

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS AND PERFORMANCE OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES (BAELS) STUDENTS: AN INPUT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REMEDIATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The researcher examined the subject-verb agreement errors made by the forty (40) Guimaras State College BAELS students in the second semester of the school year 2021-2022 using a descriptive research design. The test-retest was performed on thirty (30) Bachelor of Science in Criminology students of the Guimaras State College—as pilot participants. Calculating the error rates gave an overall impression of subject-verb agreement rules. The subject-verb agreement errors did not differ by sex or year for BAELS students, whose academic performance varied by year, but had an effect on the BAELS students' performance. The subject-verb agreement is difficult for students, especially with certain indefinite pronouns which take a singular verb, compound subjects joined by "and" which require a plural verb, in compound affirmative and negative subjects, where the verb agrees with the positive subjects, and compound subjects connected by coordinating conjunctions which require number and person agreement between the verb and the closest subject. The Guimaras State College may sponsor an English language remediation program to improve student competency. Future researches may highlight that students' English proficiency may be affected by finances, parents' occupations, and living on a small island, and teachers can alter how students regard English as a second language.

Keywords: Subject-verb agreement, error, BAELS, enhancement program

INTRODUCTION

Many of the main tests feature sections that challenge students to read phrases, identify errors, and pick an answer choice that appropriately corrects the mistake. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to teach grammar and allow students to understand some of the most prevalent forms of errors that arise in the test questions by being aware of the sentences containing faults (Identifying Grammatical Errors in Sentences, 2022).

Students frequently make errors in subject-verb agreement. These are faults in which the sentence's subject does not correspond to the sentence's verb. For starters, there are a few additional perplexing subject-verb agreement scenarios that emerge on examinations (Al Noori, 2019).

In writing, proper subject-verb agreement aids readers in comprehending one's ideas. Verbs must be equal in number to their subjects. When the subject is singular, the verb must be singular as well. When the subject is plural, the verb must be



plural as well. While the majority of subject-verb agreement rules come effortlessly to us, there are a few exceptions that are critical to remember (Subject-Verb Agreement, 2022).

In writing and speaking, subject-verb agreement is critical. Without the correct subject-verb agreement, written and spoken concepts become difficult to express, diminishing the usefulness of writing and speaking. Any errors in the subject-verb agreement will alter the sentence's meaning (Gustilo and Magno, 2020).

Additionally, the majority of students complain about the mistakes they make in their writing and speaking, most notably subject-verb agreement, which can be defined simply as a subject agreeing with a verb. When a singular subject is employed, a singular verb is required; similarly, when a plural subject is used, a plural verb is required. The students' simple grammar rules are plainly obvious (Febriyanti, 2021).

English is the medium of instruction in every school in the Philippines. As a result, all Filipino students are required to receive instruction in English, respond to queries in English, and converse in English as well. These require learners' grammatical knowledge. The subject-verb agreement item is one of a myriad of grammatical knowledge items that aid both seamless presentation and efficient communication in English (Karim, 2019).

This research identified the subject-verb errors made by the Guimaras State College's Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (BAELS) students in order to address the students' concerns through the implementation of an English remediation program. In addition, it assessed if their subject-verb agreement errors had an effect on their academic performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to identify BAELS students' subject-verb errors, address the issue by developing a remediation program, and determine the student's academic performance to see if it was related to their subject-verb errors.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used to describe the errors and academic performance of forty (40) BAELS students at the Guimaras State College who took part in the study. According to Clark (2020), descriptive research seeks to observe, describe, and record characteristics of a situation as they exist in its natural state; thus, the study's data is analytical, and one may draw clear deductions and conclusions based on the results of the statistical techniques used: mean, percentages, rank, Mann Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis H test, and Pearson r.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when they were taken as a whole

Table 1
Subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when taken as a whole

