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Language Reference

UNIT 4 | Pronouns *it, this, that*

Referring backwards

It, *this*, and *that* can be used to refer back to something that has just been mentioned.

All three words can refer back to a person or thing, a situation, or a thought / idea / proposition, etc.

*He said the greater the risk, the greater the potential reward. **This** might well be true.*

*Here's our prototype. **It** gives a pretty good idea of what we hope to make.*

*John was arguing for cuts in the R&D budget. **That's** the last thing we need.*

Emphasis - I

_It_ is used for neutral reference: as a simple way of continuing the discussion, without giving special emphasis to the information being referred to.

- _There's also a subsidised canteen. **It's** OK, but no better than in most companies._

Emphasis - II

__This__ and *__that__* are more often used to add emphasis to the information: they draw our attention to what has just been said.

- *And we have a gym exclusively for staff. __That's__ one of the best things about working here.*

Emphasis - III

<u>*This*</u> in particular is used when there is something new or especially relevant about the information introduced.

- *Finally, there's our final salary pension scheme. **<u>This</u>** has been praised throughout the industry.*

Reference - I

In sentences where several things are mentioned, **_it_** is usually used to refer to the main topic, whereas **_this_** I **_that_** more often refer to the last topic mentioned.

- *There's a meeting in the Kennedy Suite. **It's** very important and could go on for hours, (it = the meeting)*
- *There's a meeting in the Kennedy Suite. **That's** on the third floor, by the lifts, (that = the Kennedy Suite)*

Reference - II

Generally, ***this*** refers to things that are near to us (in space, in time, or conceptually - thought of as close and relevant); ***that*** refers to things we think of as more distant.

- *Carlos asked about the depreciation of the dollar. **This** will affect us all, he said.*

- *Carlos asked about the depreciation of the euro. **That** was unlikely in the foreseeable future, Kate answered.*

He, she, they, these, those - I

When we are referring to a person mentioned in the previous sentence, **_he_** or **_she_** is used in the same way as **_it_**.

- *Heather was the first of the candidates to be interviewed.* **_She_** *was very impressive.*

He, she, they, these, those - II

When the information referred to has a plural form, **_they_** is used instead of **_it_**, **_these_** instead of **_this_**, and **_those_** instead of **_that_**.

- *We discussed several options during the brainstorming sessions. **They** were all considered impractical, though.*

- *We discussed several options during the brainstorming sessions. **These** were quite good fun, by the way, but hard work.*

New information

This can refer forward to new information. We do not use **_that_** or **_it_** in this way.

- *Craig isn't a great team player. **This** is his main problem, though — his lack of creativity, (refers forward to the new information about his lack of creativity)*

- *Craig isn't a great team player. **That's** his main problem, (refers back to the information about the fact that he is not a great team player)*

Even when **_this_** is used to refer to old information, there is always a sense that what we are going to say about it is new.

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