

# Subject-verb Agreement Violation in Productive Skills in Vietnamese's English Learning: A Case Study

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**ABSTRACT---** *This case study makes an investigation on subject-verb violation in productive skills in the participant's different states of mood to see if certain mistakes are made in writing, will the same types of mistakes be made in speaking and vice versa. Besides, the study is also going to explore if the learner makes more mistakes in writing or speaking and why this happens. Another focus of this case study is to see if emotional state has any influence on learner's productive skills. The results have shown that more mistakes were made in speaking than in writing and when the learner was in stressed or tensed mood, more mistakes were made than she was in normal mood and that similar mistakes were made in both of these productive skills.*

**Keywords---** subject-verb agreement, violation, productive skills, Vietnamese's English learning

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English grammar is a complex area that continues to interest researchers and subject-verb agreement violation is one such area that has prompted further investigation by many individuals. A large portion of the research available has focused on the potential causes behind why L2 English learners become confused with subject-verb agreement and solutions for overcoming these problems have also been explored. For example, Aissen (1989) stated that subject-verb agreement need to be considered in a syntactic and semantic view or learners need to know how to mark numbers for subjects and verb, how to identify the number and how to identify the subject of a sentence (Bock and Miller, 1991). Bock and Eberhard (1993) and Vigliocco (1995) looked at the mismatching of numbers between head nouns and local nouns. Or in the research of Hartsuiker, Antón-Méndez, and van Zee (2001), they mentioned to the role of pronouns and objects in making learners more confused with subject-verb agreement. However, no research has discussed the relationship between subject-verb agreement mistakes in both speaking and writing. For example, when subject-verb agreement violations are made in writing, are the same mistakes made when speaking and vice-versa? Or are more mistakes made in one particular medium when compared to the other, and if this is the case, why is this so? Furthermore, do different emotional states influence the correct or incorrect usage of subject-verb agreement in speaking and writing? These are important questions that are worthy of further consideration. Thus this paper aims to fill a gap in the current body of literature regarding subject-verb agreement violation.

This small study will focus on a learner's language experience and gathered information, via an interview, to learn more about the participant's language learning background. In addition, the participant's performance in spoken and written English will be tested, recorded and analysed and the results will be presented. Finally, the findings will be discussed to see if the results observed are in line with what has been discovered in the existing body of literature.

## 2. PARTICIPANT

The participant of this study is a postgraduate student who is enrolled in a twenty-week English learning course at the language centre at a University in Australia. This course is for the purpose of meeting the English requirements outlined for a Master of Finance course.

The participant was seen to be a suitable candidate for this study for several reasons. Firstly, she is an L2 English learner and currently working on improving her English language skills. Secondly, in daily conversations with her, the researcher has noticed that she often makes mistakes of subject-verb agreement so further exploration of the causes behind these errors, in addition to seeing whether the same mistakes are made in her writing, will be of interest. Furthermore, the participant often makes more errors in speaking when she is talking to a teacher or someone she does not know well or in her stressful or tensed feeling so this will also be looked at to see if feelings affect English performance. In terms of her past experience with English learning, the participant started to learn English when she was in grade three in Vietnam and has been learning for 13 years now. In her point of view, age is an important factor in the

process of learning languages because she believes that the earlier a person starts the process the easier it will be to master. She believes that it is easier for children to imitate what other people say and the way they pronounce words because their tongues, at this early stage, are not yet familiar with certain positions for speaking and are more flexible as a result. For example, an adult of Vietnamese origin will not be familiar with final consonants like “th” and “sh” at the end of words because in the Vietnamese language system, these sounds do not exist. Therefore, it is difficult for such individuals to practice these sounds after they have had a long time speaking their native language. In contrast, a young learner can practice these sounds with greater ease as there is less re-learning that needs to take place. In addition to this, the participant thinks that young learners are often less afraid of making mistakes so they learn and acquire a language in a more natural way compared to adult learners who can be more shy and embarrassed about making mistakes. The participant also observed that young learners have less background knowledge of their first language, which can mean that they are not influenced by their mother tongue as heavily as those who have spoken their first language for many years. Motivation, in the participant’s opinion, plays an important role in the language studying process. If someone has good motivation, both subjective and objective, it is easier to study and make progress (Lukmani, 1972). The participant also agrees that if learners are highly motivated and have clear goals to achieve in language learning, they can overcome difficulties more easily.

