

Episode 2 - Transcript

Speaker 1 (00:00.706)

Hello and welcome to Unscripted English. I'm Kit.

And I'm Lawton. Nice to be with you guys again. Welcome to the second episode of Unscripted English. We are happy to be joining you again today. And today we have, I think, a very interesting topic that as English language learners, I think many of you will be interested in. Kit, do you want to introduce the topic?

Yeah, so today we are talking about personal pronouns. And you might be thinking, personal pronouns, that's one of the first things that we learn in English. You said you're not catering towards beginners. Why are we talking about personal pronouns? And we're talking about personal pronouns because if you are aware of a lot of, you know, Western culture and discussions going on right now, you might have heard about them before.

But if not, you might have no idea. And that is because there is a movement these days to be a bit more mindful about what sort of pronouns we use towards people. And a lot of people are choosing new pronouns that you might not be familiar with. So I wanted to do a talk about that. So I guess for this episode...

Lawton's just going to give us a quick reminder of what a pronoun is and what a personal pronoun is, your basic stuff, and then I'm going to lead a discussion on how we're using personal pronouns now, how discussions around them are changing, and what sort of new pronouns you might hear. So Lawton, do you want to start us off?

Speaker 2 (01:47.982)

Sure, yeah, I'll just give, like Kit said, a very quick rundown of the pronouns that we use in English and just some standard usages. And then I'll pass back over to Kit. So of course, the pronouns in English, as I'm sure you're all aware, are I, you, he, she, it, we, and they. One interesting usage of you.

in English that I think some non-native speakers do struggle with a little bit is that in English we have a usage of the word you that is called the generic you and this is when in a conversation you use the pronoun you but

It doesn't mean you literally the person you're speaking to it means kind of people in general. So we often use you when talking in generalities like that. So just to give a very basic example, you might say something like, if you want to get in shape, you might want to start exercising.

So in that sentence I used you a couple of times and it's never really meant to address the listener directly necessarily. It's more kind of general advice and so the you is really just meant to be anybody. So that's a very common usage of the word you in English that I think speakers of some languages that don't have the generic you may struggle with from time to time.

But other than that, think everybody who is listening to this podcast or watching this video is going to already have a pretty strong grasp of the pronouns in English. So I will go ahead and pass it back over to Kit. So, yeah, Kit, why don't you tell us more about how pronouns are being used today in a way that is maybe different than they have been used in the past?

Speaker 1 (04:01.72)

Thanks, Lawton. So there's something in English that you might hear more often these days that you probably haven't learned in class. And that is the question, what are your pronouns? And for some people, that might be a bit confusing. Even a lot of native English speakers might get a bit confused that someone's even asking that. They might be like, what do you mean?

And so the reason why we're beginning to ask that question a lot more is because in English, personal pronouns are used depending on the gender identity of the person that they reference.

So, generally we're taught when you're talking about someone who is female, you refer to that person as she her. When you're talking to someone who's male, you say he him. Or if you're talking about more than one person, you use they them. Now, the problem with this is that not everyone simply identifies as male or female, right? You might not.

feel like a man or a woman. so for those people, those people might choose to use a different pronoun, right? And then even for people who do identify who is a man or is a woman, there are cases, know, our markers of gender, how we show our gender identity and expression, it's different from person to person.

it's different in different countries and culturally and so this means that sometimes it might be hard to necessarily look at someone and think immediately and immediately know what pronouns they might prefer and how they identify if they sort of have a mix of ways that they are presenting that you're not sure exactly

Speaker 1 (06:07.404)

what they prefer, right? So that might be a little confusing and complicated to talk about, but let's talk about it simply with some examples. So for example, Lawton, what are your pronouns?

Yeah, so I do use the he, him pronouns as somebody might guess looking at me. Kit, what about you?

So me, I use they them pronouns. And that's sort of why I wanted to tackle this topic really early in our podcast, just so that our listeners know that I prefer to use they them pronouns and I prefer more gender neutral language to describe myself in general. I identify not as a man.

or as a woman, but I identify as non-binary is the term.