Category	Frequency of Error	Rank
Rule 13. Compound subjects joined by "and" require a plural verb.	35	1
Rule 11. Certain indefinite pronouns like "each," "either," "somebody," "someone," "everybody," and the like, take a singular verb.	33	2
Rule 14. Compound subjects connected by coordinating conjunctions such as "either... or," and "neither... nor" necessitate agreement in number and person between the verb and the closest subject.	31	3
Rule 20. The titles and names of books, ships, and countries that are plural in form but singular in meaning take singular verbs.	28	4
Rule 15. In compound affirmative and negative subjects, the verb agrees with the positive subjects.	27	5.5
Rule 5. Nouns denoting the amount of money, measurement, and the like take singular verb.	27	5.5
Rule 4. Nouns that are always plural in form take a plural verb.	26	7
Rule 6. Collective nouns taken as an entire unit used as a subject of the sentence take singular verbs.	25	8
Rule 17. Nouns having the same form for singular and plural may have a singular or plural verb depending upon the meaning of the noun.	23	9
Rule 9. A word or group of words introduced by such connectives as [as of," "with," "besides," "in company with," and other intervening expressions does not affect the number of the subject.	21	10.5
Rule 7. When used as a subject, collective nouns taken in disunion, dispersion, disagreement, or discussion take a plural verb.	21	10.5
Rule 16. The person and number of the verb having a relative pronoun as its subject must be the same as the person and the number of the antecedent of the relative pronoun.	18	12
Rule 10. Indefinite pronouns such as "lots of," "several," "none," "both," and the like are always plural, as the subject requires plural verbs. "Some," "all," and "none" may be singular or plural according to their meaning; they take a plural verb when referring to what can be counted. They take a singular verb when referring to only one or not countable object.	18	13
Rule 2. Some nouns, which are plural in meaning, take a singular verb.	15	14
Rule 18. Clauses such as verbals, infinitives, and gerunds that function as the sentence's subject take the singular verb.	11	15
Rule 8. Certain personal pronouns used as the subject of the sentence agree with the verb in number and person.	7	18.5
Rule 3. Nouns, which are always singular in form, take a singular verb.	7	18.5
Rule 1. The predicate verb must be the same in person and number as to the subject.	6	18
Rule 19. The verb preceding the subject of the sentence in interrogative statements agrees with the number of nouns and pronouns that follow the given verb.	3	19
Rule 12. The verbs agree with the subject, not with the predicate nominative.	2	20

The following rules accounted for the top five most common errors: Rule 13 (Compound



subjects joined by “and” require a plural verb) ranked first, Rule 11 (Certain indefinite pronouns like “each,” “either,” “somebody,” “someone,” “everybody,” and the like, take a singular verb) was second, Rule 14 (Compound subjects connected by coordinating conjunctions such as “either... or,” and “neither... nor” necessitate agreement in number and person between the verb and the closest subject) was third, Rule 20 (The titles and names of books, ships, and countries that are plural in form but singular in meaning take singular verbs) was fourth, and Rule 15 (In compound affirmative and negative subjects, the verb agrees with the positive subjects) was fifth.

2. The Subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students as to sex

When categorized according to their sex, the following rules accounted for the top five most common mistakes among the females: Rule 11 (Certain indefinite pronouns like “each,” “either,” “somebody,” “someone,” “everybody,” and the like, take a singular verb) was ranked first by the female BAELS students, Rule 13 (Compound subjects joined by “and” require a plural verb) was ranked second, and Rule 15 (In compound affirmative and negative subjects, the verb agrees with the positive subjects) was ranked third. Rule 14 (Compound subjects connected by coordinating conjunctions such as “either... or,” and “neither... nor” necessitate agreement in number and person between the verb and the closest subject) was ranked fourth, and Rule 20 (The titles and names of books, ships, and countries that are plural in form but singular in meaning take singular verbs) was ranked fifth.

Among the male BAELS students, Rule 13 was ranked first, Rule 14 was second, Rule 20 was third, Rule 5 was fourth, Rule 11 was fifth. Rule 8, Rule 12, and Rule 19 were each ranked the same in the female and male categories, respectively.

3. The subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified as to year level

Among the first-year BAELS students, Rule 14 (Compound subjects connected by coordinating conjunctions such as "either... or," and "neither... nor" necessitate agreement in number and person between the verb and the closest subject) ranked first, followed by Rule 13 (Compound subjects joined by "and" require a plural verb). Rule 15 (In compound affirmative and negative subjects, the verb agrees with the positive subjects) was for third place, while Rule 11 (Certain indefinite pronouns like "each," "either," "somebody," "someone," "everybody," and the like, take a singular verb) was fourth, and Rule 17 (Nouns having the same form for singular and plural may have a singular or plural verb depending upon the meaning of the noun) was fifth.

