Possessive Pronouns

The most important consideration in teaching any grammatical concept, including relative clauses, is a deep understanding of language development. This includes the ability to compare your client’s performance to expected developmental norms.

* Speech Language Pathologists should consider that typical emergence of the first possessive pronouns typically begin between the ages of 15 and 18 months (Owens, 2014).

* Comprehension of possessive pronouns has been suggested to begin as early as 12 months. Therefore, production of possessive pronouns should not be targeted prior to 15 months, but issues with comprehension may be addressed sooner in early intervention.
* Children who are deaf or hard of hearing acquire possessive pronouns in a different order than those who are hearing:
  + - * + The first- and third-person pronouns emerge prior to the second person pronouns (Wilbur, Montanelli, & Quiqley, 1976).



Ideas for

Intervention

Here you will find resource materials for intervention. These are not programs or recommended methods but are meant to aid you by providing myriad resources and techniques for intervention. We’ve taken the time to research available resources and to offer them for you to consider.

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* Possessive pronouns aside from “my” and “mine” require Theory of Mind (ToM) (Owens, 2014).

Therefore, the child must understand that the pronoun “my” no longer refers to them when another person is speaking.

Note: ToM is often delayed in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Therefore, when working with this population, it is important to ensure that the client has ToM before targeting possessive pronouns. The two may be targeted simultaneously depending on the child’s individual abilities.

Methods

Possessive Pronouns

* Possessive pronouns have been shown to be far more difficult for children to learn than personal and objective pronouns.

Tangible takeaway: teach personal and objective pronouns before possessive pronouns.

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* Children understand the concept of “my” and “mine” long before they are able to comprehend the concept of “his,” “yours,” or “theirs.”

For a frame of reference, “my” usually appears in children’s language when their MLU is about 2.0- 2.5 (Owens, 2014).

First person possessive pronouns should be introduced initially, followed by second, and finally third person forms (Owens, 2014).

When introducing the third person it is beneficial to begin with the feminine “hers” because it is consistent with the personal pronoun “her.” This is more easily acquired than the masculine pronouns irregular transition “him” to “his” (Ricard, Girouard, & Decarie, 1999).

* Possessive pronouns with a determiner function, like in the sentence, “Anne borrowed **my** book,” should be introduced prior to possessive pronouns with a nominal function.

An example of a nominal possessive pronoun would be in the sentence, “That book is **ours**.”

* Possessive pronouns with the nominal function are the most difficult for children to learn.
* A naturalistic approach to intervention is suggested, as children have been most successful with new language targets in conversational contexts.

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As a Speech-Language Pathologist, it is critical that an understanding of how language skills are impacted by individual differences.

* Children who are English Language Leaners (ELL), particularly those who learn Spanish as their first language, may have difficulty in the understanding of possessive pronouns (Lago et al., 2019).
  + Cross-linguistic influence is impacted by the accessibility of prior grammatical structures as auditory comprehension of speech may require individuals to quickly depend on the linguistic procedures that are automatized (Lago et al., 2019).

The Spanish language lacks possessor agreement, therefore, Spanish native speakers often experience challenges in determining possessor agreement (Lago et al., 2019).

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* In children with ASD, particularly those with echolalic speech, a structured approach to pronouns called “perspective speak” can be used.
  + In this case it is recommended that perspective shifting be included in the SLP’s possessive pronoun intervention.

The child must first be taught to self-reference (“I”) before learning to apply the concept of possession.

Then, possessive pronouns are introduced through a highly controlled interaction between the child, a conversation “director” and a “responder” that the child will repeat.

Begin once again with “mine” and the use of possessive -‘s.

Note: the child is only being introduced to one possessive pronoun at a time.

For example, the responder would only respond with, “That book is Ms. Sarah’s,” rather than “That book is yours.” The child is able to have repeated exposure to the target without having to switch their perspective. Once this has been mastered, the clinician can begin to introduce other possessive pronouns.

