Larbi Ben M’hidi University- Oum El Bouaghi

Department of English

Course Title: READING

Level: First Year-LMD

**REFERENCE WORDS**

**Objectives:** This lesson will show you how to

* Recognize and identify different types of contextual reference
* Read and connect the contextual reference to the word that it refers to

To prevent the same word more than one time in a sentence or in some sentences of the same paragraph, writers always use **references**. References are words that substitute for other words or phrases. They usually refer back to ideas that have already been expressed, but they can occasionally refer forward to ideas yet to be stated. Thus, in order to see the connection between items of information, we need to find the reference of the substitution word. Below is a list of the most often used references.

**1.Personal pronouns**: I, me, my, mine, she, her, hers, he, him, his, it, its, they, them, their, we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours (replace nouns)

**2.Impersonal pronouns**: one, ones (replace nouns)

**3.Demonstrative pronouns**: this, that, these, those (replace nouns, phrases, or sentences that refer to a fact or idea)

**4.**There, then (replace adverbials of place or time)

**5.**Such + noun (replaces the description of the person or thing named by the noun)

**6.**The former, the latter, the same (replaces the previously mentioned person, thing, or idea)

In the following paragraph, the references are italicized.

Speed-reading is a skill every student should master in order to succeed their study. In relation to *this*, some students read slowly but don’t know that *they* do; *others* read slowly and know *it*. *Their* reading problems are the same, but *the latter* can be helped more easily because they are already aware of their problem. Before *the former* can be helped, however, *they* must be made aware of the problem.

**Understanding Pronouns**

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. We use pronouns to avoid repeating a word again and again. The antecedent is the word or words that a pronoun replaces.

**Example:**

Henry VIII was an English king. He was very famous.

In the above sentence, **Henry VIII** is the antecedent and **He** is the pronoun.

**Unclear pronoun reference** occurs when a pronoun (often "it," "this," "that," or "they") could refer to more than one **antecendent** in a [sentence](https://englishcomposition.org/essential-writing/the-parts-of-a-sentence/).

To avoid unclear pronoun reference, make sure that every pronoun you use refers clearly and unmistakably to **ONE**particular noun, or **rewrite the sentence**for increased clarity.

**Examples:**

The teacher gave the student her notes.

After Ben took the radio out of the car, he sold it.

**Here are two revised versions of the sentences above:**

*The teacher gave the**student's**notes to her.*(It's clear that the notes belong to the student.)

*After taking out the radio, Ben sold his car.*(It's clear that Ben sold his car.)

**Indefinite Reference: they, it, you**

The pronouns "they," "it," and "you" should refer to a specific antecedent. Do not use these pronouns to refer to indefinite words or ideas.

**Incorrect:***If you arrive late to the play,****they****won't let you in.*(Who are *they?*)

**Correct:***If you arrive late to the play,****the ushers****won't let you in.*

**Incorrect:***On the internet****it****says that it might rain tomorrow.*(What is *it?*)

**Correct:*****The weather forecast****on the internet says that it might rain tomorrow.*

**Incorrect:***At the city park,****you****can rent paddle boats.* ("You" is best used when directly addressing the reader.)

**Correct:***At the city park,****guests****can rent paddle boats.*

**This, That, and Which**

Confirm that the pronouns ***this***, ***that***, and ***which*** have single, clear antecedents.  If not, consider rewriting the sentence for increased clarity.

**Unclear:***She doesn't even pay rent and yelled at us for making too much noise.****This****blew our minds!*

**Revised:***It blew our minds that she yelled at us for making too much noise when she doesn't even pay rent!*

**Unclear:***When he broke his arm and the bone popped out,****that****was disgusting!*

**Revised:***When the bone popped out of his broken arm, that was disgusting!*

**Unclear:***He was late and offered no apology,****which****annoyed me.*

**Revised:***It annoyed me that he failed to apologize for being late.*

**Exercise 1:** *In the following pairs of sentences, one sentence is correct, and the other sentence contains a vague or ambiguous pronoun reference. Mark the CORRECT sentence*.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ When Pearl Buck was forty, her novel The Good Earth won the Pulitzer Prize.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ When she was forty, Pearl Buck’s novel The Good Earth won the Pulitzer Prize.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Buck received much critical praise and earned over $7 million, but she was very modest about it.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Buck received much critical praise and earned over $7 million, but she was very modest about her achievements.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Bill bought a Norwegian canoe because he had heard that they make the best canoes.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Bill bought a Norwegian canoe because he had heard that Norwegians make the best canoes.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Katie was an only child, and it was hard.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Katie was an only child, and her solitary life was hard.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Jennifer’s sister wondered if she were tall enough to be a model.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Jennifer’s sister wondered if Jennifer were tall enough to be a model.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Dipping the spoon into the pot of simmering soup, Jean felt the spoon slip out of her hand.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Dipping the spoon into the pot of simmering soup, Jean felt it slip out of her hand.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ At a local restaurant, they provide each table with a bucket of peanuts.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ At a local restaurant, the owner provides each table with a bucket of peanuts.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Mary and Tom left their bags at the ticket counter, but then they weren’t sure if their bags were safe.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Mary and Tom left their bags at the ticket counter, but then they weren’t sure if they were safe.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ The boat bumped the edge of the dock, but the dock didn’t need many repairs.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_\_ The boat bumped the edge of the dock, but it didn’t need many repairs.

1. **A**\_\_\_\_\_ Although Mike was a real sports fan, his brother never became interested in them.

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ Although Mike was a real sports fan, his brother never became interested in sports.

**Exercise 2:** *Identify whether each of the following sentences is correct (C) or has an ambiguous pronoun (AP). If there is an error, correct it.*

1. Henry sought the advice of Thomas Moore, a close confidant, but he was later beheaded and is now a saint in the Catholic Church.
2. The Pope told Henry that he could not get a divorce, which angered Henry.
3. The king saw a man walking with Queen Anne, the king’s wife.
4. They say that the king spent a lot of money.
5. Henry’s incessant eating annoyed his wife.
6. The article states that Henry’s third wife died from an infection.
7. The wine bottle was empty, but the king was tired of drinking it anyway.
8. Henry was an accomplished musician, and he did it almost every day.
9. The king divorced Anne of Cleves because she had been previously engaged.
10. The king’s organ playing was so loud that he woke up the queen.
11. Jane Seymour was Queen Anne’s lady-in-waiting. This job changed Jane’s life.
12. Because the king’s fifth wife cheated on him, she sealed her fate.
13. The king got butterflies in his stomach every time he talked to Anne.
14. It says in the newspaper that the king was a Renaissance man.
15. Henry wanted to divorce his first wife, but this was not possible because the Catholic forbade it.

**Reference:**

**From Department of English, Methodist University**