In terms of her English learning process, most of the time she has been studying in a classroom with teachers, both at school with Vietnamese educators and with those in foreign language centres. The most significant differences she noted between these two types of class environments were the classroom atmosphere and the language the instructions were given in. In the class with a Vietnamese teacher, more than sixty per cent of instructional language was Vietnamese, especially when the rules of grammatical structure were explained. The participant recalled that while teachers in this environment tried to organize games and fun activities to make the class more interesting, the lack of exposure to spoken English made grasping the grammar rules difficult at times. In contrast, learning English at a foreign language centre where things are more relaxed and students are free to express themselves without worrying about making mistakes makes for a more enjoyable experience and having instructions given in English one hundred per cent of the time improves matters as this requires more concentration. In her opinion, this is a much better environment for English language learners. Yet the participant also expressed that self-study plays an important role in her learning process. The participant also felt that self-study is as important as, or perhaps even more important than studying in a classroom with a teacher because she believes that teachers can only act as guides, they cannot replace the learning that students must do for themselves.

In terms of using English, the participant explained that before she came to Australia to study, she had few chances to use the English that she knew because in her work as a teacher of Economics there was no call for it. After finishing her bachelor degree, she did not practice English for two years and only started to engage in English learning again when she was preparing for her studies abroad. However, because she knows the importance of English in the world today, she has, on occasion, practiced listening and speaking English on her own to try and improve in these areas. Although she is more confident when it comes to reading and writing English, her current speaking and listening skills still enable her to have understandable conversations with others and she only has a few problems with reading comprehension. Yet grammar in writing and speaking still makes her somewhat confused. She realizes that in an academic environment, using English in the correct way is necessary. That is also the reason why she would like to join this study to discover her own problems and ways to overcome them. In terms of influence, the participant shared the fact that learning English had changed her in positive ways. The participant expressed that it has made her more sociable because improving her skills demands that she actively starts conversations with other people and when she can say something to others in English correctly, it makes her more confident and increases her motivation to learn more. She also mentioned that learning English has helped her to be more tolerant and open-minded as she can now see many different points of view. Finally, her involvement in English has also broadened her horizons, helping her learn and understand more about people, different cultures and the world at large.

### **3. LANGUAGE FEATURE**

This English grammar study will focus on subject-verb agreement violation in writing and speaking contexts to see if the results found follow what was discovered in the literature. This includes the influence of the different number of head nouns and local nouns present, the position of local nouns (be they in the same or different clause with head nouns), and the influence that emotions have in English performance. More specifically, this paper will focus on the number of mistakes made in writing and speaking contexts with the aim of filling in the gap present in this body of literature in this area of English language studies.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

Unlike the studies of Vigliocco (1995) and Bock and Miller (1991) in which the participants listened to fragment sentences, then repeated and completed them in a free way without any prior information given, the participant in this study will attend an interview about her English learning experience before she actually begins participating. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about her background knowledge, as well as her own experiences, in learning

the English language. In the interview, she will, in a comfortable and free way, talk about her study experiences, covering things like when she started learning, why she had to learn English and whether it was a favourite or a compulsory subject, the type of classroom she was learning in, how she practiced English inside and outside the classroom, how often she had the opportunity to use English, how she would rate her English skills on a scale, if she was happy with her English level and whether she believed that she had become a different type of person as a result of learning English.

Data collection is based on the participant's completion of fifty-sentence exercises based on subject-verb agreement tasks of varying difficulty, from easy to advanced level. This exercise includes sentences with differing number of head nouns and local nouns, differing distances between head nouns and local nouns with the interference of pronouns and objects. The participant will be asked to complete this exercise in a twenty-five minute period in a 'normal' feeling or mood. She will then be asked to do another similar exercise when she is in a completely different state, either a low mood or a very happy mood, to see if the emotion affects her results.

In terms of speaking context, the participant will participate in a conversation about one of her favourite topics so that she can share more information and feel comfortable to express her ideas. This conversation will be recorded and transcribed to see if she makes mistakes with subject-verb agreement. In the conversation, the informant will be encouraged to use long and complex sentences in which the verbs do not necessarily follow the subjects immediately to see if the distance between subjects and verbs makes her confused. Her conversation will also be recorded when she is in a different mood or emotional state to see if emotion affects her delivery in speaking contexts.

These written and spoken samples will be analysed to see if her results match what was found in the literature, and more importantly, to see if the results can reveal the relationship between mistakes in writing and speaking contexts regarding subject-verb agreement.

