

Fachfragen

Heißt es immer: "Two and two *are* four" oder kann man auch sagen: "Two and two *is* four"?

OStR' DR. SUSANNE EISELE ·

ALZENAU

Both constructions are used. It is sometimes argued that the difference in construction always forces a different interpretation or conception of the subject - the singular making one view the compound subject as a single idea, the plural as an aggregate of two separate ideas. It is possible to construct examples where a semantic distinction is plausible, but this is by no means always the case. An example of a real distinction would be "The government and the army *is* dangerous" (where the meaning is that danger occurs only if the government and army combine into a single force), as opposed to "The government and the army *are* dangerous" (which could be interpreted as "Both the government and the army *is* dangerous"). The important point is that the second example could equally well be interpreted with the sense of the first; and the potential synonymy here is indeed a feature of the vast majority of cases of this type. It is doubtful whether there is any demonstrable semantic difference between "John and his car *is* a danger on the road" and "John and his car *are* a danger on the road", for instance. And certainly cases like "Two and two *is/are* four" could not bear any such difference of interpretation. There is probably a difference in usage in favour of the singular verb (cf. also such verbs as "makes" and "equals" in this context, and such constructions as "Put two and two together and it *makes* four", where the singular is the expected form), but the plural form is not thereby ungrammatical.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Während meiner Ausbildung wurde ich immer wieder auf einen mir unterlaufenden Germanismus aufmerksam gemacht. Statt: "What do you call this thing?" sagte ich: "How do you call ...?" Inzwischen fand ich zwei literarische Belege für meine Version.

1. "How do you call this place again? she used to ask Heyst ..." from Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (Penguin 2067), p. 7.

2. "He lies on a camp-bed, bandaged, in some hot Indian hospital, while coolies squatted on the floor agitate those fans - I forget how they call them." from Virginia Woolf (Penguin 808), p. 131.

Handelt es sich wirklich um einen Germanismus?

StRef WOLFGANG SCHULZE, M.A. ·
MEN DEN

Undoubtedly many German students of English substitute "how" for "what" because of the influence of their native language, but it would be wrong to consider this the only source of error. The "how" construction was common in English at one time. "How art thou called?" is to be found in Shakespeare, for instance. So that, if one does find it in a novel, it could be intended to give the impression of archaic speech. On the other hand, the choice of "how" for "what" could be due to a mental confusion as to whether one's query is primarily about pronunciation or choice of word. "How do you pronounce this place again?" is one possibility. "What do you call this place again?" is another. And "How do you call ..." could be a fairly normal example of what some linguists call a "syntactic blend", frequently occurring when both pronunciation and choice of word pose difficulties. It might well become more frequent over the next few years.

DAVID CRYSTAL



In einer Übersetzung vom Deutschen ins Englische war von den Schülern eine kleine Geschichte zu übersetzen, die von einem Ehepaar berichtete, das Vorbereitungen für eine Reise nach England traf. Dabei wurden die Ausdrücke „die Koffer waren zu packen“, „Plätze waren zu reservieren“, und „Geschenke sind nicht zu verzollen“ übersetzt mit: "the suitcases were to pack", "seats were to book" und "presents are not to declare" (letzteres in Anlehnung an die Struktur "Have you anything to declare?"). Nun