BAELS students in their second year were divided into 3 groups, with Rules 6, 11, and 16 taking the top three spots. In the rankings, Rule 17 (Nouns having the same form for singular and plural may have a singular or plural verb depending upon the meaning of the noun) and Rules 4 were ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

Rules 5, 7, and 20 shared the first through third positions among third-year students, while Rules 6 and 11 shared the fourth and fifth positions. Rule 12 and Rule 19 were first, Rule 1 and Rule 8 were second, Rule 2, Rule 3, and Rule 7 were third, Rule 16 and Rule 17 were fourth, and Rule 6, and Rule 9 and Rule 14 were among fourth-year students.

4. The performance of the BAELS students when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex and year level

Table 2
Performance of the BAELS students when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex and year level

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean	Description
Sex			
Male	0.14	1.52	Very Good
Female	0.15	1.58	Very Good
Year Level			
Level 1	0.09	1.66	Very Good
Level 2	0.13	1.64	Very Good
Level 3	0.10	1.52	Very Good
Level 4	0.16	1.45	Very Good
Overall Mean	0.15	1.57	Very Good



The performance of BAELS students as a whole was Very Good (M=1.57, SD=0.15). When broken down into categories, the data showed that in terms of sex, the female students were also rated Very Good (M=1.52, SD=0.14) while the male students were rated Very Good (M=1.58, SD=0.15) and in terms of year level, the first year was rated Very Good (M=1.66, SD=0.09), the second year was rated Very Good (M=1.64, SD=0.13), the third year was rated Very Good (1.52, SD=0.10), and the fourth year was rated Very Good (M=1.45, SD=0.16). This means that the student's performance showed a high level of learning.

5. The differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex

Table 3
Differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex

Variables	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U-test	p-value	Remarks
Sex						
Male	9	22.56	203.00	121.000	.548	Not Significant
Female	31	19.90	617.00			

$p < .01$

Table 3 shows the significant differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex using the Mann Whitney U test. There was no significant difference in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex, $U=121.000$, $p=.548$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there was no significant difference in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex was not rejected. This indicated that there was no difference in the subject-verb agreement errors made by BAELS students when their sex was taken into consideration. In addition, the evaluation of the female and male students did not differ considerably from one another. It is possible to draw the conclusion that BAELS students, regardless of sex, are required to get familiar with the subject-verb agreement.

6. The differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to year level

Table 4
Differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to year level

Variables	N	Mean Rank	H-test	df	p-value	Remarks
Year Level						
Level 1	15	24.20	38.83	3	.274	Not Significant
Level 2	6	19.00				
Level 3	7	13.86				
Level 4	12	20.50				

$p < .01$

When the BAELS students were categorized according to their year level using the Kruskal Wallis H test, Table 4 displays the significant differences that were found in the subject-verb agreement errors the students made. There were no significant differences in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to year level, $(H(3)=38.83, p=.274)$, with a mean rank of 24.20 for first year, 19.00 for the second year, 13.86 for the third year, and 20.50 for the fourth year. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there were no significant differences in subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to year level was not rejected.

This meant that the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students, when classified according to year level did not significantly differ. This implied that the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students did not significantly vary.

It is important to note that this finding withstands the findings of Ghoorchaei et al. (2020), who hypothesized that subject-verb agreement errors were associated with higher levels of academic accomplishment. On top of that, Sahagun (2021) goes on to say that factors such as sex, home language, preferred reading materials, and genres should not be considered when evaluating student learning.



7. The differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to sex

Table 5
Differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to sex

Variables	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U-test	p-value	Remarks
Sex						
Male	9	16.94	152.50	107.500	.299	Not Significant
Female	31	21.53	667.50			

$p < .01$

Table 5 shows the significant differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to sex using the Mann Whitney U test. There was a significant difference in the subject-verb agreement errors of the BAELS students when classified according to sex, $U=107.500$, $p=.299$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there was no significant difference in the performance of BAELS students based on their sex was rejected. This meant that the performance of BAELS students was not affected by their sex. In addition, there was no discernible difference between the evaluations of male and female students. This indicates that there is no longer a distinction between male and female students' achievements.

Consistent with recent research on sex differences in cognitive performance, the study by Obilor and Sakpege (2022) concludes that sex-related differences are negligible in comparison to the generally comparable levels of performance between men and women and that using both sexes' scores and school records to predict first-year college grades continues to work reasonably well for both sexes.

