

Eliminating Exceptional Subject-Verb Agreement rules in English Quantificational structure

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양화사 구문에서의 예외적 주어-동사 수 일치 규칙 소거

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Abstract This study is to establish the consistency of Subject-Verb agreement in quantifier phrase. Absence of consistency in English grammar is critical to the grammaticality. We focused on the grammar part, specifically, S-V agreement rule in quantifier phrase. We believe the existence of exceptional rules in quantifier S-V structure is not necessary as the basic grammar rule on S-V agreement is sufficient enough and adding exceptional rules just make it more difficult and confusing. We argue specific features indwelt in each quantifier are linked when quantifiers are used pronominally and the \pm feature plays an important role in quantifier S-V agreement structure. This study shows the solution to eliminate the ungrammaticality in typical English text books by simplifying quantifier S-V agreement to make it solid and systematic.

Key Words : Subject-Verb agreement, Quantifier phrase, Exceptional rules, Q-feature, consistency.

요 약 본 연구는 일반적인 영어교재에서 주어-동사 수 일치를 설명함에 있어서 예외적 규칙들과 다소간의 모호성이 존재하는 양화사 구조 구문에서 수 일치의 일관성을 설립하기 위함이다. 일관성의 부재는 문법성에 치명적 오류를 산출할 수 있다. 영어의 양화사 수 일치 구조에 있어서 일반적인 교재들에서 다루고 있는 예외적 규칙들은 불필요하다고 여겨지고 보편적인 주어-동사 수 일치 문법만으로 충분히 문제를 해결 할 수 있으며 예외적 규칙을 더하는 것은 영어의 문법성을 더욱 복잡하고 어렵게 만드는 것이다. 양화사들에 각기 내재되어 있는 양화사 고유특성들이 양화사가 대명사적으로 사용될 때에도 고유의 특성을 유지하게 되고 그 결과 양화사 구문의 주어-동사 수 일치와 연결되어 있다고 볼 수 있다. 본 연구를 통해서 양화사 구문에서의 주어-동사 수 일치와 명사-대명사의 수 일치 규칙을 접목하여 양화사 구문의 수 일치 규칙을 단순화하여 문법성을 체계화할 수 있다는 것을 확인할 수 있다.

주제어 : 주어-동사 수 일치, 양화사 구문, 예외적 규칙, 양화사 고유특성, 일관성

1. Introduction

Every Subject-Verb agreement is and should be

based on solid grammar rules and normally this rule occurs in present tense English sentences[1]. But when

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quantifier structure is involved it becomes much more complicated and some exceptional rules appear which we consider ungrammatical. Grammar can be divided into two categories - Descriptive, Prescriptive. Both kinds of grammar are concerned with rules[2]. If some kinds of grammar rules are not systematic we cannot refer them as grammatical. Among the text books used in classes, we can easily find some unsystematic grammar rules. School text books demand that Subject-Verb agreement in quantifier phrase should be learnt by heart case by case and enumerate various exceptional rules[3, 4, 5, 6].

We argue that every S-V agreement should be based on two simple grammar rules and since quantifier phrase has the same structure with ordinary Subject-Verb agreement structure it should comply with the rules. Therefore, it can be explained with the two basic grammar rules on agreement which can make grammar simpler and more effective for learners to acquire. That is, ruling out the vagueness of Subject-Verb agreement in quantifier phrase and modifying the unsystematic fraction to grant a solid and systematic grammar rule is the ultimate goal of this study.

We first confirm the definition Subject-Verb agreement and then check out the problematic features of quantifier phrase agreement in ordinary school text books. Secondly, we investigate the similarity of typical S-V agreement sentences and quantifier phrase S-V agreement. Finally, we argue that both sentence structures are equal and therefore same grammar rule should be applied.

2. Literature Review

A noun phrase can be the subject of a sentence, that is, the agent, or “doer,” that performs the action in a sentence. In (1), the subject NP, the manager, carries out the action described by the VP, participates in the

meeting every Monday.

