Pronominal Structure and the Third-Person Gap in Spanish

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1. Introduction

As illustrated in (1) with English and in (2) with Italian, there are languages that exhibit a paradigmatic gap in pronoun-noun constructions (Postal 1966; Abney 1987; Cardinaletti 1994; Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002; Panagiotidis 2002; Roehrs 2005; Bernstein 2008; Villa-García 2010; Höhn 2016, 2017; Ackema & Neeleman 2018; Höhn 2020).

(1)   a.   we linguists
      b.   you linguists
      c. *they linguists

(2)   a.   noi linguisti
      b.   voi linguisti
      c. *loro linguisti

The equivalent construction in Spanish requires the definite article between the pronoun and the noun, as in *nosotros los lingüistas*, which literally translates as 'we the linguists'. Still, as the data in (3) show, the third-person gap is also found in Spanish.

(3)   {nosotros / vosotros / ustedes / *ellos} los lingüistas
      we   you.PL   you.PL   they   the   linguists
      'we/you (informal)/you linguists'

In Spanish, as in many Romance languages, third-person pronouns and the definite article are remarkably similar in form: *él/ella/ellos/ellas* 'he/she/they/they (feminine)' and *el/la/los/las* 'the'. It therefore seems reasonable to venture that these elements occupy the same structural position, such as D. The issue with **ellos los lingüistas* 'they linguists' could then be attributed to the *-llos* component of *ellos* competing with *los* for D, as in (4).[1]

(4) *[$_{DP}$ *ellos/los* [$_{DivP}$ *lingüistas*]]

The problem with this view is that it does not rule out **ellos lingüistas* 'they linguists', which is ungrammatical as well, suggesting that a more nuanced account of the third-person gap in Spanish is warranted.

In this paper, I argue that pronouns that refer to discourse participants differ from those that refer to discourse nonparticipants in terms of how their internal structure is realized. While I focus on Spanish, the analysis that I develop can be extended to other languages that have a third-person gap. In section 2, I demonstrate that pronoun-noun constructions in Spanish are not instances of apposition even though they contain the definite article. In section 3, I introduce the claim that person and definiteness belong to different syntactic projections in Spanish based on the phenomenon of "unagreement", and in section 4, I motivate the representation of person features and honorificity that I adopt in my approach to pronominal

[1] I represent plural nouns as DivPs rather than as NumPs to maintain consistency with my work on the mass-count distinction, which builds on Borer's (2005) structural approach (Jambrović 2023, 2025, to appear).

structure. In section 5, I propose that each morpheme in third-person pronouns spells out a different head in the noun phrase and then illustrate how this account predicts the ungrammaticality of both *ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists' and *ellos lingüistas* 'they linguists'. In section 6, I expand the empirical domain by showing that third-person pronouns do not tolerate modification by restrictive relative clauses, and to explain this constraint, I contend that the heads that constitute third-person pronouns must be structurally adjacent, a configuration that prevents any other material from appearing in the noun phrase. In section 7, I summarize the main arguments and conclude.

2. Ruling out apposition

Given that constructions like *nosotros los lingüistas* 'we the linguists' include the definite article in Spanish, it is essential to consider whether they may consist of a pronoun and a definite description in apposition. Beyond the lack of a prosodic break in *nosotros los lingüistas*, one can discard the possibility of loose apposition on syntactic grounds. Adapting a diagnostic by Pesetsky (1978), the quantificational expression *algunos de* 'some of' only takes scope over the pronoun in (5a), whereas it takes scope over the pronoun as well as the noun in (5b).

(5) a. Algunos de nosotros, los lingüistas, estamos preocupados.
some of us the linguists are.1PL concerned
'Some of us, the linguists, are concerned.'

b. Algunos de nosotros los lingüistas estamos preocupados.
some of us the linguists are.1PL concerned
'Some of us linguists are concerned.'

It is not necessarily the case that all referents of *nosotros* 'us' in (5a) are linguists, but it is in (5b). This interpretational difference is responsible for the contrast in acceptability between (6a) and (6b), which differ only in the inclusion of prosodic breaks.

