**Mustansiriyah University**

**College of Arts**

**Translation Department**

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**FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR**

**First Year/ Morning Classes**

**Lecture # 7**

**Subject and Object**

**ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN USE**

**R. MURPHY**

**Subjects and Predicates**

The person or thing about which we make the assertion is called the SUBJECT of the verb, and what we say (or "predicate") about the subject is called the PREDICATE. A predicate must contain a verb ; in fact the verb is often referred to as the predicate of the subject.

**SUBJECT PREDICATE**

The clouds moved across the sky.

Nelson was a great sailor .

That you are late is not my fault.

(You) Open the door.

**Concord of Subject and Verb**

The verb agrees with its subject in number and person , e.g.

I am (1st person singular)

We are (1st person plural)

He is (3rd person singular)

They are (3rd person plural)

1. Two or more subjects connected by and take a plural verb, e.g.

The boy and his dog are here.

1. But if the second noun is merely part of phrase qualifying the first singular noun the verb is singular, e.g.

The boy with his dog is here.

1. Singular subjects joined by or or neither….nor take a singular verb, e.g.

A play or a novel is very enjoyable.

Neither Mr. Smith nor Mr.Brown has come.

1. A COLLECTIVE noun takes a singular verb when the sense is singular , a plural verb when the sense is plural, e.g.

The jury consists of twelve persons . (Singular)

The jury are having dinner together. (Plural).

Subjects and Objects in a Sentence

We will now look more closely at the ways in which words and phrases are grouped together and ordered within clauses and sentences to convey a particular meaning.

The main elements of sentences

To begin this section, we will, first of all, examine the two most vital parts of the clause structure and then move on to the other elements. Again, it will be useful to use a few examples to illustrate the grammatical ideas.

He sneezed.

Accidents happen.

Speed kills.

Yvonne left.

Snakes crawl.

These clauses are all simple sentences consisting of only two words each. The first element in each sentence is called the Subject, while the second is the Verb. (Notice that I am using a capital letter here to talk about the verb as a clause element as opposed to the verb as a word class.) The Subject and the Verb are the minimum requirements for constructing a basic English clause (with the exception of directives like sit! and go!) and appear in that order in the vast majority of positive and negative statements. Although single words have been used to fill the Subject and Verb ‘slots’ in the examples above, much more complicated phrases can, of course, be made:

Subject

Verb

The tall, dark stranger was singing

The retail prices index has been rising

Shouting and screaming in arguments doesn’t help

The newly-arrived refugees weren’t able to understand

Being rejected by work mates hurts

The poor grasshopper couldn’t sleep

The Subject

As noted earlier, the subject of a positive or negative statement is usually the first element of a clause or sentence. The Subjects in the following sentences are in bold and the type of Subject is given in brackets:

The tall, dark stranger was singing. (noun phrase)

She stood still.(pronoun)

To err is human. (verb)

What he told me turned out to be a lie. (subordinate clause)

By far the most commonly used types of Subject are the noun phrase and the pronoun (I is the most frequently occurring word in the spoken language), while the verb – more correctly the verbinfinitive with to – is seldom used in modern English. A subordinate clause as Subject is quite common both in speech and writing and usually begins with what(ever)…, the fact that… or that…:

The fact that he likes skiing doesn’t interest me at all.

That Jane failed her exam is a great disappointment.

Whatever I hear about him surprises me.

The way to test whether a clause is functioning as the Subject is to try replacing it with a simpler grammatical element such as a pronoun or basic noun phrase and then checking the grammaticality of the clause. Applying this test to the sentences above would give:

It doesn’t interest me at all.

It is a great disappointment.

It surprises me.

… all of which are grammatically acceptable. Notice that, although the Subject may consist of several words, a long phrase or even a subordinate clause, there can only be one grammatical Subject per clause.

