

Difficulties Encountered by English Specific Purposes Learners in Using Pronouns

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Abstract.

The study deals with the difficulties encountered by English Specific Purposes (ESP) learners in using pronoun. There are many types of pronoun, each one has a special function. Therefore, the study aims at investigating the difficulties encountered ESP learners in using pronouns. The study hypothesizes that: most of Iraqi ESP students face difficulties in using different types of pronouns in studying English as a foreign language. Finding out the causes of the students errors.

To verify these hypotheses, a diagnostic test has been adopted and applied to a sample of (40) Iraqi (2) stage students, Computer Department, Technical Institute of Babylon to investigate their ability in using pronouns in studying English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Personal pronouns, Possessive pronouns, Relative pronouns, Demonstrative pronouns, Emphatic pronouns

الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلبة دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض خاصة في استعمال الضمائر

الخلاصة

تناولت هذه الدراسة الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلبة دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض خاصة في استعمال الأنواع المختلفة من الضمائر إن طلبة قسم الحاسبات في المعهد التقني بابل بحاجة ماسة لاستخدام اللغة الإنكليزية بالشكل الصحيح باعتبار أن الحاسبات تعتبر تقنية حديثة وعالمية وملزمة للغة الإنكليزية. وإن استخدام الأنواع المختلفة من الضمائر في اللغة الإنكليزية يعتبر ضروري جداً لسلامة اللغة وخصوصاً للطلبة الدارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض خاصة لذا هدفت الدراسة إلى شرح الأنواع المختلفة من الضمائر وتشخيص الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلبة في استخدام الضمائر وتميز أسباب حصول الأخطاء فيها.

وعليه افترضت الدراسة أن معظم الطلبة دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لأغراض خاصة يواجهون صعوبات في استخدام الضمائر. وإن سبب عدم استجابة الطلبة يعود لعدم استعمال الأنواع المختلفة من الضمائر في مناهجهم ولتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة صمم اختبار لعينة من طلبة قسم الحاسبات (٤٠ طالب وطالبة) لتشخيص قابليتهم في استخدام الأنواع المختلفة من الضمائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الضمائر الشخصية، ضمائر التملك، الضمائر الانعكاسية، ضمائر الإشارة، الضمائر الاستفهامية، الضمائر التأكيذية.

1.1. Introduction

The parts of speech are divided into eight main types. They are verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Pronouns can be defined as a term used in the grammatical classification of words which can be used to substitute a noun phrase or single noun.[1]. Moreover, [2] stated that pronouns are terms used in the grammatical classification of words, which refer to the closed sets of items that can be used to replace for noun phrases (or single noun).

Pronouns can be used to replace the noun or nominal[3]. The aim of using pronouns is to avoid repetition of a noun or in a longer writing. Moreover, pronouns have three cases: subjective, objective and possessive. Each case requires changing the form of the pronoun according to its use in the sentence[4].

❖ The present study aims at:-

- 1- Presenting material about different types of pronouns.
- 2- Investigating the difficulties encountered by Iraqi ESP Technical Institute of Babylon in using pronouns.
- 3- Finding out the causes of the students' errors so that some solutions can be posited to help them overcome the problems they face in using pronouns.

❖ In view of the preceding aims, it is hypothesized that:-

Most of Iraqi ESP students face difficulties in using different types of pronouns in studying English as a foreign language.

Iraqi ESP students of technical Institute of Babylon inaccurate responses in pronouns may be attributed to misuse of different types of pronoun in their syllabus.

To verify these hypotheses, a diagnostic test has been adopted and applied to a sample of (40) Iraqi (2)stage students, computer Department, Technical Institute of Babylon to investigate their ability in using different types of pronouns.

2. Pronouns

2.1 Types of Pronouns in English Language

English language have eight main types of pronouns, they are:

- 1- Personal.
- 2- Possessive.
- 3- Relatives.
- 4- Reflexive.
- 5- Demonstrative.
- 6- Questioning.

7- Emphatic.

8- Reciprocal.

2.2.1 Personal pronouns

We use personal pronouns to refer to ourselves. [5] explained that the subjective case pronouns, I, you, we, etc., are used mainly as subjects and predicates, or more accurate, as predicate pronouns.

We have two types of personal pronouns in English; subjective and objective. Personal pronouns have different forms according to:

1. Number: singular, plural (e.g. I/we).
2. Person: first person, second person, third person (I/you/she)
3. Case: subjective, objective, possessive (I/me/mine)
4. Gender: masculine, feminine, neuter (he/she/it) [2].