(6) a. Algunos de nosotros, los lingüistas, estamos preocupados por otros de nosotros,
some of us the linguists are.1PL concerned about others of us
los filósofos.
the philosophers
'Some of us, the linguists, are concerned about others of us, the philosophers.'

b. *Algunos de nosotros los lingüistas estamos preocupados por otros de nosotros los
some of us the linguists are.1PL concerned about others of us the
filósofos.
philosophers
Literal: 'Some of us the linguists are concerned about others of us the philosophers.'

As shown in (7), another difference between *nosotros, los lingüistas* 'we, the linguists' and *nosotros los lingüistas* is that only the former permits the addition of *todos* 'all'.

(7) a. Nosotros, todos los lingüistas, estamos preocupados.
we all the linguists are.1PL concerned
'We, all the linguists, are concerned.'

b. *Nosotros todos los lingüistas estamos preocupados.
we all the linguists are.1PL concerned
Literal: 'We all the linguists are concerned.'

Nor does *nosotros los lingüistas* pattern like *mis colegas los lingüistas* 'my colleagues the linguists', a close appositive where the presence of two determiners confirms that there are two DPs even if there is no prosodic break between them. Following Lawrenz (1993) and Höhn (2016, 2020), close appositives differ

from pronoun-noun constructions in that they permit the second element to consist of coordinated singular expressions, as shown in (8) with coordinated names and in (9) with coordinated definite descriptions.[2]

(8) a. Mis colegas   Pedro y Vilma son   profesores.
        my colleagues Pedro y Vilma are.3PL professors
        'My colleagues Pedro and Vilma are professors.'

    b. *Nosotros Pedro y   Vilma somos   profesores.
        we   Pedro and Vilma are.1PL professors
        Literal: 'We Pedro and Vilma are professors.'

(9) a. Mis colegas   el lingüista y   la filósofa   son   profesores.
        my colleagues the linguist and the philosopher are.3PL professors
        'My colleagues the linguist and the philosopher are professors.'

    b. *Nosotros el lingüista y   la filósofa   somos profesores.
        we   the linguist and the philosopher are.1PL professors
        Literal: 'We the linguist and the philosopher are professors.'

Taken together, the data in this section refute an analysis of *nosotros los lingüistas* based on either loose or close apposition.

3. Insights from unagreement

As Choi (2013, 2014) and Höhn (2016, 2017) observe, languages that use the definite article in pronoun-noun constructions allow for "unagreement", or the phenomenon in (10) where a nonpronominal expression appears with a first-person or second-person verb form (Hurtado 1985, Villa-García 2010, Ackema & Neeleman 2018).

(10) a. Los lingüistas somos   interesantes.
         the linguists are.1PL interesting
         Approximate: 'We linguists are interesting.'

     b. Los lingüistas sois   interesantes.
         the linguists are.2PL interesting
         Approximate: 'You (informal) linguists are interesting.'

While Choi and Höhn differ in the technical details of their proposals, both would concur that there are covert pronouns in (10) that are responsible for the form of the verb, as schematized in (11).

(11) a. $\varnothing_{[\pi, \text{PART, AUTH}]}$ los lingüistas somos   interesantes.
                             the linguists are.1PL interesting
         'We linguists are interesting.'

     b. $\varnothing_{[\pi, \text{PART}]}$ los lingüistas sois   interesantes.
                          the linguists are.2PL interesting
         'You (informal) linguists are interesting.'

From this perspective, the subjects in (10) are essentially pronoun-noun constructions with an unpronounced pronoun, one that can be made overt, as in (12).

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[2]It is, however, possible for pronouns to be followed by coordinated plural expressions: *nosotros los lingüistas y los filósofos* 'we the linguists and the philosophers'. In Jambrović 2025, I build on Sauerland's (2003) approach to number in coordinated structures to explain the contrast between this construction and the ungrammatical one in (9b).

(12) a.   (Nosotros) los lingüistas somos interesantes.
        we   the linguists are.1PL interesting
        'We linguists are interesting.'

   b.   (Vosotros) los lingüistas sois   interesantes.
        you.PL   the linguists are.2PL interesting
        'You (informal) linguists are interesting.'

