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## ONLINE DEGREE

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**English - I (Basic English)**  
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**Lecture 55**  
**Common Errors in English- Part 2**

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**COMMON ERRORS IN**  
**ENGLISH - PART 2**

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Welcome to this another session on Common Errors in English. We saw how some words behave very differently in a corrected speech in a sentence apparently either they do not become singular or plural. So, they cannot be used with either a, an or ses or we saw some verbs which have no past tense, no present tense, they have the same form.

Or there are some verbs we saw in our earlier session which do not have a progressive form, that is the 'ing' form, you cannot say I am feeling comfortable, that is ungrammatical in English, you cannot say she is looking good, or she is looking angry, that is not a grammatically good sentence.

You should say she looks angry or she looked angry, or she looked tired, or she looked pretty. So, the idea is there are some words which apparently may look like any other word, but when you use them in a sentence, they behave differently, and if we do not keep their different behaviour in mind, we might make mistakes, for as the students of English language we have not been born talking in English.

Sometimes these errors happen due to overgeneralization; we say eating so we say why cannot we say seeming or looking or feeling or appearing or etc. that is why they are called common errors.

Many learners of English, many users of English make that kind of mistakes. But it is easy to overcome them once you understand, once you try to understand once you invest a little time and energy in learning. Today we will look at some sentence types which are frequently heard or seen read in the writing of in the speech of many of us, its learners who have not been born talking this language.

These sessions are not exhaustive, but these sessions are indicative. We are trying to say these areas are also there to be learned, but we cannot do everything in the classroom. So, we are giving you some indication in the hope that you will find time and you will be inclined to do more of these kinds and become the perfect user of the language including English, which is what you ought to be, which is what you have set out to be. So let us wish ourselves. Good luck and go to the next screen.

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- Some sentences with a very common type of errors are given below.

- 1)
- a. Some boys of Rajendra Hostel is making all the noise.*
  - b. Only one of the six scheduled trains are running late this morning.*
  - c. Only one of the requested items were delivered late.*
  - d. The entire team with all its star players have been found guilty of doping.*
  - e. We ordered six copies of this book, but it is yet to be delivered.*



Look at some of these sentences frequently heard in the right, in the speech of educated speakers even well-educated speakers. Say for instance, some boys of Rajendra hostel is making all the noise, look at the next third, the fourth the fifth.

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- f. *Puurna's collection of old folk songs are likely to be published soon.*
- g. *All excepting one sailor was stranded on the island.*

- All sentences above are ungrammatical because of non-agreement of the verbs in them with their subjects.



Next. What do you notice? You notice that all sentences above are ungrammatical. Why are they ungrammatical? What have they not done right? This is what they have not done right; the subject there does not agree with the verbs in terms of numbers, which is a crucial rule of the English language grammar. As I have been telling you, English grammar does not have too many rules; it has the rule of word order, it has the rule of subject-verb agreement in terms of number, in terms of tense, verb-verb agreement in terms of tense, that is about all.

These two or three rules, other things are matters of usage which we should learn to use. But this subject-verb agreement is a very holy rule, like you cannot enter a Hindu temple with your shoes on like you cannot do certain kinds of things in certain places. Similarly, you cannot make this mistake and expect to be taken seriously as a serious user of this language. So, what is wrong? Why are these sentences wrong? Go next.

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## ACTIVITY 1

- You can re-write these sentences removing all the errors, and then check them with the answers given below.



Many of you already know the answer, why these sentences are wrong. Those of us who know the answer, please rewrite these sentences removing all the errors. This is the best way to learn. Nothing teaches you anything better than doing it yourself. You may have, you may make a few mistakes in the beginning, you may feel bored, tired, disappointed, but then please believe me please believe me, the more you try on your own, the more, the greater your effort, the better, the longer, the faster the learning it will stay longer with you it will become more perfect if there can be more perfect.

