

REFLEXIVE PRONOUN

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Kendi is a reflexive and emphatic form that refers back to the subject or highlights the identity of a participant. It behaves like a noun, takes possessive suffixes and case markers, and appears in both strictly reflexive and purely emphatic usages.

1. Form and Morphology

1.1. Base form and possessive paradigm

The lexical base is kendi.

With possessive suffixes it forms a complete person paradigm:

- kendim – myself
- kendin – yourself (sg)
- kendisi – himself / herself / itself (kendi + (s)i)
- kendimiz – ourselves
- kendiniz – yourselves (pl/formal)
- kendileri – themselves; also polite singular in some registers

These forms are the basis for reflexive and emphatic uses.

1.2. Case marking

Case suffixes attach after the possessive suffix.

Accusative:

- kendimi, kendini, kendisini, kendimizi, kendiniz, kendilerini

Dative:

- kendime, kendine, kendisine, kendimize, kendinize, kendilerine

Ablative:

- kendimden, kendinden, kendisinden, kendimizden, kendinizden, kendilerinden

Locative:

- kendimde, kendinde, kendisinde, kendimizde, kendinizde, kendilerinde

Genitive (less frequent in A2 use):

- kendimin, kendinin, kendisinin, kendimizin, kendinizin, kendilerinin

2. Reflexive function

In the reflexive function, kendi + possessive marks that the object or oblique argument is identical to the subject.

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Examples:

- Kendimi tanıyorum. (I know myself.)
- Kendini korudu. (He/She protected himself/herself.)
- Kendimizi savunduk. (We defended ourselves.)
- Kendinizi suçlamayın. (Do not blame yourselves.)
- Kendilerini hazırladılar. (They prepared themselves.)
- Kendisine dikkat ediyor. (He/She takes care of himself/herself.)

Reflexive marking can appear on direct objects, indirect objects or postpositional complements, depending on verb valency.

3. Emphatic function

In the emphatic function, *kendi* highlights the participant, without necessarily encoding reflexivity. Both the bare form and the possessive forms can be used for emphasis.

3.1. Bare emphatic *kendi*

Bare *kendi* (without possessive suffix) often follows or precedes the subject and emphasizes that no other participant is involved.

Examples:

- Bunu kendi yaptı. (He/She did this himself/herself.)
- Kararı kendi verdim. (I made the decision myself.)
- Çantayı kendi taşıdı. (He/She carried the bag himself/herself.)
- Soruyu kendi çözdü. (He/She solved the question personally.)

3.2. Emphatic *kendi* + possessive

Possessive forms of *kendi* can also serve emphatic purposes, especially in subject position or immediately after the subject.

Examples:

- Ben kendim yaptım. (I myself did it.)
- O kendisi söyledi. (He/She said it personally.)
- Biz kendimiz geldik. (We came ourselves.)
- Siz kendiniz karar verdiniz. (You yourselves made the decision.)
- Onlar kendileri seçtiler. (They chose themselves.)

In these cases the sentence need not be reflexive in the strict sense; the function is to foreground the subject.

4. Emphatic possession: *kendi* + possessed noun

Kendi can precede a possessed noun to signal that the noun belongs specifically to that referent and not to someone else. The possessive suffix appears on the noun, not on *Kendi*.

Pattern:

- *kendi* + [noun + possessive]

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Examples:

- kendi evim – my own house
- kendi kararın – your own decision
- kendi planları – his/her own plans

In clausal context:

- Kendi evimde kalıyorum. (I stay in my own house.)
- Kendi kararını verdi. (He/She made his/her own decision.)
- Kendi planlarını uyguladı. (He/She implemented his/her own plans.)

5. Syntax and distribution

- Position: Reflexive *kendi* typically appears in object or oblique position; emphatic *kendi* often appears adjacent to the subject or before the emphasized constituent.
- Agreement: Person reference is encoded via possessive suffixes on *kendi* or via possessive suffixes on the following noun in emphatic possession.
- Politeness: *kendileri* may function as a polite singular referring to a respected person, especially in formal or written registers.

Examples

- Kendimi iyi hissediyorum. (I feel well myself.)
- Kendini tekrar etti. (He/She repeated himself/herself.)
- Kendimizi tanıttık. (We introduced ourselves.)
- Bunu kendim yaptım. (I did this myself.)
- Kararı kendi verdi. (He/She made the decision personally.)
- Kendi evine gitti. (He/She went to his/her own house.)
- Çocuklar kendilerini savundu. (The children defended themselves.)
- O kendisi geldi. (He/She came in person.)

Notes

- Reflexive interpretation arises when *kendi* + possessive is co-referential with the subject.
- Emphatic uses may employ either bare *kendi* or possessive forms such as *kendim*, *kendisi*.
- In emphatic possession, *kendi* precedes a possessed noun and does not itself carry a possessive suffix.
- *kendileri* functions both as third person plural reflexive and as a polite singular form in appropriate contexts