

## Pronouns, Agreement, and Clitics

### 1. Possible subjects, direct objects, and indirect objects

Subjects (SUBJs), direct objects (DOs), and indirect objects (IOs) may be pronominal or non-pronominal. ‘Non-pronominal’ examples include full noun phrases (consisting of a noun and perhaps, some other stuff):

- |     |  |                               |
|-----|--|-------------------------------|
| (1) | El chico sabe la respuesta.<br>The boy knows the answer.                         | SUBJ = <i>el chico</i>        |
| (2) | La estudiante leyó un artículo.<br>The student read an article.                  | DO = <i>un artículo</i>       |
| (3) | Marta mandó una carta a los estudiantes.<br>Marta sent a letter to the students. | IO = <i>a los estudiantes</i> |

If SUBJs, DOs, and IOs are pronominal, they may either be *salient*, in which case they show up as overt pronouns, or they may be *non-salient*, in which case they are realized as the silent pronoun *pro*. Generally, only humans may be realized as overt pronouns; non-human pronominals are usually only realized as *pro*. SUBJ overt pronouns are slightly different from DO and IO overt pronouns.

SUBJ overt pronouns			DO and IO overt pronouns	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
1st	<i>yo</i>	<i>nosotros</i>	<i>mí</i>	<i>nosotros</i>
2nd	<i>tú</i>	<i>ustedes</i>	<i>tí</i>	<i>ustedes</i>
3rd	<i>ella, él</i>	<i>ellas, ellos</i>	<i>ella, él</i>	<i>ellas, ellos</i>

- |     |   |                               |
|-----|---|-------------------------------|
| (4) | a. <i>Ella</i> leyó el artículo.<br>She read the article.                               | overt SUBJ pronoun            |
|     | b. <i>pro</i> leyó el artículo.<br>She read the article.                                | non-overt SUBJ <i>pro</i>     |
|     | c. <i>pro</i> está en la mesa.<br>It's on the table.                                    | <i>pro</i> for non-human SUBJ |
| (5) | a. Marta lo conoce a él.<br>Marta knows him.  | overt DO pronoun              |
|     | b. Marta lo conoce <i>pro</i> .<br>Marta knows him.                                     | non-overt DO <i>pro</i>       |
|     | c. Marta lo leyó <i>pro</i> .<br>Marta read it.   | <i>pro</i> for non-human DO   |
| (6) | a. Marta le mandó una carta a él.<br>Marta sent a letter to him.                        | overt IO pronoun              |
|     | b. Marta le mandó una carta <i>pro</i> .<br>Marta sent him a letter.                    | non-overt IO <i>pro</i>       |
|     | c. El jardinero le quitó las hojas <i>pro</i> .<br>The gardener took the leaves off it. | <i>pro</i> for non-human IO   |

## 2. Agreement and Clitics

Verbs agree in person and number with all subjects, whether the subject is pronominal, non-pronominal, silent, or overt; this agreement is manifested as a person/number suffix on the finite verb:

- (7) *Los estudiantes sabe-n* la respuesta.                      verb agrees w/ overt non-pronominal subject  
*The students know-3pl* the answer.
- (8) *Ellos sabe-n* la respuesta.                                      verb agrees w/ overt pronominal subject  
*They know-3pl* the answer.
- (9) *pro sabe-n* la respuesta.                                        verb agrees w/ silent pronominal *pro*  
*They know-3pl* the answer.
- (10) *pro está-n* en la mesa.                                        verb agrees w/ silent, non-human pronominal *pro*  
*They (inanimate) are-3pl* on the table.

