

CHAPTER 13

"Reflexive Pronouns and Possessives; the Intensive 'Ipse'"

FIRST AND SECOND PERSON REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

In Chapter 11 you studied the first, second and third person pronouns. Here's what you should remember about them.

The first and second person pronouns don't show any gender; there aren't three forms, for example, for "I": one that's feminine, one that's masculine, and another that's neuter.

The first and second person don't have to indicate different gender for reasons which are grounded psychologically in the nature of language itself.

Another thing is that Latin uses the weak demonstrative adjective "*is, ea, id*" as its third person pronoun. Here making distinctions among the three genders is very important, so the third person pronoun has thirty possible forms : five cases in three genders in both the singular and the plural. Remember all that?

Let's go on. Look at these English sentences.

"We saw you there".

"You saw me there".

"You saw us there".

"We are coming with you".

"You are giving it to us".

And so on. If you had to, you could put each of these sentences into Latin, using the appropriate number and case of the first and second person pronouns.

But I have something else in mind.

As you can see in each of these sentences the person of the pronoun of the subject is different from the pronoun that appears in the predicate.

In the sentence "We saw you there", the subject pronoun is first and the pronoun in the predicate is second. And similarly for the rest of the sentences.

This is because in each of these sentences some one is doing something to or with someone else.

Now look at these sentences.

They're not in standard English, but I'm going to make a point.

"You saw you".

"I saw me".

"I bought me an apple".

"We like us".

In these sentences, unlike the first batch, the person of the subject pronouns is the same as the pronouns in the predicate.

In "You saw you", both the subject and the predicate pronouns are second person. And so on with the other three.

Now, I warned you, these sentences are not in standard English, but suppose a foreigner who's just learning English wrote them out. Is there any question in these sentences about who's doing what to whom? No.

In "I saw me", the speaker is obviously trying to say that he saw himself. He's trying to say that the subject of the verb is performing an action on itself, not on something or someone else. So even though they don't qualify as good English, these sentence can be understood.

The subject of the verb is performing an action that affect the subject itself; and because the person of the pronouns in the subject and the predicate is the same, you can see that.

When the subject of a sentence performs an action which affects itself, then the pronouns in the predicate are called "**reflexive**", because they send you "back" through the verb to the subject.

A **reflexive pronoun** is a pronoun in the predicate of the sentence that refers you to the subject.

And in the first and second persons, this task could be easily accomplished by using pronouns that have the same person.

It's really not necessary to have separate forms in the first and second person for non-reflexive pronouns on the one hand and reflexive pronouns on the other. One set of forms can do double duty.

English, however, does have separate forms. Rephrase the sentences above using the English reflexive pronouns. As you can tell, we use a form of the pronoun with the suffix "-self" attached to them :

	FIRST PERSON	SECOND PERSON
Singular :	myself	yourself
Plural :	ourselves	yourselves

Latin, however, being the wise and economical language it is, has no separate forms for reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns in the first and second persons.

It simply uses the personal pronouns you've already seen.

<i>Video me.</i>	(I see myself.)
<i>Videmus nos.</i>	(We see ourselves.)
<i>Videtis vos.</i>	(You see yourselves.)
<i>Vides te.</i>	(You see yourself.)

And so on, and so on.

In the first and second persons, if the pronoun in the predicate is the same number as the subject pronoun, the pronoun in the predicate is referring to the subject and is therefore de facto reflexive.

There is one interesting feature worthy of comment.

Will a reflexive pronoun ever be in the nominative case? Think about it.

When a pronoun is nominative, it is the subject of the sentence.

But a reflexive pronoun by definition is in the predicate and is receiving in some way the action which the subject of the sentence is performing.

So a reflexive pronoun will never be in the nominative case.

That's why you see Wheelock listing the reflexive pronouns like this:

	FIRST PERSON	SECOND PERSON
Nom.	-----	-----
Gen.	[mei]	[tui]
Dat.	mihi	tibi
Acc.	me	te
Abl.	me	te
Nom.	-----	-----
Gen.	[nostri/nostrum]	[vestri/vestrum]
Dat.	nobis	vobis
Acc.	nos	vos
Abl.	nobis	vobis

No nominatives.

Actually, a better way to say this would be to say that Latin has no separate forms for the reflexive pronoun in the first and second persons at all; it simply uses the existing pronouns reflexively.

THIRD PERSON REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

In the third person things are a little more complicated.

You remember that the third person pronoun needs to show gender, because, unlike the first and second persons, the gender of the topic of conversation may not be obvious.

The same kind ambiguity is possible in the third person with regard to reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns. It may be possible that the third person subject is performing an action which is affecting another third person. Consider this :

"He saw him".
"They saw them".
"She saw her".

