

SEMINAR 9B - PRONOUNS 3

Indefinite pronouns – compound v. of pronouns; universal – assertive – non-assertive - negative

Indefinite pronouns

- express quantity, from totality ('*all*') to its converse ('*nothing*')
- reference sometimes reflects gender, i.e. items in *-body* are personal, items in *-thing* are nonpersonal
- quantification – reflects countability and number, e.g. *each* + *sing C nouns* (e.g. *each boy*), *both* + *dual C nouns* (*both her parent*), *some* + *U or C pl nouns* (*some water, some students*)
- they can sometimes combine with elements of definite meaning, e.g. *the ones, the few, the other*
- the indefinite pronouns are quantitative - they have universal or partitive meaning

Major indefinite pronouns

- universal – *everyone, everybody, everything; each, every, all, both*
- assertive – *someone, somebody, something, some*
- non-assertive – *anyone, anybody, anything, either, any*
- negative – *no one, nobody, nothing, none, neither, no*

Compound pronouns

- are composed of **two morphemes**: a *determiner* morpheme *every-, some-, any-, or no-* and a *nominal* morpheme *-one, -body, -thing*
- all the compound pronouns are **singular** and so **take singular verbs**, although notionally they may denote more than one thing or person:

e.g. *Everybody / Everyone* over eighteen now *has* a vote.
Nobody / No one was willing to get up and speak.
Has anybody / anyone got anything to say?

- the forms in *-one* are more common in written usage, in speech the forms in *-body* are more frequent

- the pronouns in *-one* and *-body* have a genitive

e.g. Safety is *everyone's* responsibility.
It seems to be *nobody's* fault.
There's *somebody's* glove on the floor.

- a postmodifier '*else*' can be added to the compound pronouns –e.g. *everyone else, nobody else*; the genitive ending is added to *else*, not the pronoun itself:

e.g. I must be drinking *someone else* 's coffee.
Her hair is longer than *anybody else* 's.

Note:

Notice the difference between **everyone** (=everybody) v. **every one**

Compare: **Everyone** enjoyed the party.
(=everybody)

X He is invited to a lot of parties and he goes to **every one**. (= every party.)

I have read **every one of** those books.
(not: every of those books!)

I have read **every one of them**.

Of- pronouns

The remaining indefinite pronouns which are not compounds are by some grammarians called *Of-pronouns* (*all, each, both, some, many, more, most, few, one, either, none, neither, little + (of)*)

a) they can be followed by a partitive of-phrase

e.g. *Some of us* were tired and hungry. (not: ~~Somebody~~ of us...)

b) they can be used as substitutes for nouns phrases:

e.g. Many children learn to read quite quickly, but *some* need special instruction.

UNIVERSAL PRONOUNS

All and both

- with 'all' we make plural reference = more than two

- with 'both' dual reference = two only

- 'all' and 'both' have a predeterminer function:

e.g. *All these cars* are for export.

Both the suspects were arrested.

- the converse of 'all' is 'no' ('none'); the converse of 'both' is 'neither', usually with sg verb concord:

e.g. The two suspects were interviewed but *neither was* arrested.
or *Neither suspect* was arrested.

- 'all' and 'both' (and 'each') can appear *medially* (= *in mid-position*) – after the subject if there is no operator, or after the operator

e.g. The cars *were all* for export. X The cars *all cost* more than ...
The two suspects *were both* arrested. The suspects *both denied* ...

- 'all' and 'both' when used with 'the' can be followed by *of*, but don't need to!

e.g. *All (of) the boys* want to become football players.
Both (of) the boys want to become football players.

- used alone, 'all' can be equivalent to *everything*, but not always, normally, we don't use 'all' alone:

e.g. *All* is not lost. = *Everything* is not lost.
e.g. He thinks he knows *everything*. (not: *all*)

- we don't normally use 'all' to mean *everybody* / *everyone*:

e.g. *Everybody* liked the concert very much. (not: *All liked*...)

- before a sg countable noun 'all' is formal and is frequently replaced by a construction with 'whole':

e.g. *The whole (of) civilized world* denounced the invasion.
They weren't able to stay for *the whole concert*.

- the phrase 'both the boys' can be replaced by 'the two boys / both boys'

Each and every (+ none)

- they have singular reference, can be used irrespective of gender (people or things)

- they are singular in number

e.g. Many *members* hesitated but although *each was* pressed to act, *none was* in the end willing.