scheint der englische Sprachgebrauch zwar der zu sein, daß man besser sagt: "the suitcases were to be packed", "seats were to be booked" und "presents are not to be declared", doch wollte ich sicher gehen und fand auf diese Weise zunächst in der von den Schülern benutzten Kurzgrammatik von Klett (*Learning English A2 neu, Grammatisches Beiheft*) auf Seite 14, § 18 eine Darstellung, woraus nicht hervorgeht, daß die aktive Infinitivform hier als unbedingt falsch anzusehen sei, und worauf sich die Schüler dann auch stützten: „Gelegentlich entspricht im Englischen ein passiver Infinitiv einem aktiven Infinitiv im Deutschen, besonders nach 'to be' und 'to remain'." Das Wort „gelegentlich“ und das Wort „besonders“ beinhalten meiner Meinung nach die Tatsache, daß der aktive statt des passiven Infinitivs im Englischen nicht als Fehler angerechnet werden kann. Weiterhin fand ich in diesem Sinne einen Satz bei R. W. Zandvoort, *A Handbook of English Grammar*, p. 56, § 123: "It remains to point out that the passive infinitive may vary with the active infinitive as an adjunct to nouns and pronouns, ..." Schon die Formulierung "It remains to point out" spricht dabei für den aktiven Infinitiv, sogar nach "to remain". Diesen Punkt scheint noch ausführlicher § 669 der englischen Grammatik von Koziol-Hüttenbrenner zu behandeln, wo es heißt: "In attributiver Funktion kann der Infinitiv des Aktivums stehen, wenn an einen persönlichen Handlungsträger gedacht wird ..." Ganz allgemein wäre auch die Einschränkung des Gebrauchs des passiven Infinitivs im Englischen durch die Formulierung „oft“ in folgendem Satz der genannten Grammatik von Koziol-Hüttenbrenner, § 667, zu beachten: „Der Infinitiv des Passivums wird zum Unterschied vom Deutschen oft nach den Formen von 'to be' gebraucht ..."

StR HERBERT SCHNEIDER · CHAM

Grammarians are past masters of that non-committal use of phraseology which allows them both to eat their linguistic cake and to have it, as is well illustrated by many of the above quotations. Adverbs like "occasionally", "usually", "often", and "invariably", and auxiliary verbs like "can" and "may", are notoriously ambiguous. "Such-and-such is invariably the case" can mean either "it is always the case" or "it is generally the case", for example. Such statements may at times provide a useful general perspective for study, of course, but they are of little value to

the teacher in the classroom, who has to establish exactly what ground is covered by "invariably", "often", and the like, and what is not. But this degree of detailed statement textbooks of grammar rarely provide.

In the present case, we must begin by distinguishing two types of structure mentioned above. In the first - in what I would call the "unemphatic" use - both active and passive infinitives are possible, and this is the flexibility referred to by Zandvoort and others, e.g. "There were suitcases to pack/to be packed", "There remains one thing to point out/to be pointed out". These alternatives are quite synonymous, apart from the usual overtones of increased formality which attach to most uses of the passive in English. The only difference between the structures is the usual "potential" one, that is, there are possibilities for expanding the passive construction which the active construction does not share, e.g. "There were suitcases to be packed by the children", never "There were suitcases to pack by the children". Sometimes the active construction takes on an additional, idiomatic meaning - an evaluative implication - with verbs of personal activity, such as "know", "see", "speak", "do". "There is nothing to see" can be taken two ways: either literally, "There is nothing that can be seen", or, evaluatively, "there is nothing worth seeing". Cf. also, "He's not someone to talk to", where the evaluative interpretation is the normal one.

In the second structure - the "emphatic" use - the initial position gives the noun phrase more prominence, and here there is the important restriction which gave rise to this whole question, that the active infinitive is not normally possible. The sentences "The suitcases were to pack", etc., are all unquestionably ungrammatical, and it has to be "The suitcases were to be packed", etc. The source of the difficulty, which leads me, as others, to use an adverb like "normally" in ruling out the active construction, is that the restriction does not apply to animate nouns as subject when they govern the action (the "personal agent" idea of Koziol-Hüttenbrenner), nor to a number of stock phrases. The first case can be illustrated by "In this race men are to run, and women to walk", which disallows a passive interpretation and construction. "He is nowhere to be found" however conforms to the restriction, because here the subject is, semantically, the goal of the action and not its perpetrator. The stock

phrases can be illustrated by "What's to pay?", "This house is to let" - but in such cases the passive construction is also possible.

