Forum: Grammar ï¼ˆæ–‡æ³•ï¼‰

Topic: There is/There are
Subject: Re: There is/There are
Posted by: Tim Luo
Posted on: 2007/8/26 20:51:05

More info on the usage of there from some grammar books.

Quote:

When the verb precedes a subject compounded of singular and plural, some questions of more interest than importance may arise. *There were a table and some chairs in there*; *were* is better because the compound subject is compact. ---Fowler's Modern English Usage

Fowler's is said to be one of the best and most authoritative. The book was first published in 1926.

Quote:

The verb following *there* may be singular or plural. According to the rules, it is plural if the meaningful subject of the sentence is plural, and singular if it is not, as in *there were friends who told him* and *there was one in particular.* There is a strong tendency today to use only a singular verb after there, even with a plural subject. This is now acceptable English when the word closest to the verb is singular, as in *there was a man and two women.* A singular verb is often heard before a plural word, as in *there was two women,* but this offends many people and is condemned by most grammarians. ---A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage by Bergen Evans & Cornelia Evans, 1957

A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage is also a famous one. The info there might be a little out-dated by now, but at least it shows the situation around half a century ago.

Quote:

2 There can express the idea of existence: *What is there to eat? There seem to be only eggs.* Before a plural, it should correctly be *there are/were*, although *there is* is common in spoken English: *There's two experts in the studio.* When **there** introduces a list of items of which the first is singular, usage is divided: *There are/is Bill and the children to consider.* Here **are** is correct, though it may be felt to sound odd before the singular *Bill*.   ---Longman Guide to English Usage, 1988

Hope the above info sheds some more light on the use and evolution of **there**.

Tim