

A LITTLE ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION OF PRONOUNS AND SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT
by Neill Chaffin

The three types of pronouns you need to learn first in Spanish are:

NOMINATIVE(SUBJECT)

<i>yo</i>	I
<i>tù</i>	you (familiar)
<i>Ud.</i>	you (formal)
<i>èl</i>	he
<i>ella</i>	she
<i>nosotros-as</i>	we
<i>vosotros-as</i>	you (familiar pl.)
<i>Uds.</i>	you (formal pl.)
<i>ellos-as</i>	they

These pronouns are also used as objects of prepositions except for: *yo=mi* and *tu=ti*

You will notice that, unlike English, there are several ways of saying “you”. You use “tù” among your friends and family. You use “Usted(Ud.)” for your teacher, boss, strangers. “Vosotros” is the plural of “tù”, but only in Spain and certain parts of South America. “Ustedes(Uds.)” is the plural of “Usted(Ud.)” and also of “tù” in Latin American Spanish. You will also notice, unlike in English, that “Ud.” and “Uds.” are third-person pronouns, sharing the verb form with “he”, “she”, and “they”. **There is no “it” in Spanish: everything is a “he” or a “she”, even inanimate objects.**

Notice the gender endings (os/as) for the pronouns: “ellos” is *they* masculine, “ellas” is *they* feminine, “nosotros” is *we* masculine, “nosotras” is *we* feminine, etc. Mixed groups use the masculine pronoun.

Pronoun arrangement for reference:

first person

I/we (*yo/nosotros-as*)

second person

you (familiar) (*tù/vosotros-as*)

third person

he/she/it/they/you formal

(*èl/ella/ellos/ellas/Ud./Uds.*)

Again, note that in Spanish *you formal*, that is *Ud.* and *Uds.*, are considered third-person pronouns and share the same verb form with the other third-person pronouns.

REFLEXIVE

<i>me</i>	myself
<i>te</i>	yourself (familiar singular)
<i>se</i>	yourself (formal), himself, herself, itself
<i>nos</i>	ourselves
<i>os</i>	yourselves (familiar plural)
<i>se</i>	yourselves, themselves

Again, there is no “it” and therefore no “itself” in Spanish, but there is in English, so this is given for translating purposes.

Many verbs that are not reflexive in English *are* reflexive in Spanish, so the reflexive pronouns are used a lot more.

I comb my hair.

Yo me peino el pelo.

(I comb myself the hair)

I get up.

Yo me levanto.

(I get myself up.)

Sometimes the reflexive is used for the passive voice in Spanish:

Spanish is spoken here.

Aquí se habla español.

(Spanish speaks itself here.)

It may seem confusing that “se” can mean so many things, but you have to remember that the antecedent of the reflexive will be known, either in speech or in writing. Thus, the meaning of “se” will be clear.

The reflexive pronoun does not in any way affect subject/verb agreement. Thus:

Yo levanto.

Yo me levanto.

Ella cae.

Ella se cae

Ellos cepillan.

Ellos se cepillan.

Whether reflexive or not, the verb inflections (endings) say the same.

POSSESSIVES

my/mine

mi, mis, mío, mía, míos, mías

your/yours (familiar singular)

tu, tus, tuyo, tuya, tuyos, tuyas

your/yours (formal singular)

su, sus, suyo, suya, suyos, suyas

his/her/hers/its

su, sus, suyo, suya, suyos, suyas

our/ours

nuestro, nuestra, nuestros, nuestras

your/yours (familiar plural *vosotros*)

vuestro, vuestra, vuestros, vuestras

your/yours (formal plural)

su, sus, suyo, suya, suyos, suyas

their/theirs

su, sus, suyo, suya, suyos, suyas

The possessive pronouns (adjectives) in Spanish must agree with the antecedent **and** in gender and in number with the word modified.

