

Grammatical Concepts Paper

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Introduction

Good writing is something that students learn and become accustomed with throughout their schooling. It depends on many different grammatical concepts being used appropriately on their own as well as working together with others. Good writing is very hard to teach and is not taught as just one concept, it is taught as the different concepts that make up our writing. These separate concepts work together to make good writing. The variety of grammatical concepts that are taught to students may be overwhelming, so it is important to teach them separately and on a step by step basis. Without the appropriate and varied use of these concepts, writing can become repetitive, confusing, and hard to read. One grammatical concept that is extremely important to good writing is pronouns. Pronouns are grammatical concepts that are constantly changing, therefore, the way we teach them changes as well.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that we use in place of nominals. Pronouns help us to clarify, emphasize, or abbreviate the nominal we are referring to and as mentioned before, are extremely important in good writing. They are divided into 9 different types: personal, reflexive, intensive, reciprocal, demonstrative, relative, indefinite relative, interrogative, and indefinite. Many of these types are labeled by number and person; each type of pronoun may only be used in certain situations.

Personal pronouns are pronouns that are used to replace names. They vary depending on the number of people and tense one writes or speaks in. Reflexive pronouns are those that end in “self” or “selves.” These are often used when referring to the same noun as the subject of the verb. Intensive pronouns are the same pronouns as reflexive however, these are used for emphasis rather than reference. Reciprocal pronouns refer to two or more previously mentioned

nouns. If two nouns are being referenced “each other” is generally used, while when three or more nouns are being referenced “one another” is used. Demonstrative pronouns are the pronouns “this, these, that, and those.” These four words are generally used to point something out. Relative pronouns such as “who, whose, whom, which, and that” introduce relative clauses. Interrogative pronouns are the same pronouns as relative; however, they are related to or introduce questions instead of relative clauses. Indefinite pronouns refer to one or more unidentified objects. There are a large number of pronouns that fall under this category including, “many, all, few, and both.” Lastly, indefinite relative pronouns combine the roles of relative and indefinite pronouns. These pronouns all refer to definite things and include “whoever, whomever, whatever, and whichever.” All of these pronouns play their own role in good writing and are important to understand.

Personal pronouns are the pronouns that are most commonly used and recognized. Usually, these pronouns are labeled by number and person and that is how they are introduced to students. This technique of introducing pronouns, however, is becoming more difficult as people are changing the pronouns that they go by. Currently, labels such as transgender and non-binary are becoming more accepted in the world. Non-binary is when a person does not identify as a man or a woman. In the case that this occurs, the person will change their pronouns to they/them. “They” is defined as the plural pronoun for the subjective case of personal pronouns. “Them” is defined as the plural pronoun for the objective case of personal pronouns. These definitions imply that it would be inappropriate for the two pronouns to be used when talking about a singular person. Now that it is becoming common for they/them to be used in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person in singular and plural cases, the emerging use of these personal problems should be emphasized.

Pronouns and Good Writing

Pronouns are extremely important to good writing. This is because they limit repetitiveness, prevent confusion, and in general make the writing flow better. The most important concept of pronouns is pronoun reference. Pronoun reference can be defined as “pronoun-antecedent agreement” (Ruday, 2020). In general terms, it is the use of pronouns to correctly refer to any word that is functioning as a noun. If incorrect pronoun reference is used, it can cause the readers to become confused and distract them from the narrative itself. If pronouns were not used at all, the narrative would become extremely repetitive by using the same noun over and over again. Preventing mistakes that could lead to these occurrences is where teachers become very important. Pronouns are a difficult topic to teach because they can seem like a lot of information at once and may be intimidating. They are also hard to teach because most students consider grammar to be a slow or boring topic, which can lead to lack of enthusiasm within the classroom during these lessons. It is up to educators to create unique lesson plans that will keep the students attention while also making the information stick in their heads. Personally, I would teach pronouns in a step by step process while using examples and activities to keep the students engaged and active in the learning process.