## **5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the literature review concerning subject-verb agreement violation, many researchers mentioned the differing number of nouns, including head nouns and local nouns, which lead to mismatching. Hartsuiker et al. (2001); Franck, Vigliocco, and Nicol (2002); Bock and Eberhard (1993) and T. R. Haskell (2002) all put forward the idea that if the number of head nouns are singular, then more mistakes will be made than if it is plural, or if local nouns are plural, it will often make learners more confused. The position of local nouns also has certain influence (Bock and Cutting, 1992; T. R. Haskell and MacDonald, 2005). If local nouns are in the same clause with head nouns, learners seem to make more mistakes than if it is located in a different clause (Franck et al., 2002). Also, pronouns and objects play a role in making the situation more difficult. If a pronoun or an object exists next to a verb, it can make a learner confused and more mistakes are commonly made and it appears as if objects have more influence than pronouns (Eberhard, Cutting, and Bock, 2005; Hartsuiker et al., 2001). In addition, the emotional feelings of learners also influences their work, as is mentioned in the research by Argaman and Abu-Rabia (2002); Ingleton (1995, 1999). Research has shown that a person cannot concentrate properly when they feel stressed, anxious or depressed (Better health channel, 2013). If English learners are affected by feeling in this way, the attention given to writing, talking or conversation is often compromised.

The theoretical framework has focused on causes that lead to the subject-verb agreement violation and some suggestions to improve this problem have been put forward. However, there is no research found mentioning to the relationship between mistakes of subject-verb agreement in speaking and writing. Also, no research mentions the number of mistakes in writing and speaking made by learners to show if they make more mistakes in writing or when speaking or if the amount of mistakes made in these areas is about the same. Thus, there is a gap in the literature about subject-verb agreement violation that needs to be filled and this is what this small study seeks to achieve.

## **6. FINDINGS**

The participant finished two fifty sentence exercises, one of which was completed in a 'normal' or 'regular' mood and one was completed when the participant was feeling sad. She also participated in two conversations that were recorded and transcribed (see appendixes). Again, one conversation took place when she was in a 'normal' or 'regular' mood and the other was she was feeling sad and tensed.

All of her written and spoken performances were collected and analysed and the results are as follows:

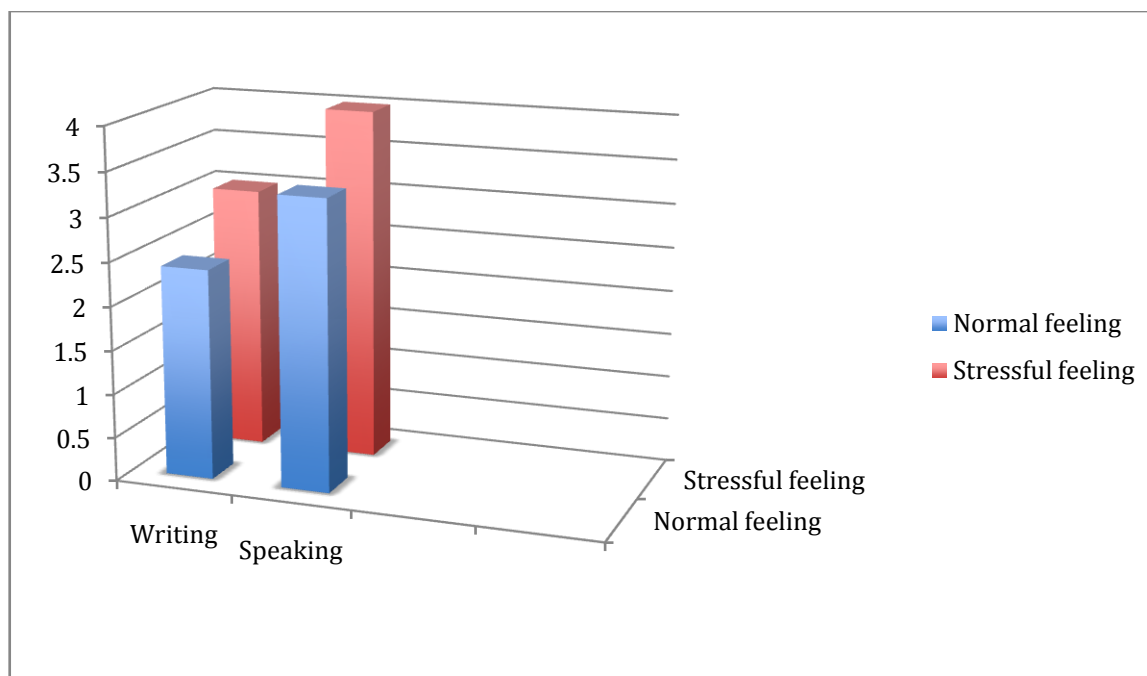


Chart 1: Mistakes were made in the participant's writing and speaking in normal and stressful feeling