- (1) [The manager] [participates in the meeting every Monday].
S V
- (2) The managers participate in the meeting every Monday.
S V agreement
- (3) The manager [in sales department] participates in the meeting every Monday.
S PP V agreement

As we can see in (1),(2),(3), subject-verb agreement in English does not require contiguousness[1]. The basic grammar rule, the cornerstone rules, on Subject-Verb agreement is as follows:

- I. Subjects and verbs must agree in number - Singular subjects are followed by inflected form of verb phrase ending with a final -s/es and plural subjects go with uninflected form of verb.
- II. Prepositional phrases between the subject and the verb do not affect agreement. - If a phrase comes after the noun and modifies, it the verb agrees with the first noun.

According to the above agreement rule I, the ending -s, which indicates third person singular present tense, is added to the bare infinitive form of the verb ‘participate’ to produce ‘participates’ as in example sentence (1). Also, in (3) the prepositional phrase intervening between the subject and the verb do not have any effect on Subject-Verb agreement to satisfy the agreement rule II. This is the ordinary method which English grammar text books use when they try to explain S-V agreement and there is no problem since the rules are strictly solid and systematic. But if we take a closer look at quantifier phrase S-V agreement, there is much to be considered and confusion arises.

2.1 Exceptional agreement rules

The followings are the widespread exceptional quantifier S-V agreement methods which are used to explain quantifier S-V agreement in typical text books. In 'Most / All / Some / Half / The rest + of + the + Noun' structure, if the Noun after definite article 'The' is singular, the structure is considered singular and takes singular verb and if the Noun after definite article 'The' is plural, the structure is considered plural and takes plural verb. Some other quantifier phrases such as each of ~, everyone of ~ can only take singular verbs as each and every are considered singular. It is paraphrased as an equation (4),(5),(6),(7) [3, 4].

- (4) Most / All / Some / Half + of + the + Singular
or uncountable Noun + Singular Verb
agreement
- (5) Most / All / Some / Half + of + the + Plural
agreement
Noun + Plural Verb
- (6) Each / Everyone + of + the + Plural Noun
+ Singular Verb agreement
- (7) Several / Both + of + the + Plural Noun +
Plural Verb agreement

Above exceptional quantifier S-V agreement rules are organized in the <Table 1> below[4].

3. Simplifying exceptional S-V agreement

3.1 Contradiction

There is a critical defect in explaining quantifier S-V agreement referred above in 2.1. It violates the basic agreement rule II which is 'Prepositional Phrase between the subject and the verb do not affect agreement'. To confirm this violation, let's take a look at the following examples.

- (8) $\begin{matrix} S & & PP & & V \\ \text{Students} & [\text{of the world}] & \text{get} \end{matrix}$ to know each other
agreement
through SNS.
- (9) $\begin{matrix} S & & PP & & N & & V \\ \text{Some} & [\text{of the participants}] & \text{get} \end{matrix}$ hired right after
agreement
the job fair.
- (10) $\begin{matrix} S & & PP & & V \\ \text{Each} & [\text{of the participants}] & \text{gets} \end{matrix}$ hired right after
agreement
the job fair.

<Table 1> Exceptional S-V agreement rule [5]

Subject-Verb agreement : Using expressions of Quantity		
Singular	Verb	Plural
(a) Some of the book is good. (c) A lot of the equipment is new. (e) Two-thirds of the money is mine.		(b) Some of the books are good. (d) A lot of my friends are here. (f) Two-thirds of the pennies are mine.
(g) One of my friends is here. (h) Each of my friends is here. (i) Every one of my friends is here.		Exceptions: One of, each of, and every one of take singular verbs. One of } + the + plural noun Each of } = singular verb Every one of }
(j) None of the boys is here.		(k) None of the boys are here.(informal)
(l) The number of students in the class is fifteen.		(m) A number of students were late for class.