The same account extends to apparent cases of unagreement that involve definite descriptions in object position. In (13), the possibility of the first-person clitic *nos* 'us' and the second-person clitic *os* 'you all (informal)' can be attributed to agreement with the optional stressed pronoun.

(13) a.   Siempre nos invitan   a   (nosotros) los lingüistas.
        always   1PL invite.3PL DOM us   the linguists
        'They always invite us linguists.'

   b.   Siempre os   invitan   a   (vosotros) los lingüistas.
        always   2PL invite.3PL DOM you.PL   the linguists
        'They always invite you (informal) linguists.'

I conclude, following Höhn, that the term "unagreement" is a misnomer. Pronoun-noun constructions can appear in subject and object position, and it is always the pronominal component that is responsible for first-person and second-person agreement, even if it is silent.

    In the remainder of this paper, I adopt Höhn's (2016, 2017) claim that person features are hosted by PersP, or πP, in languages that use the definite article in pronoun-noun constructions and permit so-called unagreement. I represent the essence of this proposal in (14) using *nosotros los lingüistas* 'we the linguists' and *vosotros los lingüistas* 'you (informal) the linguists'.

(14) a.

     b.

Since πP dominates DP in this approach, it reflects Ritter (1995: 421) view that "person implies definiteness, but definiteness does not imply person". Nevertheless, as Höhn (2020) remarks, this analysis does not predict the third-person gap in Spanish, at least if one assigns third-person pronouns to the same position as first-person and second-person pronouns. Given the structures in (14), there is no principled reason to rule out that of **ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists' in (15).

(15)

Another mystery is the grammaticality of *ustedes los lingüistas* 'you the linguists' despite the fact that *ustedes* 'you all' patterns like *ellos* 'they' in appearing with third-person verb forms, as shown in (16).

(16) {Ustedes / Ellos} son   lingüistas.
       you.PL   they   are.3PL linguists
       'You all/They are linguists.'

To address both issues, it is necessary to consider whether third person is different from the absence of person and how to represent honorificity in Spanish.

4. Person and honorificity in Spanish

In this section, I motivate the view that only pronominal expressions are marked for person (Bianchi 2006, Ackema & Neeleman 2018, Sichel & Wiltschko 2021, Sichel & Toosarvandani to appear). As the contrast in (17) indicates, plural nominal expressions can occur with any plural verb form in Spanish, but third-person plural pronouns cannot do so.

(17) a. Los lingüistas {somos / sois   / son}   interesantes.
         the linguists are.1PL are.2PL are.3PL interesting
         'We/You (informal)/The linguists are interesting.'

     b. Ellos {*somos / *sois   / son}   interesantes.
         they   are.1PL are.2PL   are.3PL interesting
         'They are interesting.'

If one were to attribute third-person agreement in (17a) to a covert pronoun, as in (18), it would be necessary to explain why this pronoun cannot be overtly realized: **ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists'.

(18) ∅$_{[π]}$ los lingüistas son   interesantes.
          the linguists are.3PL interesting
     'The linguists are interesting.'

If, on the other hand, definite descriptions lack πP altogether when they occur with third-person verb forms, one can instead appeal to failed agreement since third person is a morphological default (Bianchi 2006, Preminger 2014). As it turns out, there is further empirical support for the claim that nonpronominal expressions do not have person features.

In (19), I modify a diagnostic by Ackema & Neeleman (2018) to illustrate that the definite description *los filósofos* 'the philosophers' can be coreferential with any pronoun, whereas the third-person pronoun *ellos* 'they' cannot be.

(19) a. Tienes   que hablar con los filósofos   para aprender de   {nosotros / vosotros
         have.2SG   that speak with the philosophers for learn   from us   you.PL
         / ellos}.
           them
         'You have to speak with philosophers to learn from us/you all (informal)/them.'

     b. Tienes   que hablar con ellos para aprender de   {*nosotros / *vosotros / ellos}.
         have.2SG   that speak with them for learn   from us   you.PL   them
         'You have to speak with them to learn from them.'

