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Lezione 6

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Pronouns

Before we look at personal pronouns, it's important to remember two basic grammar rules:

1. All articles can become pronouns.

Example from the text: *Keinen mehr, keinen mehr!* (No one else, not anymore!)

2. The subject is always expressed.

Example from the text: *Das war unmöglich.* (It wasn't possible.)

Personal Pronouns (Nominative)

Singular

ich

The subject pronoun *ich* is the same as the little word 'I' in English and is used to refer to oneself in a sentence. Occurrences in the text: There are 25 occurrences of the word *ich* in the text.

One in the first part.

Three in the second part.

Twenty-one in the third part.

Interpretation:

The excessive use of the word *ich* in the last part of the story suggests an overemphasis on the self, to the detriment of the other characters.

du

The subject pronoun *du* is the English equivalent of 'you' and is used to address someone with whom you have a familiar, friendly or informal relationship.

Observation:

Upon entering the room, the narrator adopts a familiar tone with the mother, addressing her as *du*.

Occurrences in the text:

The word *du* appears three times in the text.

er

The subject pronoun *er*, which is the English equivalent 'he', is used to refer to the person or object being discussed.

Observation:

When the protagonist talks about the girl's husband, he refers to him as a 'giant' or a 'big ugly stranger' (*Riese, fremder Riesenkerl*). When the astonished giant pauses on the threshold, the other, the intruder, chooses to call him simply *er*. This marks the beginning of a duel between two equals: *ich* ('I') against *er* ('he') - though they are not quite equal, as the narrator notes:

Ich fühlte mich viel größer als er ('I felt much bigger than he').

Occurrences in the text:

The word *er*, referring to the man or the giant, occurs three times in the text.

sie

The subject pronoun *sie*, which is the English equivalent of 'she', is used to refer to the person or object being discussed.

Observation:

The female character develops throughout the story:

- In the first part, she is introduced as *das kleine Mädchen* ('the little girl'), accompanied by the pronoun *es*.
- Later, when she is twenty, the pronoun *sie* is used.
- In the second part, she is referred to as *die Mutter* ('the mother'), again with the pronoun *sie*.

This change is deliberate:

- In German, the pronoun varies according to age:

- *es* for *das kleine Mädchen* ('the little girl').
- *sie* for *das Mädchen* ('the grown-up girl').
- *sie* for *die Mutter* ('the mother').

Occurrences in the text:

The pronoun *sie* (referring to the grown-up girl and the mother) occurs twice in the text.

es

Except for the little girl at the beginning of our story, later when she (*das kleine Mädchen*) becomes the mother, her sick child (*das kranke Kind*) is referred to with the pronoun *es*, as if in her place.

Occurrences in the text:

The pronoun *es*, referring to the sick child, occurs three times in the text.

Personal Pronouns (Accusative)

The pronoun *mich* is the accusative form of the personal pronoun *ich*, which is equivalent to 'me' in English. It is used to indicate the direct object of an action - the person who undergoes the action of the verb. In the text, we also find:

dich (2nd person singular)

ihn (3rd person singular masculine)

sie (3rd person singular feminine)

es (3rd person singular neuter)

This table shows the nominative and accusative forms of the singular personal pronouns used in the text.

Singular Personal Pronouns in Nominative and Accusative Cases:

| Person | Nominative | Accusative |
|------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1st Person | <i>ich</i> (I) | <i>mich</i> (me) |

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 2nd Person | <i>du</i> (you) | <i>dich</i> (you) |
| 3rd Person (Masc.) | <i>er</i> (he) | <i>ihn</i> (him) |
| 3rd Person (Fem.) | <i>sie</i> (she) | <i>sie</i> (her) |
| 3rd Person (Neut.) | <i>es</i> (it) | <i>es</i> (it) |

Personal Pronouns (Dative)

To complete the declension of singular personal pronouns, let's add the dative to the nominative and accusative.

Below is the full table of singular pronouns in the order nominative, accusative and dative:

ich — mich — mir (to me)

du — dich — dir (to you)

er — ihn — ihm (to him)

sie — sie — ihr (to her)

es — es — ihm (to it)

The singular third-person personal pronouns are very similar to the definite articles in German. This similarity is particularly evident in their declensions in the nominative, accusative and dative cases:

er - ihn - ihm resembles *der - den - dem*,

as *sie - sie - ihr* follows the same pattern as *die - die - der*,

and *es - es - ihm* is very similar to *das - das - dem*.

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Risorse per la scuola

<https://www.baobab.school>



Siti web a Varese

<https://www.francescobelloni.it>