mi libro = my book

mis libros = my books

El libro es mío = The book is mine

Los libros son míos = The books are mine

mi silla = my chair

mis sillas = my chairs

La silla es mía = The chair is mine

Las sillas son mías = The chairs are mine

Èl tiene su libro = He has his book

Èl tiene sus libros = He has his books

El libro es suyo = The book is his

Los libros son suyos = The books are his

Ella estudia su lección = She studies her lesson

Ella estudia sus lecciones = She studies her lessons

La lección es suya = The lesson is hers

Las lecciones son suyas = The lessons are hers

Nosotros comemos nuestra manzana = We eat our apple

Nosotros comemos nuestras manzanas = We eat our apples

You will notice that “*su/sus, etc.*” can mean many things, but the meaning will be clear from context either in speech or in writing.

Just as in English, a verb in Spanish must agree with the subject. In Spanish this is somewhat more complicated, since it is a more highly inflected language. That is to say, there are more inflectional forms of a verb. In English, for the present tense of the verb “walk”, there are just two inflectional forms: “walk” and “walks”. In Spanish there are six. Look at the following comparison:

I walk	first person singular
you walk	second person singular/plural
he, she, it walks	third person singular
we walk	first person plural
they walk	third person plural

You will note that there is no difference between “you singular” and “you plural” in English. This is the reason for such colloquial terms as “ya’ll”, “you all”, and “yous”. It is a way of distinguishing between “you singular” and “you plural”.

“First person” means the person doing or saying something.
 “Second person” is the person talked to.
 “Third person” is the person talked about or described.

Since there are only two inflectional endings in English, it is essential to use the subject, be it a noun or a pronoun. You can’t just say “thinks about the problem”. Who is thinking about the problem? The only time the subject is omitted in English is when giving a command. “Turn in the assignment” means “You turn in the assignment.” The subject of every imperative/command in English is “you” understood/implied.

SAMPLE CONJUGATION OF “ANDAR” (TO WALK)
(for present indicative tense, drop the AR ending and add:)

yo (I) and o	first person singular
tù (you) and as	second person familiar singular
Ud. (you) and a	third person singular
èl (he/it) and a	third person singular
ella (she/it) and a	third person singular
nosotros-as (we) and amos	first person plural
vosotros-as (you) and ais	second person familiar plural
Uds. (you) and an	third person plural
ellos-as (they) and an	third person plural

Again, notice that *you formal* (Ud. and Uds.) are considered third person in Spanish, not second person as in English. Thus, they share the same verb form with *he, she, and they*. You can see that it is not always necessary to use the subject in Spanish. “Ando” can only mean “I walk”. “Andamos” can only mean “we walk”. Thus, it is not necessary to use “yo”, “tù”,

IRREGULAR VERBS

As noted above, even if a verb is irregular in some way, the inflectional endings of AR/ER/IR verbs, that is all verbs, will be the same, except perhaps in the first person singular. Look at the following examples in the present indicative tense:

TENER

yo	tengo
tù	tienes
Ud./èl/ella	tiene
nosotros-as	tenemos
vosotros-as	tenèis
Uds/ellos-as	tienen

and the verb is a “stem-changer”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *o, es, e, emos, eis, and en.*

DAR

yo	doy
tù	das
Ud./èl/ella	da
nosotros-as	damos

While the first person singular is irregular,

“vosotros”, or “nosotros”. It **is** necessary to use the subject with third person, since they share the same verb form.

For the present indicative tense:

ALL second person familiar singular verbs end in “**as**” or “**es**”.
 ALL second person familiar plural verbs end in “**ais**”, “**èis**”, or “**is**”.

ALL third person singular verbs end in “**a**” or “**e**”.

ALL third person plural verbs end in “**an**” or “**en**”.

ALL first person plural verbs end in “**amos**”, “**emos**”, or “**imos**”.

MOST first person singular verbs end in “**o**”; a few don’t.