This difference suggests that *ellos* has some type of person feature that *los filósofos* does not. In my analysis, I adopt the privative system in (20), following Sichel & Wiltschko (2021) and Sichel & Toosarvandani (to appear), and distinguish between pronominal and nonpronominal structures in Spanish through the presence versus absence of πP in (21).

(20) a. [π, PART, AUTH] First person
   b. [π, PART] Second person
   c. [π] Third person
   d. [ ] No person

(21) a. [πP$_{[PART, AUTH]}$ [DP]] First person
   b. [πP$_{[PART]}$ [DP]] Second person
   c. [πP [DP]] Third person
   d. [DP] Nonpronominal

The next issue to consider is the featural identity of *ustedes* 'you all', a pronoun that appears with third-person verb forms, like *ellos* 'they', but is not subject to the third-person gap.

In Jambrović 2025, I argue on the basis of Person Case Constraint effects that *usted* 'you (formal)' and *ustedes* 'you all' bear a [PART] feature at the level of syntax. The different orderings of the pronominal clitics in (22) reveals that third-person pronouns are not subject to this constraint, and if *usted* were syntactically third person as well, one would expect the same flexibility in (23), contrary to fact.

(22) Ella reconoce   a   los filósofos.
     she recognizes DOM the philosophers
     'She recognizes the philosophers.'

   a. ¿Quién se los   presentó?
      who   3 3PL.ACC presented.3SG
      'Who introduced them to her?'

   b. ¿Quién se la   presentó?
      who   3 3SG.F.ACC presented.3SG
      'Who introduced her to them?'

(23) Usted reconoce   a   los filósofos.
     you   recognizes DOM the philosophers
     'You (formal) recognize the philosophers.'

   a. ¿Quién se los   presentó?
      who   3 3PL.ACC presented.3SG
      'Who introduced them to you?'

   b. *¿Quién se la   presentó?
      who   3 3SG.F.ACC presented.3SG
      'Who introduced you to them?'

These types of data indicate that *usted* is syntactically second person, like *tú* 'you (informal)', hence its interpretation as a participant-denoting pronoun. To differentiate *usted* from *tú*, I resort to an [HON] feature on π, and to account for the agreement behavior of *usted*, I claim that this feature triggers the deletion of [PART] during the morphological component of the grammar. The corresponding impoverishment rule is given in (24), followed by the vocabulary items for *usted* and *tú* in (25).[3]

(24) [PART] → Ø / __ [HON] Morphology

(25) a. /us̺te̬d̺/ ↔ $\pi_{[HON, \text{P̶A̶R̶T̶}]}$
   b. /t̺u/ ↔ $\pi_{[PART]}$

In other words, the reason that *usted* occurs with third-person verb forms and clitics is that it loses its [PART] feature before it can serve as a goal for agreement.

As for the plural form *ustedes* 'you all', the analysis depends on the variety of Spanish under study. Peninsular Spanish maintains a distinction in formality between *vosotros* 'you all (informal)' and *ustedes* 'you all (formal)', so the impoverishment rule in (24) is sufficient. Latin American Spanish, on the other hand, uses *ustedes* in both formal and informal contexts, and in these varieties, I propose that [HON] is deleted at logical form in structures that contain a [PL] feature, as formalized in (26).

(26) [HON] → Ø / __ [PL] Logical form (Latin American Spanish only)

Considering that *usted* 'you (formal)' and *ustedes* are syntactically second person, the contrast between *ustedes los lingüistas* 'you the linguists' and **ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists' is less surprising than it may otherwise seem.

5. The structure of third-person pronouns

As mentioned in the introduction, third-person pronouns in Spanish are morphologically similar to the forms of the definite article: *él/ella/ellos/ellas* 'he/she/they/they (feminine)' and *el/la/los/las* 'the'. Other than palatalization, the only difference between the two elements is that the pronouns begin with a

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[3]See the appendix to Arregi & Nevins 2018 for a similar proposal that assumes binary features.

stressed *e*-.[4] I take this vowel to be the realization of π in third-person pronouns, which is consistent with the discussion in the previous section that only pronominal expressions bear person features. Moreover, I consider *-l/-ll-/l-*, which is the first segment that is common to third-person pronouns and the definite article, to occupy D. The question is where to assign the class markers *-o/-a* and the plural suffix *-s* in the case of the pronouns.

