Episode 037 – Grammar

1. Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs are verbs whose object is the same as the subject. The object is called a reflexive pronoun.

Example:

\[ Er \ wäscht \textbf{sich} \, \textit{nicht} \, \textit{mehr}. \]

Many verbs can be used reflexively or non-reflexively with an accusative object. In German these are called "unecht" or "false" reflexive verbs.

Examples:

\[ Er \ wäscht \textbf{sich} \, \textit{nicht} \, \textit{mehr}. \quad \text{–} \quad Er \ wäscht \textit{die Hände} \, \textit{nicht} \, \textit{mehr}. \]
\[ Er \ kämmt \textbf{sich} \, \textit{nicht} \, \textit{mehr}. \quad \text{–} \quad Er \ kämmt \textit{seine Haare} \, \textit{nicht} \, \textit{mehr}. \]

Other verbs, however, are exclusively reflexive. Such verbs cannot be used without the reflexive pronoun. Nor can the reflexive pronoun be replaced by another pronoun or noun. In German these are called "echt", or "true", reflexive verbs.

Examples:

\[ \textit{Beeil dich!} \]
\[ \textit{Ich beeile mich}. \]
2. Reflexive pronouns in the accusative and dative cases

German reflexive pronouns are a category of pronouns that always refer back to the subject. Truly reflexive verbs cannot be used without their reflexive pronouns, which are usually in the accusative. Other verbs can be used in a reflexive and non-reflexive way, so the reflexive pronoun requires the dative and is replaced by an accusative object.

The reflexive pronouns take the same forms as personal pronouns. The only exception is in the 3rd person singular and plural, which has its own form: "sich".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronoun</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>Dative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich</td>
<td>wasche</td>
<td>mir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du</td>
<td>wäschst</td>
<td>dir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er/Sie/Es</td>
<td>wäscht</td>
<td>die Hände.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir</td>
<td>waschen</td>
<td>uns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihr</td>
<td>wascht</td>
<td>euch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie</td>
<td>waschen</td>
<td>sich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example sentences:
- Ich wasche mich.
- Du wäschst dich.
- Er/Sie/Es wäscht sich.
- Wir waschen uns.
- Ihr wascht euch.
- Sie waschen sich.