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), and sometimes, embedded clauses:

(1) a. El chico sabe la respuesta.  
\textit{The boy knows the answer.}  
SUBJ = el chico

b. Que Curro sabe la respuesta nos sorprendió.  
\textit{That Curro knows the answer surprised us.}  
SUBJ = que Curro sabe la respuesta

(2) a. La estudiante leyó un artículo sobre rección y ligamiento.  
The student read an article aon Government and Binding.

b. Curro sabe que Pilar leyó el artículo.  
Curro knows that Pilar read the article.

(3) a. Marta mandó una carta a los estudiantes.  
Marta sent a letter to the students.

b. it is not clear whether or not embedded clauses may act as IOs

IO = a los estudiantes

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJ emphatic pronouns</th>
<th>DO and IO emphatic pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>tú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>ella, él</td>
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</tbody>
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(4) a. Ella leyó el artículo.  
\textit{She read the article.}  
emphatic SUBJ pronoun

b. pro leyó el artículo.  
\textit{She read the article.}  
non-emphatic SUBJ pro

c. pro está en la mesa.  
\textit{It’s on the table.}  
obligatory pro for non-human SUBJ

(5) a. Marta lo conoce a él.  
Marta knows him.  
emphatic DO pronoun

b. Marta lo conoce pro.  
Marta knows him.  
non-emphatic DO pro

c. Marta lo leyó pro.  
Marta read it.  
obligatory pro for non-human DO
1 There is some dialect variation with respect to the 3rd person clitics. In most of Spain, Paraguay, and Equador (other places?), the masculine DO clitic is le(s) instead of lo(s), when referring to human males. This is known as leísmo. In Northern Spain, the feminine IO clitic for human females is la(s) instead of le(s). This is known as laísmo. Notice that someone who is both a leísta and a laísta (e.g., someone from Burgos) would not distinguish between human direct and indirect objects. The distinction would be only one of gender.
Clitics come before finite verbs, but after non-finite verbs:

(12) a. Marta lo, está leyendo pro,  lo comes before finite verb
    b. Marta está leyéndo pro,  lo comes after non-finite verb
       Marta is reading it.

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

(13) a. Marta lo, conoce a él,       clitic-agreement w/ overt pronominal DO
    b. * Marta conoce él.           clitic-agreement obligatory
       Marta knows him.
(14) a. Marta lo, conoce pro,      clitic-agreement w/ silent DO pro
    b. * Marta conoce.             clitic-agreement obligatory
       Marta knows him.
(15) a. Marta le, mandó la carta a él, 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, mandó la carta pro, clitic-agreement w/ silent IO pro
    b. * Marta mandó la carta pro.  clitic-agreement obligatory
       Marta sent the letter to him.

In some dialects, clitic agreement is optional with non-pronominal IOs (whether human or not):

(17) a. Marta le, mandó la carta a Curro, clitic-agreement w/ non-pronominal, human IO
    b. Marta mandó la carta a Curro. clitic-agreement optional
       Marta sent the letter to Curro.
(18) a. El jardinero le, quitó las hojas al arbol, clitic-agreement with non-pronominal, non-human IO
    b. El jardinero quitó las hojas al arbol clitic-agreement optional
       The gardener took the leaves off the tree.

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

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

2 (16b) is grammatical with a different meaning: ‘Marta sent it.’
However, in Argentina, clitic-agreement is optional with *human*, non-pronominal DOs, but not with non-human DOs: ³

**Argentinean Spanish**

(21) a. Marta _lo_ conoce _a Curro_. clitic-agreement w/ non-pronominal, human DO  
    b. Marta conoce _a Curro_. clitic-agreement optional

   Marta knows Curro.

(22) a. * Pedro _lo_ leyó _el libro_. 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_, _la_ mandó _pro_, _a mí_.  
    b. Marta _me_, _la_ mandó _pro_, _pro_.
    c. * Marta _la_, _me_ mandó _pro_, _pro_.  
       Marta sent _it_ to _me_.

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_, _la_ mandó _pro_, _a Curro_. spurious-*se*  
    b. * Marta _le(s)_ , _la_ mandó _pro_, _a Curro_.  
       Marta sent _it_ to _her/him/them_.