

Reflexive pronouns in subject position

Consider the following sentences.

'Nice job. Who did this?' 'Myself and Jane.

Do you think 'myself' is correctly used in the above sentence?

Words like 'myself', 'yourself', 'himself', 'herself' etc., are reflexive pronouns.

The reflexive pronouns are used when the object of the verb refers to the same person as the subject.

Consider the sentence given below.

He cut himself shaving.

Here the subject and the object refer to the same person, so instead of writing '*He cut him shaving*', we write '*He cut himself*'.

The poor widow killed herself. (NOT The poor widow killed her.)

She quickly established herself as a writer.

Reflexive pronouns are also used for emphasis.

He dressed the wound himself.

Here the reflexive pronoun 'himself' is not the object of the verb. It is merely used for emphasis and can be removed from the sentence without causing any grammatically. It is therefore called an emphatic pronoun.

The minister himself announced this.

An emphatic pronoun can go immediately after the noun it emphasizes or it can go after the verb.

So, for example, you can write:

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I heard this myself. OR I myself heard this.

He cooked the dinner himself. OR He himself cooked the dinner.

In expressions like 'myself and John', the reflexive is used in the subject position. While this is not exactly considered as correct or standard, in some varieties of English, it is very common.

For example, in Irish English, the reflexives are often used in the subject position.

Interestingly, in Irish English, the first person reflexive 'myself' can go before second and third person pronouns.

In 'standard' English, however, first person pronouns go after second and third person pronouns.

The reflexive is used in the subject position in some other varieties of English as well. So you may also hear sentences like:

John and myself went to the park.

Myself and my family live in this house.