

## Pronouns and the Verb “To be”

We’ve already discussed the fact that in order to conjugate verbs, the verbs need to have subjects. The subject of the verb is the noun (person or thing, sometimes place) that is *doing* the action of the verb. Often, the subject of the verb is going to be a pronoun, like the English words **I, you, he**, etc. Here are the subject pronouns in BCS:

	Singular	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	Ja <i>I</i>	Mi <i>We</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	Ti <i>You</i>	Vi <i>You all</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	On/Ona/Ono <i>He/She/It</i>	Oni/One/Ona <i>They</i>

Remember, the **2<sup>nd</sup> person plural** is also the *formal singular* pronoun. It’s also important to keep in mind that the words *on/ona/ono* will mean “it” when referring to a noun of that grammatical gender. (For ex., *Ovo je knjiga. Ona je moja.* “This is a book. **It** is mine.”)

Now, in order to make full sentences we need verbs. We’ve already learned to conjugate one verb, but now we’re going to learn about the most basic and important of all verbs, “to be,” or *biti*. In BCS, there are **3 forms** of this verb, which are used in different situations. The first is the basic form, as follows:

Biti ( <i>to be</i> )	Singular	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	Ja sam <i>I am</i>	Mi smo <i>We are</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	Ti si <i>You are</i>	Vi ste <i>You all are</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	On/Ona/Ono je <i>He/She/It is</i>	Oni/One/Ona su <i>They are</i>

This form of the verb “to be” can **only be used if there’s a visible subject**. Remember when we talked about “implied subjects” in the previous lesson, and you could choose whether or not to include a visible subject? You can’t do that with this form. The reason is because you **can’t start a sentence with this form of the verb “to be.”** In order to begin a sentence with the verb (and therefore leave the visible subject out), you need to use the following form:

	Singular	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	Jesam	Jesmo
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	Jesi	Jeste
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	Je	Jesu

Sometimes when using the **3<sup>rd</sup> person singular** in this form (so, if the implied subject is he/she/it), you'll see the forms "**Jest**" or "**Jeste**" used. This is for emphasis. I'll show you examples below. For now, let's move onto the third and final form of the verb "to be."

The third form of "to be" is the negative form. Usually if you want to negate a sentence in BCS you'll just put the word *ne* in front of it, but with "to be," we use a special form:

	Singular	Plural
<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	Nisam <i>I am not</i>	Nismo <i>We are not</i>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	Nisi <i>You are not</i>	Niste <i>You all are not</i>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	Nije <i>He/She/It is not</i>	Nisu <i>They are not</i>

When using this negative form of the verb, you can either include a visible subject or not, as you see fit. Remember that **2<sup>nd</sup> person plural** forms are also **singular formal forms**.

Now, let's look at some examples of the various forms of "to be" in context:

**Ja sam** Amerikanac. **Jesi** li ti Amerikanac? I am an American. Are you an American?

**Jesam**. A tvoj drug? I am. And your friend?

**Nije**. **On je** hrvat. He isn't. He is a Croat.

**Profesorka/Profesorica je** Engleskinja. A profesor? The lady professor is an Englishwoman. And the male professor?

**On nije** Englez. A vi? He isn't. And you all?

**Nismo**. Da li **ste vi** Englezi? We aren't. Are you English people?

**Jesmo!** We are!

**Je li on** Srbin? Is he a Serb?

**Jest!** A **ona**, da li **je** Srpkinja? He is! And her, is she a Serb?

**Ona nije** Srpkinja, a Bosanka. **Jesi** li student? She's not a Serb, but a Bosnian. Are you a student?

**Jesam**. A ti? I am. And you?

**Nisam**, ali **moj prijatelj je**. I am not, but my friend is.

Can you come up with your own examples?