

Unit 30 - Personal pronouns (2)

1 Order of object pronouns

1.1 Affirmative, interrogative and negative sentences

Here object pronouns come directly before the verb (or in compound tenses, the auxiliary verb *avoir* or *être*). In cases where there are two pronouns the order is as follows :

me					
te	le				
se	la	lui			
nous	les	leur	y	en	
vous					

Elle **me les** a rendus - *She gave them back to me*

Ils **nous en** prêteront - *They will lend us a few*

Je ne **la lui** ai pas envoyée - *I didn't send it to him / her*

Il **y en** a encore - *There are more of them*

This rule also applies for all questions, including those formed by inversion :

Me les a-t-elle rendus ? - *Did she give them back to me ?*

Nous en prêteront-ils ? - *Will they lend us a few ?*

Ne **la lui** ai-je pas envoyée ? - *Didn't I send it to him / her ?*

Y en a-t-il encore ? - *Are there any more of them ?*

1.2 Use before infinitives

When a verb is used with an infinitive, the pronouns tend to come directly before the infinitive :

Je compte **la leur** présenter

I'm planning on introducing her to them

Sometimes, however, the verbs are so closely tied together that pronouns are placed before the first verb. This is the case with *faire*, *laisser* or verbs of perception such as *voir*, *entendre* etc. + an infinitive verb :

Il a fait rire les enfants ⇒ Il **les** a fait rire

He made the children laugh ⇒ He made them laugh

Je n'ai jamais entendu parler de ce livre ⇒ Je n'**en** ai jamais entendu parler

I have never heard of that book ⇒ I have never heard of it

1.3 Affirmative imperative sentences

In the affirmative imperative, however, pronouns come after the verb and are linked to it by a hyphen :

Tu veux du chocolat ? Prends-**en** !

Do you want some chocolate ? Take some !

Ce sera bientôt l'anniversaire de ta mère. Envoie-**lui** une carte !

It will soon be your mother's birthday. Send her a card !

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Note that in this case *moi* and *toi* are used instead of *me* and *te* (e.g. *écoute-moi* and *assieds-toi*). *Moi* and *toi* then align with *lui* and *leur* in terms of word order (*tu peux me le passer*, **but** *passe-le-moi*). The word order thus becomes :

imperative verb +		moi
	le	toi
	la	lui
	les	nous
		vous
		leur

Tu as trouvé ses clefs ? Donne-**les-lui** !
Did you find his keys ? Give them to him !
Tu as des photos ? Montre-**les-moi** !
Do you have some photos ? Show them to me !

Y and *en* as before come after the object pronouns above, but note that before *en*, *moi* reverts to *m'* and *toi* to *t'* :

Tu a du chocolat - Donne-**m'en** !
Do you have some chocolate ? Give me some !
Ils aiment la glace ? - Achète-**leur-en** !
Do they like ice-cream ? Buy them some !

Note also that in the second person, the verb *aller* and verbs ending in *-e* take an *-s* before the pronouns *y* and *en* : *vas-y !*, *achètes-en !* This is for reasons of sound.

1.4 Negative imperative sentences

In the negative imperative, however, pronouns come before the verb :

Ne les lui donne pas ! <i>Don't give them to him !</i>	Ne me les montre pas ! <i>Don't show them to me !</i>
Ne m'en donne pas ! <i>Don't give me any !</i>	Ne leur en achète pas ! <i>Don't buy them any !</i>

2 Le used as a neutral pronoun

2.1 When the object pronoun *le* is used to refer to parts of a sentence other than a noun, it is said to be a **neutral pronoun**. In this case it is often not translated by the equivalent neutral pronoun in English, *it*. The neutral pronoun *le* can refer to :

- **an adjective or complement :**

Autrefois Pierre était très timide, mais il ne l'est plus
Pierre used to be very shy, but he isn't any longer
Cet étudiant est plus doué que je ne l'ai d'abord cru
This student is more gifted than I first thought

- **a past participle :**

Elle vient d'être sélectionnée pour un prix : elle ne l'a jamais été auparavant
She has just been nominated for a prize : she never has been before

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- **a direct object clause :**

Je peux garder les enfants. Dites-moi si vous **le** voulez avant le week-end

I can look after the children. Tell me if you want me to before the week-end

2.2 Anticipating facts, ideas etc.

2.2.1 The object pronoun *le* is often used to anticipate a fact, idea, statement etc. when in English a pronoun is not normally used :

Comme vous **le** savez déjà

As you already know

Comme je vous l'ai déjà dit

As I have already told you

2.2.2 By contrast, sometimes the object pronoun *le* is not so used where the equivalent construction in English does use the pronoun *it* :

Je trouve difficile de m'installer ici

*I find **it** hard to settle down here*

Verb constructions acting like this include *trouver*, *juger* and *estimer* + adjective + *que*.

3 Disjunctive or stressed pronouns

These are : *moi, toi, lui, elle, nous, vous, eux, elles, soi*. They are used :

3.1 After prepositions

3.1.1 After all prepositions (except *à* and *de*) and the conjunction *comme*, to replace nouns referring to both people and things :

Pour un ancien soldat comme **lui**, ce n'est pas un problème

For a former soldier like him, it's not a problem

Ma carte de crédit ? Je ne sors jamais sans **elle** !

My credit card ? I never leave home without it !

3.1.2 After the preposition *à*

As outlined in Unit 29, nouns introduced by *à* are replaced by an indirect object pronoun if they refer to people, and by *y* if they refer to things. Note, however, that the emphatic pronoun is used to replace nouns referring to people in two cases :

- After pronominal (reflexive) verbs taking the preposition *à* :

Il a du mal à s'habituer à **ses nouveaux collègues**

⇒ Il a du mal à s'habituer à **eux**

He's having problems getting used to his new colleagues / to them

- After certain verb constructions such as *penser à*, *songer à*, *rêver à*, *être à*, *faire attention à*, *avoir affaire à*, *tenir à*, *faire appel à* :

Elle pense beaucoup à **son frère**

⇒ Elle pense beaucoup à **lui**

She thinks of her brother / of him a lot

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3.1.3 After the preposition *de*

Here the emphatic pronoun is used to replace nouns referring to people :

Est-ce que tu te souviens de **lui** ? - *Do you remember him ?*

3.2 When a pronoun is emphasized or contrasted (see also Unit 56) :

Moi, je n'en sais rien - *I don't know anything*

Non, c'est ton avis à **toi** - *No, that's your opinion*

Il ne fait rien, **lui** - *He doesn't do anything*

Vous êtes à un bout de la maison, **eux** à l'autre

You're at one end of the house, they're at the other

3.3 When a pronoun is separated from the verb by another word or expression :

Moi aussi, je les ai vus

I saw them as well

Lui seul le savait

He alone knew

3.4 When a pronoun is the only word in a sentence :

Qui a parlé ? - **Moi** - *Who spoke ? Me*

3.5 When a pronoun is used with *et*, *où* or *ni* :

Pierre et **moi** avons décidé d'acheter une nouvelle voiture

Pierre and I have decided to buy a new car

3.6 When a pronoun stands as the antecedent of a relative clause :

Lui qui était normalement si courageux

He who was usually so courageous

3.7 When a pronoun is used after *il y a*, *c'est* or other complements of *être* :

Il n'y a que **moi** dans la salle

There's only me in the room

C'est **moi**

It's me

Ce n'est pas **eux** qu'il cherche

It's not them he's looking for

Je ne suis pas **toi**

I am not you

3.8 When a pronoun is an indirect object pronoun used after an imperative (see section 1.3 above).