The following table shows the subject pronouns:-

Subject	singular	Plural
First person	I	We
Second person	You	You
Third person	He ,She ,It	They

- The pronoun “I” shows and refers to myself.

Example

- **I** watched a horror film last Monday.

- The pronoun “you” declares the person or people we are talking to.

Example:

-**You** should look for the ball.

- The pronouns “he” and “she” are used to refer to a man and a woman. “He” compensates for the names of boys and men, and “she” for the names of girls and women.

Examples:

-Jood is a good tailor. **He** sews beautiful shirts.

- Khadija is a good dentist. **She** uses lasers in treating the teeth.

- The pronoun “it” is used to refer to an object, place, or abstract something.

Example:

-Have you been to Baghdad? Yes, **it** was crowded.

- The pronoun “we” can be used to refer to many people including ourselves. the group can be :

Example:

-**We** shall be ready for our party.

- The pronoun “they” is used to refer to many people not including ourselves.

Example:

- Jana and Maram are now in 2nd stage at university. **They** are smart girls. [1]

2.2.2 Object Pronouns

Object pronouns are used to refer to the sum of people or things (similar to subject pronoun). The objective case pronouns, me, him, us, etc., are used as object of verbs and prepositions.

The following table shows the object pronouns:

Object pronouns	singular	plural
First person	Me	Us
Second person	You	You
Third person	Him , Her ,It	Them

An object pronoun is used as the object of the sentence.

Examples:

- My mother asked **me** to help the old lady.
- A man gave **him** a car.[4]

2.2.3 Possessive pronouns

[6], [7] and [8] declared the possessive form of pronouns as it is shown in the following table:

Possessive forms of pronouns

Nominative	Genitive	Possessive
I	My	Mine
You	Your	Yours
He	His	His
She	Her	Hers
It	Its	Its
We	Our	Ours
They	Their	Theirs

We use a possessive pronoun to refer that something belongs to someone or when we want to talk about the similar type of thing. The possessive case pronouns, my, his, our, etc., are used as determiners to express possession. Moreover possessive pronouns are also used to contrast two things of the same type[9].

Examples:

- Whose coat is that? I think it's hers.
- This box belongs to my cousin.

The following table shows possessive pronouns[10]

possessive pronouns	singular	Plural
First person	Mine	Ours
Second person	Your	Yours
Third person	His , Hers ,its	Theirs

2.2.4 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns introduced relative clauses post modifying nominal heads. Compare the three different types of noun phrase post modification, relative clause, and prepositional phrase.

Example:

- The mobile phone which is lying on the table is Layla's.
- The mobile phone lying on the table is Layla's.
- The mobile phone on the table is Layla's.

There are two types of relative clause:

• **Restrictive relative clause** which are closely connected with their heads prosaically. For example, about restrictive clause:

-This is not something **that** would disturb me anyway.

• **Non Restrictive relative clause** which are parenthetical comments which do not further define the antecedent. For example, about nonrestrictive relative clause:

-It is all based on violence, which I hate.

Relative pronouns including two series :wh- pronouns(Who , Whom, Whose ,Which, and What),and that or zero.

Examples:

- 1991 was the year **which** the marshes were dried up.
- The boy to **whom** she has spoken is my old friend.[11]

2.2.5 Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns end in-self (singular) and selves (plural). The suffixes are added to determiner possessives (myself, ourselves, yourself, your selves) objective case personal pronouns (himself, itself, and themselves) or joint from (herself).

❖ Reflexive pronouns have some uses:

Reflexive pronouns are used as an object or a complement when it shows the same thing.

Example:

- Jalal was not careful and he hurt himself.
- The students found themselves in the middle of a garden.

A) We sometimes use me, you, etc., with prepositions.

Example:

- Khalid likes playing basketball **with himself**.
- She took the game **for herself**.

B) We can also use a reflective in order to make the meaning clear.

Example:

-I bought these toys for myself (not for someone else).[12]

2.2.6 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns have contrast and both determiner and nominal functions, the general meaning of the two sets can be stated as near and distant reference.

The major types of use for demonstratives are:

- Situational: it involves the notion of relative distance to some deictic center and serves to establish a referent in the universe of discourse.
- Tracking: it involves and serves to help the hearer in keeping track to what is happening to whom.
- Discourse deictic: it serves to establish a proposition as a referent in the universe of discourse.
- Recognitional: it serves to signal the hearer that the speaker is referring to specific knowledge.[13]

Singular	Plural
Near reference :this	These
Distant reference : that	Those

Demonstrative pronouns have several uses. In (a), (b) and (c) below the two sets this/those and that /those are contrastive; in (d) and (e) there is no such contrast, and only one of the sets is used in either

A) Anaphoric reference with optional one/once

Of all book, I preferred **this** (one)

Of all book, I preferred **that** (ones).