Here the person of the pronouns is the same in each of these sentences, and in the first and second persons you need to know that the subject is acting on itself.

But that's not going to work in the third person.

You can't tell whether the "her", for example, in the predicate of the third sentence is the same female which is the subject of the sentence. "She" could be seeing another female.

The third person must have one form for the reflexive pronoun and another for the non-reflexive pronoun, since the possibility of ambiguity is real if the forms were the same.

In English, we use the old stand-by: the suffix "-self" for the reflexive: "He saw himself"; "They saw themselves"; "She saw herself".

In Latin as well the standard third person pronoun "*is, ea id*" won't do; different forms are required for the third person reflexive pronoun - that is, for a pronoun which will refer you to the subject of the sentence and not to some other third person.

Latin does indeed have separate forms, but unlike the barbarous prolixity of English, Latin keeps its forms to a bare minimum.

Look at it this way.

All the third person reflexive pronoun has to do is to refer you to the subject of the sentence.

The pronoun itself does not have to tell you the gender or the number of the subject of the sentence.

The subject itself can tell you that.

The reflexive pronoun only has to point you back to the subject, and if you remember the subject of the sentence you're reading or listening to, you can mentally bring forward the number and gender.

Try it this way.

Suppose in English the sign "*" is the reflexive third person pronoun. It tells you to go back to the subject of the sentence, so every time you see it, you plug in the words "the subject"

"He saw *".	=	"He saw [the subject]".
"They saw *".	=	"They saw [the subject]".
"She bought it for *".	=	"She bought it for [the subject]".

Do you see.

In all three sentence you get a full understanding of what's going on without having to be told by the reflexive pronoun what the gender and number of the subject is.

But in English we'd have to say:

"He saw himself".
"They saw themselves".
"She bought it for herself".

But really, in sentence #1, we don't need to be told again by the reflexive pronoun that the subject is masculine and singular. Yet this is precisely what English does. Similarly for the other two. Does the speaker of the English sentence really think our attention spans are so short that we have to be reminded after a second or two what the subject of the sentence is? Evidently.

In Latin, no such stupidity is impugned to us.

The Latin third person reflexive pronoun is simply a sign which directs us back to the subject of the sentence.

It declines, of course, because it may be used in the different cases (not the nominative), but it tells us nothing about the number or gender of the subject.

It just tells us, 'no matter what the subject of this sentence was, think of again.'

Here's the reflexive third person pronoun.

SINGULAR AND PLURAL

Nom.	-----
Gen.	[sui]
Dat.	sibi
Acc.	se
Abl.	se

How do we translate this into English?

Remember that the English third person reflexive pronoun indicates number and gender, so when we bring a Latin third person reflexive pronoun over into English, we have to reinsert the number and gender of the subject.

Like this: "*Ea se videt*".

To a Roman ear it means, "she sees [the subject]"

For us, we have to repeat the gender and number in the reflexive pronoun.

We would say, "she sees herself".

Let's try a few more.

" <i>Ei homines se viderunt</i> ".	(The men saw themselves.)
" <i>Eae se vident</i> ".	(The women see themselves.)
" <i>Vir se videt</i> ".	(The man sees himself.)
" <i>Eae litteras ad se mittent</i> ".	(They (the women) will send a letter to themselves.)

Of course, in the sentences Wheelock gives you it may be impossible to say precisely what the gender of the third person subject is if it isn't explicitly stated, as in the examples above.

For example, "*Se videt*" could be translated as "he sees himself", "she sees herself", or "it sees itself"

Without a context, it's impossible to decide. Choose whichever you prefer.

DRILLS

Translate into Latin.

1. I see you (pl.). _____
2. They see us. _____
3. They will send us the letter. _____
4. She sees herself. _____
5. The tyrant loves himself. _____
6. The tyrants love themselves. _____
7. Give yourself to philosophy! _____
8. He gives himself to philosophy. _____
9. She will not see them. _____
10. He will not see him. _____
11. The farmers can't see them. _____
12. The farmers can't see themselves. _____

So let's collect ourselves. Here's what we've covered so far.

In the first and second persons in Latin there are no new forms for the reflexive pronouns.

If a pronoun in the predicate is the same person as the subject, then the pronoun is reflexive.

This is because the pronoun in the predicate must be referring to the same person as the subject of the sentence.

Additionally, for this reason, the reflexive pronoun will never be in the nominative case.

If it were in the nominative case it would be the subject of the verb and hence not in the predicate; and all reflexive pronouns must be in the predicate.

Despite this inherent simplicity of reflexive pronouns in the first and second persons, English nevertheless adds "-self" or "-selves" to the end of the non-reflexive pronouns to form the reflexive pronouns. Strictly speaking, it's not necessary to distinguish formally the non-reflexive from the reflexive pronouns in the first and second persons; context could do that for you.

