

Chapter 8: PRONOUNS

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General Notes on Chapter 8

- **OBJECTIVE:** This chapter reviews most aspects of personal pronoun use, with emphasis on the problem areas of agreement and the use of *other* as both a pronoun and an adjective.
- **TERMINOLOGY:** A “possessive adjective” (e.g., *my, your, her*) is a pronoun (i.e., a noun substitute) that functions as a determiner. Some grammars call it a “possessive determiner” or a “determinative possessive pronoun.” The terminology may be confusing for students because a possessive adjective is indeed a pronoun, but the term “possessive pronoun” (e.g., *mine, yours, hers*) is used in this text and most others to refer to an independent possessive pronoun that is used alone as a noun substitute.

In an effort to minimize grammatical terminology, the text does not use the term “determiner,” finding other ways to present these function words (such as *a/an/the, one, no, this/that/these/those, many, other, my/you/her, some/any*). If you are comfortable with the term “determiner” and find it useful, by all means introduce it to your class and explain that what this text calls a “possessive adjective” may be called a “possessive determiner.”

□ EXERCISE 1, p. 131. Preview: personal pronouns. (Chart 8-1)

ANSWERS: 1. Some North American food is very good, but I don’t like most of it. 2. When we were schoolgirls, my sister and I used to play badminton after school every day. 3. If you want to pass your exams, you had better study very hard for them. 4. The work had to be finished by my boss and me after the store had closed for the night. [You might point out to the students that they may hear native speakers misuse the pronoun “I” in noun phrases with *and* that are used as objects (e.g., *by my boss and I*, in which the noun phrase is the object of the preposition *by*). Even well-educated speakers of English misuse the

pronoun “I” in this way in their regular speech. It’s quite an interesting and curious linguistic phenomenon. Evidently, to many native speakers the use of a subject pronoun after *and* simply sounds right, for they use it even though they know that correct, standard grammar requires an object pronoun. It’s baffling.] 5. A hippopotamus spends most of its time in the water of rivers and lakes. 6. After work, Mr. Gray asked to speak to Tim and me about the company’s new policies. He explained them to us and asked for our opinions. 7. Children should learn to respect other people. They need to learn how to treat other people politely, including their playmates. 8. My friends asked to borrow my car because theirs was in the garage for repairs.

CHART 8-1: PERSONAL PRONOUNS

- Most of this information should be familiar to the students, so they can use this chart as a reference.
- Note the definition of *antecedent* in (a).
- Pay attention to possessive pronouns vs. possessive adjectives, pointing out that possessive adjectives occur with a noun, but possessive pronouns occur without a noun.
- Give additional examples of *its* vs. *it’s*; this is a frequent source of errors (by native speakers, too).

□ EXERCISE 2, p. 132. Personal pronouns: antecedents. (Chart 8-1)

ANSWERS:

2. they . . . they = *pronouns*; monkeys = *antecedent*
3. She = *pronoun*; teacher = *antecedent*
them = *pronoun*; papers = *antecedent*
4. her . . . She = *pronouns*; Nancy = *antecedent*
it = *pronoun*; apple = *antecedent*
5. it = *pronoun*; dog = *antecedent*
6. She . . . She = *pronouns*; cat = *antecedent*
His . . . him = *pronouns*; Tom = *antecedent*
They = *pronoun*; dogs = *antecedent*
him = *pronoun*; Tom = *antecedent*

□ EXERCISE 3, p. 133. Possessive pronouns and adjectives. (Chart 8-1)

If necessary, again point out the difference between possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives in Chart 8-1. And remind students that *it’s* = *it is*, not a possessive adjective.

- ANSWERS: 2. mine . . . yours 3. their books . . . hers . . . his 4. its 5. It’s true . . . its way . . . its trip 6. Its name . . . It’s a turtle . . . It’s been [*It’s been* = It has been] 7. Our house . . . Our neighbor’s house . . . ours . . . theirs 8. It . . . its prey . . . its long, pointed bill . . . it . . . it . . . It’s interesting . . . them

