SEMINAR 7B – PRONOUNS – INTROD.+ PERSONAL PRONOUNS (SGEL 6.1 – 6.12)
Chalker – ex. 62 – 64; Grammar I – ex. 204 – 232 (all kinds of pronouns)

- introduction – general characteristics and classification of pronouns
- personal pronouns in detail – person, gender, number and case; specific v. generic
  reference; the pronoun it; modification of pronouns

The most common category of *pro-forms* – the pronoun – is rather wide-ranging as the
following example illustrates:

> e.g. As *it* turned out, *somebody* offered Elaine a bicycle at a price which *she* and
>   *her* friends knew was well below *that* of a new *one*.

Since the meaning **of pronouns** in itself **is general and undetermined**, in a sentence like
this their referential meaning is determined purely by the **linguistic or situational
context** in which they occur. **Semantically**, most pronouns function like **noun phrases**.

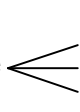We distinguish the following classes and subclasses:

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                personal – I, me, you, they, them, ...
1. central      reflexive – myself, themselves, …
                possessive – my / mine, their / theirs, ...
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2. **reciprocal** – *each other, one another*

3. **relative** – *which, that, who, whose, …*

4. **interrogative** – *who, what, which, , ...*

5. **demonstrative** – *this, these, that, those, ...*

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                            universal – both, each, every, everybody, all,...
               positive     assertive – some, several, half, one, ...
6. indefinite               non-assertive – any, either

               negative – nobody, neither, none, no on, nothing ...
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Some pronouns have **morphological characteristics that nouns do not have**:

1) **case**: a contrast between subjective v. objective case (I / me, she / her)
2) **person**: a contrast between 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons
3) **gender**: personal v. nonpersonal; masculine v. feminine
4) **number**: I / we, he / they

CENTRAL PRONOUNS (i.e. personal, reflexive, possessive)

I. PERSONAL PRONOUNS

- like all central pronouns, personal pronouns have **a person contrast** (i.e. separate 1st, 2nd and 3rd person forms)
- in the 3rd person there are three genders – **masculine, feminine, nonpersonal**
- there are also number contrasts (**sg. v. pl.**)
- in the personal subclass – 1st and 3rd person also have a contrast in **case** (**subjective** v. **objective**), 2nd person forms are in both cases identical (*you*)

A) PERSON

- 1st person = the speaker / writer
- 2nd person = the addressee
- 3rd person = the persons/ things which are neither of the previous two

- if more pronouns are coordinated, the sequence is considered:

   1st person – <u>You</u> and <u>I</u> can go together, can't **we**?
   2nd person – <u>You</u> and <u>Gillian / she</u> agree with that, don't **you**?
   3rd person – <u>Fred / he</u> and <u>Mona / she</u> met in Tunis, didn't **they**?

<u>The order of pronouns</u> (important form the viewpoint of style and courtesy)

- 1st person comes last (especially if it is the singular)
- 2nd person usually comes first

     e.g. *You*, Jack and *I* will still be at work.
        Why didn't they invite *you* and *her*? / *you* and *John*?

- in the 3rd person – usually the masculine comes before the feminine

     e.g. *He and she* were both elected.

- the pronoun comes before the noun phrase

     e.g. *She* and *another student* were expelled from school.

B) GENDER

- **gender distinctions** are largely restricted to **3rd person singular of personal**, **possessive** and **reflexive** pronouns – masculine, feminine and nonpersonal forms

> e.g. *He* has hurt *his* hand.
> *She* asked *herself* why she had had bought it.
> The *dog* hurt *itself* …

Personal v. nonpersonal gender

- personal – not only human beings, also supernatural beings (*the Deity, gods, angels*) and higher animals
- the pronoun *it* can be also used to refer to e.g. *babies*
- personification – *a computer = he*, *a car = he or she*
    - *a ship* – usually *'she'*, but the relative is *'which'*

- if we do not know the gender as for example in:

> *Someone* is knocking so I'd better go and let _____ in. (*him* or *her*?)

> → the <u>masculine</u> can be used as the <u>unmarked</u> form but many people prefer to use <u>reference to both sexes</u> as in:

> *An ambitious player* must discipline *himself* or *herself*.
> *Someone* is knocking so I'd better go and let *him* or *her* in.