So, that is why I say look at these sentences, try and check where they have an error, remove those errors and rewrite them and then check either with us or with a dictionary or with a book of usage. And if you are right, pat yourself on the back, if you are not, do them again, there is no shame, there is no harm. Let us go.

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## ANSWERS

Activity 1:

- Some boys of Rajendra Hostel are making all the noise.
- Only one of the six scheduled trains is running late this morning.
- Only one of the requested items was delivered late.
- The entire team with all its star players has been found guilty of doping.
- We ordered six copies of this book, but they are yet to be delivered.
- Purna's collection of old folk songs is likely to be published soon.



Here we have done for you, done them for you. Say, for example, look at the first sentence. Some boys of Rajendra hostel, it cannot be is because the word immediately before hostel is a singular. So the speaker here has been misled by the word immediately before the verb. So this is right, some boys of Rajendra hostel are, though hostel is singular, but the verb does not have to agree with the word immediately before it, the word has to agree with the head of the noun phrase.

What is the noun phrase? Some boys of Rajendra hostel, what is the head of the noun? Boys. Some is the adjective, of Rajendra hostel is another phrase which modifies boys. What is the number of boys, it is plural number more than one boy, two boys, 20 boys, 200 boys in Rajendra hostel which may be apparently boys hostel, they are making all the noise. Boys are rather noisy lot come very happy easily, very noisy easily and very hard working also equally easily, right.

So, here you have 'are making'. Next sentence, but in the next sentence, the head of the noun phrase which is the subject it is a singular noun, 'only one of the six scheduled trains'. So, the word immediately before is that is the verb is trains. It is not influenced by the word immediately before it is influenced, by what verb, what number the verb will be in is determined by the head of the noun, the number of the head of the noun.

What is the head of the noun here? One of the six trains, what is one? It is singular, trains; it is plural. So, we do not go according to trains; we go according to one, one is singular therefore the verb here should be is. Number C, what will be the answer according in your opinion? Only one of the requested items were, no not 'were' because you are not talking




about all the requested items you are talking about only one of the requested items which is singularly single.

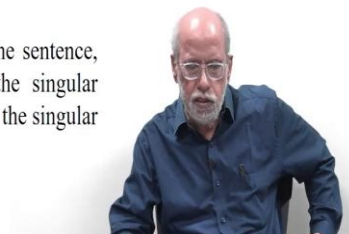
Therefore 'was'. Only one of the requested your company has asked you for your feedback and you are telling them; dear company you are a great company, I got all items on time except one, so only one of the requested items was delivered late. The next sentence is also like that, the entire team with all its star players has gone, because team is singular, players very plural.

We ordered six copies of this book, but it should not be it is yet to arrive, it will mean what, book you have not asked for the book, you have asked for six copies of the book. So, the copies have not yet arrived; they are yet to be delivered. So, what is the plural of it? They. Purna's collection of old folk songs, the head is collection, Purna's is like the, like a, like an, a determiner. Whose collection, Purna's, of what, of old folk songs so, that is why collection is the head.

Is collection singular or plural? Collection is of course singular, because it is singular it will take 'is', 'is likely to be published soon'. Next

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- In all of the sentences above, verb does not agree with the number of the subject. Here verb is influenced by the noun nearby, and is wrongly assigned the same number as that of the noun near it.
  - In 1.a, the subject is “boys”, not the “hostel”. Since “boys” is a noun in plural number, the verb here also must be so.
  - In 1.b, on the other hand, the subject of the sentence, “one of the trains”, happens to be in the singular number. Therefore, the verb must also be in the singular number, saying “... is running...”.



In all of the sentences above verb does not agree with the number of the subject. Here verb is influenced by the noun nearby. Many people make that mistake; they are over-influenced by the noun immediately before the verb, not necessarily. Find the head of the noun then you will have word making wrong assignment of the number to the verb and you will not make that mistake which is commonly made. I have given you the analysis already. Next.