The chart clearly illustrates that when the participant was in a 'normal' mood when writing and speaking, she made fewer mistakes when compared to when she was in stressed mood. Yet in both instances, the informant made more mistakes when speaking in comparison to writing. The detailed numbers are stated as follows:

In the written exercise that was completed in a normal mood, the participant made twelve mistakes. The mistakes included sentences with a differing number of head nouns and local nouns and some of her mistakes were made because of the distance between the subjects and verbs. She was also attracted by nouns that are nearer to verbs, rather than the subjects themselves, at the beginning of the sentences. One of the mistakes she made was because of the influence of the pronoun next to the required verb.

In her second exercise, she completed the sentences in a sad mood. She also did a similar fifty-sentence exercise in the same amount of time of twenty-five minutes. The results show that she made more mistakes than the first time. She made fifteen mistakes of subject-verb agreement, which included four mistakes because of the long distances between subjects and verbs, five other mistakes that were due to the difference in number between head nouns and local nouns and six more mistakes that were related to pronouns, objects and joined subjects.

In her speaking experiment, the first conversation was recorded in fifteen minutes in which the participant was encouraged to talk about her favourite things, like her hobbies, her daily life, and her family her dreams and her experience of learning English grammar. These topics were chosen because they were familiar to her and were easier for her to talk about and discuss in greater depth. What was found was that she made fifteen mistakes in subject-verb agreement. Most of the mistakes related to singular person as a subject, some of the mistakes were in relation to the interference of attractors between subjects and verbs and some others were due to the difference in number of head nouns and local nouns and the rest of the mistakes relates to other reasons that go beyond this study.

Her second conversation took place when she had just received bad news about a test result regarding her English studies. As a result, she was rather stressed and tense. The conversation lasted another fifteen minutes and she owned most of the talking time during the conversation. Under this circumstance, she made more mistakes than what she did in the first conversation. The number of mistakes counted was twenty and included different types of causes. Most of the mistakes found in the first conversation were also found in the second conversation but the amount of times they were made increased.

## 7. DISCUSSION

From what was presented in the findings of this case study, it is clearly seen that the results are similar to what was outlined in the literature review about subject-verb agreement violation. As indicated in T. R. Haskell and MacDonald (2005), learners make mistakes because they make the verb agree with nearer nouns whether the nouns follow or precede the verbs. What was seen here, in this case study, showed that their theory was correct. The nouns that preceded the verb attracted the participant.

For example, in this sentence: “Carlos is the only one of those students who \_\_\_\_\_ lived up to the potential described in the yearbook”, instead of choosing “has” as the answer, she chose “have” and when asked why she chose this answer, she said that she chose “have” because of “students” that precedes the verb. Or in the sentence of “Building a good marriage and building a good log fire \_\_\_\_\_ similar in many ways”, instead of choosing “are” as the answer because the subjects are joined with “and”, the participant chose “is” because the attraction of “a good log fire” which precedes the verb.

However, five of the twelve mistakes found demonstrated the opposite view from what T. R. Haskell and MacDonald (2005) found where learners make verbs agree with their nearest nouns. In the incorrect answers, the participant chose the verb that agreed with the noun at the beginning of the sentence rather than making it agree with the noun immediately preceding the verb. In other words, she made it agree with the noun that was further away, not with the noun that was closest, like the theory states. For example, in the sentence: “Neither the basket nor the apples \_\_\_\_\_ expensive”. If what T. R. Haskell and MacDonald (2005) found was right, the participant would choose “were” for “apples” because it was nearer to the verb than “basket”. However, in this case the participant chose “was” instead. In the sentence: “Either Maria or you \_\_\_\_\_ late for class”, “were” is a correct answer, but the informant chose “was” for the subject “Maria”, which was farther from the verb than the word “you”.

