



A University Grammar of English

Lecture No. 7

Coordinated subject: *Coordination with “and*

When a subject consists of two or more noun phrases (or clauses) coordinated by *and*, a distinction has to be made between *appositional coordination* and *non-appositional coordination*. *Non-appositional coordination* includes cases that can be treated as an implied reduction of two clauses. These have a verb in the plural:

Coordination with “and”

- What I say and what I think **are** my own affair.
[what I say is my own affair and what I think is my own affair]
- Jack and George are my roommates. [Jack is my roommate and George is my roommate]
Conjoinings expressing a mutual relationship also take a plural verb:
- Your cell phone and mine are similar. [Your cell phone is similar to mine and mine is similar to yours]

Coordination with “and”

A singular verb form is used with conjoinings which represent a single entity:

- The Bat and Ball *sells* good juice.
- Broad bean and eggs *makes* a good Iraqi breakfast.

Arithmetical sums may be used with a singular or plural verb:

- Two and two [is/are>equals/equal] four
- Ten fives [makes/make] fifty.

appositional coordination

Clause reduction isn't possible with ***appositional coordination*** because the coordinated structures refer to the same thing. That's why a singular verb is used:

- ***This temple of ugliness and memorial to Victorian bad taste was*** erected in the main street of the city.

The following example, however, could have either a singular or plural verb, depending on the meaning:

- ***His aged servant and the subsequent editor of his collected paper*** {was/were} with him in the conference.

Singular ***was*** is used if the servant and the editor are the same person, and plural ***were*** if they are two different people.

appositional coordination

Some freedom is allowed in the interpretation of abstract nouns since it is not always easy to decide if they represent two qualities or one :

- Her calmness and confidence {is /are} astonishing.
- Law and order {has/have}been established

Coordination with “or” and “nor”

When two noun phrases are joined by *or* or *either...or*, both grammatical concord and proximity concord can be used. Grammatical concord is clear when each member of the coordination has the same number:

- Either the Mayor or her deputy is bound to come.
- What I say or what I think is none of your business.

Proximity principle is to be used when the coordinated noun phrases have different numbers. The general rule, here, is that the number of the verb is determined by the number of the last or closest noun phrase.

- Either the workers or the foreman is to blame for the disruption.
- Either the foreman or the workers are to blame for the disruption.

Coordination with “neither...nor”

The rules for the negative correlatives *neither* . . . *nor* are the same as for *either* . . . *or* in formal usage. In less formal usage, they are treated more like *and* for concord. Thus, [the first example below] is more natural in speech than [the second one]:

- Neither he nor his wife *have* arrived.
- Neither he nor his wife *has* arrived.

Coordination with “*not. . . But*” and “*not only. . . but also*”

The coordinating correlatives *not. . . but* and *not only. . . but also* behave like *or* with respect to number concord:

- Not only he but his wife has arrived.
- Not (only) one but all of us were invited.
- Not just the students but even their teacher is enjoying the film.

The mixed expression ***one or two*** follows the principle of proximity in having plural concord:

- One or two reasons *were* suggested.

Similarly *one and* plus a fraction has plural concord, since the notion of plural applies not to at least two but to more than one:

- One and a half years *have* passed since we last met.

Grammatical concord is usually obeyed for ***more than***:

- More than a hundred terrorists were killed yesterday.
- More than five thousands have participated in the opening ceremony.

Although ***more than one person*** is notionally plural, a singular verb is preferred (*one*) ***person*** operates as head of the noun phrase.

- More than one person has protested against the proposal.

Indefinite expressions as subject

Another area of ambivalence for subject-verb number concord is that of indefinite expressions of amount or quantity, especially with the determiners and with the pronouns *no, none, all, some, any*, and fractions such as *half*. They have both count and noncount uses.

With noncount nouns (present or implied), the verb is of course singular:

- So far no money *has* been spent on repairs.
- None (of the money) *has* been spent on repairs.
- Some cement *has* arrived.
- Some (of the cement) *has* arrived.

Indefinite expressions as subject

With plural count nouns (present or implied) the verb is plural:

- No people of that name *live* here.
- Some books *have* been placed on the shelves.

None with plural count nouns is in divided usage:

- None of the books {has/have} been placed on the shelves.

With *either* and *neither* the singular verb is generally used:

- The two candidates have arrived, {and either/but neither} is welcome.

The proximity principle may lead to plural concord even with indefinites such as *each, every, everybody, anybody,* and *nobody* (or indefinite phrases such as *everyone, any one*), which are otherwise singular:

- Nobody, not even the teachers, were listening.
- Everyone of that audience were pleased with the show.

Many people consider the above sentences and similar ones as being ungrammatical for they contradict rules of grammatical concord.