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- Since we know about the phrase, structure now, we should look at the head of the phrase. Regardless of how many modifiers there are, it is always the head to which the verb agrees in number. So find the head. Look at the following sentences,



- 2)
- The Geography Master was absent.*
  - The boys of the First A had leisure between three and three-forty-five on Wednesday.*
  - The noise that they make, sitting on their benches and swinging their legs, gets on his nerves.*
  - No one, except Rajam and Mani, was there.*
  - Trucks full of water are now brought to cities from the villages.*



How do you know what is the head, are there any rules? Well, there is something called intuition, there is something called intuition. Nobody tells you he is the king, she is the king, or that person is this person, this person is that person, but using our intelligence, we reach those conclusions. In some cases, they put on a uniform and identity marker, in Armed Forces they put stars.

So, 3 stars is a captain, 2 stars is a lieutenant, 3 stars plus something is a general or some such thing, a major has only the lion's head here on the shoulder. In many other companies also people do that, they decide the color of the uniform, assistants are in white, but executives in light blue, there are all kinds of things. In real life, there is no uniform; in real life, there are no nameplates, in real life, there is intelligence, intuition.

So about whom we are speaking we know, there however are some rules. We know something about the phrase, phrase structure now. So, in all phrases, regardless of how many modifiers there are, it is always the head to which the verb agrees in number. So, what is the head? In a noun phrase like the geography master, what is the head, the geography or master? The boys of the first A section, the boys of the first-class A section who is the head, the boys, the first-class the A, like that go on.

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- In a noun + noun combination, ordinarily the second noun is the head. See the following for example:

History Teacher, State Department, Home Minister, House Wife, Cinema Hall, etc.

- But in a noun phrase created with a preposition, it is a noun before the preposition that is usually the head.

Inspector of Police, Captain of Guards, House of Cards, Head of Department, Secretary to the Director, etc.



The rule is pretty simple. Generally you see in languages, languages are not like mathematics, languages are not totally logical. In that case, computers would speak like you and me; there is a logic of a different level which is more than mathematical, there is intuition also in it. So, generally speaking, 80 per cent of the phenomena in language is rule-governed. Some people say 85-90 per cent of the phenomena in language maybe rule covered.

So, one of these rules is noun plus, now in a noun plus noun combination, such as you have nouns like History teacher, what is the head of the noun? History or teacher, State Department, Home Minister, House Wife, some standard pronunciation maybe house if, Cinema Hall, booking counter right policeman or District Magistrate, what is the head, what is the rule, is there any rule?

The rule is pretty simple the rule says, in a combination of this kind the usually it is the second noun which is the head. When have 3 nouns, look up the dictionary, you see it is best to do some work on your own, to discover, to find, to learn and then you enjoy it. That learning will stay with you for the rest of the life. But the general rule is, that in a noun plus noun combination in a noun phrase, such a known is the head of the clause or that phrase, of the following verb, then in a noun plus noun combination, it is a second noun.

So, in history teacher it is the teacher, in the State Department is the department, in Home Minister, it is the Minister, in housewives, it is the wife, your wife originally about 400 years ago, 500 years ago in English meant woman. So, housewife is a woman who does not have to go out for a living; her family provides for her; other women have to go out. So, that is an

economic compulsion. So, England in those days, England in Chaucer's time made this distinction that here is a housewife; she does not have to go out for a living.

And here are others who have to, this usage has survived. Cinema hall, what is more important, cinema hall. So, the principle is in a noun plus noun combination, ordinarily, the second noun, which is the head. But when you have a noun phrase of this kind, inspector of police, Rogers from Bangalore, the CEO in Chennai, mango jelly from Vijayawada, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, if that is the case, what do you do?