- 'each' (but not 'none') can also function as a determiner:

e.g. *Each (Every)* candidate will be individually interviewed.

- 'each' is more targeted on *the individual* among the totality whereas 'every' on the *totality* itself

- with 'almost, nearly, virtually, etc. we use 'every' not 'each'

e.g. *Almost every* visitor stopped and stared.

- 'every' is used to say how often something happens:

e.g. Ann gets paid *every four weeks*.
There's a bus *every ten minutes*.

- 'none' can also be used with plural, although some users object to that, singular form is usually more formal:

e.g. Hundreds were examined but *none were* acceptable.
None of the parcels *have / has* arrived.
None of the children *was / were* awake.

ASSERTIVE PRONOUNS

- these pronouns are used in the 'assertive territory'

e.g. I can see *someone / somebody* climbing that tree.
There's *something* I want to tell you.
There are nuts here; please, have *some*.
All the students speak French and *some* speak Italian as well.

- 'some' occurs typically with *plural and uncountable nouns*:

e.g. *Some rolls* have been eaten. / *Some bread* has been eaten.
Some (of the rolls) have been eaten. / *Some (of the bread)* has been eaten.

- as a determiner, 'some' can occur with *singular countable nouns*, especially *temporal nouns*:

e.g. *Some day*, I'll tell you a great secret. (= one day)

- with other singular nouns, 'some' has the meaning of 'a certain':

e.g. I hear that *some rare animal* has escaped from the zoo.
Some man stopped me to ask the way.

- assertive forms can be used in non-assertive territory – i.e. 'some' in questions or requests or offers – when the presupposition is **positive**:

e.g. Can you see *someone* in the garden? (=there is someone, can you see him/her?)
Would you like *some* wine? (=I invite you to have some wine)

Quantifiers

- *increase or decrease the implications of 'some'*

- *many* (= a large number) v. *a few* (= a small number)

- *much* (= a large amount) v. *a little* (= a small amount)

I know *many / a few people* in Boston.

Many (of my friends) were there.

I have eaten *too much / a little (of the food)*.

Much has been said about the cost of medicine.

- '*much*' is used rather in non-assertive territory – questions and negatives

- '*many*' can be used in assertive territory

e.g. She has *many* good ideas.

But! *a lot of / plenty of* are preferred. – She has *a lot of / plenty of* good ideas.

- there are objections against the use of 'less' and 'least' with plural nouns, but they are widely used in informal English:

e.g. There used to be *more women* than men in the country, but now there are *fewer / less*.

There were *less / fewer* than 20 students at the lecture.

- *many / much / a few / a little* can precede the comparative forms *more, fewer* and *less*:

e.g. We have had *many more apples* this year than last year.

We have had *a few more plums*

We have had *much less rain*

One

'*One*' in its numerical sense fits into the list of indefinite pronouns at this point, but it is a versatile word that has a number of different functions

a) numerical one – *one*

b) substitute one – *one, ones*

c) generic one – *one, one's, oneself*

↓

a) numerical one

- the cardinal numeral '*one*' is naturally singular and countable

- can occur as a determiner (*one boy* = a boy) or the head of a nouns phrase (*one of the boys*)

- it also occurs in contrast to *'the other'* or *'another'* in correlative constructions
- *'one ... the other'* is used with reference to *two*:

I saw *two* suspicious-looking men. *One* went this way, *the other* that.
One of his eyes is better than *the other*.

- *'one ... another'* or *'one ... the other'* is used with reference to more than two:

e.g. We overtook *one car after another / the other*.
 I've been busy with *one thing or another*.

b) substitute one

- the substitute pronoun *'one'* has the plural *'ones'* and is used as a substitute for a countable noun:

e.g. I'm looking for *a book* on grammar. – Is this *the one* you mean?
 I'd like *a drink*, but just *a small one*.

- it can be easily combined with determiners and modifiers:

e.g. *those ones* I like *the old one* in the kitchen

- the combination *'a one'* can occur when *'one'* is used as *a noun*:

e.g. I couldn't make out whether the number was a seven or *a one*. (=number one)

c) generic one

- occurs chiefly in the singular and with personal gender
- it has the genitive *one's* and the reflexive *oneself*
- its meaning is *'people in general'*, often with particular reference to the speaker

e.g. I like to dress nicely. It gives *one* confidence.