In terms of the influence of pronouns, Hartsuiker et al. (2001) mentioned that pronouns are one of the reasons why English learners get confused because of their own attraction effect. One of the mistakes made by the participant supported this theory. In the sentence “Neither of them \_\_\_\_\_ going to the show” the participant was attracted to the pronoun “them”, so she chose “like” instead of “likes”. Regarding the difference in the number of head nouns and local nouns as mentioned in the research of Bock and Eberhard (1993), and Vigliocco (1995) and Franck et al. (2002), the result in this case study showed a similar result, which was that mismatching of the number of head nouns and local nouns is different. One of the mistakes made by the participant illustrated this conclusion. For example, “The way of life in small villages far from big cities \_\_\_\_\_ mostly quiet because there are few people”. The head noun in this sentence is “the way of life” which is singular and two other local nouns are “villages” and “cities” which are plural. This made the informant confused and she made a mistake when she chose “are” as her answer, but not “is”. Also, two sentences in this exercise illustrate that learners make mistakes because they do not master the grammatical rules and some of the quantity phrases make them confused. For example, in these two sentences:

“The number \_\_\_\_\_ very small” and “A number of students \_\_\_\_\_ absent.”

The participant was confused about whether the subjects were plural or singular. If she knew that “the number” is considered as “singular” and “a number of ...” is considered as plural, then no mistakes would be made here. However, this important cause has not been mentioned in the literature of subject-verb agreement violation. Therefore, it needs to be considered and mentioned as one of the vital reasons that lead to mismatching. As well, further research needs to be done in this area to find out the affect it has on learners’ language performance.

In her second written exercise, she made more mistakes than the first exercise. Fifteen mistakes were found from fifty sentences given to her. According to Ingleton (1995, 1999), emotion affects learning results and in this case study, tense feelings had a negative influence upon English performance. This is because when the participant was completing the exercise given, she was still thinking about her stressful situation and so her concentration was affected, which likely impacted upon her performance. The effect of emotion seems to be similar in speaking contexts in which the participant made more mistakes when she was tense and stressed compared to when she was more relaxed. Furthermore, most of the mistakes made under these circumstances were similar to those made in her first performance. Therefore, it could be said that the participant makes similar mistakes in writing and speaking. This means that in both writing and speaking, the participant was confused because of the different number of head nouns and local nouns, because of the distance between head nouns and local nouns, and the influence of pronouns and objects upon decision-making when attempting to make subjects and verbs agree. The only difference found here between mistakes in speaking and listening is that in simple sentences like “I + verb” or “she/he + verbs”, no mistakes of this type were found in writing, but in speaking, many of them exist. This does not mean the informant does not know the grammatical rule, but because in her speaking, it is her habit to add or drop “s” automatically regardless subject-verb agreement.

In both written and spoken performance, it can be seen that emotion has a certain influence upon the learning process and overall results. The findings found match what was presented in the literature review of this study.

It is also clearly seen that the participant made more mistakes when speaking than in her writing, regardless of her emotional state at the time. Given her background, this could be due to a number of reasons. First, according to her learning experience, she was used to writing English rather than speaking it. Therefore, it was easier for her to do the writing exercises overall. Secondly, in her writing exercise, she had a chance to look back and self-correct, unlike in speaking where she had to concentrate, listen and respond immediately, giving her little time to think about grammar. Thirdly, as observed, the participant made mistakes in speaking partly because she placed much attention upon the meaning and the message she wanted to convey to the listener rather than on the language itself. Also, as Hartsuiker and

Barkhuysen (2006) explained, the distance between head nouns and local nouns make it difficult for speakers to remember the number of head nouns present and they often make agreement between verbs and the nearer nouns as a result. The difference in the number of head nouns and local nouns contributed to the participant's feelings of confusion, the amount of mistakes made. Besides, as the participant herself realized, she adds and drops "s" in an uncontrolled way that also contributes to the amount of mistakes, especially when she was in her tensed feeling. In her second conversation, these mistakes appear in more frequency. For example, in the first conversation these mistakes come out seven times in the lines of 6, 16, 24, 52, 54 62 and 63; while they appear 11 times in her second conversation. Actually, when she reviewed the transcription, she could realize these mistakes herself and she could self-correct them. However, during the time of speaking, she did not know that she broke the rules because at that time she placed much attention on meaning.