With a definite description like *los lingüistas* 'the linguists', it is clear that the *-o* and *-s* of *los* 'the' belong to D as gender and number concord and that the *-a* and *-s* of *lingüistas* 'linguists' belong to *n* and Div, respectively, as illustrated in (27).[5]

(27)
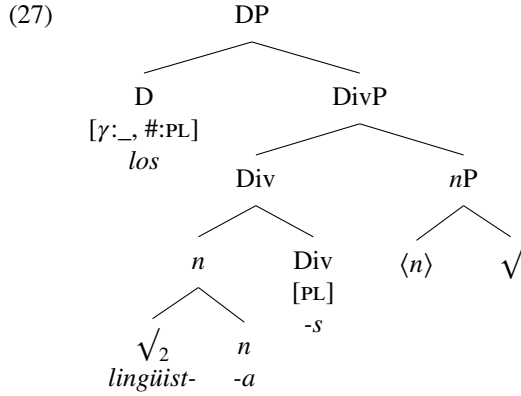
With the third-person pronouns *ellos* 'they' and *ellas* 'they (feminine)', however, one cannot narrow down the position of *-o/-a* and *-s* in the same way because these pronouns cannot appear together with nouns: **ellos/ellas lingüistas* 'they linguists'. Although it may be theoretically appealing to decompose *ellos/ellas* into *e-* in π and *-llos/-llas* in D, there are no data available to corroborate this analysis. Instead, I propose the alternative in (28), where there is a one-to-one correspondence between the segments and heads that constitute third-person pronouns.[6]

(28) a.   b.
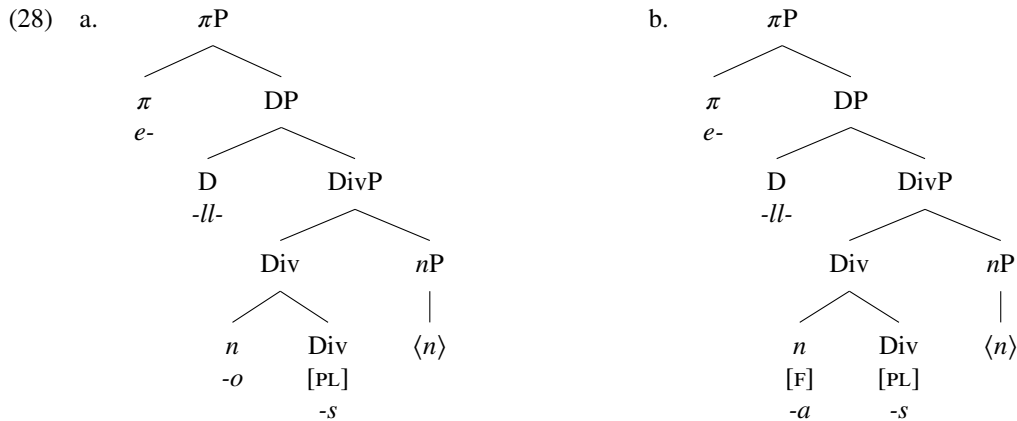
One reason to favor this approach is that it immediately rules out both **ellos lingüistas* and **ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists' since *n* and Div cannot simultaneously be realized as the *-o* and *-s* of *ellos* and as the *-a* and *-s* of *lingüistas*. Still, for this explanation to be tenable, it is necessary to justify the exceptional configuration in (28), which I do on phonological grounds.

In *el/la lingüista* 'the (female) linguist', the *e-* and *-a* of the definite article permit the syllabification of *-l/l-*, the exponent of definiteness. Similarly, in *los/las lingüistas* 'the (female) linguists', the *-o* and *-a*

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[4]For Harris (1991), the unstressed *e-* in *el* 'the' is epenthetic.

[5]In Jambrović 2025, I follow Panagiotidis (2019) in distinguishing between interpretable gender on AnimP and uninterpretable gender on *n* but abstract away from this issue here.