In that case, it simply means, in a combination of this kind, earlier noun plus noun, go for second noun. In a combination of this kind, joined with 2 nouns, joined with prepositional phrase, then quite often it is the first noun, not the second which is the head. Son of Dashratha was exiled. Son of Pandu were exiled. Son of Dashratha was exiled, sons of Pandu were exiled. Pandu is singular, just as Dashratha is singular.

So Pandu and Dashratha do not influence the number of the verb; it is the word before them. Son of Dashratha; singular, so you know was but sons of Pandu, plural, so were thus usual they become a. But in a noun phrase connected with a preposition, I said that you can create more noun phrases, look at any book, look at the noun phrases, see the data, remove in between words and tomorrow ask yourself, where, who is the head and this will make for good learning. Next.

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## ACTIVITY 2



- In all of the sentences given in 2. Above, find the head of the noun, also called the subject of the sentence. Just underline the particular word which you think works like the head of the noun phrase, and the subject of the sentence. Compare your work with the answers given below.

All the sentences given in 2 above, I had told you to find the head of the noun. Next.

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## ANSWERS

### Activity 2:

- a. The Geography Master was absent.
- b. The boys of the First A had leisure between three and three-forty-five on Wednesday.
- c. The noise that they make, sitting on their benches and swinging their legs, gets on his nerves.
- d. No one, except Rajam and Mani, was there.
- e. Trucks full of water are now brought to cities from the villages.

Okay, that is the answer, you can compare underlined words. In other words, in a noun plus noun combination, the second noun is the head. Come back to it. In a noun plus noun but with preposition in between, it is usually the noun before the preposition. It is usually the noun before the preposition, which will be the head. So, the boys of the first A section. So, which is the first word before of, 'boys'. Actually, it is not the first word, it will be the noun, first noun of the phrase before the preposition.

So, the first of the boy, the noise, that they make hear you the noises followed by a clause that they make, sitting on the benches, swinging their legs, such a long clause yet 'gets' follows boys, not benches, not legs, but boys which is singular. Sorry, noise it is singular. No one except Rajam and Mani was there; no one was there, Rajam and Mani come as second thoughts. They may be plural, but no one is the subject of the rest of the sentence. And therefore, the verb must follow the clause of the subject, the number of the subject.

Trucks full of water are now brought to cities from the villages. So trucks full of water, noun before the preposition, are now brought to cities from villages. Pretty simple, I think we should have no difficulty. Next.

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## ACTIVITY 3

- Fill in the blanks in the following sentences using the given verb in the present tense and in appropriate number. Check your work with the answers given below.

Every night after the meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her things Swaminathan ----- (feel) very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves. 'Oh, granny!' he ----- (cry) ecstatically, 'you don't know what a great fellow Rajam is.' He ----- (tell) her the story of the first enmity between Rajam and Mani and the subsequent friendship. (Do) Granny ----- (know), Rajam has a real police dress,' ----- (say) Swaminathan. 'Is it? What ----- (do) he want a police dress for?' asked granny. 'His father is the Police Superintendent.



He is the master of every policeman here.' Granny is impressed. She says that it must be a tremendous office indeed. She then ----- (recount) the days when her husband, Swaminathan's grandfather, has been a powerful Sub-Magistrate, in which office he ----- (make) the police force tremble before him, and the fiercest dacoits of the place flee. Swaminathan ----- (wait) impatiently for her to finish the story. But she ---- (go) on, rambled, confused, mixed up various incidents that took place at different times. That will do, granny,' he said ungraciously. 'Let me tell you something about Rajam. ----- (Do) you know how many marks he ---- (get) in Arithmetic?' 'He ----- (get) all the marks, ---- (does) he, child?' ----- (ask) granny.

But, the idea is look at more and more. Similarly, here randomly a paragraph. Look at the paragraph; there are some blank spaces which require similar number which requires a verb in the present tense, see if it takes singular or plural. If you do them all correct that means you have got the language, you can further learn it of course, there is no limit to learning, but you have got the basics all right.