There are some other types of mistakes can be observed here in her conversations including wrong use of verb tense and the lack of verb in the sentences. It can be clearly seen that she used simple present most of the time even though she was talking about something in the past in which past tense must be applied. For example, when talking about the comment of her strange teacher, the incident had happened two weeks before the day of her conversation, she still used simple present. Also, in some sentences, she did not include the verbs, but what she said like a translation from Vietnamese into English. For example, in line 10, conversation 1, she said "grammar, i think not important as long as i can understand". However, these types of mistakes are beyond the border of this study, so no further discussion is included here.

Basing on what was analysed in the participant's written and spoken English performance, the following suggestions are drawn for her only. First, it is necessary for her both written and spoken English that she needs to master the rules of subject-verb agreement before she can apply them into her performance. It is impossible for her to realize and correct herself if she does not know the rules. Second, "attention", as her previous teacher suggested, is important to help her improve her situation. She should pay attention on her English input. When she reads or listens to something in English, she needs to remind herself to place attention on grammar, not for understanding properly, but for improving her mistakes as revealed in this study. As she said it became her habit and it is believed that habit can be changed. If she is patient enough and practices this way for a certain amount of time, her performance will be improved a lot. Thirdly, she needs a listener who is willing and patient enough to help her to correct the mistakes or to remind her when the mistakes come out. Gradually, she can establish a new good habit of paying more attention to grammatical structures in her productive skills. Last but not least, practice makes perfect. The more she practices these skills, the more she realizes and correct herself, the better her performances will be.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

It is possible to conclude, according to this small study, that the difference in number between head nouns and local nouns in sentences make learners confused and contribute to subject-verb agreement violation. However, because of the limited scope of this study, no findings relating to whether fewer mistakes are made when head nouns are plural compared to when they are singular or what the difference is if local nouns are plural or singular can be made.

Secondly, the distance between head nouns and local nouns makes it difficult for learners to have subject-verb agreement because learners will be attracted by nearer nouns. The literature review based on this topic highlights that if local nouns are in the same clause with head nouns, it makes learners more confused and therefore they make more mistakes than if local nouns are in a different clause with head nouns. Also, pronouns and objects influence learners' violation of subject-verb agreement and sometimes learners make mistakes because of pronouns or objects that follow or precede verbs.

The third finding in this study is that emotion has a certain affect on language performance. When language learners are in tensed or stressed moods they cannot concentrate as well and this can lead to more mistakes being made in spoken and written English performance.

Finally, the most important finding of this case study is that when comparing the mistakes in writing and those of violation in speaking, it is noted that speaking mistakes are more prolific. This may be due to the fact that learners have less time to think and consider language grammar and their working memory has difficulties in remembering the number of head nouns when they are far away from the verbs. Instead, they will commonly make verbs agree with the nouns that come immediately before or nearer to the verbs rather than the head nouns.

However, this study has been carried out with one participant only. Therefore the findings have limitations. The results of this study seek to show if what has been discovered compliments what was found in previous studies conducted in this area and to see if similarities and/or differences can be identified. Given the extremely small sample size of this study, it is impossible to conclude that what was found here can be applied to English learners in general, or Vietnamese learners, in particular. Also, in this small study, the participant was told what aspect of her language would be analysed, so during the experiment, she would have likely attempted to do her best in these areas to try and avoid making mistakes as much as possible. Therefore, both written and spoken performances are not totally natural, when compared to what she

would do outside of this study. Thus, it can be said that the reflection that she was able to have upon her language performance is not completely true and natural, making it a significant limitation.

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## APPENDIXES

First written exercise (finished in her normal feeling)

1: The rhythm of the pounding waves \_\_\_\_ calming.

a. **is**

b. are

2: All of the dogs in the neighborhood \_\_\_\_ barking.

a. **were**

b. was

3: A high tax, not to mention unemployment, \_\_\_\_ votes.

a. influence

b. **influences**

4: My friends and my mother \_\_\_\_ each other.

a. **like**

b. likes

5: The team and the band \_\_\_\_ on the field.

a. was

b. **were**

6: Building a good marriage and building a good log fire \_\_\_\_ similar in many ways.

a. **is**

b. are

7: John or Doris \_\_\_\_ to us regularly.

a. write

b. **writes**

8: Either Patty or Tom \_\_\_\_ asked to lead the meeting.

a. was

b. **were**

9: Neither Carol nor Ted \_\_\_\_ excluded from the meeting.

a. **is**

b. are

10: Neither the basket nor the apples \_\_\_\_ expensive.

a. **was**

b. were



11: Neither the apples nor the basket \_\_\_\_ expensive.

- a. was
- b. were

12: Either Maria or you \_\_\_\_ late for class.