The third person reflexive pronoun must differ in form from the third person non-reflexive pronouns.

But all the third person reflexive pronoun need do is to point you back to the subject of the sentence.

Because you remember the subject of the sentence, it's not really necessary for the reflexive pronoun itself to remind you of the gender and the number of the subject.

The Latin third person reflexive pronoun therefore does not in itself make any distinctions in number and gender. It simply works as a sign pointing you back to the subject. To translate the Latin reflexive pronoun properly in English, however, you must resupply the gender and number to the pronoun.

REFLEXIVE AND NON-REFLEXIVE POSSESSIVES

On to new business.

Read this English sentence: "I see my daughter". Now is there any question whose daughter this is? It's the daughter of the subject of the sentence. And how do you know that? Because the possessive "my" is first person and the subject of the sentence is first person. So the subject of the sentence is being recalled in the predicate, because the subject owns the direct object of the verb.

We can call this relationship between "I" and "my" **reflexive possession**. The subject of the verb is possessing something in the predicate.

You can see that to show reflexive possession no new form of the possessive pronoun is needed.

"My" does just fine. Only a dolt would need more information about whose daughter this is. But English has plans for the dolt. The speaker can underline this reflexive possession by inserting "own" after "my".

Speaker : "I see my daughter".
Dolt : "Whose daughter?"
Speaker : "I see my own daughter, you dolt".

More examples: "Do you have your money?" (reflexive possession)
"Do you have my money?" (non-reflexive)
"Have you seen our friend?" (non-reflexive)
"Hey, we can see our car from here". (reflexive possession)
"I haven't found my book yet". (reflexive possession)

Latin has no different forms for reflexive and non-reflexive possession in the first and second persons. There's no need. Latin simply uses the existing possessive adjectives :

FIRST PERSON	SECOND PERSON
meus, -a, -um	tuus, -a, -um
noster, -tra, -trum	vester, -tra, -trum

If the person of the possessive adjective in the predicate is the same as the person of the subject, then the possessive is reflexive. Simple.

"*Videtis amicos vestros*". (reflexive possession)
"*Videtis amicos meos*". (non-reflexive possession)

Let's look just a little more closely at these possessive adjectives.

They consists of two parts.

There's the stem and the adjectival ending.

The stems tell you about the possessor, not about what the possessor is possessing.

The stem "me-" of the adjective "meus, -a, -um" tells you that the possessor is singular and in the first person. It doesn't, however, tell you what gender the possessor is.

The adjectival ending agrees in number, gender, and case with the object possessed. Got that?

You can think of the possessive adjectives of the first and second persons as having two parts :

the stem which tells you about the possessor,

and the adjectival ending which tells you about what is being possessed.

Now let's get on with the third person. The simple rule that worked so well in the first and second persons isn't going to work here. Look at this sentence: "She had her ticket". The possessive pronoun "her" is the same person as the subject - third person -- but can you tell from this sentence whether "she" has her own ticket or the ticket of some other female? No, you can't. There is a real ambiguity here, and often in English we have to ask for further information. "Whose ticket?" If the speaker hasn't made it clear, an additional "own" can be used to help out: "She has her own ticket". Now normally we rely on context to clear up any possible ambiguities, but sometimes it's really not clear who's owning what: "They have their books" (Their own or some other peoples' books?). The only thing the possessive pronoun "their" tells you about the possessors is that there is more than one of them. But you can't tell whether these people are the same folks indicated by "they".

In Latin, the same possibility for ambiguity exists; so some solution to the problem is in order.

First off, how does Latin show non-reflexive possession in the third person?

It uses the genitive of the third person pronoun "*is, ea, id*". Watch :

" <i>Eius librum habuit</i> ".	(He/she had his/her book (not his/her own).)
" <i>Eius gladium invenit</i> ".	(He/she found his/her sword (not his/her own).)
" <i>Servavit patriam eius</i> ".	(He/she saved his/her fatherland (someone else's).)
" <i>Servaverunt patriam eorum</i> ".	(The saved their (other peoples') fatherland.)

A couple of things to notice.

First, unlike the first and second person possessive adjectives, the possessive in the third person is not an adjective.

It does not agree with the thing being possessed.

Look at the three sentences above. "Liber" is masculine, "gladium" is neuter, and "patriam" is feminine, yet "eius" didn't change.

Similarly, in the last sentence, "eorum" tells you that the owners are plural and masculine, but it has nothing whatsoever to do grammatically with "patriam".

In the third person, the possessive pronoun only tells you about who's doing the possessing; it tells you absolutely nothing about the object possessed.

Secondly, the genitive of "*is, ea, id*" is used to show only non-reflexive possession.

"*Eius librum habuit*" could not possibly mean "he had his own book". It can only mean "he has his [another person's] book".