One interesting approach to understanding this situation is through the use of a non-sense-word technique. Consider the sentence "There are five plogs to pack". Here, "plogs" could be either some species of person (who are to do the packing) or objects (which have to be packed). "Five plogs are to pack", however, could only be interpreted in the personal sense. Or, to take an actual example, "There are three dogs to hunt today" is ambiguous, as it can mean either that the dogs are being hunted or that they are doing the hunting. "Three dogs are to hunt today" can only mean the latter, however.

DAVID CRYSTAL

■ ■

In Schulbüchern und Grammatiken fand ich folgende Beispiele und Regeln: He will do anything you ask but stop talking. Is there nothing we can do except sit in silence? Locke is always willing to sacrifice logic rather than become paradoxical. After "except", "but" (ausgenommen) and "than" in comparing sentences the *infinitive is used without to*. Our house-maid does everything except to wash the car. Was ist richtig?

KARL UHDE · SCHÖNINGEN

The rule in English is fairly clear: after *than*, *but*, and *except* the infinitive does not normally have *to* preceding, and consequently "Our housemaid does everything except to wash the car" is wrong. What is sometimes forgotten in formulating this rule is that there are a few idiomatic structures which do allow *to* (such as "He knew better than to interfere", where "He knew better than interfere" is ungrammatical), and if an infinitive has already been used in the part of the sentence preceding the conjunction, with *to* expressed, then the *to* may be introduced in the sentence after the conjunction, e.g. "I am willing to starve at five rather than to eat at six". One must admit that this is far less likely a construction to be used than that which leaves the *to* out - in conversational speech, at least. (In some kinds of public speaking, a desire for a nice formal antithesis makes the *to*-construction much more probable.) And it

should also be noted that as the length of the utterance between the two infinitives increases, so the probability of the *to* being introduced, as a kind of reinforcing structure marker, also increases, e.g. "I am willing to starve at five or at any other time that you are intending to bring that hateful person rather than to eat at six". This would be particularly likely if the second infinitive was a verb which could be confused with a noun, e.g. "help".

DAVID CRYSTAL

Fachfragen

"Behind the cautious moves of leaders of both Germanies stand the big guns of the Soviet Union and the western alliance, and all those concerned must be aware of the dangers of a small dispute *growing* into a major crisis if carelessly handled."

Ist in diesem Satz "growing" als Gerundium oder als Partizip anzusehen? Kann man beide Auffassungen gelten lassen?

StAss MORITZ KAGERER · ULM

The distinction between gerund and participle is not always an easy one to draw; and very often when this question is posed of a sentence, people try and force one or other interpretation when in fact the sentence is neutral in respect of the distinction or is ambiguous. F. R. Palmer has a good survey of the problems involved in this corner of grammar in his book *A Linguistic Study of the English Verb* (Longmans, 1964, pp. 151-155). However, in the present case it is fairly clear that *growing* should be interpreted adjectivally, as a participle and not as a gerund. It is the dispute which is growing into the crisis, and it is this possibility of "growing dispute" which is what all those concerned have to be aware of. Any alternative interpretation is quite impossible.

DAVID CRYSTAL



In einer Klassenarbeit (U II) gab ich folgenden, in keinem Zusammenhang stehenden Satz zur Übersetzung: „Wo haben Sie Ihr ausgezeichnetes Englisch gelernt?“

Meines Erachtens ist nur das *Past Tense* anwendbar, da der Fragende sich entweder nach dem Ort oder der Institution erkundigt, wo das Englisch gelernt wurde. Außerdem ist der Vorgang des Lernens abgeschlossen. Ich glaube nicht, daß das Ergebnis des Lernens den Gebrauch des *Present Perfect* rechtfertigt, da in diesem Satz nicht danach gefragt ist. Da wir in unserem Kollegium geteilter Meinung sind, wäre ich für eine Antwort dankbar.