- a. was
- b. were

13: Either you or Maria \_\_\_\_ late for class.

- a. was
- b. were

14: Hardest hit by the high temperatures and drought \_\_\_\_ the farmers.

- a. was
- b. were

15: Neither of them \_\_\_\_ going to the show.

- a. like
- b. likes

16: Each of them \_\_\_\_ a good seat.

- a. has
- b. have

17: Everybody in the class \_\_\_\_ tickets.

- a. has
- b. have

18: Every silver knife, fork, and spoon \_\_\_\_ to be counted.

- a. has
- b. have

19: Each cat and each dog \_\_\_\_ its own toy.

- a. has
- b. have

20: The committee \_\_\_\_ meeting today.

- a. is
- b. are

21: Ten million gallons of oil \_\_\_\_ a lot of oil.

- a. is

b. are

22: The jury \_\_\_\_ today.

a. vote

b. **votes**

23: The number \_\_\_\_ very small.

a. is

b. **are**

24: A number of students \_\_\_\_ absent.

a. **was**

b. were

25: Ten million gallons of oil \_\_\_\_ spilled.

a. was

b. **were**

26: The majority of us \_\_\_\_ in favor.

a. is

b. **are**

27: Statistics \_\_\_\_ an interesting subject.

a. **is**

b. are

28: Statistics \_\_\_\_ often misleading.

a. is

b. **are**

29: The sheep \_\_\_\_ when the gate is left open.

a. stray

b. **strays**

30: Sheep \_\_\_\_ when the gate is left open.

**a. stray**

b. strays

31: Of all university courses, mathematics probably \_\_\_\_ the most fear.

a. produce

b. **produces**

32: Living in big cities almost always \_\_\_\_ stress because of traffic jams, too few parking spaces, and too many people.

a. cause

b. **causes**

33: The way of life in small villages far from big cities \_\_\_\_ mostly quiet because there are few people.

a. is

b. **are**

34: In many countries, governments \_\_\_\_ the mass media through censorship.

a. **control**

b. controls

35: Sometimes a government covertly \_\_\_\_ the general population by releasing disinformation through the mass media.

a. Influence

b. **influences**

36: President Obama, along with his support staff and news reporters, \_\_\_\_ many key cities around the world every year.

a. visit

b. **visits**

37: Least considered in the latest bombing campaign \_\_\_\_ the innocent victims.

a. **was**

b. were

38: Each cat and each dog in this animal shelter \_\_\_\_ eventually placed in a good home.

a. **is**

b. are

39: The deer standing silently next to the large tree \_\_\_\_ not seen by the two hunters.

a. **was**

b. were

40: Neither the students nor the teacher \_\_\_\_ able to find the solution immediately.

a. was

b. **were**

41: Either the physicians in this hospital or the chief administrator \_\_\_\_ going to have to make a decision.

a. is

b. **are**

42. \_\_\_\_ my boss or my sisters in the union going to win this grievance?

a. **Is**

b. Are

43. Some of the votes \_\_\_\_\_ to have been miscounted.

a. seem

b. **seems**

44. The tornadoes that tear through this county every spring \_\_\_\_ more than just a nuisance.

a. **are**

b. is

45. Everyone selected to serve on this jury \_\_\_\_ to be willing to give up a lot of time.

a. have

b. **has**

46. Kara Wolters, together with her teammates, \_\_\_\_\_ a formidable opponent on the basketball court.

a. **presents**

b. present

47. He seems to forget that there \_\_\_\_\_ things to be done before he can graduate.

a. **are**

b. is

48. There \_\_\_\_ to be some people left in that town after yesterday's flood.

a. **have**

b. has

49. Some of the grain \_\_\_\_\_ to be contaminated.

a. appear

b. **appears**

50. Three-quarters of the students \_\_\_\_\_ against the tuition hike.

a. is

b. **are**

Second written exercise (finished in her sad feeling)