Clitics can be considered to be agreement markers on the verb. Thus, verbs agree with DOs and IOs by means of clitic-agreement. However, in some contexts, clitic-agreement is obligatory, in some contexts it is optional, and in some contexts it is not allowed. DOs and IOs use slightly different clitic paradigms:

	DO clitics		IO clitics	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
1st	<i>me</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>nos</i>
2nd	<i>te</i>	<i>las, los</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>les</i>
3rd	<i>la, lo</i>	<i>las, los</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>les</i>

Clitics come before finite verbs, but after non-finite verbs:

- (11) a. Marta *lo<sub>i</sub>* está leyendo *pro<sub>i</sub>*.    *lo* comes before finite verb (subscripts indicate agreement)  
 b. Marta está leyéndolo<sub>i</sub> *pro<sub>i</sub>*.    *lo* comes after non-finite verb  
 Marta is reading it.

Clitic agreement is obligatory if the DO or IO is pronominal (whether overt or *pro*):

- (12) a. Marta *lo<sub>i</sub>* conoce a *él<sub>i</sub>*.                                      clitic-agreement w/ overt pronominal DO  
 b. \* Marta conoce a *él*.    clitic-agreement obligatory  
 Marta knows *him*.
- (14) a. Marta *lo<sub>i</sub>* conoce *pro<sub>i</sub>*.                                      clitic-agreement w/ silent DO *pro*  
 b. \* Marta conoce.    clitic-agreement obligatory  
 Marta knows *him*.
- (15) a. Marta *le<sub>i</sub>* mandó la carta a *él<sub>i</sub>*.                              clitic-agreement w/ overt pronominal IO  
 b. \* Marta mandó la carta a *él*.                                      clitic-agreement obligatory  
 Marta sent the letter *to him*.
- (16) a. Marta *le<sub>i</sub>* mandó la carta *pro<sub>i</sub>*.                              clitic-agreement w/ silent IO *pro*  
 b. \* Marta mandó la carta *pro*.                                      clitic-agreement obligatory  
 Marta sent the letter *to him*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (16b) is grammatical with a different meaning: ‘Marta sent the letter.’

In some dialects, clitic agreement is optional, but preferred, with non-pronominal human IOs, but obligatory with non-pronominal, non-human IOs:

- (17) a. Marta  $le_i$  mandó la carta a Curro $_i$ .            clitic-agreement w/ non-pronominal, human IO.  
 b. ? Marta mandó la carta a Curro.            clitic-agreement optional, but preferred  
 Marta sent the letter to Curro.
- (18) a. El jardinero  $le_i$  quitó las hojas al árbol $_i$     clitic-agreement with non-pronom, non-human IO  
 b. \* El jardinero quitó las hojas al árbol    clitic-agreement obligatory  
 The gardener took the leaves off the tree.

In most dialects, clitic-agreement is impossible with all non-pronominal DOs:

- (19) a. \* Marta  $lo_i$  conoce a Curro $_i$ .            no clitic-agreement w/ non-pronominal, human DO  
 b. Marta conoce a Curro  
 Marta knows Curro.
- (20) a. \* Pedro  $lo_i$  leyó el libro $_i$ .            no clitic-agreement w/ non-pronominal, non-human DO.  
 b. Pedro leyó el libro.  
 Pedro read the book

Finally, a verb may have both DO and IO clitics. In these cases, the IO clitic comes first:

- (23) a. Marta  $me_i la_j$  mandó  $pro_j$  a mí $_i$ .  
 b. Marta  $me_i la_j$  mandó  $pro_j pro_i$ .  
 c. \* Marta  $la_j me_i$  mandó  $pro_j pro_i$ .  
 Marta sent  $it_j$  to  $me_i$ .

When the IO clitic is 3rd person (*le* or *les*), it changes to *se* when it co-occurs with a 3rd person DO clitic. This is known as the “spurious-*se*”:

**Spurious-se Rule:**  $le(s)+\{la(s), lo(s)\} \rightarrow se+\{la(s), lo(s)\}$

- (25) a. Marta  $se_i la_j$  mandó  $pro_j$  a Curro $_i$ .            spurious-*se*  
 b. \* Marta  $le(s)_i la_j$  mandó  $pro_j$  a Curro $_i$ .  
 Marta sent  $it_j$  to her/him/them $_i$ .