master this essential grammar rule and improve their overall English proficiency.



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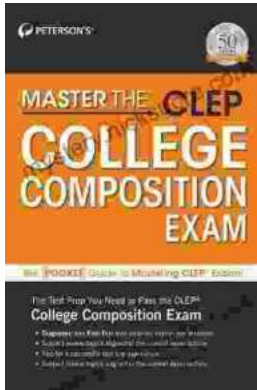
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