CHART 8-2: PERSONAL PRONOUNS: AGREEMENT WITH GENERIC NOUNS AND INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

- The English language traditionally used only male pronouns when speaking of people in general, e.g. *A doctor treats **his** patients kindly*, as though no women were doctors (which, in fact, was true during certain periods of Western history). Language reflects social change; today women have more equal representation in language usage because they do in society in general. Now English speakers try to use *he or she, she or he, s/he, his or her, etc.* The easiest way to avoid the problem is to use a plural rather than a singular generic noun so that *they/them/their* (which are neither masculine nor feminine) may be used, e.g., *Doctors treat **their** patients kindly*.
- Not so long ago, it would have been unthinkable for an educated speaker to use *their* (a plural pronoun) to refer to *someone* (singular). Today it seems to have become the norm rather than the exception in everyday spoken English, and it avoids a feminine/masculine pronoun problem. However, singular personal pronouns are still expected in formal writing. Discuss with your class guidelines for feminine/masculine and singular/plural pronoun usage.

□ EXERCISE 4, p. 132. Personal pronouns use with generic nouns. (Chart 8-2)

ANSWERS: 3. Students in Biology 101 have to spend three hours per week in the laboratory, where they do various experiments by following the directions in their lab manuals. 4. Pharmacists fill prescriptions, but they are not allowed to prescribe medicine. 5. (no change) 6. Citizens have two primary responsibilities. They should vote in every election, and they should serve willingly on a jury. 7. (no change) 8. Lecturers need to prepare their notes carefully so that they do not lose their place while they are delivering their speech(es). [Note that the nouns “place” and “speech” can remain singular even though the subject noun and pronouns are plural. It is also possible to use plural nouns here. The choice is a matter of style and clarity rather than grammar. Indeed, in this sentence one would probably choose to keep *place* in the singular and change *speech* to the plural. Both of the following examples are correct grammatically: *Dogs wag their **tail** to show they are happy.* *Dogs wag their **tails** to show they are happy.* Some stylists might argue that the singular, *tail*, is preferable because a dog has only one tail and maintain that the plural, *tails*, might misleadingly indicate that a dog has more than one tail. Other stylists would argue that everyone knows a dog has only one tail, so the meaning is clear with the plural noun; and the plural *tails* is appropriate because the sentence concerns more than one dog.]

□ EXERCISE 5, p. 135. Personal pronoun use with indefinite pronouns. (Chart 8-2)

Students could discuss the various possibilities in small groups, but the principal purpose of the exercise is to provide material for discussion of the usage problems in Chart 8-2. Students will want your advice.

ANSWERS: 2. s/he wants; he or she wants; they want 3. his/her; their 4. his/her; their 5. anyone; his/her; their 6. him/her; them 7. s/he . . . his/her; they . . . their 8. s/he pleases; they please

CHART 8-3: PERSONAL PRONOUNS: AGREEMENT WITH COLLECTIVE NOUNS

- The speaker's view of the collective unit determines the grammatical usage of the words in this chart. The English language is somewhat flexible on this point. If the speaker wants to emphasize unity or wholeness, the collective noun will be singular, and this number will influence both the pronoun and the verb. On the other hand, if the speaker wants to emphasize the individuals within the group, the collective noun will be considered plural (but it will not add *-s/-es*).
- Other collective nouns: *army, community, company, crew, enemy, gang, herd, media, press*.

□ EXERCISE 6, p. 136. Personal pronoun use with collective nouns. (Chart 8-3)

The purpose of this exercise is to help students develop an understanding of the difference between singular and plural uses of collective nouns. In general, the singular usage is impersonal or statistical, while the plural usage emphasizes the people involved.

ANSWERS: 2. it consists [a statistical unit, not a group of real people] 3. It 4. They 5. they [the people on the team] 6. It doesn't 7. they 8. It was 9. They are . . . their . . . them [*class* = the individuals in the group] 10. It is [*class* = an organized unit of people taught together]

□ EXERCISE 7, p. 137. Preview of reflexive pronouns. (Chart 8-4)

In a natural, conversational style, lead the class to answer these questions about their drawings. The questions in the book are simply suggestions for the teacher. Cover as many of the reflexive pronouns as you can by asking leading questions.

If you wish, supply drawing paper and colored pencils or crayons. Reassure those students who believe they can't draw by first drawing a self-portrait of yourself—a drawing that is simple and funny, requiring no special artistic skill. The self-portraits should be a fun task.