8. The differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to year level

Table 6 shows the significant differences in the performance of the BAELS students when

classified according to year level, using the Kruskal Wallis H test.

Table 6
Differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to year level

Variables	N	Mean Rank	H-test	df	p-value	Remarks
Year Level						
Level 1	15	27.57	14.413	3	.002	Significant
Level 2	6	25.75				
Level 3	7	15.50				
Level 4	12	11.96				

$p < .01$

Table 6 shows the significant differences in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to year level, using the Kruskal Wallis H test.

There was a significant difference in the performance of the BAELS students when classified according to year level, $H(3)=14.413$, $p=.002$, with a mean rank of 27.57 for the first year, 25.75 for the second year, 15.50 for the third year, and 11.96 for fourth year. As a result, it was determined that the alternative hypothesis, which stated that there were no substantial differences in the number of subject-verb agreement errors made by BAELS students when they were grouped according to year level, was rejected.

This meant that when the BAELS students were categorized according to their year level, there was a considerable difference in their overall performance. This suggested that there is a large amount of variation in their academic performance.

9. The relationship between the subject-verb agreement errors and performance of the BAELS students

Table 7
Relationship between the subject-verb agreement errors and performance of the BAELS students

Category	r	p-value	Remarks
Subject-Verb Agreement Errors	.47**	.002	Significant
Performance			

$p < .01$

Using Pearson's r , the researcher was able to assess whether there was a significant association between the subject-verb agreement errors and the overall performance of the BAELS students.

Table 7 shows that there was a significant relationship between the subject-verb agreement errors and the academic performance of the BAELS students. Pearson's r is 0.47 with a p -value of .002. The direction of the relationship was positive. The results denote a moderate positive relationship. Since the p -value was less than 0.01 level of significance, it meant that there was a significant relationship between the subject-verb agreement errors and performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The data support the notion that the relationship between subject-verb agreement errors and performance in the population of BAELS students.

This study's findings confirm the association between students' grammatical skills and their academic success which has been established by prior research. The research is connected to the prior investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

The following were conclusions drawn from this study:

1. There is evidence that students still possess problems in the usage of their subject-verb agreement, especially with nouns denoting amounts of money and measurement, collective nouns, nouns with connectives, some indefinite pronouns, nouns with plural forms, and titles and names.
2. There are rules or principles of subject-verb agreement with a few errors relating to certain personal pronouns used as the subject of the sentence and that agree with the verb in number and person, nouns, which are always singular in form and that take a singular verb; the predicate verb, which has to be the same in person and number as the subject; the verb preceding the subject of the sentence in interrogative statements and that agree with

the number of nouns and pronouns that follow the given verb; and the verbs that agree with the subject, but not with the predicate nominative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are being made in light of the findings and conclusions:

1. To ensure that the students of the Guimaras State College have good English language proficiency, it may allocate funding to design and staff an English language remediation program, which would be run by the English Department, College of Arts and Sciences.
2. According to the findings of this research, modification of English language remediation course is recommended so that it meets the specific requirements and prerequisites of any and all university classes, beginning with the principles of subject-verb agreement that are erred the most frequently and working down to the principles that are erred the least frequently.
3. Higher education institutions may facilitate each student's ability to communicate effectively with others, to learn new concepts, and to develop beginning skills that are needed for reading and writing.
4. Higher education institutions may help students improve their English skills by increasing student motivation to have good English skills, providing instruction in English all the time, providing English practice, and providing constructive feedback about their grammar.
5. The remediation program may emphasize the mastery of English skills as an integral part of the academic goals for all students to enable them to participate equitably in school.
6. For that reason, corrective actions should be taken to assist students in becoming proficient in subject-verb agreement, particularly in areas where they usually

make errors, in order to narrow the knowledge gap that exists between what students know and what is expected of them. They can be taught systematically without skipping over topics with the use of a language remediation program, which can also provide practice tasks to reinforce learning and practice applying new knowledge to real-world scenarios.

7. It is also recommended that the students' socioeconomic backgrounds be investigated in order to determine whether or not the students' backgrounds, the jobs held by their parents, or other factors, such as living on a smaller island, have an effect on their level of English proficiency.
8. The teachers may also have some influence on how the students think of their time-spent learning English as a second language—as these were not included in the study. For one thing, it is possible that the conditions for an environment conducive to learning will change at the school if the teachers all have the same attitude toward grammar and if that attitude is passed on to the students.

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