In each example, there is a prepositional phrase [of the Noun] between the Subject and the Verb. Basically, (8) and (9) have the same structure except that (8) has a plural noun 'student's in the subject position and (9) has quantifier 'Some' in the subject position. (8) can be confirmed grammatical by the agreement rule I and II easily. The plural subject 'Students' takes plural verb 'get' as the intervening prepositional phrase does not affect S-V agreement. On the other hand, plural verb 'get' in (9) agrees in number with the Noun 'Participants' which is situated in the prepositional phrase if we apply exceptional agreement rules for quantifier structure. It is obvious that (9) violates agreement rule 2 since the verb agrees in number with the noun in the prepositional phrase. Moreover, the identical quantifier phrase (10) has a different version of explanation. In (10), the singular verb agrees with the quantifier 'Each' even though (9) and (10) have exactly the same structural formation. As we see it, identical grammar rule should be applied to the examples (9) and (10). Both sentences have the same structures and if S-V agreement rule being applied is different in each sentence, it means that there is a flaw in grammaticality.

We argue that a single solid rule is needed for identical structures. In result, agreement rules should be applied in the same way in examples (8),(9),(10).

3.2 Simplification

On the basis of suggested problem in 2.1 and 3.1, we insist quantifier structures like (9) and (10) should go through the same agreement pattern as shown in (11).

(11) $\begin{matrix} S & & PP & & & & V \\ \text{Some} & [\text{of the participants}] & \text{need} & \text{to send in their} \\ & & \text{agreement} & & & & \\ & & \text{resumes.} & & & & \end{matrix}$

In (11) Subject of the sentence is 'Some' and takes the plural verb 'need' for S-V agreement, in consequence, prepositional phrase [of the participants]

does not affect agreement. According to 'Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English', quantifiers - such as some, any, each, both, all, several - have pronominal feature and it can be said that quantifiers without a noun acts like a pronoun that is the head of their own noun phrase[6, 7]. That means quantifiers have subject feature and can be used as a subject in sentences. So the verb 'need' in (11) agrees with the head noun not the modifier phrase.

- (12) A. There are a lot of participants at the job fair.
Some are qualified but others are not.
B. (Some of the participants are qualified but others are not.)

Quantifiers serve to quantify the noun expression which follows them and a quantifier which has no noun expression following it is named Q-pronoun [8]. In (12A) 'Some' is the pronominal quantifier for 'Some of the participants'[2]. As we all know pronouns replacing nouns have the same numeral features. For example, pronoun 'it' cannot replace plural noun and demonstrative pronoun 'those' cannot replace singular noun. If nominative is singular, the pronoun replacing it is also singular and vice versa in plural nouns.

Quantifiers like 'each' and 'every' possess singular grammatical specification because 'each' don't combine with a plural or uncountable noun and 'some' possess plural/uncountable specification [9]. Since 'Some' in (12A) is a replacement of 'Some of the participants' in (12B), the pronoun 'Some' has the plural feature. In result, the plural feature of 'Some' takes the plural verb 'are' in (12A). In this manner Subject-Verb agreement in (12) does not violate some kinds of \pm feature showing that it is a plural pronoun, quantifier S-V agreement rule II and the basic agreement rule becomes solid. That is,

if we confirm that 'Some' in (12) is a pronominal subject and it carries agreement structures can be organized in two basic agreement rules with no other exceptional cases.

4. Method

4.1 Application

To make a systematic and solid grammar rule for quantifier structure, let's say that all quantifiers have some kinds of \pm Singular, \pm Plural, \pm Countable, \pm Uncountable features. There are much more quantifiers in English but for the convenience we will restrict the examples to the below Q-features in <Table 2> [10].

(Table 2) Q-Features

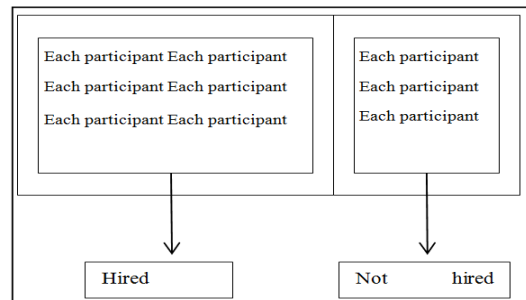
Feature Quantifier	\pm Countable	\pm Uncountable	\pm Singular	\pm Plural
All	+	+	–	+
Some	+	+	–	+
Any	+	+	–	+
Several	+	–	–	+
Many	+	–	–	+
Much	–	+	–	–
Each	+	–	+	–
Every	+	–	+	–

If we take a look at example 'Each' and 'Several' in the chart, quantifier 'Each' takes +Countable, –Uncountable, +Singular, –Plural features and 'Several' can take +Countable, –Uncountable, –Singular, +Plural features. Every quantifier follows this feature when sentence is structured like (13) and (14).