□ EXERCISE 8, p. 137. Preview of reflexive pronouns. (Chart 8-4)

ANSWERS: 2. himself 3. herself 4. themselves 5. ourselves 6. yourself 7. yourselves 8. oneself

CHART 8-4: REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

- In informal English, reflexive pronouns are sometimes substituted for object pronouns, especially in prepositional phrases. To some degree, the reflexive pronoun adds emphasis. This use of reflexive pronouns is variously deemed to be incorrect, nonstandard, questionable, or perfectly acceptable.

INFORMAL USAGE: She gave the gift *to* Bob and **myself**.

PREFERRED USAGE: (a) She gave the gift *to* Bob and *me*.

(b) I gave a gift *to myself*.

Other examples: *What happened between my girlfriend and myself is no one's business.*

No one on the bus spoke English except a few Italians and ourselves.

In the vast majority of instances, reflexive pronouns cannot be substituted for personal pronouns used as objects: *I sit in the front row in class; Mustafa sits behind me* (not *myself*). *When Tom arrived, Alice spoke to him* (not *himself*).

As with any other grammar structure, idiomatic use of reflexive pronouns develops as learners gain experience with the language. Grammar basics can be taught and provide a good foundation for growth, but idiomatic usage ability grows only with time and exposure. Engaging in lots of reading, listening, and communicative interaction is essential for second language learners. The study of grammar is but a foundation and springboard; it is neither desirable nor possible to explain every possible structure in the English language. Students who believe they need to know a “rule” for every possible variation of an English structure should be disabused of that notion—and encouraged to go to a movie in English or make an English-speaking friend.

- Some other exceptions are given in the footnote. The text focuses on the basic patterns of any given structure, but also tries to anticipate questions students may have about exceptions that they note. The old saying about there being an exception to every rule is a good one for students of language to keep in mind.

□ EXERCISE 9, p. 138. Reflexive pronouns. (Chart 8-4)

ANSWERS: 2. herself 3. themselves 4. herself 5. yourself . . . himself . . .
myself . . . ourselves . . . themselves 6. myself 7. himself 8. yourself
9. themselves 10. herself

□ EXERCISE 10, p. 139. Reflexive pronouns. (Chart 8-4)

ANSWERS: 2. enjoy himself 3. proud of yourselves 4. pat yourself [“pat someone on
the back” = congratulate, praise] 5. killed himself 6. entertained themselves
7. introduced myself 8. feeling sorry for yourself 9. talking to yourself
10. laugh at ourselves 11. promised herself 12. angry at himself

CHART 8-5: USING YOU, ONE, AND THEY AS IMPERSONAL PRONOUNS

- Point out that when a speaker is using impersonal *you*, the *you* does not refer specifically to the listener. For example:

A: *What are some of the customs in your country about touching another person?*

B: *Well, **you** shouldn't touch someone else's head.*

Speaker B means “people in general should not do this.” She is not giving personal instructions to the listener; the “you” does not refer specifically and only to Speaker A.

□ EXERCISE 11, p. 141. Impersonal YOU and THEY. (Chart 8-5)

ANSWERS: 3. The pronouns refer to people in general. 4. The pronouns refer to Alex. 5. people in general 6. Sonya 7. people in general 8. people in general 9. people in the orchestra 10. people in general

□ EXERCISE 12, p. 141. Review of nouns and pronouns, singular and plural. (Chapters 7 and 8)

This exercise marks the end of the unit on pronouns and the beginning of a general review of nouns and pronouns. Help students recall what they have learned about singular and plural in Chapters 7 and 8. Assign the exercise as homework or seatwork prior to discussion or group work. Settle questions that arise during this exercise.

ANSWERS: 2. Millions of years ago, they had wings. These wings changed as the birds adapted to their environment. 3. Penguins' principal food was fish. Penguins needed to be able to swim to find their food, so eventually their wings evolved into flippers that enabled them to swim through water with speed and ease. 4. Penguins spend most of their lives in water. However, they lay their eggs on land. 5. Emperor penguins have interesting egg-laying habits. 6. The female lays one egg on the ice in Arctic regions, and then immediately returns to the ocean. 7. After the female lays the egg, the male takes over. He covers the egg with his body until it hatches. 8. This process takes seven to eight weeks. During this time, the male doesn't eat. 9. After the egg hatches, the female returns to take care of the chick, and the male goes to the ocean to find food for himself, his mate, and their offspring. 10. Although the penguins' natural habitat is in polar regions, we can see them in most major zoos in the world. They seem to adapt well to life in confinement, so we can enjoy watching their antics without feeling sorry about their loss of freedom.

