

# Pro-forms

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Pro-forms include **pronominals** and **anaphors**, otherwise known as pronouns. Anaphors need an antecedent in the same tensed clause, an Anaphor must be coindexed with its antecedent:

(1) Mary saw herself in the mirror.

Reflexive pronouns such *herself* have no referential meaning. It needs to be coindexed with an appropriate antecedent which may have referential meaning. Here, the antecedent is *Mary*. It is an appropriate antecedent in that it agrees with the anaphor in gender, number, and person. If (1) occurs as a complement of some form in an embedded clause, the anaphor cannot be coindexed with anything in another clause:

(2) Joan knows that Mary saw herself in the mirror.

The only possible antecedent for *herself* is *Mary*. It cannot be *Joan*. Note that in a sentence like

(3) \*John saw herself.,

the anaphor does not agree with the only possible antecedent, *John* for gender. If no antecedent can be found, the sentence crashes, rendering it ungrammatical. This condition on anaphoric interpretation is often called 'the Clausemate Condition.'

Coindexation is considered an interpretive rule. The anaphor has no reference. A referent must be found. Finding a reference is considered interpretive, since the full sentence is being created. The feature [+Pro] is one of the features of pro-forms. The anaphoric property is marked by the feature [+Anaphoric].

Pronominals in English cannot be coindexed with an antecedent in the same clause:

(4) John saw him.

Here, *him* cannot be coindexed with *John*., The antecedent for *him* either occurs in a preceding sentence or is determined from the real world context.

- (5) Bill thinks that John saw him.

Here, *him* is either coindexed with *Bill* or it refers to someone in the context of the situation who may not have been mentioned. This sort of thing is common. Consider the following discourse  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , which are members of some discourse D:

- (6) a. Bill just came into the room.  
b. John saw him a moment later.

(6) is discourse D, (6a) is  $S_1$  and (6b) is  $S_2$ . In (6b) *him* cannot be coindexed with *John* It must be coindexed with *Bill* in (6a). In discourse D, it is unlikely that *him* would be coindexed with some other male in the real world context, whatever that may be.

[pro] (little pro) is a pronominal that has no phonetic representation ([NULL]). It must be marked for Case, and it often is marked for gender, person, and number (depending on the language). The null subject of imperatives is [pro] marked as [+Nom], [+Personal], [-1st], and [ $\pm$ PI]:

- (7) Just look at yourself (singular pro) = [pro just look at yourself]  
(8) Just look at yourselves (plural pro) = [pro just look at yourselves].

The anaphor here must be coindexed with the subject [pro], which can be either [+PI] or [-PI].

The rules for generating pro-forms, as opposed to interpreting them, have not been fully worked out yet. One of the conditions that affects generating pro-forms is the unique property of R-expressions. R-expressions are words that have a unique referential meaning. This includes nouns, verbs, and all modifiers. Pro-forms do not referential meaning and cannot be R-expressions. There is a condition cited by Chomsky that:

- (9) R-expressions must be free.

This means that an R-expression cannot have an antecedent. The logical structure of:

(10) Milly cut herself

is something like:

(11) CUT <MILLY<sub>i</sub>, internal argument> <MILLY<sub>i</sub>, external argument>.

The subindex ‘i’ indicates that both MILLYs have the same referent, some person whose name is Milly. If we generated in standard English:

(12) Milly cut Milly,

(12) would be rendered ungrammatical since the second MILLY cannot be coindexed with the first MILLY. Or, the second MILLY could be interpreted as MILLY<sub>j</sub>, which is not the meaning of the intended sentence. To avoid this problem, the second MILLY is realized as the anaphor *herself*.

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