Lesson 5: How to find the subject of a sentence

In Lesson 1, we said that X-Words were important for five reasons

1) they are used to ask questions,

2) they are used to make negative statements

3) they are used to find the subject of a sentence

4) they are used to change tense

5) they are used to add meaning

Let's look at number 3. In this lesson, you will learn how to use X-Words to find the subject of a sentence. It's really easy to find subject the of the sentence if you know the X-Words. If you want to find the subject of any sentence, all you have to do is to find the X-Word. Everything between the beginning of the sentence and the X is the **subject.**

English is a word order language

Example 1:

☞   X
X   The president's office is located on the eighth floor of 66 West 12th.

The president's office is the subject of the sentence.

Example 2

☞ ------------------X
X   ESL students should try to find opportunities to practice English.

ESL students is the subject of the sentence because it comes between the two positions of the X.

Example 3

```
        ↩ ----------------- ↪
        X                  X
Should  ⌐ESL students⌐   try to find opportunities to practice English?
```

The same rule works in questions. ***ESL students*** is the subject of the sentence because it comes between the two positions of the X.

We can show the subject of the sentence by placing a box around it and by putting the letter **S** for *subject* over it.

```
        S
⌐ESL students⌐ should try to find opportunities to practice English.
```

The main subject

The main subject is usually <u>the last word </u>in the subject box.   This is the word that has to "agree" in number with the X-Word that comes after it. We'll study this more in a later lesson.

In the examples below, the **main subjects** are marked with a *

Main subjects example 1

Because the word "José" is <u>singular</u>, we need the X-Word <u>has</u>, not <u>have</u>.

```
              S   *    X
⌐My friend José⌐ has never been a great student.
```
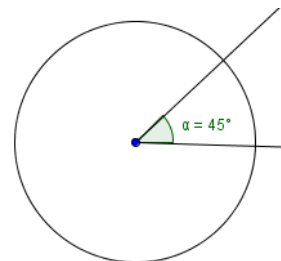
Main subjects example 2

Because the word "sisters" is <u>plural</u>, we need the X-Word <u>have</u>, not <u>has</u>. CAREFUL apostrophe "s" means possession, not plural.

```
     S   *      X
⌐José's sisters⌐ have always helped him with his homework.
```

Main subjects example 3

Sometimes subjects are described by the words that come <u>in front</u> of them.

S　　　　　　　　*
The most successful **students** <u>will</u> find opportunities to practice.

Main subjects example 4:

Sometimes subjects are described by words (usually prepositional phrases) that come <u>after</u> them. The most common prepositions are 2 letters long: in, at, on, of

*
The **students** in this class <u>will</u> find opportunities to practice.

Lesson 5: Exercise 1

Directions: Find the **X-Word** in each of the following sentences and place an X over it. Then place a box around the **subject** and put an **S** over the box. Try to mark the forms of the **verbs**, too.

"This is Why Birds Fly in a V"

　　　X　　　　　　　　　S　　　　　　Vb
1. Why do migratory birds like ducks and geese fly in the shape of a V?

2. Why don't they fly in the shape of an I or a W?

3. People would like to understand this interesting habit.

 4. It could help us design better airplanes.

5. Studies have shown that the V shape helps birds see each other.

6. Each bird in the V is located just far enough back and to the side.

Lydon/Gex/Hart   3

7. The next bird can see it in its side vision.

8. One study has discovered another reason for the V.

9. The birds were each given a GPS.

10. Each bird was exactly four feet behind and at a 45 degree angle from the bird ahead.

11. The rear bird rides the front bird's air and saves energy.

<u>mi</u> gra to ry: migratory animals live one place in the summer and travel to another place for the winter

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(adapted from *The Week*)

Lesson 5 Exercise 2 Write three sentences with visible X-Words. <u>Make the subjects at least 3 words long.</u> Mark the subjects and verbs.

Example: The simplest sentence is often the best sentence.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Lesson 5 Exercise 3 (Optional: for more advanced students)

    1) Box the subjects.
    2) Write the type of MAIN subject on the line.
        (Gerund, Singular, Plural, Uncountable)
    3) Chose the correct form of the X-Word or Verb.

1. _____ A bird (is | are) a wonderful machine.

2. _____ Flying (is | are) not easy!

3. _____ Birds (use | uses) a lot of energy when they fly.

4. _____ Flying birds (saves | save) energy in a V shape.

5. _____ Science (use | uses) information like this.

6. _____ Nature (provides | provide) useful information.

7. _____ Scientists (has | have) not stopped learning from nature.