- often the **gender-neutral plural** can be used (when we do not have to express number concord strictly), usually with indefinite pronouns – *someone, somebody, anyone, anybody, no one, nobody*

> e.g. *Everyone* thinks *they* have the right to be here.
> *Someone* has parked *their* car under the 'No parking' sign.
> Has *anybody* brought *their* dictionary?

- the personal / nonpersonal contrast is also found in relative pr. (*who v. which*) and indefinite pr. (*somebody v. something*)

C) NUMBER

- with the 2nd person there is number contrast only in the reflexive pronoun *(yourself* v. *yourselves)*

>   e.g. Look at your hand, *Jack*. You've cut *yourself.*
>   Keep your voices down, *children*, you must behave *yourselves.*

- also: demonstratives: *this / these*
        indefinite pronoun *one / ones* used as a substitute

D) CASE

- personal pronouns (although not all) have a distinction between **subjective** (I), **objective** (*me*) and **genitive** (*my / mine* – called possessive pronouns)

- so, unlike nouns, the personal pronouns involve a distinction between the subject and object:

>   e.g. The <u>policeman</u> interviewed the <u>woman</u>.
>   <u>He</u> interviewed <u>her</u>.
>
>   The <u>woman</u> resisted the <u>policeman</u>.
>   <u>She</u> resisted <u>him</u>.

→ *he* and *she* = subjective forms   v.   *him* and *her* = objective forms

The choice of the form is based on the pronoun's function in the clause – we make a distinction between the so-called '**subject territory'** (=the pre-verbal part of the clause) and '**object territory'** (=the post-verbal part)

But in informal style we also find objective forms in sentences such as:

>   e.g. Whoever left the door unlocked, it certainly wasn't <u>me</u>.
>   I am taller than <u>her</u>.

Also: I am taller than <u>she is</u>. (if we use **the subj. case**, it's preferable to **add the operator**)

In informal style the objective form is found also in the subject complement (with linking verbs such as 'to be'):

>   e.g. Who said it? – It was <u>he</u>. (subjective form is formal)
>   It was <u>him</u>. (objective form is felt natural)

Who said that? – <u>He</u> did.

Indefinite pronouns (nobody, everybody, all) + but or except

- **except** – is always a preposition, so it is followed by objective case

      e.g. Nobody <u>except her</u> objected to the proposal.

- **but** (=**except**) used as a preposition – many people prefer the subjective form if it is in the subject territory:

      e.g. Nobody but <u>she</u> objected.
         Nobody but <u>she</u> can solve the problem.

Usually, we use objective forms, subjective forms are possible in a more formal style.

However, **in object territory both forms are possible**:

      e.g. Nobody objected but <u>she / her</u>.
        Nobody can solve the problem but <u>her</u>.

We can also avoid this saying: Nobody said anything but <u>myself</u>.

Specific reference

- central pronouns – usually have definite meaning and specific reference, in the 3rd person the identity of reference is supplied by the linguistic context either **anaphorically** (a) or **cataphorically** (b)

    a) There is <u>an excellent museum</u> here and everyone should visit <u>it</u>.
        <u>My brother</u> is afraid that <u>he</u> will fail the test.

    b) When <u>she</u> had examined the patient, <u>the doctor</u> picked up the telephone.

- with anaphoric reference (which is more common than cataphoric) it does not have to be always clear to what / which person we refer:

      e.g. Mrs Fairweather asked Janice if <u>she</u> could come into <u>her</u> room; <u>she</u> seemed to
         be more upset than <u>she</u> had ever seen <u>her</u>.

      → the pronouns have <u>sg feminine reference</u> – they do not determine the specific
         identities – it depends on the larger context or situation; to avoid ambiguity or
         confusion we may use the nouns again

Generic reference

- in certain cases the reference is rather generic, especially with relative clauses, as in:

> e.g. <u>He</u> (i.e. *anyone*) <u>who hesitates</u> is lost.
> Ever since <u>he</u> found a need to communicate, <u>man</u> has been the 'speaking animal'.