[6]In the absence of evidence that pronouns have roots in Spanish, I do not include $\sqrt{}$ in their structure.

of the definite article permit the syllabification of both *l-* and *-s*. In support of this point, consider that the definite article contracts with vowel-initial singular nouns but not with vowel-initial plural nouns in many languages that are closely related to Spanish, such as Catalan: *l'artista* 'the (female) artist' versus *els/les artistes* 'the (female) artists'. As for the third-person pronouns *ellos* 'they' and *ellas* 'they (feminine)', which are represented in (28) above, there is no need for gender concord on D since the *-o* and *-a* in *n* syllabify *-ll-* in D and *-s* in Div. Turning to the singular pronouns in (29), *él* 'he' does not require *n* to be overt because the *é-* in *π* syllabifies *-l* in D, and *-a* in *ella* 'she' arguably serves a semantic rather than phonological purpose.[7]

(29) a.

```
            πP
          /    \
        π       DP
        é-     /  \
             D     nP
             -l     |
                    n
                    ∅
```

b.

```
            πP
          /    \
        π       DP
        e-     /  \
             D     nP
            -ll-    |
                    n
                   [F]
                   -a
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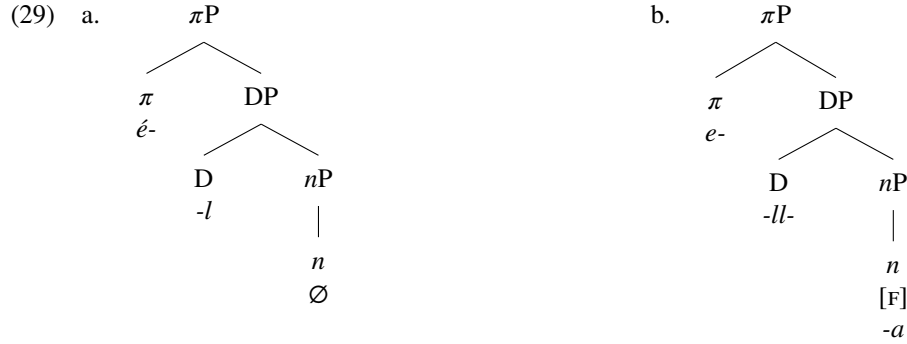
In the next section, I refine this proposal after demonstrating that the third-person gap extends to pronouns that are modified by restrictive relative clauses.

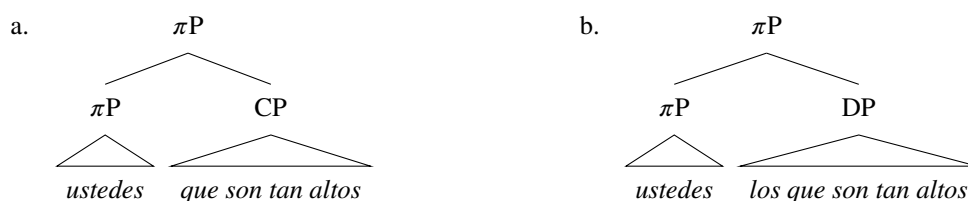## 6. Pronouns and (non)restrictive modification

The paradigm in (30) indicates that *tan* 'so', a degree modifier that favors a nonrestrictive interpretation, can only be included in the first three examples.

(30) a. Ustedes, que son   tan altos, deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
          you.PL   that are.3PL so tall   should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
          'You all, who are so tall, should sit further back.'

      b. Ustedes que son   tan altos deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
          you.PL that are.3PL so tall should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
          'You all who are so tall should sit further back.'

      c. Ustedes, los que son   tan altos, deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
          you.PL   the that are.3PL so tall   should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
          'You all, the ones who are so tall, should sit further back.'

      d. Ustedes los que son   (#tan) altos deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
          you.PL the that are.3PL so   tall should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
          Literal: 'You all the ones who are tall should sit further back.'

In the syntax and semantics literature, relative clauses that have nonrestrictive readings are typically considered to attach at a different level of the noun phrase than those that have restrictive readings. Given that nonrestrictive relative clauses do not narrow down the set of potential referents, it follows that they enter the derivation after D converts an *n*P or DivP predicate into a referential expression. More specifically, I assume that nonrestrictive relative clauses combine with the highest projection of the noun phrase, such as DP in definite expressions and *π*P in pronominal expressions. For instance, the nonrestrictive relative clauses in (30a) and (30b) can be represented as CPs that adjoin to *π*P, as in (31a), and the second element of the appositive construction in (30c) can be represented as a DP that adjoins to to *π*P, as in (31b).
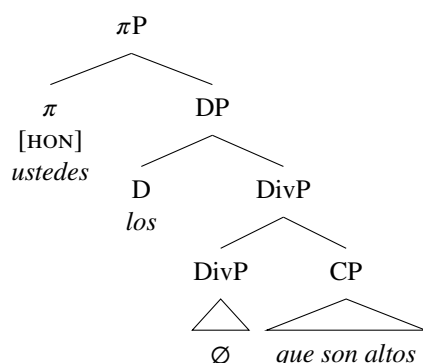
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[7]See Jambrović 2023, to appear for the claim that DivP does not project in definite nonplural structures and Jambrović 2025 for an analysis of the "neuter" pronouns *ello* 'it', *esto* 'this', *eso* 'that', and *aquello* 'that'.

(31) Nonrestrictive modification

a.
```
            πP
           /  \
         πP    CP
         /\    / \
     ustedes  que son tan altos
```

b.
```
            πP
           /  \
         πP    DP
         /\    / \
     ustedes  los que son tan altos
```

Restrictive relative clauses, however, do narrow down the set of potential referents, suggesting that they attach at a level below DP. Accordingly, one could assign *ustedes los que son altos* 'you all the ones who are tall' in (30d) the structure in (32), where DivP is not pronounced.[8]

(32) Restrictive modification