Those exceptions: *soy, doy, estoy, voy, sè*

SER : soy, eres, es, somos, sois, son

SABER: sè, sabes, sabe, sabemos, sabeis, saben

AR/ER/IR INFINITIVES

All infinitives in Spanish end in AR, ER, or IR. For regular verbs, the present indicative tense endings are as follows:

	<u>AR</u>	<u>ER</u>	<u>IR</u>
yo	o	o	o
tù	as	es	es
Ud./èl/ella	a	e	e
nosotros-as	amos	emos	imos
vosotros-as	ais	èis	is
Uds./ellos-as	an	en	en

Look at the following examples of regular AR, ER, and IR infinitives. Note that the infinitive ending is dropped and the inflectional ending are added to the remaining stem:

	<u>ANDAR</u>	<u>COMER</u>	<u>SUBIR</u>
yo	ando	como	subo
tù	andas	comes	subes
Ud./èl/ella	anda	come	sube
nosotros-as	andamos	comemos	subimos
vosotros-as	andais	comèis	subis
Uds/ellos-as	andan	comen	suben

While the first person is irregular and does not end in “o”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *as, a, amos, ais, an.* The accent on “ais” is omitted in this verb

IR

yo	voy
tù	vas
Ud./èl/ella	va
nosotros-as	vamos
vosotros-as	vais
Uds./ellos-as	van

Uds./ellos-as saben

While the first person singular is irregular, and does not end in “o”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *es, e, emos, èis, and en.*

CONOCER

yo	conozco
tù	conoces
Ud./èl/ella	conoce
nosotros-as	conocemos
vosotros-as	conocèis
Uds./ellos-as	conocen

While the first person is irregular and does not end in “o”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *as, a, amos, ais, an.*

Ir is also irregular in that it conjugates as an AR verb. Again, though, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *as, a, amos, àis, an.* The accent on “ais” is omitted in this verb.

ESTAR

yo	estoy
tù	estàs
Ud./èl/ella	està
nosotros-as	estamos
vosotros-as	estàis
Uds./ellos-as	estàn

While the first person singular is irregular, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *o, es, e, emos, èis, and en.*

While the first person is irregular and does not end in “o”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *as, a, amos, àis, an.*

Note, with this particular verb, there are accent marks.

HACER

yo	hago
tù	haces
Ud./èl/ella	hace
nosotros-as	hacemos
vosotros-as	hacèis
Uds./ellos-as	hacen

While the first person is irregular, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *o, es, e, emos, èis, en.*

VENIR

yo	vengo
tù	vienes
Ud./èl/ella	viene
nosotros-as	venemos
vosotros-as	venis
Uds./ellos-as	vienen

While the first person singular is irregular, and the verb is a “stem-changer”, you will note the usual inflectional endings: *o, es, e, emos, èis, and en.*

SABER

yo	sè
tù	sabes
Ud./èl/ella	sabe
nosotros-as	sabemos
vosotros-as	sabèis

All subjects that are not pronouns are third person singular or plural:

*El gerente viene.
Los bomberos van.
Mis amigos tienen.
Las señoritas dan.
Sus hermanas saben.
El cocinero hace.*

Again, even if the first person singular is irregular and does not end in “o”, **all of the other inflectional endings will be predictable:**

<u>AR</u>	<u>ER</u>	<u>IR</u>
as	es	es
a	e	e
amos	emos	imos
àis	èis	is
an	en	en

Occasionally, as with IR and DAR, the accent mark for the second person familiar ending will be omitted: *ais* instead of *àis*.

THE REFLEXIVE “SE” ENDING

If a verb is reflexive, the infinitive form will have “se” appended to it:

PEINARSE
PONERSE
CAERSE
DESAPARECERSE
DESPERTARSE
LEVANTARSE

This does not change the inflectional endings. It simply means the reflexive pronoun will either precede the verb or be appended to it (we’ll cover this appended form later):

*Mi hermana se levanta.
Ellas se peinan el pelo.
El carpintero se cae.
Los niños se despiertan.
Yo me despierto.
Tù te pones.*

Notice that the inflectional endings are the same, despite the reflexive pronoun.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, these, and those* in English) are somewhat more complicated in Spanish because of gender agreement. There are also three “distances” in Spanish: here, there, and at a remote location. In English there are only two: here and there. **Accents are written when the demonstratives are used as pronouns, but not when used as adjectives to modify other words.** I have shown below the accented forms used as pronouns.

