

# Intermediate English Grammar

## **Chapter 11** **Inversion (part 1)**

Lecturer: Agnechia Friska Rivalny, S.S., M.Hum.  
*Jakarta International University, Indonesia*

What comes to your mind when you hear  
the word “inversion”?

# Inversion

Inversion happens when we reverse the normal word order of a structure, most commonly the subject-verb word order.

# Inversion

There are two main types of inversion: **when the verb comes before the subject** (inversion is often optional), and **when the auxiliary comes before the subject and the rest of the verb phrase follows the subject** (inversion is usually necessary):

- *Alex **stood** in the doorway.* → *In the doorway **stood** Alex.* (*or ... Alex stood.*)
- *I **had** rarely **seen** such a view.* → *Rarely **had** I **seen** such a view.* (*not Rarely I had seen ...*)

- *Alex **stood*** in the doorway. → In the doorway **stood** *Alex*. (*or ... Alex stood.*)
- *I **had** rarely **seen*** such a view. → Rarely **had** *I* **seen** such a view. (*not Rarely I had seen ...*)

Inversion brings about *fronting*, the re-ordering of information in a sentence to give emphasis in a particular place. Often this causes an element to be postponed until later in the sentence, focusing attention on it.

# Here comes... There goes...

In conversation we use **Here comes + noun** and **There goes + noun**, with inversion of verb and subject, to talk about things and people moving towards or away from the speaker:

- **Here comes** the bus.
- **There goes** Per Alvin, the conductor.

# Here comes... There goes...

**Here comes** ... is also used to say that something is going to happen soon, and **There goes** ... is used to talk about things (particularly money) being lost and to say that something (such as a phone or door bell) is ringing:

- **Here comes** lunch.
- My bike's been stolen! **There goes** £100!
- **There goes** the phone. Can you answer it?

We also put the verb before the subject when we use adverbs expressing direction of movement, such as **along, away, back, down, in, off, out, up** with verbs such as **come, fly, go**. This pattern is found particularly in narrative, to mark a change in events:

- The door opened and **in came** the doctor. (*less formally ... and the doctor came in.*)
- As soon as I let go of the string, **up went the balloon**, high into the sky. (*less formally ... the balloon went up ...*)

We can use clauses with inversion instead of certain kinds of **if-clause**. Compare:

It would be a serious setback, <b>if <i>the talks</i> were to fail.</b>	It would be a serious setback, <b>were <i>the talks</i> to fail.</b>
<b>If <i>you should</i> need</b> more information, please telephone our main office.	<b>Should <i>you</i> need</b> more information, please telephone our main office.
<b>If <i>Andy</i> had asked</b> , I would have been able to help.	<b>Had <i>Andy</i> asked</b> , I would have been able to help.

The sentences with inversion are rather more formal than those with 'if'. Note that in negative clauses with inversion, we don't use contracted forms:

- **Had *the plane* not been diverted**, they would have arrived early.  
(*not* Hadn't the plane ...)
- **Had *the class* not been dismissed**, the students would have studied a lot. (*not* Hadn't the class ...)

# Exercise

Match the sentence halves and write new sentences beginning **Were ...**, **Should ...**, or **Had ....**

1. If Kahn had not resigned as party leader, ...
2. If you do not wish to receive further information about our products, ...
3. If the plane were ever to be built, ...
4. If the ice hockey team wins again today, ...
5. If I were offered the job, ...
6. If a car had been coming the other way, ...
7. If there had been a referendum on the issue, ...
8. If Charles Dickens were alive today, ...

- a. It would cut the journey time from New York to Tokyo by four hours.
- b. I might have been seriously injured.
- c. he would have been sacked.
- d. I would have on hesitation in accepting.
- e. he would be writing novels about the homeless in London.
- f. it is unlikely that the electorate would have supported government.
- g. it will be their tenth consecutive victory.
- h. click on the box below.

# Exercise [answer]

Match the sentence halves and write new sentences beginning Were ..., Should ..., or Had ....

1. If Kahn had not resigned as party leader, ...
2. If you do not wish to receive further information about our products, ...
3. If the plane were ever to be built, ...
4. If the ice hockey team wins again today, ...
5. If I were offered the job, ...
6. If a car had been coming the other way, ...
7. If there had been a referendum on the issue, ...
8. If Charles Dickens were alive today, ...

- a. It would cut the journey time from New York to Tokyo by four hours.
- b. I might have been seriously injured.
- c. he would have been sacked.
- d. I would have on hesitation in accepting.
- e. he would be writing novels about the homeless in London.
- f. it is unlikely that the electorate would have supported government.
- g. it will be their tenth consecutive victory.
- h. click on the box below.

