

You and I and Lady Gaga's bad grammar

Heidi Stevens, *The Chicago Tribune*

August 22, 2012

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-tribu-words-work-me-i-20120822-story.html>

It's tempting to blame [Lady Gaga](#) for our poor grammar, but it just seems like piling on.

Christina

[Aguilera](#) blames her for poor album sales. And I still blame her for that meat dress—an image that's painfully, permanently seared into my brain.

So while it's true that the pop star's song "You and I" should, in the interest of proper use of personal pronouns, be "You and Me," it's also true that the problem hardly originates with her.

"Is there any possibility that you will write something about the use of I /me?" writes Barbara B. Davies. "So many supposedly intelligent people will use me as the subject. (Me and my girlfriends are going out to dinner.) Yikes!"

"When," Davies implores, "did this become acceptable?"

Long before Lady Gaga sang, "You and I. You, you and I, baby. I'd rather die without you and I."

As Peter Lee points out on his [Hooks and Harmony](#) blog, [Bryan Adams](#) sang "But that'd change if she ever found out about you and I" in "Run to You." Queen sang "I'd like for you and I to go romancing" in "Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy." And Eric Carmen sang "I feel the magic between you and I" in "Hungry Eyes."

You can probably think of a song or 14 to add to that list. We can accept a certain amount of poor grammar in our [pop songs](#), though, especially when they make way for a rhyme. The me versus I problem really became

pronounced with Facebook photo sharing.

"Please write a column (re)educating people on the correct use of 'I' and 'me,' especially when captioning Facebook photos," writes a fan (and fellow Tribune worker) on Words Work's own Facebook page. "It's driving me insane. I'll repost it a million times over, promise."

Here goes:

"I" is the subject of a sentence or clause. ("I am going to the Lady Gaga concert.")

"Me" is the object of a sentence or clause. ("Can you take me to the Lady Gaga concert?")

The errors usually slip in when a sentence has more than one object. The word "me" just plain *sounds* wrong to some people. So you get sentences like "Can you take Jessica and I to the Lady Gaga concert?" (Wrong.) Or Facebook captions like, "Matt surprised Jessica and I with Lady Gaga tickets!" (Wrong again.)

To check whether you're using the correct pronoun, try the sentence without the other noun. "Can you take I to the Lady Gaga concert?" (Sounds as wrong as it is.) "Matt surprised I with Lady Gaga tickets!" (You get the idea.)

A couple of phrases introduce an extra layer of confusion.

- First: Is it "better than I" or "better than me"? That depends on the meaning of the sentence.

"Jessica likes Lady Gaga better than I" is correct if you mean "Jessica likes Lady Gaga more than I like Lady Gaga."

"Jessica likes Lady Gaga better than me" is correct if you mean "Jessica likes Lady Gaga more than she likes me."

•Second: Is it "between you and me" or "between you and I"? Me is the object of the preposition "between," so "between you and me" is correct.

Between you and me, Lady Gaga is far more entertaining than Christina Aguilera. Meat dress and all.

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