<i>èste</i>	this (masc)	<i>èstos</i>	these (masc)	use with “here”: <i>aquí/ahí</i>
<i>èsta</i>	this (fem)	<i>èstas</i>	these (fem)	use with “here”: <i>aquí/ahí</i>
<i>èse</i>	that (masc)	<i>èsos</i>	those (masc)	use with “there”: <i>allí</i>
<i>èsa</i>	that (fem)	<i>èsas</i>	those (fem)	use with “there”: <i>allí</i>
<i>aquèl</i>	that (masc)	<i>aquèllos</i>	those (masc)	use with “there”: <i>allà</i>
<i>aquèl</i> that (fem)		<i>aquèllas</i>	those (fem)	use with “there”: <i>allà</i>

Note: “èsto” and “èso” are used when the gender is unknown: i.e.: ?*Què es èsto?*

Look at the following examples of demonstratives used as adjectives:

Este libro aquí.	Estos libros aquí.	Esta silla aquí.	Estas sillas aquí.
Ese libro allí.	Esos libros allí.	Esa silla allí.	Esas sillas allí.
Aquel libro allá.	Aquellos libros allá.	Aquella silla allá.	Aquellas sillas allá.

Look at the following examples of demonstratives used as pronouns:

<i>Me gustan èsos.</i>	I like those.	<i>Quiero comprar èstos.</i>	I want to buy these.
<i>Aquèl es peor.</i>	That is worse.	<i>?Què es èso?</i>	What is that?

LESSON TWO: MORE ABOUT PRONOUNS

You have already learned about personal pronouns as subjects, about possessive pronouns as both adjectives and pronouns, and about reflexive pronouns. In this lesson you will be introduced to pronouns used as direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions.

Direct object pronouns are pronouns used as direct objects; that is, they receive an action from the subject via the verb. The direct object pronouns in Spanish are *me, te, le*, lo, la, nos, os, les*, los, and las*. The direct object pronouns come before the verb in Spanish. **Look at the following examples of direct objects:**

<i>Yo veo el perro.</i> I see the dog. <i>Yo lo veo.</i> I see it. <i>Ella bebe la leche.</i> She drinks the milk. <i>Ella la bebe.</i> She drinks it. <i>Recibimos las cartas.</i> We receive the letters. <i>Las recibimos.</i> We receive them. <i>Èl lava el carro.</i>	He washes the car. <i>Èl lo lava.</i> He washes it. <i>Yo amo a María.</i> I love Maria. <i>La amo.</i> I love her. <i>Uds. quieren dinero.</i> You (pl) want money. <i>Uds. lo quieren.</i> You want it. <i>Oigo el ruido.</i> I hear the noise.	<i>Lo oigo.</i> I hear it. <i>Comemos el tocino.</i> We eat the bacon. <i>Lo comemos.</i> We eat it. <i>Escribimos los poemas.</i> We write the poems. <i>Los escribimos.</i> We write them. <i>El gato come el ratòn.</i> The cat eats the rat. <i>El gato lo come.</i> The cat eats it.
---	---	--

***LE and LES: “Le” and “Les” are included below in the list of indirect object pronouns. Many textbooks do not mention them as direct object pronouns. However, in Latin-American Spanish, they are often used as direct object pronouns, “le” meaning “you formal singular” and “les” meaning “you formal plural”.**

Yo le veo a Ud.
I see you.(singular)
Yo les veo a Uds.
I see you. (plural)

Note that when a direct object is a person, you must use “a” before the direct object pronoun: *Yo amo a María; Ella ve a su papà.* To make a sentence negative, put “no” in front of the pronoun: *No lo comemos. No la veo.*

