THE PRONOUN AND ITS CONFUSION

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WHAT IS A PRONOUN?

According to Dictionary.com: noun, *Grammar*.

- Any member of a small class of words found in many languages that are used as replacements or substitutes for nouns and noun phrases, and that have very general reference, as *I, you, he, this, who, what*. Pronouns are sometimes formally distinguished from nouns, as in English by the existence of special objective forms, as *him* for *he* or *me* for *I*, and by nonoccurrence with an article or adjective.
HISTORY OF PRONOUNS

• Originated around 1520-1530, modeled from the Middle French word *pronom*, which was modeled from the Latin word *pronomen* (‘pro’ “in place of” + *nomen* “name”).

• Old English Pronouns (c. 500 - c. 1100)

• Middle English (1100 - 1500): Also known as Chaucer English. Originated as a mix between Anglo-Saxon French and Old English as a result of the Norman Conquest of 1066. During this time, noun genders died out and adjectives were reduced to just singular and plural. The difference between formal and informal singular pronouns was created.
### First Person Personal Pronouns Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>ie = 1</td>
<td>wit = we two</td>
<td>we = we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>min = mine</td>
<td>unc = of us two (of ours)</td>
<td>user or ure = of us (our)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>mee or me = me (direct object)</td>
<td>uncit or unc = us two (direct object)</td>
<td>usic or us = us (direct object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative / Instrumental</td>
<td>me = with me (or indirect object)</td>
<td>unc = with us two (or indirect object)</td>
<td>us = with us (or indirect object)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Second Person Personal Pronouns Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>pu = you (singular)</td>
<td>git = you two</td>
<td>ge = you (plural = &quot;y'all&quot; or &quot;younz&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>pin = your (singular)</td>
<td>incer = of your two (yours)</td>
<td>eower = your (plural = &quot;y'all's&quot; or &quot;younz's&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>pee or pe = you (direct object)</td>
<td>incit or inc = you two (direct object)</td>
<td>eowie or eow = you (direct object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative or Instrumental</td>
<td>pe = with you (or indirect object)</td>
<td>inc = with you two (or indirect object)</td>
<td>eow = with you (or indirect object)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Third Person Personal Pronouns Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>All Genders Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>he = he</td>
<td>hit = it</td>
<td>heo or hie = she</td>
<td>heo or hie = they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>his = his</td>
<td>his = its</td>
<td>hire = hers</td>
<td>hira = theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>hine = him (direct object)</td>
<td>hit = it (direct object)</td>
<td>heo or hie = her (direct object)</td>
<td>heo or hie = them (direct object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative or Instrumental</td>
<td>him = with him (or indirect object)</td>
<td>him = with it (or indirect object)</td>
<td>hire = with her (indirect object)</td>
<td>him or heom = with them (or indirect object)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Middle English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>First Person</th>
<th>Second Person</th>
<th>Third Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>I, ich</td>
<td>thou</td>
<td>he, she, hit (it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>my, mine</td>
<td>thy, thine</td>
<td>his, hire, his (its)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>thee</td>
<td>him, hire, hit (it)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>First Person</th>
<th>Second Person</th>
<th>Third Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>ye</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>oure</td>
<td>your</td>
<td>hire, hir(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>hem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LET’S DO A WRITING ACTIVITY!

I am a writer.
MINDING OUR PRONOUNS

Correct the following sentences:

1. One of the young men at the party brought their dog with them.
2. Alex couldn’t wait for winter break; they were so excited to visit home.
3. All of the wedding party was soaked in the rain.
4. Sam wanted to bake a cake for their friend’s birthday.
5. Is everyone happy with their gift?
SO WHAT IS THE CORRECT USAGE OF PRONOUNS?

I'M WORTHLESS AS A GHOST. I WISH I WAS DEAD.

ANY CHANCE YOU SEE THE FLAW IN THAT STATEMENT, OWEN?

I WISH I WERE DEAD?
There is no clear answer! Use the singular pronoun, and if this sounds too awkward, go ahead and change it to the plural pronoun.

“Everyone knows that ‘everyone’ gets a singular verb – ‘knows’ – as in ‘he knows,’ and not the plural verb – ‘knows’ – as in ‘they know.’ [...] If ‘everyone’ gets a singular verb, shouldn’t it get a singular pronoun? [...] “Everyone means ‘every one,’” Safire writes in *Fumblerules*. “We match our subject, ‘everyone,’ with its singular pronoun: ‘his’ or ‘her,’ not ‘their.’”’’” (Casagrande 165).

However, Grammar Snobs also mentions how this usage is sometimes extremely awkward, so much so that “it’s now correct to use the singular verb but the plural pronoun: “Everyone picks up their keys at the desk.”” (Casagrande 165).
“PURDUE OWL” OWLS US THEIR KNOWLEDGE

• A long time ago, writers used to use the male third person pronoun in such cases, but as women gained more access to professions and power, just relying on he became inadequate.

• According to Purdue Owl, an acceptable option is to use “he or she”/“him or her” / “his or her” / “s/he” or any variations of these. These may be a little awkward to writer or reader, which is why some readers accept the use of “they”, “them,” and “their” instead.

• Thus, they suggest to find out which usage

Example: The new teacher will work approximately 25 hours a week. He or she will also have to know campus resources, and will need to provide his or her own transportation.
AMAENIIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA)

• APA does not recommend changing “he” with any variation of “he/she” or to use solely one gendered pronoun because it might make you think of only one gender.
• Their suggestions include:
  1. Rephrasing the sentence
  2. Use plural nouns/pronouns – which then allows you to use “they” or “their”
  3. Replace the pronoun with an article – instead of using “she” use “the”
  4. Drop the pronoun
  5. Replace the pronoun with a noun
The Chicago Manual of Style suggests the use of “he/she” and its variations instead of “their” and its variations. According to the manual, “gender-neutral pronouns do not exist in their lexicon. [...] Plural pronouns with a singular noun seems inadequate.” Instead they suggest changing the sentence to make the noun plural so that there is agreement.

Example:

Question: Should I use “his mind” or “her mind” or “their mind.”

Answer: Change “mind” to plural for agreement: “their minds.” Other writers also choose to alternate using “his” and “her” throughout their writing to give each pronoun equal representation.
APPLICATIONS TO OUR MODERN WORLD

334 linguists from the American Dialect Society declared “they,” as the singular gender neutral pronoun, as the 2015 Word of the Year.

As people move away from the gender binary, other pronouns are being considered that are an in-between of he and she. These include “ze”, “ey”, “hen”, and “Mx.”

“Misgendering ‘isn’t just a style error,’ Caitlin Dewey of The Washington Post wrote ... ‘It’s a stubborn, longtime hurdle to transgender acceptance and equality, a fundamental refusal to afford those people even basic grammatical dignity.””
HOW WILL THIS RELATE TO OUR TUTORING SESSIONS?

- Clarity
- Subject-Verb and Pronoun Agreement
- Avoiding possibly (unintended) sexist messages
- Appropriate use depending on context/area of study
- Do what feels right/comfortable
WORKS CITED


