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[PRONOUNS – DEBUNKING MYTH 4]

Hello all!

Let us debunk the final myth in this series of fact revealing articles! ☺



MYTH **4**

ANTECEDENT SHOULD ALWAYS APPEAR BEFORE THE RESPECTIVE PRONOUN.

SOURCE OF THIS MYTH

This could have emerged from a misinterpretation of the word “antecedent” (which literally means something that comes before).

LET’S DEBUNK THIS MYTH

Once again, we need to keep in mind that the only underlying principle behind pronoun usage is that “There should be a unique noun to which the pronoun can refer and the reference should be logical.” The position of the noun doesn’t matter. (Even though we call it an antecedent).

Simple Example 1: Although ***it*** is a big firm, ABC Corporation rarely recruits from top colleges.

Observe there is only one possible antecedent “ABC Corporation” for the pronoun “it”.

Although **it** is a big firm, **ABC Corporation** rarely recruits from top colleges.

Therefore **the pronoun “it” unambiguously refers to “ABC Corporation”**, even though the pronoun “it” appears before the noun “ABC Corporation”.

Simple Example 2: *Despite the excitement in **his** life, Sherlock Holmes retired to the Sussex Downs to take up beekeeping.*

Observe that there is only one singular masculine noun in this sentence.

Despite the excitement in **his** life, **Sherlock Holmes** retired to the Sussex Downs to take up beekeeping.

Therefore **the pronoun “his” refers to the noun “Sherlock Holmes”** and the sentence is grammatically correct, even though the pronoun “his” comes before the antecedent “Sherlock Holmes”.

This is because the only underlying principle (as we have seen already) in pronoun usage is “A pronoun should have only one Logical Antecedent.” The position of the antecedent is irrelevant.

Official Sentence 1: ***His** studies of ice-polished rocks in his Alpine homeland, far outside the range of present-day glaciers, led Louis Agassiz in 1837 to propose the concept of an age in which great ice sheets existed in what are now temperate areas. (OG13 #72)*

This is an official sentence where the pronoun precedes the antecedent. **The pronoun “his” properly and unambiguously refers to the noun “Louis Agassiz”.**


His studies of ice-polished rocks in his Alpine homeland, far outside the range of present-day glaciers, led **Louis Agassiz** in 1837 to propose the concept of an age in which great ice sheets existed in what are now temperate areas.

This sentence once again reiterates that the placement of antecedent doesn't matter and that the underlying principle of pronoun usage is "A pronoun should have only one Logical Antecedent."

Official Sentence 2: *As **its** sales of computer products have surpassed those of measuring instruments, the company has become increasingly willing to compete for the mass market sales it would in the past have conceded to rivals. (OG12 #07)*

This is a correct official sentence.

*As **its** sales of computer products have surpassed those of measuring instruments, the **company** has become increasingly willing to compete for the mass market sales it would in the past have conceded to rivals.*



The pronoun "its" unambiguously refers to the noun "company". (Observe that there are no other singular nouns in the sentence).

FACT TO BE NOTED



“Sometimes the best need not appear first!”
The antecedent need not appear first.

“A pronoun should have only one Logical Antecedent”.

TAKEAWAYS

We have now reached the end of this long series of myth debunking articles. Let us now recap the gist of this whole series.



Take Away

A pronoun should have only one logical antecedent.

1. A pronoun **can** refer to a faraway noun.
2. A pronoun **can** refer to a noun in another clause.
3. A pronoun **can** refer to a noun inside a prepositional phrase.
4. A pronoun **can** appear before an antecedent.

I hope this article helps you guys in understanding the meaning of a sentence quickly and without any ambiguity.

Cheers!! 😊

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P.S: *We'll soon come up with an article which presents a framework to evaluate the usage of pronouns in a sentence.*

EXERCISE

In each of the following sentences, try to identify if the pronoun usage is correct and the possible logical antecedent(s) for each pronoun.

- Once they had seen the report from the medical examiner, the investigators had no doubt that the body recovered from the river was that of the man who had attempted to escape from the state prison.*
- The gyrfalcon has survived a close brush with extinction; its numbers are now five times greater than when the use of DDT was sharply restricted in the 1970s*
- The White Tiger of the Snow Capped Everest Mountain prefers to stay inside caves because it has inadequate fur to protect itself from the freezing climate of the Himalayan region.*

- iv. *The White Tiger is nicknamed “the Lightning” because **it** moves very quickly.*
- v. *The increase in the vulnerability of an average user to malicious attacks didn’t escape the notice of Computer Security Experts who say that **it** might be due to the onset of the much feared intelligent virus “AvaNova”, the IQ of which exceeds 170.*