Of all books, I preferred **these** (ones).

Of all books, I preferred **those** (ones).

B) Deictic (pointing)

This is my teacher Waleed Ali.

That is my teacher Waleed Ali.

The demonstrative can only have non- personal reference, compare these two pairs:

That is the doctor.

He is the chairman.

They made **that** the chairman.

They made him the chairman.

C) Discourse reference

That is what I mean.... (with only anaphoric reference)

D) Determinative use (only that /those, which is non-contrastive)

Those who are lazy will never pass.

Emotive use of this in formal style

Don't mention **this** retched business again![11]

Interrogative pronouns

Some of English words are used as questioning pronouns (interrogative pronouns) have the same phonological shape as some relative pronouns[14]

There are five interrogative pronouns: (who, whom, whose, which, what)

“Whose” as well as “who” and “whom” can be used only with reference to items of personal gender .Whom function only as objective case who can both subjective (especially in speech) objective except after a preposition to illustrate these points:

- Who owns this flat?
- Who(m) does this flat belong to?

- To whom does this flat belong?
- _Whose is this flat?

With which; reference can be both personal and non-personal

- _Of these houses which is best?
- _Of these children which do you like most?

When what is used as a pronoun; the questioner assumes that the reference is non personal.

_what is in the bag?

- What were you wearing that day?

But what and which can also be determiners; and in this function the noun phrase can be personal and non-personal; the difference then being that which assume a limited choice of know answer:

- What nurses would refused to see a patient?
- Which nurses [of those we are discussing] his gave an opinion on this problem?

As determiner, whose retains it personal reference:

- Whose book is this?[15]

Emphatic pronouns

We can use the emphatic pronouns:

A) To emphasize a noun phrase, we can use an emphatic pronoun.

Self/selves is stressed.

Example:

- George Yule **himself** was the doctor of Ali Yousif.

B) When the pronoun came in the end position, it means “without help”.

Example:

- We paint the classroom **ourselves**.
- Can you repair the car yourself ?[12]

Reciprocal pronouns

“Each other” and “one another” are used as reciprocal pronouns to explain that people do the same thing.

Examples:

- We love **each other** a lot.

- You and I help **each other**.
- They gave **each other** flowers from time to time.

Reciprocal pronoun can also use as the object of a preposition:

- Zeke and Ali are respected **each other**.
- They did not dare to look at **one another**. [10]

3. The Test

3.1 The Procedure and Description of the Test

In order to know the ability of 2nd stage students of Computer Department, Technical Institute of Babylon in using pronouns, a test has been made for them during the first term in the academic year 2017-2018. There are different ways to evaluate the students' performance using pronouns, one of them is the written test. The test has been designed to measure the performance of the subjects at the recognition and production levels. It comprises four questions (See Appendix 1). The first two questions are designed to test the students' responses at the recognition level. At the production level, the last two questions are designed for this purpose.

3.2 The Test Result

The results of the test show that (75.1%) of answer are incorrect, whereas (24.8%) of the answer are correct.

3.3 The analysis of the test result

The results show that the ESP Technical Institute of Babylon, Department of Computer students face difficulties in the recognition and production levels (i.e. they face difficulty in using pronouns). The great number of errors made by the students proved such difficulty. The results of question one (A) show that (75.1%) of answers are wrong (table1). The highest percentage of error appears in item (9), which relating to reflexive pronoun, the ratio was (95%). i.e. (38) out of (40). The ratio of items (2, 8, 15) is (92.5%) that items (2,15) are relating to personal pronouns, whereas item (8) is relating to reflexive pronoun, all the mentioned items come secondly in the wrong answers, i.e. (37) out of (40) are wrong. The ratio of items (13, 14) is (82.5%) that (7) of answers out of (40) are wrong, these answers relating to relative pronouns. As for the best results of correct, item (11) the ratio is (45%), which relating to personal pronoun. The possessive pronoun is the second in percentage i.e. (37.5%) that (15) out of (40) answers are correct. Thirdly item (1) ratio that relating to personal pronoun is (35%) that (14) out of (40) answers are correct. See table (1) for more details. The another questions reveal the following types of errors:

- 1- Wrong choice of a suitable pronoun.
- 2- Putting the pronoun in the incorrect places.
- 3- Lack of agreement between the subject and verb.
- 4- Failure to use a suitable pronoun in the grammatical sentences.