- for ordinary purposes the pronouns such as '*we, you, they*' can be used as generics:

> e.g. These days *you* have to be careful with your money.
> *We* live in an age of moral dilemmas.
> *They* will soon find a cure for cancer.
> *They* say it's going to snow today.

- the pronoun '***they***' is especially convenient when we express **regret** or **disapproval**:

> e.g. I wonder why *they* don't repair the roads more often.
> I see *they* are raising the bus fares again. What will *they* be doing next?

- the pronoun '*we*' implies the 1st person involvement
- the pronoun '*you*' implies special interest in the addressee

Special uses of *'we'*

a) How are *we* feeling today? - a doctor talking to his patient
b) *We*'re in a bad mood today. – one secretary talking to another about the boss
c) As *we* saw in chapter 3 …. – in serious writing '*we*' seeks to involve the reader in a joint enterprise
d) As *we* showed a moment ago, …. – in formal writing – the writer wants to avoid 'I' which might be felt somewhat egoistical

The pronoun it
- any sg noun phrase that does not determine reference by '*he*' or '*she*' is referred to by '*it*' – collectives, nouncount concretes, singular abstractions

> e.g. The *committee* met soon after *it* had been appointed.
> He bought some *salmon* because *it* was her favourite food.
> When you are ready to report *it*, I would like to know your assessment of the problem.

The last example shows that '*it*' can refer to the content of whole sentences and sequence of sentences:

> e.g. I don't like to say <u>it</u> but I must. <u>You have lost your job because you didn't</u> <u>work hard enough. You have only yourself to blame.</u>

It is also possible to use the so-called '**extra positional** it' (=end focus), i.e. 'it' is the grammatical subject - the actual subject is expressed either <u>by a clause or infinitive (or</u> <u>genrund</u>)

<div align="center">↓</div>

> e.g. <u>It</u> has to be said that <u>you have lost your job because</u> …………
> Isn't <u>it</u> a shame that <u>they lost the game</u>?
> <u>It</u> doesn't matter <u>what you say</u>.

The so-called '**anticipatory it'** is used in **cleft sentences** (tzv. vytýkací konstrukce)

> e.g. It was only last week that the death was announced.
> It was John that told me about her failure.
> It was Paul that I saw there last night.
> It was I who put the envelope on the desk.
> It's her I feel sorry for.

'It' is also used as the so-called '**prop'** (or '**dummy'** or '**empty')** **subject**, especially denoting time, distances and atmospheric conditions:

> e.g. If *it* stops raining, we can go for a walk.
> *It*'s getting dark.
> What time is *it*?
> How far is *it* to York from here?

It is found not only in the subject position:

> e.g. I take *it* that she has declined the invitation.

It is often found in idioms:

> e.g. He had a hard time of *it* in the army. (= to find life difficult)
> At last we've made *it*. (= achieved success)
> How's *it* going?

It can also be used as a substitute for a predication:

> e.g. She was a rich woman and she looked <u>*it*</u>. (=a rich woman)

Modification of pronouns

- is generally limited
- concerns mainly personal pronouns with the objective case

a) **adjectives** (esp. in *informal* exclamations)

   e.g. *Poor you!   Silly me!   Clever you!   Poor us!*

b) **appositive nouns**, with plural 1st and 2nd person

   e.g. Will *you others* please wait here?
   We doctors think that ………..

c) '**here'** and '**there'** with 1st and 2nd person

    e.g. Whatever you others do, *we here* would be willing to leave now.
   Could *you there* collect your passports at the desk? (!this tends to sound rude!)

d) **prepositional phrases**

    e.g. It is very much the concern of you / us *in the learned professions.*
   You *in the rain coat* ……… (impolite!)

e) **emphatic reflexives**

   e.g. I *myself* would not do that.
   They *themselves* said so.
   She *herself* wanted to …………

f) **universal pronouns with plurals**

   e.g. We *all* accept responsibility.
   You *both* need help.
   They *each* took an apple.

g) **relative clauses, mainly in formal style**

   e.g. We *who fought for this principle* will not lightly abandon it.
   He or she *who left a case in my office* should claim it as soon as possible.

Note:

- combination '*they that*' is rare, '***those who***' is preferred ('they who' is not possible)