

Verb phrases – Coloured by Person, Number, and Tense, Aspect

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NLN 100 Language & Writing Skills-2 (Week - 6)

1 Subject-Verb Matching

1.1 Fix the verbal parts

1. Quickly glance through the excerpt.
2. Pay special attention to the verbal part of every sentence. The verbal parts of sentences in the excerpt have errors. Correct each error.
3. We discuss the errors once you are done.

As I sits in my study, surrounded by the countless volumes that have been my companions throughout a lifetime of inquiry, I are struck by the passage of time. The years have woven a tapestry of experiences, each thread a moment of discovery, of triumph, and of profound introspection.

My journey as a scientist began in the quiet solitude of my childhood, where the world unfolded before me like a vast canvas waiting to be painted. From the moment I first peers through a microscope, I is captivated by the intricacies of life, by the delicate balance of order and chaos that permeates the universe. With each passing year, my passion for exploration grew, fueled by an insatiable curiosity that knew no bounds. I delves into the realms of physics, chemistry, and biology with equal fervor, seeking to unravel the mysteries that lay hidden beneath the surface of reality.

But the path of a scientist is not without its challenges. There were moments of doubt, when the weight of uncertainty threatened to overwhelm me. There were setbacks and failures, each one a reminder of the fragility of human understanding.

Yet, through it all, I persevered. For the pursuit of knowledge are not merely a vocation, but a calling—a sacred duty to illuminate the darkness with the light of reason and understanding.

As I reflect on the countless experiments conducted, the papers written, and the ideas explored, I is struck by the sheer magnitude of human achievement. From the smallest subatomic particles to the grandeur of the cosmos, we have journeyed far in our quest to unravel the mysteries of existence.

And though my days may be numbered, my spirit remains undimmed. For the legacy of a scientist are not measured in years, but in the enduring impact of their work—a beacon of inspiration for generations yet to come.

1.2 Person and Number matching

The verb form of verbs in a sentence depends upon the subject NP. More specifically, what are called the person and number information of the subject is mapped onto the verb. The verb therefore must ‘match’ with the subject.

- **Person** refers to the the status of the person/thing being discussed in a conversation.

- If what is being discussed by the speaker is themselves (the speaker), the first person is said to be used (I, me, myself).
 - If what is being discussed by the speaker is the addressee/audience, the second person is said to be used (you, yourself, yourselves).
 - If what is being discussed is some other entity/person, other than the speaker or the addressee, the third person (he/she, they, themselves, the boy, habits, happiness, Trump) is said to be used.
- **Number** refers to the quantity of the person/thing being discussed – is it singular (one) or plural (more than one). Nouns that are uncountable cause the information ‘singular’ to be copied onto the verb.

In English, the person and number information of the subject can only be ‘seen’ on the verb in the present tense. Check this on your own.

2 Tense and Aspect

2.1 Fix the verbal parts once more

1. The excerpt you just corrected is repeated below.
2. Like in the previous case, it has errors. Like last time, the errors are in the verbal part of the sentence. Correct each error.
3. We discuss the errors once you are done.

As I sat in my study, surrounded by the countless volumes that have been my companions throughout a lifetime of inquiry, I will be struck by the passage of time. The years had woven a tapestry of experiences, each thread a moment of discovery, of triumph, and of profound introspection.

My journey as a scientist begins in the quiet solitude of my childhood, where the world unfolded before me like a vast canvas waiting to be painted. From the moment I first peered through a microscope, I am captivated by the intricacies of life, by the delicate balance of order and chaos that permeates the universe.

With each passing year, my passion for exploration grew, fueled by an insatiable curiosity that knew no bounds. I delve into the realms of physics, chemistry, and biology with equal fervor, seeking to unravel the mysteries that lay hidden beneath the surface of reality.

But the path of a scientist had not been without its challenges. There are moments of doubt, when the weight of uncertainty threatened to overwhelm me. There are setbacks and failures, each one a reminder of the fragility of human understanding.

Yet, through it all, I was persevering. For the pursuit of knowledge was not merely a vocation, but a calling—a sacred duty to illuminate the darkness with the light of reason and understanding.

As I reflected on the countless experiments conducted, the papers written, and the ideas explored, I was struck by the sheer magnitude of human achievement. From the smallest subatomic particles to the grandeur of the cosmos, we had journeyed far in our quest to unravel the mysteries of existence.

And though my days may be numbered, my spirit remained undimmed. For the legacy of a scientist has not been measured in years, but in the enduring impact of their work—a beacon of inspiration for generations yet to come.

