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B.A.Part-2 English Composition

S. No 6

Topic: Subject verb agreement: Common Errors.

An important rule of English Grammar is that the verb must agree with the subject in number and person. But often the students make mistakes in recognizing the subjects and its number and person. The present lesson is aimed at helping the students to recognize the number and person of the subject and to use with it the correct form of verb.

Prominence of headword

Type 1 If a subject is in the form (head word+ modifier)the verb agrees with the head word but not the modifier

- a. The view of the scientists on the source of corona virus is same.
- b. Several studies confirm that China is the source of corona virus.
- c. The study of viruses is very important in the medical science.

Type 2: If the subject of a sentence begins with a fraction word the verb agrees with the noun in the post modifying phrase.

- a. Two-thirds of the acid has evaporated.
- b. Two-thirds of the beakers are broken.

Type 3 If the subject of sentence is in the form(noun + apposition noun)the verb agrees with the head word but not with the word in apposition.

- a. I ,Ramesh Kumar, am a student of D.B. College.
- b. Dr Nand Kumar, the Professor and Principal of the college has come.
- c. Patna , the capital of Bihar is free from corona virus.

Type 4 If the subject of a sentence is linked with *as well as/ along with/ with/ as well as/ the verb agrees with the subject and not with the words followed by the connectives.*

- a. The students along with his class teacher are going on picnic.
- b. The house with all its furniture is for sale.
- c. A bat unlike other birds is the carriers of corona virus.

Type 5: When 'and' connects two or more designation of the same person the verb takes the form required by a third person and singular number subject.

- a. The Vice President of India and Chancellor of this University has given his consent. (same person)
- b. The Vice President of India and the Chancellor of this University have given to this proposal. (different persons)

Type 6: If a subject begins with *each of/ either of/ neither of/ it agrees with the verb in third person singular number.*

- a. Neither of the two experiments was relevant to the topic of research.
- b. Each of these procedures has its own advantages.
- c. Either of them has to demonstrate how this apparatus works.

Type 7: If the subject of a sentence may begin with any one of the phrases (a good deal of, a great of, a lot of, plenty of, most of, some of) in all cases the verb agrees with the object of the preposition of.

- a. Some of the music was superb.
- b. Some of the children were mischievous.
- c. A lot of students have passed this year.

Type 8 Phrases beginning with a group (a crowd of, a flock of, a herd of, and a regiment of) usually takes a singular verb in spite of the fact that the word after 'of' is plural.

- a. A crowd of people was shouting slogans.
- b. A group of factory workers was going to oppose this proposal
- c. A group of smugglers was arrested yesterday

Prominence of notion.

Sometimes co-ordinate words in a subject, connected with 'and' (a noun + another noun) stand for the notion of the third one, then the verb takes the form required by third person singular number.

Type 1 a. Bread and butter is a wholesome breakfast.

b. Fish and rice is a popular dish in Bengal.

c. Fish and chips is not so expensive as chicken curry and rice.

Type 2 When the two nouns (singular noun+ singular nouns=) represent the same thing

a. My friend and colleague has come

b. His pet and companion is his dog

c. The magistrate and Collector is on duty.

Type 3: When the subject though plural in form is taken as a single unit takes singular verb

a. Ten miles is a long distance.

b. Two dollars is not a big sum.

c. Sixty years is a long time.

Prominence of nearness

Type 1. In case of correlative conjunction either... or neither.... nor. The verb agrees with the nearest one.

a. Either you or he has to leave this place.

b. Neither the doctor nor the nurses are to blame.

c. Neither the doctors nor the nurse on duty at that time is to blame

Type 2. If one of the two subjects is negative the verb agrees with positive subject even though the negative subject is near to the verb.

a. Not the Defence Minister but the two generals deserve a reward for this victory.

b. The two generals, but not the Defence Minister deserve a reward for this victory.

- c. Not the Vice Chancellor but the students were happy for the examination being postponed.

Test yourself

1. Rice and fish are the most popular dish in Bengal.
2. Neither of the two students have completed his assignments.
3. Sixty years are a long time.
4. A flock of sheep were grazing in the field.
5. The crown and glory of life are character.
6. The thinker and politician were talking about poverty.
7. Time and tide wait for none.
8. Neither of the students has come.
9. Both Mohan and Gopi is absent.
10. Two thirds of the students have failed in the examination.
11. The pros and cons of the matter are to be considered.