Up to this point we have been discussing only positive and negative statements where the Subject is the first element of the clause. However, there is one very common situation where this word order is not used – namely, in questions. Here the Subject and part of the verb phrase constituting the Verb element are inverted. From some of the examples above we get:

Was the tall, dark stranger singing?

Has the retail prices index been rising?

Doesn’t shouting and screaming in arguments help?

Weren’t the newly-arrived refugees able to understand?

Couldn’t the poor grasshopper sleep?

The Verb has a pivotal role in sentence structure. As with the Subject, the Verb can, and often does, consist of more than one word, but is treated as a single unit expressing not only the basic meaning of the main word (run, decide, imitate etc.), but also, among other things, the time that the action took place, whether the action is finished or not and the certainty of the action. In the examples below, the Verb is in bold:

The cat sleeps all day.

He is talking rubbish.

We will be seeing each other next week.

The wallet might have been lost at the party.

So, although there may be up to four, possibly even five words in the verb phrase of a clause, they are usually analysed as one Verb as an element of the clause. To demonstrate the importance of the Verb in a clause, try omitting the verb phrases from the examples above. Having done that, now omit each of the other elements in turn and see how the sense of the clause is affected.

The choice of the verb itself will often largely dictate what other elements may or may not be used in the clause. Verbs like yawn, sleep and scratch would seem to require an animate Subject, whilelaugh, talk and read usually need human Subjects (although the actions of animals are sometimes described in the same terms). Some verbs need only a Subject to make a complete clause (he yawned, the cat is sleeping, Barry jumped), while others appear to need some more elements – \*he hit…, \*they like…, \*cars cost…; we will look at these other elements in the next section.

Other elements in the clause

Apart from the two main clause elements, Subject and Verb, there are three others which may or may not appear in the clause. These are the Object, the Complement and the Adverbial. The following sentence contains examples of each of these:

The agency considered Harry indispensable for most jobs.

Using the definitions from the previous section, the agency is the Subject and considered is the Verb. The remaining elements are: Object – Harry, Complement – indispensable, Adverbial – for most jobs. We will now examine these in turn.

The Object

Here are some more examples of both people and things as Objects:

He loves football.

The dog bit the postman.

The police have arrested three people.

Sally opened the door to the dining room.

The company sacked one hundred of its employees.

Fifteen children from the school choir will be singing African folk songs.

As with the Subject, the Object can be anything from a single word (football) to a phrase (the door to the dining room). You will notice that the Object in each case directly follows the Verb. This is by far the most common position for the Object element in English, although, again, there are exceptions. English is, therefore, usually referred to as an SVO type language, meaning that the expected and most natural order of clause elements is Subject + Verb + Object. If you are a native speaker of English, this might seem so obvious as not to be worth comment. However, there are many languages in the world that do not follow this pattern; for example, Welsh and Irish are bothVSO languages, while Japanese and Turkish are SOV. It appears that this latter type is more common than the English SVO.

The examples given so far contain what is usually called a direct object; that is, there is only one object in the clause and this is the main focus. But how do we analyse the Objects in the following sentences?

A young boy showed her the way here.

Several friends have told me the same story.

The shop is sending my father a replacement.

You gave them no warning.

The direct object is shown in bold; but that still leaves us with an extra element immediately following the Verb in each sentence which we have not accounted for. While the direct object is the main focus of the verb action, the remaining elements (her, me, my father, them) seem to be the recipients of the direct object. So, in the third

example, my father will be receiving the replacement. All of these sentences can in fact be rewritten to illustrate this idea of recipient with very little change in meaning:

A young boy showed the way here to her.

Several friends have told the same story to me.

The shop is sending a replacement to my father.

You gave no warning to them

The preposition to indicates the target of the action of the verb. These targets, given in bold, are referred to as indirect objects. Notice that in the second set of examples the indirect object is formed by using a prepositional phrase with to and also follows the direct object, whereas in the first set the indirect object precedes the direct object without to.