

3.3. Subject is never part of prepositional phrase

In section 3.2 above, we studied a very powerful method to identify the subject (by identifying the *doer* of the verb). This section discusses *another* method to identify the subject.

Before we discuss this method, let's understand what a *Prepositional phrase* is. A *prepositional phrase* begins with a *preposition* (such as *in, on, at, between, among*; refer section 2.1.6 on prepositions) and ends with a noun, pronoun, or gerund.

Examples of *prepositional phrases*:

Below the surface

under the table

in the serene surroundings

on the bumpy road

between them

among the vacant houses

without crying

inside the house

Rule: In a clause, words in *prepositional phrase* will *never* be the subject of *that clause*.

This rule, along with our understanding of the basics of subject (section 3.2 above), would help us identify the subject of the given sentence.

Let's look at few examples:

The beads of the necklace (is/are) all brilliantly shining.

Let's apply each of the above to methods to figure out the subject in this sentence:

1. Subject is the *doer* of the verb: What *is/are* brilliantly shining: *beads* and hence, *beads* is the *subject* (plural) and requires *plural* verb *are*.
2. Subject is never part of prepositional phrase: This entire sentence is a clause (*Independent* clause). In this clause, the prepositional phrase is *of the necklace*. Since *necklace* is a part of this *prepositional phrase*, *necklace* cannot be the subject. *beads* is the *subject* (plural) and requires *plural* verb *are*.

A sentence based on official question (#89, OG-13: Ryonosuke Akutagawa's knowledge...):

William Carlos Williams's knowledge of medicine and colloquial American English were instrumental in his development as a poet, informing both his content and style.

Analysis: Let's apply each of the above learning to figure out the *subject* in this sentence:

1. Subject is the *doer* of the verb: What *was/were* instrumental in his development as a poet: *William Carlos William's **knowledge** (of medicine and colloquial American English)*, and hence, *knowledge* is the *subject* (singular) and requires *singular* verb *was*.
2. Subject is never part of prepositional phrase: This entire sentence is a clause (*Independent* clause). In this clause, the prepositional phrase is *of medicine and colloquial American English*. Since *medicine and colloquial American English* is a part of this *prepositional phrase*, *this* cannot be the subject. *knowledge* is the *subject* (singular) and requires *singular* verb *was*.

So, the correct sentence is:

William Carlos William's knowledge of medicine and colloquial American English was instrumental in his development as a poet, informing both his content and style.