```
              πP
             /  \
            π    DP
         [HON]   / \
        ustedes D   DivP
               los   / \
                  DivP   CP
                  /\     / \
                  ∅   que son altos
```

In support of this analysis, DivP can be overtly realized, as in *ustedes los lingüistas que son altos* 'you the linguists who are tall'.

With this structural distinction between nonrestrictive and restrictive modification in mind, I turn to the data set in (33), which reveals that third-person pronouns only tolerate nonrestrictive relative clauses.

(33) a. Ellos, que son   tan altos, deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
        they that are.3PL so tall   should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
        'They, who are so tall, should sit further back.'

     b. Ellos que son   tan altos deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
        they that are.3PL so tall should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
        'They who are so tall should sit further back.'

     c. Ellos, los que son   tan altos, deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
        they the that are.3PL so tall   should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
        'They, the ones who are so tall, should sit further back.'

     d. *Ellos los que son   altos deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
        they the that are.3PL tall should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
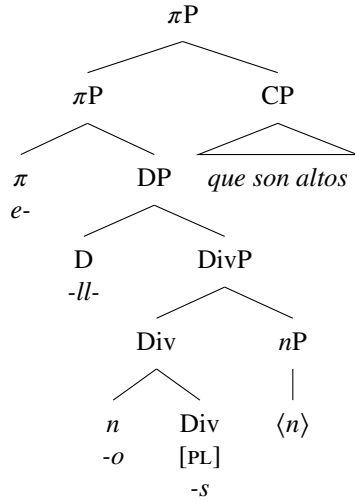   Literal: 'They the ones who are tall should sit further back.'

Even though the intensifier *tan* 'so' is omitted in (33d), this example is still ungrammatical, as opposed to *nosotros/vosotros/ustedes los que son altos* 'we/you all (informal)/you all the ones who are tall'. Based on the proposed structure of *ellos* 'they' in (28a) above, the problem with *ellos los que son altos* in (33d) is that D cannot simultaneously be realized as the *-ll-* component of *ellos* and as the definite article *los* 'the'. Nonetheless, the question remains why *ellos que son altos* 'they who are tall', where there is no competition for D, can only have a nonrestrictive reading. For instance, the pronoun *ellos* is not felicitous in (34), where the relative clause is intended to distinguish one set of individuals from another.

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[8]As discussed in section 4, the [PART] feature of *ustedes* 'you all' is deleted during morphological operations, and its [HON] feature is deleted at logical form in Latin American Spanish.
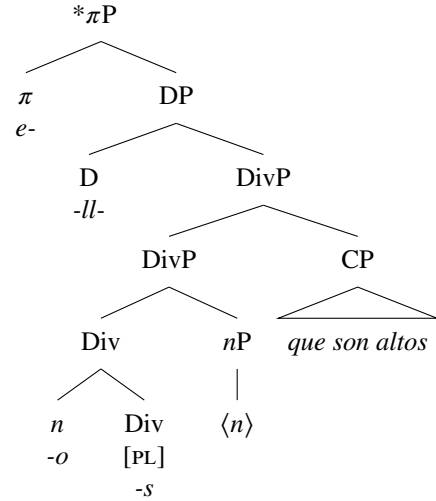
(34) Solamente {los / *ellos} que son   altos deberían   sentarse   más atrás.
      only   the   they   that are.3PL tall should.3PL sit.3.REFL more behind
      'Only the ones who are tall should sit further back.'

To capture the incompatibility between third-person pronouns and restrictive relative clauses, I propose that the configurations in (28) and (29) are contingent upon structural adjacency of the heads that realize these pronouns: π, D, Div, and n. This adjacency is satisfied in (35a), where the relative clause adjoins to πP and has a nonrestrictive interpretation, but it is not satisfied in (35b), where the relative clause adjoins to DivP and has a restrictive interpretation.

(35) Nonrestrictive modification