Non non-binary that's I think a very useful word to know when talking about for this discussion when talking about Talking about identity. So I should say as as a co-host and you know, a very close friend of

Speaker 2 (07:25.228)

Kit, that I will definitely be doing my best to always use they them pronouns, but I do want to go ahead and apologize in advance if I ever do use the wrong pronouns. That is definitely not intentional and I invite Kit to correct me and I will, you know, happily take that correction and correct myself. But just in case I happen to use them incorrectly, please let me know.

I will, thank you, Lotton. And part of the reason that is sort of tricky is obviously number one, because a lot of people would look at me, my face, my hair, and think like, that's a girl, and refer to me as she her. So I'm aware that the way I look sort of...

looks a certain way, right, differently than how I might present. And so that's why I try to be conscious of telling people that actually know I'm non-binary and I use they them pronouns. And also it is relatively new. I haven't used they them pronouns for my entire life. It's something that has really only become a more viable option in the past several years, I would say.

And so when I first met Lawton, I was not using they, pronouns. I had never met anyone who used they, them pronouns or heard of anyone who did that. I didn't know it was an option, right? I felt very stuck. So even just in the time I've known Lawton, I've sort of been able to learn more about myself and my identity and tell people how I want to be talked about. So again,

Yeah, a lot of people like Lotton as well who knew me before I used they them pronouns are in the habit of using she her so that's why you might hear people mix it up sometimes too. If any of our listeners have any questions like that I'm happy to answer in the comments. But getting back to sort of the pronoun bit and how we talk about the pronouns

Speaker 1 (09:44.428)

The big thing that I hear and I think a lot of people hear most often when they hear they, them pronouns referring to one person is that, isn't that grammatically incorrect?

And I think we think that, right, because in school, excuse me, in school and probably in your English classes, that's what you're taught, right? Is if it's one person, you use she or him. If it's multiple people, you use they, them. But in actual spoken English, in actual practice, that's not always the case. And to give you an example,

say that Lawton and I are with a group of friends hanging out at a cafe. Lawton leaves and I see his phone on the table so I say to one of our other friends, look Lawton forgot his phone, right? I say his because I know it's Lawton's. In a different scenario, maybe a couple of our friends get up to go someplace and it's just me and Lawton and I see a phone on the table.

but I don't know whose phone it is. In that case, I might say, look, someone forgot their phone. And that's a very common use case of there, where I'm talking about one singular person, but I don't know this person's gender. I don't know which of our friends forgot their phone, but I know one friend did. So,

It is still a bit more unusual to hear it when you're talking about one person who you know that person. But because there is such a large use case for using they, them to refer to one singular person, I think that's why a lot of non-binary people have really embraced the pronouns they, them. And that's why I like them as well. It's...

Speaker 1 (11:56.288)

a little awkward maybe at first for people to get used to, but once you get used to it, it's pretty seamless and it sounds pretty natural because it's already used in English that way.

Yes, right, exactly. Do you want to tell us a little bit more about neo pronouns? That's something that I have to say that I am almost entirely unfamiliar with, if I'm honest. So

maybe you can give us some information on it and then yeah, I might have some questions for you.

Sure, so neopronouns basically, not all non-binary people use they them pronouns. So some people choose different pronouns. They just want to make up a completely new pronoun instead of using she, he, or they, right? And I have to say, and these are called neopronouns, and I have to say that I am also not

expert on neo pronouns. I personally do not use them and I don't know personally very many other people who do, but I know that there are people who do. So some of I think the most famous examples of neo pronouns that I have heard are zizim or zizer. That's either with an X at the beginning or with a Z at the beginning.

It just sort of depends on the person. I think they're pronounced the same though the X and the Z And so basically you would use those the same way you would use any other pronoun So for example with the phone. look Kai forgot zur phone is How you would use that? Yeah

Speaker 2 (13:34.766)

Okay.