CHART 8-6: FORMS OF *OTHER*

- The use of forms of *other* is a common source of errors. Emphasize that *other* has a final *-s* only when it is used as a pronoun, NOT as an adjective.
- Point out that *another* is a combination of the article “an” with “other,” so *the* never precedes *another*. *The* and *a/an* are never used together. (A common mistake is, for example, *I bought the another book.*)

□ EXERCISES 13 and 14, p. 143. Using **OTHER**. (Chart 8-6)

In items 2 and 3, the students use their fingers and then their hands to illustrate *another* vs. *the other*. It is important for students to understand the difference between these two items. In item 2, emphasize that you are dealing with a known, finite quantity: five. For comparison with the use of *another* (but not *the other*) for a series of items in an unknown, indefinite quantity, walk around the classroom and say, pointing at various books, “This is a book. This is another. This is another. This is another. This is another.” Etc. Then stack five books on a desk. “This is one book. This is another. This is another. This is another. And this one, the last of the five, is **the** other.”

Have the students do Exercise 13 as seatwork followed by discussion. Then have them do Exercise 14 more independently, perhaps in pairs or small groups, or as a quick teacher-led review in which the students’ books are closed and the teacher provides the cues.

EX. 13 ANSWERS: 2. Another . . . Another . . . Another . . . the other 3. The other 4. The others 5. The other 6. others 7. other 8. another 9. Others 10. the other 11. other 12. others 13. another 14. another 15. Another . . . Others 16. others 17. Another . . . Others . . . other 18. the other 19. the others 20. another 21. Another . . . The other

EX. 14 ANSWERS: [These depend on students’ creativity.]

CHART 8-7: COMMON EXPRESSIONS WITH *OTHER*

- When the phrase *every other* means “alternate,” the vocal emphasis is on *every*: e.g., *I receive that magazine every other month.*

When *every* is used as an expression of quantity that happens to be followed by *other*, the stress is on *other*: e.g., *George is the only student who missed the test; every other student took it last Friday.* In this instance *every* has the meaning of *each* or *all*: *All of the other students took it last Friday.*

- Forms of *other*, especially the reciprocal pronouns in (a), can be used to show possession, in which case an apostrophe is used: e.g., *They enjoy each other’s company.*

□ **EXERCISE 15, p. 145. Using OTHER. (Charts 8-6 and 8-7)**

ANSWERS: 2. Another . . . other 3. one another/each other 4. the other
5. other . . . other 6. other 7. others . . . others . . . other 8. each other/one
another . . . each other/one another . . . each other/one another . . . other 9. other
10. other 11. another

□ **EXERCISE 16, p. 147. Using OTHER. (Charts 8-6 and 8-7)**

Punctuation depends on the structure of students' sentences. (See Charts 5-1 and 16-3.)

ANSWERS: [These depend on students' creativity.]

□ **EXERCISE 17, p. 147. Summary review. (Chapters 6 → 8)**

You might divide the class into competing groups. Set a time limit (about five minutes for advanced classes, eight or ten for intermediate students). The group that identifies and corrects the most errors is declared the winner. Deduct one point for each error they overlook, for each correct word that they mistakenly identify as an error, and for each error that they correct in an unacceptable way. You may decide how to reward the winners.

ANSWERS:

1. That book contains many different kinds of stories and articles.
2. ~~The~~ English is one of the most important languages in the world.
3. She is always willing to help her friends in every possible way.
4. In the past, horses were the principal means of transportation.
5. He succeeded in creating one of the best armies in the world.
6. There is a lot of equipment in the research laboratory, but undergraduates are not allowed to use it.
7. All of the guests enjoyed themselves at the reception.
8. I have a five-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son.
9. Each state in the country has a different language.
10. Most of the people/ Most ~~of~~ people in my apartment building are friendly.
11. A political leader should have the ability to adapt himself/herself to a changing world.
12. In my opinion, ~~an~~ international students should live in a dormitory because they will meet many people and can practice their English every day. Also, if they live in a dormitory, their food is provided for them. [Note: It is not good style to mix different impersonal pronouns (*they, you, one*) in the same paragraph.]
13. When I lost my passport, I had to apply for ~~the~~ another one.
14. When I got to class, all of the other students were already in their seats.
15. Everyone seeks ~~the~~ happiness in their lives. OR Everyone seeks ~~the~~ happiness in his/her life.
16. In my country, there are a lot of schools / ~~a~~ lots of schools.
17. Writing compositions is very hard for me.
18. It's difficult for me to understand English when people use a lot of slang.
19. ~~A~~ Students at the university should attend class regularly and hand in their assignments on time. OR A student at the university should attend classes regularly and hand in his/her assignments on time.
20. In my opinion, ~~the~~ English is an easy language to learn.