```
                    πP
              _____|_____
             πP           CP
          ___|___       __|__
         π      DP    que son altos
         e-   __|__
             D    DivP
            -ll-  __|___
               Div      nP
            ___|___      |
           n    Div     ⟨n⟩
          -o   [PL]
               -s
```

(36) Restrictive modification

```
                    *πP
              _____|_____
             π           DP
             e-        ___|___
                      D      DivP
                     -ll-  ___|____
                         DivP      CP
                      ___|___    __|__
                    Div    nP  que son altos
                 ___|___    |
                n    Div    ⟨n⟩
               -o   [PL]
                    -s
```

In summary, I maintain that third-person pronouns spell out every major head in the noun phrase and that they can only do so if there is no intervening material.[9] While more research is needed, this analysis can, in principle, be extended to other languages that display a third-person gap, including English: *they linguists* and *only they who are tall should sit further back.*

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I provide a novel account of the third-person gap in Spanish, a language that uses the definite article in pronoun-noun constructions: *nosotros los lingüistas* 'we the linguists'. After showing that these constructions behave differently than loose and close appositives, I defended Choi (2013, 2014) and Höhn's (2016, 2017) claim that person and definiteness are not hosted by the same head in this language. Using πP and DP to represent these projections, I then motivated the view that πP is exclusive to pronominal expressions, which is consistent with the broader stance in the literature that only pronominal expressions bear person features (Bianchi 2006, Ackema & Neeleman 2018, Sichel & Wiltschko 2021, Sichel & Toosarvandani to appear). Next, I presented evidence that formal pronouns are syntactically second-person in Spanish, explaining the otherwise puzzling contrast between *ustedes los lingüistas* 'you the linguists' and *ellos los lingüistas* 'they the linguists'. Finally, I argued that third-person pronouns differ from first-person and second-person pronouns in that they realize the entirety of the noun phrase. As a result of this unique configuration, third-person pronouns cannot appear with nominal complements or restrictive relative clauses, ruling out *ellos los lingüistas*, *ellos lingüistas* 'they linguists', and *ellos que son altos* 'they the ones who are tall'. In future work, I will explore how this approach may shed light on the third-person gap in other languages.

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[9] As for collocations like *ellos dos* 'they two', which seem to be counterexamples, see Jambrović 2025 for arguments that the numeral adjoins to πP and plays a role similar to that of the adverb *ahí* 'there' in *ellos ahí* 'they there'.

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