

Preface

The main goal of this book is to explain pronominal alternations such as those in (1).

- (1) a. In this reply, the present authors (= the writers of the reply) attempt to defend ourselves/themselves against the scurrilous charges which have been made.
- b. Your Majesty should praise yourself/herself.
- c. Every one of us thinks we/they are a genius.
- d. I am a teacher who takes care of myself/himself.
- e. Would Your/Her (= addressee) Majesty like her tea on the veranda?
- f. This reporter (= speaker) and his son are proud of ourselves/themselves.

In all cases, two pronominal forms are possible, each with the same antecedent.

For example, in (1a), the reflexives *ourselves* and *themselves* have *the present authors* as antecedent. Furthermore, the alternation is not accompanied by differences in truth conditions. In each case in (1), the two versions mean the same thing. Apart from the extensive study by Kratzer (2009) (which is relevant to (1d); see chapter 15), we are unaware of any studies on any of the alternations in (1). In fact, the phenomena in question seem to have been little discussed in the voluminous descriptive grammars of English.

We will argue that it is possible to understand all these pronominal alternations in the same way. In each case, a pronominal can agree in ϕ -features with its immediate antecedent, or with some distinct DP (which we dub a *secondary source*) syntactically related to its immediate antecedent. (Here and throughout, we use either of the terms *pronoun* or *pronominal* to refer to both reflexive and nonreflexive pronouns.)

The syntactic approach we adopt in this book is quite informal. We make reasonably precise theoretical assumptions but mostly without attempting to embed them in any fixed theoretical framework. At certain points, however, we

do indicate how various claims could be represented internal to specific theoretical views. Although it is unusual, we believe the approach adopted here is not without merits. That view is based on our shared perception that syntactic knowledge at this stage of inquiry is in general extremely limited. Most areas of research provide at best small patches of understanding surrounded by, and intertwined with, large territories of mystery, even for languages as intensely studied as English, and a fortiori for every other language on earth. We believe this characterization is true of even well-studied domains (e.g., English island phenomena or passives); it is doubly so in any virgin territory. Relevantly, the subject dealt with here seems to have gone largely unstudied—in fact, largely unnoticed.

While this is apparently the first real exploration of the terrain in question, we argue that it is nonetheless possible to reach some solid syntactic conclusions. But it is inevitable that research on what has up to now been a mostly invisible syntactic domain should not be expected to yield a fully worked-out, explicit syntactic account. Those points that can be established with some justification inevitably trail off in many directions into puzzles and questions that cannot yet be firmly answered. Given this situation, if one were to insist on a fully worked-out, explicit account, one would make it impossible to present those partial results that are achievable.

Thus, the partially informal approach adopted in most of this book serves three ends. First, it permits us to present observations and generalizations that we believe any explicit account would have to incorporate, while minimizing arbitrary decisions and technical assumptions that the facts themselves do not justify. Second, it permits us to describe our results in terms that neither of us would independently advocate but that we both find adequate enough to suggest the kind of account we would like to see developed. Third, we hope that the sort of lingua franca terms used in most of the book will permit readers with a wide range of theoretical viewpoints to grasp the minimal generalizations already achieved and to focus on lines of research needed if one is to go beyond the limitations of the present account.