- (13) Each student makes his own portfolio.
: +Countable, –Uncountable, +singular,
–Plural feature of 'Each' + Singular countable noun 'Student'
- (14) Several students make their own portfolio.
: +Countable, –Uncountable, –Singular,
+Plural feature of 'Several' + Plural countable noun 'Students'

In (13) 'Each' has +Countable and +Singular feature and can take only countable singular noun. In (14)

'Several' has +Countable and +Plural feature and takes countable plural noun. These quantifier features can be applied the same way when the quantifiers are used pronominally as a subject of the sentence. We can verify this concept through [Fig. 1] and the following examples (15) and (16).



[Fig. 1] Supposition of hired or not hired participant

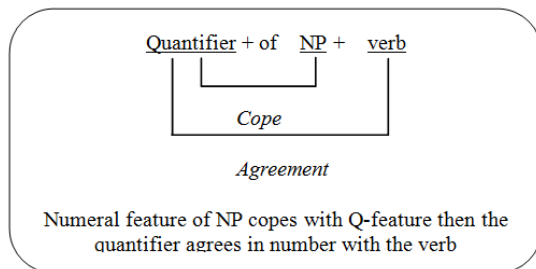
In [Fig. 1], there are 9 participants who participated in the job fair. Since 6 participants were hired and 3 not, we can say as follows.

- (15) Each of the participants was hired right after the job fair.
(+Singular feature of Pronominal 'Each' + Singular verb 'makes')
- (16) Some of the participants were not hired right after the job fair.
(+Plural feature of Pronominal 'Some' + Plural verb 'make')

In (15), pronominal 'Each' refers to the 6 students individually in the prepositional phrase but it can only take +Singular feature, thus 'Each' agrees with singular verb 'makes'. In (16) 'Some' refers to 3 students and pronominal 'Some' can take either +Uncountable or +Plural features but the Noun 'students' which it refers to is plural so it pairs with the +Plural feature and agrees with plural verb 'make'.

4.2 Simplified rules

Utilizing the suggested concept, we can roughly outline a grammatical rule as shown in [Fig. 2] to simplify the exceptional quantifier S-V agreement rules. The quantifier pronoun in the structure has its own \pm Singular, \pm Plural, \pm Countable, \pm Uncountable features and the NP has its numeral features. The features - Q-feature, Numeral feature of NP - cope with each other to make a solid agreement rule in Subject-Verb agreement. In result, exceptional agreement rule can be ruled out to solve the ungrammaticality.



[Fig. 2] Simplified Quantifier S-V agreement rule

5. Conclusion

Quantifiers have restrictions in the types of head nouns they can occur with[3]. Also, they have \pm numeral features and such features remain the same when they become pronominal subjects. In result, pronominal quantifiers which are used as a subject in a sentence cope with the noun in the propositional phrase to determine the numeral feature.

Q-features in <Table 2> is a thing that learners must acquire if they want to use them in a sentence or to solve a problem in English test. That is, whether the quantifier structure is concerned with Subject-Verb agreement or not knowing the basic Q-feature is a vital factor. In result, applying Q-feature in S-V agreement does not add up complexity in English

grammar. By contrast, it can simplify the agreement rule and give consistency in the rules by eliminating exceptional rules in S-V agreement rules.

As shown in the method presented above, we can simplify some of the confusing problems in S-V concord in quantifier structures by combining the two grammaticality concerning agreement rules as both S-V agreement and Noun-Pronoun agreement rules are contained in the grammar text books. By making a systematic grammar rule which can enhance the simplicity of grammar acquisition in English, grammar would be much easier for learners to acquire.

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