2.2 Time of action

- Tense markers in a language are those bits and parts that give us information about the time of an event.
- To understand how to use the right tense you must know how these are calculated. Tense is calculated using

1. three points in time — event (E), a point of reference (R), the point of speech
2. two ordering relationships — anteriority ('<') and simultaneity '='

Temporal relations	Tense	Example
$S = R = E$	Present simple	Sabeeha sees a donkey
$(E = R) < S$	Past simple	Sabeeha saw a donkey in 2014
$S < (E = R)$	Future simple	Sabeeha will see a donkey in 2025
$E < (S = R)$	Present Perfect	Sabeeha has seen a donkey by now
$E < R < S$	Past Perfect	Sabeeha had seen a donkey by the time John arrived at the zoo
$S < E < R$	Future Perfect	Sabeeha will have seen a donkey by the time the sun rises

Table 1: Understanding English Tense: Note that for the 'simple', R is immaterial as E and R are the same, i.e., $E = R$

2.2.1 The present (ϕ or '-s')

The present — simple present, present perfect and present continuous — in English is used to talk about:

- events that are happening at speech-time
 - (1) It **is** raining outside.
 - (2) The mangoes **have** fallen off the tree just now.
 - (3) Taroo **is** watching TV, and cannot come to speak to you right now.
- habits/traits/existences that are simultaneous to speech-time
 - (4) Aman **is** very talkative. He was once a quiet child.
 - (5) George **does** not know how to tie his shoe laces. After the accident he has trouble with this.
 - (6) Polar bears are a kind of bear.
 - (7) In 2012, Aman **jogs** 10 km everyday.
 - (8) My grandfather **is** the headmaster of the village high school.
 - (9) Azim is a doctor.
 - (10) The sun rises in the east.

2.2.2 The past (-ed)

The past tenses — simple past, past perfect, past continuous, past perfect continuous — in English are used to talk about:

- events that happened before speech-time.
 - (11) It **rained** last afternoon.
 - (12) The mangoes **had** fallen off the tree.
 - (13) Meena **was** lazy.
 - (14) Taroo **was** watching TV late into the night.
- traits, existences and habitual actions that existed before speech time past

- (15) Aman **was** quiet as a child. He is now very talkative.
- (16) George **knew** how to tie his shoe laces. After the accident he has trouble with this.
- (17) In 2012, Aman **would** jog 10 km everyday.
- (18) My grandfather **was** the headmaster of the village high school.

2.2.3 The future (will)

The language to talk about the future in English is used to talk about

- events that are predicted to happen after speech-time.

- (19) It **will** rain tomorrow.
- (20) It is peak summer. The mangoes **will** fall off the tree soon.
- (21) Tomorrow is Sunday. Taroo **will** watch TV late into the night.

- habits/traits/existences that could happen after speech time.

- (22) Aman **will** have quiet children. He himself was quiet as a child.
- (23) Raneem is nearly eight. She **will** know how to tie her shoe laces soon.
- (24) In 2012, Aman **will** jog 10 km everyday.
- (25) My grandfather **will** soon be the headmaster of the village high school.

2.3 Manner of action/event

To talk about how an event/state unfolded over time, and talk about its duration, frequency or state of completion, we use language markings called **aspect**.

2.3.1 The perfect (HAVE + '-en')

The **perfect** is almost aspect-like, in that it gives us information about the relevance of an action. A event/state that **occurred/existed** before reference time (R), but **has continuing relevance** at R is discussed using the perfect.

- (26) By the time my mother got home from work, I **had eaten** dinner.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' came home from work, which is in the past.

- (27) My mother returned home just now. I **have already eaten** dinner.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' comes home from work, which is in the present.

- (28) By the time my mother gets home from work, I will **have eaten** dinner.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' comes home from work, which is in the future.

2.3.2 The continuous (BE + '-ing')

The **continuous aspect** in English is used to talk about an event/state of being that is incomplete at reference time R.

(29) I **was eating** dinner.

- State of completion of action: imperfect

(30) I **am eating** my dinner when she yells at me.

- State of completion of action: imperfect

(31) By the time my mother gets home from work, I will **be eating** dinner.

- State of completion of action: imperfect

2.3.3 The perfect continuous (HAVE + been + '-ing')

The **perfect continuous** in English is used to talk about an event/state of being that (1) has relevance at reference time — which follows event time — and (2) is incomplete.

(32) By the time my mother got home from work, I **had been eating** dinner for 2 hours.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' came home from work, which is in the past.
- State of completion of action: imperfect

(33) My mother returned home just now, at 8 PM. I **have been eating** dinner since 6 PM.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' comes home from work, which is in the present.
- State of completion of action: imperfect

(34) By the time my mother gets home from work, I will **have been eating** dinner.

- Time of reference: The time when 'my mother' comes home from work, which is in the future.
- State of completion of action: imperfect