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Books

[*Mine, All Mine*](https://www.amazon.com/Mine-All-About-Pronouns-Explore/dp/0698117972/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1547522243&sr=8-1&keywords=mine+all+mine+ruth+heller)*,* by Ruth Heller

[*The Planet Without Pronouns*,](https://www.amazon.com/Grammar-Tales-Planet-Without-Pronouns-ebook/dp/B00H9GUX1E) by Justin McCory Martin

[*If You Were a Pronoun*](https://www.amazon.com/You-Were-Pronoun-Word-)*,* by Nancy Loewen and Sarah Gray

[*I and You and Don’t Forget Who: What Is a Pronoun*?](https://www.amazon.com/You-Dont-Forget-Who-Categorical/dp/0822564696/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547570310&sr=8-1&keywords=i+and+you+and+don%27t+forget+who+what+is+a+pronoun) By Brian Cleary and Brian Gable

Possessive Pronouns

Games and Activities

* [*Pronoun Heroes* [app],](https://www.smartyearsapps.com/pronoun-heroes-2/) by Smarty Ears Apps
* [His, Her, and Their Fun Deck game](https://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=fd62&s=using-his-her--their#.XD1QFS3MzjA) by Thomas Webber.
* [*Possessive Pronoun Practice for Elementary Kids*](https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/parts-of-speech/pronouns/possessive-pronoun-practice-for-elementary-kids.html)
  + - One approach to practicing nominal possessive pronouns is the game Is This Mine or Yours?

In this activity, children bring in familiar objects from home and place them into a large box that already contains some of the clinician’s items. Objects are drawn from the box and the child must state whom the item belongs to.

This can also be done through prompting with WH-questions while looking at pictures or reading books.

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Games and Activities

* Consider engaging the client in a structured play activity such as a tea party or a restaurant game. These types of scenarios provide embedded and incidental trials for possessive pronouns, as well as opportunities for the clinician to recast the child’s sentences to model correct pronoun usage (Owens, 2014).

For example: the clinician might say, “Please put the bread on his plate.” During some of the initial sessions, the child may benefit from the speaker highlighting the use of the target structure in his or her own speech. This can be done by altering the prosody of one’s speech as well as, pausing before the target, using a higher pitch, or by placing the target at the end of the sentence. For example, “The dog is **his.”**

Gesturing in conversation has also been shown to improve the child’s ability to make the connection between new grammatical words and their meaning within the context of the conversation.

Pointing at the referent is therefore suggested for emphasizing the pronoun.

This will also be useful for irregular possessive pronouns, which are generally learned most efficiently through rote learning and repetition.

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Websites

* [*Google Play Personal and Possessive Pronouns Book*](https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=4E-eCwAAQBAJ&source=productsearch&utm_source=HA_Desktop_US&utm_medium=SEM&utm_campaign=PLA&pcampaignid=MKTAD0930BO1&gclid=CNHKh6CxuNACFUG8NwodYHQIHA&gclsrc=ds)
* [*Chart on Possessive Pronouns vs. Possessive Adjectives*](http://www.myenglishpages.com/site_php_files/grammar-lesson-possessive-pronouns.php)*,* an online resource
* [*Online Handout-*](https://www.superduperinc.com/handouts/pdf/173%20teaching%20pronouns.pdf) *Student Reference chart to classify all pronouns*
* *Lesson plans for addressing possessive pronouns*

[*Handout One*](http://www.gwh.nhs.uk/media/140492/possessive_pronouns.doc)

[*Handout Two*](https://educators.brainpop.com/lesson-plan/2-2-1-possessive-pronouns-lesson-plan/)

[*Handout Three*](https://www.lessonplanet.com/lesson-plans/possessive-pronoun/all)

Please visit [our Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/sugarlanguage/relative-clause/) for additional resources and activities:

Pinterest Q&A:

What is Pinterest? Pinterest is a social media platform that serves as an electronic bulletin board. Many SLPs use it as a way to electronically “bookmark” (i.e., save) activities for future sessions.

How much does it cost? It’s free! However, you must create an account in order to access the SUGAR Language boards or use the website in general.

How do I use it? Please check-out the following link for an in-depth explanation of all things [Pinterest.](https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-pinterest-3486578)

**References**

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Ricard, M., Girouard, P. C., & Gouin Decarie, T. (1999). Personal pronouns and perspective taking in toddlers. *Journal Of Child Language*, *26*(3), 681-97.

Wilbur, R. B., Montanelli, D. S., & Quigley, S. P. (1976). Pronominalization in the language of deaf students. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 19(1), 120-140. doi: 10.1044/jshr.1901.120.