- 5- Repetition of the same pronoun in more than one place.
- 6- Giving no responses.
- 7- Students' confusion in using pronouns when they are parts of compound subjects or objects.

No. item	Correct answers	%	Wrong answers	%
1	14	35%	26	65%
2	3	7.5%	37	92.5%
3	30	75%	10	25%
4	10	25%	30	75%
5	11	27.5%	29	72.5%
6	10	25%	30	27%
7	8	20%	32	80%
8	3	7.5%	37	92.5%
9	2	5%	38	95%
10	15	37.5%	25	62.5%
11	18	45%	22	55%
12	8	20%	32	80%
13	7	17.5%	33	82.5%
14	7	17.5%	33	17.5%
15	3	7.5%	37	7.5%

The conclusion

- 1-As an important topic the teacher must pay more attention during teaching pronouns because they have many types and subtypes.
- 2-The result of test declares that the students make wrong answers in the different types of pronouns, reflexive pronouns, relative pronouns and personal pronouns. So that the teacher must focus on these topics (reflexive, relative, and personal pronouns) during teaching them.
- 3- The total ratio of wrong answers (75.1%) and correct answers (24.8%), shows that most of students can not use pronouns correctly depending on grammatical rules, which support the suggestion of teaching pronouns by new ways which reduce the mistakes of student when using pronouns.
- 4- The great number of errors made by the students proved their difficulties in using different types of pronouns. This validates the first hypothesis which states that most of Iraqi Technical Institute of Babylon, Department of Computer students face difficulties in using pronouns.
- 5- The total rate of students' incorrect response to the questions of the production level verifies the second hypothesis of the study which says that English Specific Purposes (ESP) learners' inaccurate responses at the production level may be attributed to the misuse of the different types of pronouns.

The Test

Q1/ Fill the blacks with the suitable pronouns:

1. Where shall.....meet Ali?
2. Fatima bought the new book offavourite writer.
3.is this house?
4. Place the vase on..... wardrobe in the corner.
5. Wael and Sona understand.....
6. Of these friends.....do you like most?
7. The boys are struggling
8. Mrs. Raul,.....son is also a teacher here, teaches the third grade.
9. My little daughter can dress.....
10.Your uncle's name?
11.coat is very wide for him.
12. is the new title of your article?
13. Fatima bought the new book of favourite writer.
14. Are these toys ?
15. are my shoes, dad? In the wardrobe.

Q2/ A: Underline the correct reflexive pronoun:

1. I bought herself / myself a new phone.
2. John wasn't careful and cut himself / herself with a knife.
3. Noor and Yasamin, did you ask ourselves / yourselves the question.
4. The students introduced himself / themselves to new teacher.
5. The camel nearly killed itself / myself when it walk across the street.

B: Choose the correct pronoun:

1. are my shoes, dad? In the wardrobe.
a. What b. whose c. when d. where
a. He b. your c. his d. him
2. friend fell in the lake yesterday.
a. My b. yours c. you d. me

3. Last week we went on holiday and spent a good time with relatives.

- a. You b. ours c. us d. our

4. is the new title of your article?

- a. Where b. what c. why d. who

5. The students are listening to

- a. Each other b. another c. other d. others

Q3/ A: Write the correct interrogative pronouns:

1. was she born? In Iraq.
2. is it so cold? Because it is winter.
3. did he send the last message? Twenty minutes ago.
4. did they come to school? By bus.
5. did he visit his uncle? Twice a month.

B: Write a suitable pronoun instead of underlined word or words:

1. Schools and universities are closed on Fridays and Saturdays in Iraq.
2. Khalid likes playing football with Sameer.
3. Lima goes sailing every month.
4. Mansour and Ali enjoy riding a horse.
5. Dad took Nawal and Mina to Queen Park.

Q4 / A: Write the appropriate demonstrative pronouns to complete the sentences:

1. Heba read a very interesting article recently. article was about a great architect and designer called Zuha Hadid. I think article was excellent.
2. I like TV comedy programme better than other one I watched last Friday with monsters in it.
3. Ibn al-Haitham's most famous work "Book of Optics" was in seven volumes. great and important work was translated into many languages. He wrote more than 200 works in astronomy, optics and maths. Most of inventions and achievements are now lost.
4. Fareed took key out of bag in the wardrobe and put it here with other keys on table.
5. who are tired will never win.

B: Say which pronouns in the following sentences are reflexive and which are emphatic:

1. She herself correct her brother's mistake.
2. He bought the car himself.
3. The driver hurt himself while he was driving his lorry.
4. I myself ate this delicious pizza.
5. They did the plan all by themselves.

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