

Chapter 4, Problem 5: Assessing the Facts of English Case

English personal pronouns are of three kinds (ignoring possessives):

- Nominative: *I, we, he, she, they*
- Accusative: *me, us, him, her, them*
- Unspecified for CASE: *you, it*

The subject of a (tensed) sentence must be specified as [CASE nominative], as the following examples show:

- (1) a. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{I} \\ \text{We} \\ \text{He} \\ \text{She} \\ \text{They} \\ \text{You} \\ \text{It} \end{array} \right\}$ went home.
- b. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Me} \\ \text{Us} \\ * \text{Him} \\ \text{Her} \\ \text{Them} \end{array} \right\}$ went home.

And the direct object must be [CASE accusative]:

- (2) a. Sandy likes $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{me} \\ \text{us} \\ \text{him} \\ \text{her} \\ \text{them} \\ \text{you} \\ \text{it} \end{array} \right\}$.
- b. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{I} \\ \text{we} \\ * \text{Sandy likes} \text{ he} \\ \text{she} \\ \text{they} \end{array} \right\}$.

Second objects of ditransitive verbs are hard to test, because pronouns generally don't sound very good as second objects:

- (3)*The teacher taught the students it.

But if both objects are pronouns, the sentences sound better, and the second objects, like the first objects, have to be [CASE accusative]:

- (4) a. Sandy showed me them.

b.*Sandy showed me they.

And finally, prepositional objects also require [CASE accusative] NPs:

(5) a. Sandy was fond of $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{me} \\ \text{us} \\ \text{him} \\ \text{her} \\ \text{them} \\ \text{you} \\ \text{it} \end{array} \right\}$.

b.

*Sandy was fond of $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{I} \\ \text{we} \\ \text{he} \\ \text{she} \\ \text{they} \end{array} \right\}$.

The generalization: Nominative NPs occur only as subjects; accusative NPs appear everywhere else.