Teaching Pronouns

To begin a lesson on pronouns, I would describe what a pronoun is and find examples in texts that the students are familiar with. For the examples chosen, I would make sure to write out each one on the board as well as providing them on a sheet for the students that includes images related to the examples, which will provide an abundance of visual information. Including simple examples such as the quote “During the winter, me and Rowley stored up some snowballs in my freezer so we could have a snowball fight when the weather got warm” (Kinney, 2007), to more

complicated pronoun examples such as “My mom said just to be myself, and everyone would be like me” (Kinney, 2007) from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Using these examples would help to clarify the function of a pronoun and allow me to steer the conversation into why they are important and what would happen if a different pronoun was used or a pronoun wasn’t used at all. After making sure the students can confidently explain the function of a pronoun, I want to emphasize the importance of pronouns in good writing.

To really emphasize the importance of pronouns in good writing to my students, I want to work with the examples I used towards the beginning as well as new examples pulled from texts the students are familiar with. While working with these examples, I will first write and talk through them on the board with the entire class. Focusing on an example such as one from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* “During the winter, me and Rowley stored up some snowballs in my freezer so we could have a snowball fight when the weather got warm” (Kinney, 2007), would allow me to point out a certain pronoun and change it to have a discussion with the class on how it changes the meaning of the sentence. For example, changing the pronoun “we” to a different pronoun such as “she.” This change would lead to the sentence reading “During the winter, me and Rowley stored up some snowballs in my freezer so she could have a snowball fight when the weather got warm,” which would confuse the reader and make them question who would be using the snowballs as well as how it related to “me and Rowley.” After talking through a few examples of the changes different pronouns could make I would encourage students to work with a small group and pull their own sentence from an independent reading book, repeating the same process we completed as a class. Before moving to the next stage of independent work where they would complete the same type of assignment on their own, I would walk around to each group to answer any questions and make sure they are understanding the lesson. After I feel

confident that my student would be able to easily describe the importance of pronouns, I would move to the more in-depth portion of the lesson; the 9 different types of pronouns and when they should be used.

Teaching the 9 different types of pronouns may be the hardest part. Remembering the difference between the types is very difficult, however, I have found that giving a definition, examples of what some of the pronouns look like, as well as examples of how the pronouns work in sentences is helpful. I will start with one pronoun type at a time and begin by giving a definition of that specific type. I will then provide a list of the pronouns that can be found under the category, possibly providing charts for visuals. To end the lesson on each pronoun type, I will provide multiple examples so the students are able to see what they may look like as well as ask them to identify their own from an independent reading book. After following these steps for all 9 types of pronouns, I will conclude my pronoun lesson by doing a quick review summary as well as a class Q&A. This will allow me to gauge how much the students understand about pronouns in general as well as the importance they play in good writing.

Teaching Explanation

Teaching pronouns in this order will help to ease the idea of pronouns into the students minds and gradually get deeper into the concept. Starting at a simple level will allow the students to connect the information little by little as new information is introduced. If I immediately jumped into the 9 different types of pronouns before explaining what a pronoun is and how it is important to good writing, the students would be confused and it would be harder to understand the difference between the 9 types. It is important to be mindful of the order the information is taught in, as it is an important factor with this subject. The use of examples is also important because it allows the students to visualize the information and connect it to real texts. Using texts

that the students are familiar with will keep them entertained as well as help them to identify pronouns in their own reading in the future. I also think it is important to start teaching the subject as a whole group before moving to independent work. Working the students' knowledge with different levels of assistance will allow me as the teacher to make sure the students understand what is being taught. Working as a class as well as with a small group will give a student assistance, but also allow repetition of the subject to help relay the information into their memory before working on their own. While there are many ways of formulating a lesson plan for pronouns, I feel this would be the most effective plan to lead to the success of my students.

References

Ruday, S. (2020). *The Elementary School Grammar Toolkit*. Routledge.