- the use of generic *'one'* is chiefly formal, it is often replaced colloquially by *'you'*:

e.g. *One* would think they would run a later bus than that. (or *You* would think)

Half, several, enough

- *'several'* is always plural, indicates a number slightly greater than *'a few'*

- 'enough' contrasts with 'too little' and 'too few'

e.g. *Half (of) the class / children* were girls.
I've only read *half (of) the book*.
We had to wait for *half an hour*.
Several (of my friends) attended the conference.
There is *enough water* to last several weeks.

Other and **another**

- 'other' as a postdeterminer follows other determiners, including quantifiers, also numerals

e.g. *all the other* women *several other* trees
two other letters *many other* ideas

- as a pronoun, it can occur with the same determiners, and it also occurs in a plural form:

e.g. Some people complained, but *others* were more tolerant.
Where are all the *others*? (people, books, etc.)

- 'others' is also used in an absolute sense:

e.g. We should be considerate to *others*. (=other people generally)

'another', although spelt as a single word, is a combination of 'an' and 'other':

e.g. I've sold my bicycle and bought *another (one)*.

- apart from its usual meaning, 'another' also means 'a further' or 'one more'; in this sense, 'another' can be followed by a numeral and a plural noun:

e.g. May I borrow *another piece of paper*?
They decided to stay for *another three days*.

- 'other, others and another' can be used with of-constructions, although rather rarely:

e.g. I saw *another of* those yellow butterflies yesterday.
Some members of our expedition wanted to climb to the summit, but *others of us* thought it too dangerous.

- the genitive is not common with 'another':

e.g. She has *another person's* coat. (instead of *another's coat*)

NONASSERTIVE PRONOUNS

- in addition to the compound pronouns '*anybody, anyone, anything*' there are two non-assertive pronouns – *any* and *either*

Besides '*not*', the negative forms whose scope favours non-assertive forms includes:

- a) words negative in form: *never, no, neither, nor*
- b) words negative in meaning:
 - i) adverbs, determiners – *hardly, little, few, only, seldom*
 - ii) the 'implied negatives' - *fail, deny, prohibit; reluctant, unlikely*

Compare:

There was *a good* chance *somebody* would come.
There was *little* chance *anybody* would come.

John was *eager* to read *some* (of the) books.
John was *reluctant* to read *any* (of the) books.

Some v. any

- some contexts are considered non-assertive (negative, interrogative and conditional) and yet assertive forms are possible in them; it is the **meaning** that governs the choice of '*some*' or '*any*'

e.g. Freud contributed more than *anyone* to the understanding of dreams.
(= *Nobody* contributed as much to the understanding of dreams as Freud.)
Did *somebody* telephone last night? (= '*somebody*' suggests that the speaker *expected* a telephone call)

- we often use '*any*' after '*if*', or if the sentence has the idea of '*if*':

e.g. Let me know *if* you need *anything*.
I'm sorry for *any* trouble I've caused. (= If I have caused any trouble...)

The following examples are superficially non-assertive and yet '*some*' is appropriate:

e.g. If *someone* were to drop a match here, the house would be on fire in two minutes.
But what if *somebody* decides to break the rules?
Will *somebody* please open the door?
Why don't you ask *some* other question?

Any and either

- *any* – the choice is between three or more
- *either* – the choice is limited to two (similarly to ‘both’ and ‘neither’ it has dual meaning)

e.g. I haven’t written to *any of my relatives* about the marriage.
I haven’t written to *either of my parents*.
You can ask *either of us* to help you.

- ‘*any*’ in its stressed form occurs in ‘assertive territory’ with the meaning ‘it doesn’t matter which / who / what:

e.g. He will eat *any* kind of vegetables. / He will eat *anything*.
Any dog might bite a child if teased.
Any offer would be better than this.
Anyone who tells lies is punished.

NEGATIVE PRONOUS

- the compound pronouns – *nobody, no one, nothing*
- negative determiners and pronouns – *none, neither*
- also ‘*few*’ and ‘*little*’, although not morphologically negative, are negative in meaning and syntactic behaviour, they can be intensified by ‘*extremely*’ and ‘*very*’:

e.g. I have received *no* urgent messages.
None (of the students) has / have failed.
Neither accusation is true.
That’s *none* of your business.
I said *nothing* about it.

There were *few* visitors at the exhibition. (=not many)
Little of the original building remains today. (=not much)