So, all blank spaces need to be filled in by a verb, right or wrong verb in either singular or plural for going according to noun. Verb which you may use in either tense is given there. So for example, you look at the question, 'Swaminathan every night after the meal, with his head on his Granny's lap, and nestling close to her things, Swaminathan', now in the present tense what can it be? Feel or feels? That is what you have to fill in.

Not felt. Not past tense. I know you know good English, but here the challenge, deliberate challenges is put a little of your own. So here the sentence will be Swaminathan feels very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves. Oh, Granny, he cries ecstatically, you did not know what a great fellow Rajam is, does granny know, but because the singular has already been used, so you cannot say does granny knows, then you will use the neutral form of the word.

The neutral form of the word is know, does granny know, Rajam has a real police dress, says Swaminathan. Is it? What does he want to police dress for?" asked granny. His father is the police superintendent.

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## ANSWERS

### Activity 3:

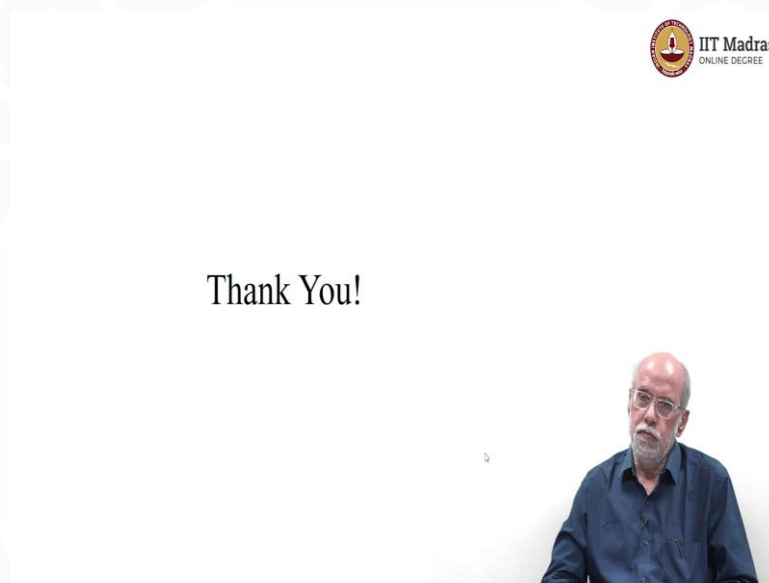
Every night after the meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her things Swaminathan **feels** very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves. 'Oh, granny!' he **cries** ecstatically, 'you don't know what a great fellow Rajam is.' He **tells** her the story of the first enmity between Rajam and Mani and the subsequent friendship. **Does** Granny **know**, Rajam has a real police dress,' **says** Swaminathan. 'Is it? What **does** he want a police dress for?' asked granny. 'His father is the Police Superintendent. He is the master of every policeman here.' Granny is impressed. She says that it must be a tremendous office indeed.

- She then **recounts** the days when her husband, Swaminathan's grandfather, was a powerful Sub-Magistrate, in which office he made the police force tremble before him, and the fiercest dacoits of the place fled. Swaminathan **waits** impatiently for her to finish the story. But she **goes** on, rambled, confused, mixed up various incidents that took place at different times. That will do, granny,' he said ungraciously. 'Let me tell you something about Rajam. **Do** you know how many marks he **gets** in Arithmetic?' 'He **gets** all the marks, **does** he, child?' **asks** granny.

Now you compare your work with the one given here. If it is right, that is wonderful. If you have not, please take another passage, do them again and again, until such a time as you got it in your brain. Nothing gives you the confidence; nothing gives you greater power, greater faith in yourself, then a job well done than a piece of knowledge you may have acquired that particular day.

Then you will find that you have all the power of youth, all the power of wisdom and you are not only able to do well yourself. You also help, you become a help to your family, to your friends, and help them and help us. Next.

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Thank you. Have a good day.