1. Carlos is the only one of those students who \_\_\_\_\_ lived up to the potential described in the yearbook.

a. has

b. have

2. The International Club, as well as the Choral Society and the Rowing Club, \_\_\_\_\_ to submit a new constitution.

a. need

b. needs

3. One of my best friends \_\_\_\_\_ an extra on Seinfeld this week.

a. are

b. is

4. Not only the students but also their instructor \_\_\_\_\_ been called to the principal's office.

a. have

b. has

5. Most of the milk \_\_\_\_\_ gone bad. Six gallons of milk \_\_\_\_\_ still in the refrigerator.

a. has ---- are

b. have ---- is

6. Each and every student and instructor in this building \_\_\_\_\_ for a new facility by next year.

a. hope

b. hopes

7. The students and instructors each \_\_\_\_\_ for a new facility by next year.

a. hopes

b. hope

8. Rice and beans, my favorite dish, \_\_\_\_\_ me of my native Puerto Rico.

a. remind

b. reminds

9. A large number of voters still \_\_\_\_\_ along straight-party lines.

a. votes

b. vote

10. Four years \_\_\_\_\_ a long time to spend away from your friends and family.

a. are

b. is

11. Politics \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes a dirty business.

a. are

b. is

12. To an outsider, the economics of this country \_\_\_\_\_ to be in disarray.

a. seem

b. seems

13. Unlike similar kinds of pets such as neon tetras, the guppy \_\_\_ very little food and attention to survive.

a. need

b. needs

14. According to the police, the killer of the boys in both cities \_\_\_ probably between the ages of 40 and 50.

a. is

b. are

15. Swimming in heated pools \_\_\_ very common in this part of the country in the winter.

a. are

b. is

16. Without the new taxes, houses built before World War II \_\_\_ lower costs than more modern homes do.

a. have

b. has

17. Despite the bad weather we have had in the past days, there \_\_\_ no doubt that the tournament will go on.

a. is

b. are

18. The large companies in our area \_\_\_ a cheap source of labor.

a. need

b. needs

19. That Shakespeare was one of the most talented writers \_\_\_ an understatement to those who are really familiar with the field of literature.

a. are

b. is

20. As most sports magazines can attest, playing sports such as tennis and basketball \_\_\_ not only mental ability but also physical strength.

a. requires

b. require

21. The use of vitamin supplements and herbs (be) \_\_\_ becoming increasingly popular among Americans.

22. While many studies claim that vitamins and herbs can improve health, there (be) is a lot of controversy about their safety.
23. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (do) does not regulate vitamins and herbs.
24. Most experts (believe) believe that herbal supplements are mild and somewhat harmless.
25. Still, anyone who (take) takes too much of a vitamin or herb could suffer negative side effects.
26. For example, some medical problems (have) have been linked to overuse of ephedra, an herb taken by people to lose weight.
27. Some research (suggest) suggests that Vitamin C may help prevent cancer.
28. People who (take) take more than 1,000 milligrams of vitamin C daily may experience diarrhea or kidney stones.
29. Advertisers say that the herb "kava kava" (reduce) reduces anxiety and insomnia.
30. Using large amounts of kava kava (be) is not wise as muscle, eye or skin problems could result.
31. The danger of long-term use of vitamins and herbs (be) are still unknown.
32. There (be) is a lot of evidence that vitamin-rich foods are beneficial.
33. However, whether the use of supplements (be) is helpful or not is still being debated.
34. Most people (be) are able to get all the vitamins they need in the foods they eat.
35. A daily diet that (contain) contain foods from the 4 groups should supply all the nutrients a person needs.
36. Eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily (be) is said to provide all the essential vitamins we require.
37. The best way to get the necessary vitamins and minerals (be) is naturally, through a healthy diet.
38. Talking to your doctor before taking supplements (be) is advisable.
39. A small black cat and a large yellow dog (sit, sits) sit on the front stairs.
40. The boss and her secretary (eat, eats) eat lunch at the same time.
41. For a delicious salad, fresh ingredients and a large bowl (is, are) are essential.
42. Comfortable shoes and loose-fitting clothing (was, were) were recommended by the instructor.
43. Not only the students but also the teacher (was, were) were anxious to finish the lesson.
44. The money spent on athletes' salaries is hurting the integrity of professional sports leagues. (is/are)
45. The purpose of this essay is to investigate how the design of toothbrushes have changed over time. (have/has)
46. The everyday stresses of students, such as labs and essay deadlines, teach them to manage their time wisely. (teach/teaches)
47. The scissors I got from the supply drawer (is/are) ...is... too dull.
48. At the start of the meeting, Mr. Burns, my boss and mentor, always (stand/stands) ...stand... and (sing/sings) ...sing... the company song. What a dork!
49. The shirt with the bold horizontal stripes (make/makes) ...makes... you look heavier.
50. Analysing sentences for grammatical purposes (is/are) ...is .. even better than watching paint dry.