The indirect object pronouns are used as indirect objects. They are *me, te, nos, le, and les*. Note that *le* and *les* are both masculine and feminine. Therefore, a prepositional phrase often is used along with *le* and *les*. *Le* and *les* are often used even if the noun that is the indirect object is in the sentence. (Se” is a replacement for both “le” and “les”. You will learn about this in the section on double object pronouns. **Look at the following examples of indirect objects:**

<i>Tomas me habla.</i> Thomas speaks to me.	<i>El gato nos mira.</i> The cat looks at us.	<i>El bombero nos muestra el camión.</i> The fireman shows us the truck.
<i>Ellos les cantan a sus mamàs.</i> They sing to their mothers.	<i>Ella no te dice nada.</i> She doesn't tell you anything.	<i>Ella me dice un cuento interesante.</i> She tells me an interesting story.
<i>La profesora nos enseña la lección.</i> The teacher teaches us the lesson.	<i>El perro nos trae un conejo muerto.</i> The dog brings us a dead rabbit.	<i>Les cuezo huevos revueltos.</i> I cook them scrambled eggs.
<i>Le enviamos la carta a Juan.</i> We send John the letter.	<i>Èl le da un libro a su nieto.</i> He gives a book to his nephew.	<i>Yo le hablo a ella.</i> I talk to her.

Note the use of a **double negative** in *Ella no te dice nada* (literally, She doesn't tell you nothing.). This is perfectly acceptable in Spanish, but not in English. *No hay nadie aqui* (literally, There is not nobody here.). In English this would be *There isn't anyone here* or *There is nobody here*. Again, **Spanish commonly uses double negatives**. Again, **to make a sentence negative, put “no” in front of the pronoun:** *No les cuezo huevos revueltos. No le enviamos la carta a Juan.*

DOUBLE OBJECTS (DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT)

Sometimes you have both an indirect and a direct object. The indirect object will always come before the direct object. Both will come before the verb, except sometimes in the case of an infinitive, which will be explained shortly. To review:

Direct objects:		<i>los</i>	them	<i>Los queremos.</i>	We want them.		
<i>me</i>	me	<i>El me ve.</i>	He sees me.	<i>las</i>	them	<i>Las recibimos.</i>	We receive them.
<i>te</i>	you	<i>Ella te ama.</i>	She loves you.	*	<i>le/les</i> translate this way in Latin-American Spanish. In Spain, “le” can mean “him” when it refers to a person. “Le” and “les” are not used as “you” in the direct object sense in Spain. Even this varies from one part of the Spanish-speaking world to another.		
<i>le*</i>	you	<i>Yo le veo a Ud.</i>	I see you.				
<i>lo</i>	him/it	<i>Lo tomo.</i>	I take it.				
<i>la</i>	her/it	<i>El gato la mata.</i>	The cat kills it.				
<i>nos</i>	us	<i>El camarero nos sirve.</i>	The waiter serves us.				
<i>os</i>	--	<i>Yo os veo.</i>	I see you.(pl/fam)				
<i>les*</i>		<i>Yo les veo.</i>	I see you.(pl)				

Indirect objects:

<i>me</i>	me	<i>El me habla.</i>	He talks to me.
<i>te</i>	you	<i>Ella te mira.</i>	She looks at you.
<i>le/se</i>	him, her, you	<i>Yo le pienso.</i>	I think about you.
<i>nos</i>	us	<i>El gato nos viene.</i>	The cat comes to us.
<i>os</i>	--	<i>Yo os hablo.</i>	I talk to you.

les/se them, you *Ellos les cantan.* They sing for them.

Note that in the case of *le* and *les*, an explanatory phrase would usually be added: *Ellos les cantan para ellos.* *Yo le pienso en Ud.* “*Se*” will be explained below.

Here are some examples of **double object pronouns**:

Yo te/le envío la carta.