In English, by contrast, the possessive "his" can be used to show reflexive or non-reflexive possession; but the Latin "eius" and "eorum, earum" can only be used non-reflexively.

So what does Latin use to show reflexive possession in the third person?

How does it say "his own", "her own", "its own" and "their own?"

To show reflexive possession in the third person, Latin uses the "**reflexive possessive adjective**" : "*suus, -a, -um*".

This adjective has a couple of interesting features.

First, it's an adjective, so it must agree with the object which is being possessed. You've seen that already in the possessive adjectives of the first and second persons.

Second, unlike the first and second persons, the third person reflexive possessive adjective has no different form for the plural number.

Like this.

The "-us, -a, -um" part of the adjective agrees with the object possessed.

The "su-" part tells you to go back to the subject of the sentence. And that's all it tells you.

Like the reflexive pronoun "*sui, sibi, se, se*", the possessive adjective only tells you that the subject of the sentence is now involved in the predicate, and you shouldn't have to be reminded of the gender and number of the subject.

"Habuerunt suos libros". (They had [the subjects'] books.)

"Habuit suos libros". (He had [the subject's] books.)

"Puella habuit suos libros". (The girl had [the subject's] books.)

But to translate this into English, we have to reinstate the number and gender of the subject in the predicate.

"Habuerunt suos libros". (They had their own books.)

"Habuit suos libros". (He had his own books.)

"Puella habuit suos libros". (The girl had her own books.)

Do you see?

The Latin adjective "*suus, -a, -um*" isn't changing, but our English rendition is, because in English we clumsily repeat the gender and number of the subject of the sentence in the reflexive possessive pronoun.

Latin doesn't, and there's really no reason it should.

The "su-" part of the possessive says, "Go back to the subject".

And that's all it has to say to get the message across.

DRILL

Translate (as many as you need to reassure yourself.)

1. I saw you. _____
2. They saw her. _____
3. They saw us. _____
4. I saw myself. _____
5. You saw me. _____
6. You saw yourself. _____
7. You (pl.) saw yourselves. _____
8. We saw ourselves. _____
9. I gave it to him. _____
10. We came with you (pl.). _____
11. We gave it to ourselves. _____
12. They gave it to her. _____
13. Vidimus nos. _____

14. Id mihi dedi. _____
15. Vidistis vos. _____
16. Venimus cum vobis. _____
17. Id ei dedi. _____
18. Id vobis dedistis. _____
19. Vidit eum. _____
20. Venerunt cum eis. _____
21. Id eis dederunt. _____
22. Se vidit. _____
23. Se amant. _____
24. Id sibi dederunt. _____
25. Amo meum canem (dog). _____
26. Vidimus amicos nostros. _____
27. Vides tuos amicos. _____
28. Video tuos amicos. _____
29. Videmus vestros amicos. _____
30. Videbitis eius amicos. _____
31. Vidit eius amicos. _____
32. Vidit suos amicos. _____
33. Viderunt eorum amicos. _____
34. Viderunt suos amicos. _____
35. Dederunt id eorum amicis. _____
36. Dederunt id suis amicis. _____
37. He saw himself. _____
38. They saw our friends. _____
39. We saw you. _____
40. They saw themselves. _____

41. I saw your friends. _____
42. They saw your friend. _____
43. I saw my friends. _____
44. We saw our friend. _____
45. They saw themselves. _____
46. They saw their friends. _____
47. I gave it to my friends. _____
48. They gave it to them. _____
49. She came with her friend. _____
50. *Venistis cum amicis vestris.* _____
51. You (pl.) gave it to yourselves. _____
52. They gave it to their own friends. _____
53. They gave it to themselves. _____
54. He came with their friends. _____
55. He came with his [own] friends. _____
56. He came with his [not his own] friends. _____
57. They gave it to our friends. _____
58. They saw their [own] friends. _____

VOCABULARY PUZZLES

ipse, ipsa, ipsum This pronoun always causes some confusion because of its English translation. It's an emphatic adjective or pronoun, and we translate it with our "him-, her-, it- or them- self (selves)". Because it is the same form we use for our reflexive pronoun, students often mistranslate it. "*Ipse*" underlines or emphasizes the noun it's modifying or the noun it's replacing. "*Ipse id fecit*" would mean "He himself did it", not "He did it himself" which means he did it all by himself, or "He did it to himself". "*Ipsa id fecit*" would mean "She herself did it". "*Vidi ipsos viros:*" would mean "I saw the very men themselves". You'll have to practice with this demonstrative some.

ante + acc. or adv. The preposition means "before" as in "*ante bellum*" (before the war). It can also be used as an adverb, but you won't see it in this book. Wheelock warns you not to confuse it with "anti", which is a Greek word which means "against" or "instead of".