Speaker 1 (13:58.38)

And again, there are other examples as well. I'm not an expert on neo pronouns, but Lawton, did you have any other questions about those that maybe I can answer?

Well, I think one question that our viewers might have is along the lines of like,

you know, hey, I'm just a language learner here. you know, how can I keep track of all of these pronouns? You know, I thought this was an easy part of the language that I already had down. You know, now you guys are telling me to use they, them for individual people. And there's these neo pronoun things that you guys don't even know that much about. Like,

you know, what should I, what can I do here? What should I do? What would you say to that kid?

I would say, first of all, not to stress about it too much. Like I said, it's perfectly acceptable these days to, if you're not sure what pronouns someone uses to ask, what are your pronouns, right? And so that's a very easy way then to just know, okay, this person uses these pronouns and you can sort of practice yourself. And if you mess up, generally people are gonna be nice about it.

never met anyone who got super upset about people mixing up pronouns. I personally don't get offended either. I know that it is tricky to get the hang of. And so if you're uncertain, first of all, just ask the person you're talking to. And I'd say secondly too, as a non-native English speaker, I think a lot of people know that

Speaker 1 (15:44.212)

not all different languages even have gendered pronouns. Korean, for example, is a language where there is no way... you don't really ever say he or her in any way.

Yeah, I guess technically you have $\frac{\square}{\square}$ and $\frac{\square}{\square}$, but you would never say that in spoken language. think you do see it written sometimes, but yeah, for sure you don't have commonly used pronouns in the way that we have them in English and most Germanic and Romance languages.

Right, so I mean if you're from one of those, if you're one of those language speakers too who, where your language doesn't even use any gendered pronouns and even he and she might get mixed up in different scenarios, again I think a lot of times people are gonna be understanding of that, that you're a non-native English speaker and that it just takes practice to get used to.

Absolutely. And for any listeners who maybe are themselves non-binary and who are looking for some additional resources in English, we will try to include some links and some references to potentially some other YouTube channels where non-binary

individuals are talking about their life and the way they identify because yeah, I think that it's important to be able to find your community. So, you know, we definitely want to be providing those types of resources to any of our listeners, you know, who are themselves non-binary or in any way, you know, not conforming with a typical concept of gender.

Speaker 1 (17:37.868)

Yes, and I think that's one of our core values in this too. Lotton and I, know we're going to get a wide range of different people from different cultures and different backgrounds and we really want this to be a space of learning and a space that is welcoming.

you know, don't... Yeah. Absolutely. No matter what, I want to say you're safe here with us. We will do our best ourselves to understand and we hope that you do the same to us.

Yes, I think as a

As a channel, we will probably refrain from diving too deeply into most political issues. We don't want to necessarily make this a political channel. However, I think that for both of us, as Kit said, it's critical that we are accepting of people from all different identities and walks of life. And we want all of our listeners here to feel safe. And that is something

that we will definitely stand for and stand behind. So yeah, we hope that you do.

Speaker 1 (18:57.016)

So maybe just to wrap up, think we did a good job of kind of asking questions sort of in the middle as they came up. But was there anything else that you wanted to talk about or wanted to ask, Lawton, before we wrap it up?

I think we covered most of my questions actually. think that, if any of our listeners have questions, then please feel free to leave those in the comments. We would be happy to respond as best we can. Kit probably would be the better one to respond in this case. But yeah, we're always happy to respond to questions and yeah, we can always do a follow-up episode in the future to dive into it a little bit more deeply. And I think it would be interesting to hear more about

your experience, being a non-binary person living as an expat. That's a very specific life experience to have. So I think that would be interesting for us to dive into some more in the future.

Absolutely, so leave us your questions and let us know what else you'd be interested in hearing us talk about. And thanks for joining us on this second episode.

Yeah, thanks so much everybody. We will see you again soon. Bye bye.

Speaker 1 (20:13.57)

Bye bye.