I send you(familiar)/you(formal) the letter.

Yo te/se la envío a ti/a Ud.

I send it to you.

Èl nos explica la lección.

He explains the lesson to us.

Èl nos la explica.

He explains it to us.

Manuel me muestra la vía.

Manuel shows me the way.

Manuel me la muestra.

Manuel shows it to me.

El gato nos trae el pàjaro.

The cat brings us the bird.

El gato nos lo trae.

The cat brings it to us.

Èl les da la información a ellos.

He gives them the information.

Èl se la da a ellos.

He gives it to them.

Note that when *le* or *les* is an indirect object in front of a direct object beginning with “**I**”, *le* and *les* change to “*se*” and an explanatory phrase is used. In fact, that is usually done anytime *le* or *les* is used, to avoid confusion. This is because *le*, *les*, and *se* can mean several things. “*Ti*” means to you (familiar). Again, it is very common to use both the pronoun and a prepositional phrase.

Sometimes you will use the infinitive form of a verb. These are the forms ending “**ar**”, “**er**”, or “**ir**”. They mean “to eat”, “to sleep”, “to walk”, etc. There are some important things to consider about the meaning of verbs in Spanish. In English there is a distinct difference between “I go to the store”, “I am going to the store”, and “I do go to the store”. In Spanish there typically is no difference. “I need to go to the store”, “I do need to go to the store”, or “I am needing to go to the store”, all become “Necesito ir a la tienda” in Spanish. “Necesito” is the first person singular form of the infinitive “necesitar”, which means “to need”. “Ir” is the infinitive form meaning “to go”.

Look at the following examples:

Tengo que ir a la escuela.

I have to go to the store.

Ella necesita enviar la carta.

She has to mail the letter.

Queremos hablar màs.

We want to talk more

Elena va a dar el regalo.

Elena is going to give the gift.

Vamos a comprar el carro.

We are going to buy the car.

La profesora quiere explicar la lección.

The teacher wants to explain the lesson.

When you use pronouns in a sentence that contains an infinitive, there are two ways of placing the pronouns. Whichever you use, however, if there is a double object, then the indirect object pronoun will always come before the direct object pronoun. The pronouns may be placed before the inflected verb form or attached to the end of the infinitive. **Look at the following examples:**

He wants to get the ball for me.

Èl me quiere sacar la pelota. Èl quiere sacarme la pelota.

He wants to get it for me.

Èl me la quiere sacar. Èl quiere sacàrmela.

She is going to teach me the song.

Ella me va a enseñar la canción. Ella va a enseñarme la canción.

She is going to teach it to me.

Ella me la va a enseñar. Ella va a enseñàrmela.

They ought to send me the book.

Ellos me deben enviar el libro.

They ought to send it to me.

Ellos me lo deben enviar. Ellos deben enviàrmelo.

She wants to send the letter to Mariela.

Ella quiere enviar la carta a Mariela.

She wants to send her the letter.

Ella le quiere enviar la carta a ella.

She wants to send it to her.

*Ella se la quiere enviar a ella. * Ella quiere enviàrsela a ella. **

Jorge needs to explain the problem to Juan.

Jorge necesita explicar el problema a Juan.

Jorge needs to explain the problem to him.

Jorge le necesita explicar el problema a èl.

Jorge needs to explain it to Juan.

Jorge lo necesita explicar a Juan.

Jorge needs to explain it to him.

Jorge se lo necesita explicar a èl. Jorge necesita explicàrselo a èl. **

Note that an explanatory prepositional phrase is used to clarify the meaning of “le” and “se”. Note that “se” replaces “le” when you have a double object where both objects start with “I”. See the starred (*) examples. Since the indirect object pronoun would be “le” and it comes before “la” or “lo”, then “le” must be replaced by “se”.

Note that an accent mark on the infinitive form often becomes necessary if you attach the double object pronouns to the infinitive. This preserves the natural accent or stress on the infinitive.