# Exercise [answer]

Match the sentence halves and write new sentences beginning Were ..., Should ..., or Had ....

1. Had Kahn not resigned as party leader, he would have been sacked.
2. Should you do not wish to receive further information about our products, click on the box below.
3. Were the plane ever (to be) built, it would cut the journey time from New York to Tokyo by four hours.
4. Should the ice hockey team win again today, it will be their tenth consecutive victory.
5. Were I (to be) offered the job, I would have on hesitation in accepting.
6. Had a car been coming the other way, I might have been seriously injured.
7. Had there been a referendum on the issue, it is unlikely that the electorate would have supported government.
8. Were Charles Dickens (to be) alive today, he would be writing novels about the homeless in London.

# INVERSION AFTER “SO” AND “NEITHER”

In order to agree with a positive statement, “be” and its subject, or an auxiliary and its subject can be inverted after “so.” For a negative statement, the same is done after “neither.” For a sentence that doesn’t have an auxiliary, “do” is used when it is inverted.



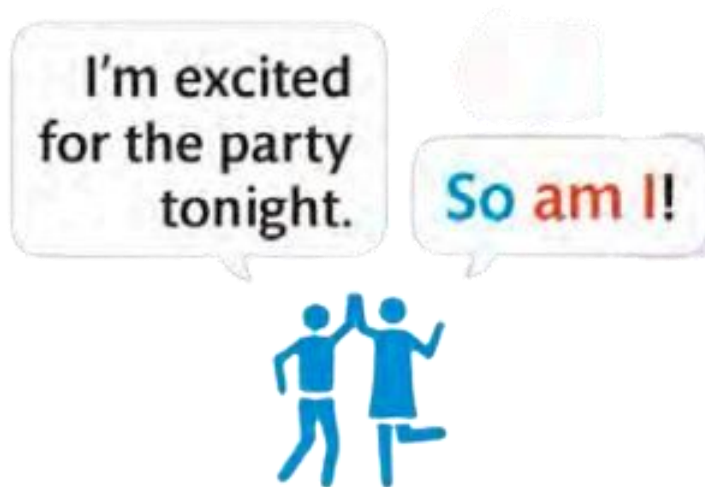
# INVERSION AFTER “SO” AND “NEITHER”

In order to agree with a positive statement, “be” and its subject, or an auxiliary and its subject can be inverted after “so.” For a negative statement, the same is done after “neither.” For a sentence that doesn’t have an auxiliary, “do” is used when it is inverted.



# INVERSION AFTER “SO” AND “NEITHER”

In order to agree with a positive statement, “be” and its subject, or an auxiliary and its subject can be inverted after “so.” For a negative statement, the same is done after “neither.” For a sentence that doesn’t have an auxiliary, “do” is used when it is inverted.



In formal written language we commonly use inversion after **as** and **than** in comparisons:

- Paper was invented in China, **as was the process of printing**.
- Most young people did not vote in the election, **as was the case in 2010**.
- I believed, **as did my colleagues**, that the plan would work.
- Research shows that parents watch more television **than do their children**.

Note that we don't invert subject and verb after **as** or **than** when the subject is a pronoun:

- We now know a lot more about the universe **than we did** ten years ago. (*not ... than did we ten years ago.*)

# Exercise

**Rewrite these sentences with a similar meaning using as or than + be or do.**

1. I was opposed to the new road. Everyone else in the village was opposed to it, too.
2. Kamal went to Oxford University. His sister went there, too. Kamal went ...
3. Compared with people in developed nations, people in poorer countries consume a far smaller proportion of the earth's resources. People in poorer countries ...
4. Compared to five years ago, he is a much better teacher. He is ...
5. Dan is a keen golfer. His wife is a keen golfer, too. Dan is ...

# Exercise [answer]

**Rewrite these sentences with a similar meaning using as or than + be or do.**

1. I was opposed to the new road, as was everyone else in the village.
2. Kamal went to Oxford University, as did his sister.
3. People in poorer countries consume a far smaller proportion of the earth's resources than do those in developed nations.
4. He is a much better teacher now than he was five years ago. (no inversion with a pronoun as subject.)
5. Dan is a keen golfer, as is his wife.

Thank you!

## REFERENCES

Murphy, Raymond & Smalzer, William. *Grammar in use, Intermediate*. Cambridge U. Press, 2019.

DK. *English for Everyone – English Grammar Guide*. Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2016.