

Using The Personal Pronoun "I" As A Compound Subject

BY GLADYS PANG AND DEBORAH CHU

To teach the correct usage of the personal pronoun "I" when used as a compound subject.

Problem

Island children, as well as their mainland counterparts, seem to have difficulty distinguishing between "I" and "me" when used as a compound subject.

Example 1: "Me and John went to the zoo."

Example 2: "John and me went to the zoo."

Most grammarians apparently do not feel this is a problem area or one that would cause any degree of difficulty because there is very little information readily available for examination. It is generally recognized that errors in pronoun usage are among the most common errors made in speech.

Solution

Young children need to learn about pronoun politeness, that is, it is polite to name yourself last.

Example: "John and I are friends."

"John, Susan, and I are friends."

Young children (ages 5 years to 7 years) must have many opportunities hearing the correct form of the pronoun "I" as well as practicing the correct usage. Through repeated activities integrated throughout the school curriculum, we hope they will be able to make the proper production so that they will acquire native competence.

With greater understanding and more maturity, children can be made to learn that when they have trouble with the pronoun "I" in compound subjects, all they must remember is to use the form they would use if the pronoun stood alone.

Example: "John and (me or I?)

made the blocks fall."

"I made the blocks fall, NOT Me made the blocks fall."

Language Arts

The use of poster pictures showing action words for oral practice.

Procedure: Teacher shows a poster to class. (Example: Silhouette of child running.)

Teacher: "Children, will you all pretend that you are this child. Mary, if you were this child, what would you say you were doing?"

Mary: "I am running."

Teacher: "Mary, if John and you were doing the same thing, how would you say it in a sentence? Remember your manners and name yourself last."

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Mary: "John and I are running."

Teacher: "Good, Mary. You remembered to name yourself last."

Teacher: "Now, if there were three of you doing the same thing, who could say it in a sentence? Be sure to name the children before yourself."

John: "Mary, Susan, and I are running."

Teacher could continue with other posters in similar manner for that period and repeat this activity at another time if more practice is needed.

For free activity, the children could pair off and work with these posters, checking each other's responses.

Mathematics

Teaching recognition of numerals 1-10.

Procedure:

Teacher passes out two sets of identical numbers (1-10) to class. The teacher will ask, "Who has numeral 5?" The two children holding this number card will raise their cards. The teacher will solicit correct response, "_____ and I have numeral 5." The teacher will continue in the same manner with the other numerals.

Rhythmic Activity

To be sung to the tune of "Rig-a-Jig-Jig." The children are familiar with this tune.

Procedure:

Have children stand facing each other. (There will be one row of boys and one row of girls.) The head couple will decide what action they will perform (example: Skip, jump, walk, hop, etc.). As they link elbows and perform this action between the rows of children, one of them will sing:

"(Name of the partner) and I walk down the street, down the street, down the street....."

"_____ and I walk down the street, Heigh ho, heigh ho, heigh ho!"

At the end of the song, the couple will take their places at the end of each row. A new action is decided by the new head couple and the same procedure is followed until all the children have had a chance to perform.

Art and Social Studies

Integrating an art activity with the social studies unit on the family.

Procedure:

Assuming the children have had enough background experiences in discussing the family unit, the teacher will have the children draw a situation picture of themselves

and a family member. Later, individual children will tell a story about his picture.

Example: "_____ and I are at the beach, etc."

Science

A study on plants.

Procedure:

Each child has planted some seeds in a can. The children will make daily observations and share their observations orally. The teacher, through guided questions, will try to elicit such responses as "_____ and I see our plants sprouting, etc."

Physical Education

Game: The Ocean is Stormy.

Formation:

Players divide off in pairs and each pair occupies a circle. Two players become the whales. The others will become the fish that is designated on their circle. (Codfish, mackerel, or rainbow trout).

Procedure:

The whales hook elbows and, having no home, move about and take turns calling the names of fish as they move. "_____ and I are whales." "_____ and I are whales." "Are there any Mackerels? etc."

Couples whose fish name is called say "_____ and I are codfish, etc." They leave their circle, hook elbows and drop behind the whales, following them thereafter until the whales call, "The Ocean is Stormy!", whereupon they, together with all who are following them dash arm in arm to secure a vacant circle. Those unsuccessful are the new whales.

The teacher, when he feels it will liven the game, may call loudly, "Typhoon! Typhoon!" whereupon everyone, including those standing in circles, must try to secure a new living place.

Variations: Use names other than those of fish, such as pets, zoo animals, etc.