□ **EXERCISE 18, p. 148. Summary review. (Chapters 6 → 8)**

If you used Exercise 17 as a game, you might use this one in a test format. Give the students ten minutes to complete it as seatwork prior to discussion. Or give them a longer time and ask them to rewrite the sentences correctly and hand them in.

ANSWERS:

1. There are many different kinds of animals in the world.
2. My cousin and her husband want to move to another city because they don't like a cold weather.
3. I like to travel because I like to learn about other countries and customs.
4. Collecting stamps is one of my hobbies.
5. I came here three and a half months ago. I think I have made a good progress in English.
6. I was looking for my keys, but I couldn't find them.
7. When my mother was a child, she lived in a small town. Now this town is a big city with tall buildings and many highways.
8. English has borrowed quite a few of words from other languages.
9. There are many students from different countries in this class.
10. Thousands of athletes take part in the Olympics.
11. Education is one of the most important aspects of life. Knowledge about many different things allows us to live fuller lives.
12. All of the students' names were on the list.
13. I live in a two-room apartment.
14. Many of people prefer to live in small towns. Their attachment to their communities prevents them from moving from place to place in search of work.
15. Today's news is just as bad as yesterday's news.
16. Almost all of the students / Almost all of the students / Most (of the) students in our class speak English well.
17. The teacher gave us some homework to hand in next Tuesday.
18. Today women work as doctors, pilots, archeologists, and many other things. Both my mother and father are teachers.
19. Every employee in our company respects Mr. Ward.
20. Children need to learn how to get along with other people, how to spend their time wisely, and how to depend on themselves. [Also possible, but more stylistically awkward in its use of pronouns: *A child needs to learn how to get along with other people, how to spend his or her time wisely, and how to depend on himself or herself.*]

EXERCISE 19, p. 149. Writing: nouns and pronouns. (Chapters 7 and 8)

This exercise is principally for fun, with a focus on pronoun awareness. The paragraphs should use the simple present tense. Probably there is no reason for you to mark them, because the real test of their effectiveness is whether the class can identify the object described. You could spread this activity over several days.

Answer to the example: *a bell*.

EXERCISE 20, p. 150. Writing: agreement. (Chapters 6 → 8)

The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce self-monitoring awareness of final *-s/-es*, first by requiring that mistakes be purposefully made and then by requiring corrections of those mistakes.

□ **EXERCISE 21, p. 150. Writing: nouns. (Chapters 6 → 8)**

One purpose of this kind of writing assignment is to reduce the students' hesitation to write freely by challenging them to write quickly on a broad topic. This sort of practice is especially good for those students who, unsure of themselves before now, have written only laboriously, wrestling with each word, afraid of making mistakes. Assure them that mistakes are not the end of the world and that even English teachers make changes in their own paragraphs. No one can write perfectly on the first attempt. All writers need to do their own proofreading ("error analysis"), rewording, and reorganizing.

In terms of grammar, the main purpose of this exercise is to let the students see if any old habits of singular–plural misuse remain in their writing. If so, they need to be especially aware of these problems when they monitor their writing and speech. When the students correct each others' papers, ask them to look especially for errors in singular and plural. Many students tend to proofread another student's writing more assiduously than they do their own; point out that they need to apply the same care and effort to their own writing. It's simply part of the writing process for everyone.

This type of exercise, designed to develop speed and fluency as well as to improve proofreading skills, can be repeated periodically throughout the term with topics of your or the students' choosing. You can set the time limit from one to ten minutes. In marking, you may choose to focus only on the points you have recently taught in the class.