StR HEINZ GOLL · FLÜREN

"Where did you learn ..." is certainly the normal form for a general enquiry of this kind, and it has all the usual implications of the preterite tense form (the event being viewed as concluded, etc.). But it would be possible to hear the present perfect when something specific in the person's English had prompted the question – for example, a naive mistake might provoke "Where have you learnt your English!", the implication here perhaps being that the speaker is supposed to have learnt English but is speaking as if he never had. The boundary between the two tense-forms is by no means as clear-cut as the grammar-books sometimes make it out to be. I would not recommend the present-perfect form in the above sentence as a teaching norm; but I would make sure that the students were aware of the possibility of the alternative amongst some English speakers.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Fachfragen

Das *Grammatische Wörterbuch – Englisch* (Dortmund: Lensing) bezeichnet unter dem Stichwort "headquarters" den Pluralgebrauch des folgenden Verbs als "uncommon". In *The English Companion's Modern Grammar* (Frankfurt: Diesterweg) heißt es, daß u. a. "headquarters" gewöhnlich wie ein Plural behandelt wird (§ 47, 8). Was ist richtig?

OStR DR. G. STOEBE · FRANKFURT

The golden rule for this particular area of English grammar is quite simple: if two grammars, written at more or less the same time, disagree about verb agreement with noun plurals, then they are both correct. This is a corner of the language where change in usage manifests itself most rapidly. From the point of view of meaning, the distinction between seeing a noun in its plural form as a single concept, or as a collection of related concepts, or as a multiplicity of the same concept is often very subtle. One frequently comes across "nonce" usage, also; that is, usages which have been introduced for a

specific purpose, to express a particular point, and which are not part of the normal possibilities of the language. And in literary usage, upon which grammar books are often based, extended meanings of one kind or another frequently occur. Thus I would not like to make any statement about whether "headquarters" is used more with singular verb than with plural, but would simply say that both forms are possible, depending on the sense intended. Essentially the difference is between the concept viewed as a single, undifferentiated unit ("the headquarters is a mile from here") or as a composite, a conglomeration of (unspecified) features, e. g. buildings, personnel ("the headquarters are a mile from here").

DAVID CRYSTAL



"He seized the young man by *his* arm" ist vom Korrigierenden durch "... by *the* arm" verbessert worden. (Would you have marked it wrong?" *PRAXIS* 3/69, S. 325, 350.)

David Crystal schreibt dazu: "Both (forms) are possible, and equally likely." (S. 350)

In einer ganzen Reihe von Grammatiken findet sich der auch mir bekannte Hinweis, daß in einem Falle wie dem obigen (d. h. wenn der bezeichnete Körperteil dem Objekt, *nicht* dem Subjekt eigen ist), der bestimmte Artikel und nicht das Possessivpronomen gebraucht wird. Ist dieser Hinweis auf die Behandlung von Possessivpronomen oder bestimmtem Artikel falsch oder vielleicht zu pedantisch oder veraltet? Beruht die vom Korrigierenden beanstandete sprachliche Fügung, die von Crystal als möglich bezeichnet wird, auf neuester Sprachentwicklung?

OSTR DR. G. PANSEGRAU ·

WOLFENBÜTTEL

"The" is certainly the older form, and is the form most people come out with first when asked to complete the above sentence. But it is indeed pedantic to insist upon its use, as the possessive pronoun is also frequently used in such contexts. There is no possibility of ambiguity: the "his" could *only* be referring to the object; it could never be construed as referring to the subject. The subjective interpretation requires a different preposition, "with".

DAVID CRYSTAL

Fachfragen

Kann der Satz "They were believed to have left the group" auch so formuliert werden: "They were believed *having left* the group"? Kann man also nach "to be believed" das Partizip Präsens setzen, wie es etwa nach "to be found", "to be heard" u. a. möglich ist?

OSTR NORBERT RÖLLECKE ·

MESCHÉDE

"Believe", "understand" and "know" are examples of verbs which may be used in the first pattern only. "They were believed having left the group" is ungrammatical. And even with verbs such as "find", one is far more likely to hear "They were found to have left the group" than "... having left ...". The same holds for the active construction: "I found them to have left the group" is more normal than "I found them having left the group", though both are used.

DAVID CRYSTAL