

WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

When Moi just isn't me

Looking after Number One is not always the easiest thing to do in French. It's all right when the person doing the talking is also taking the action... *Je fais...je voudrais...j'ai besoin...*, though the French frequently say *Moi, je...Me, I* to emphasise the fact they are talking about the most important person around. *Moi, j'ai faim... Well; I'm hungry ; Moi, je crois... Well, I think ; Moi, je prends... Well, I'm having ...* If you listen out for this little phrase, you'll hear it all around you!

But what if it's happening to me? You told me... that's hurting me... It seems to me.. etc. Well there's good news and bad news. The good news is *me* is the same word in French *me* but rhyming with *sir*, not *see*. The bad news is it doesn't fit where you think it should. In French it's *It me seems.. Il me semble* or *That me hurts.. Ça me fait mal* or *You me have told .. Vous m'avez dit..*, with the *me* bit going in front of the active part of the verb. This is where you put all the *its* and *thems*, *hims* and *hers*, *somes* and *anys*, when you use them to avoid repeating the name of what you're talking about.

Of course, the same is true of *You* and *Us*. *I told you = I you have told..Je vous ai dit ; They gave us = They us have given.. Ils nous ont donné.* Of course the really nice thing about *Nous* and *Vous* is that they stay the same whatever you do with them. *You* is always *Vous* and *We* or *Us* is always *Nous*. Not something you can say of *him*, *her*, *it* and *them*!

If you've read my previous notes, you'll be aware that everything in French is either *him* or *her*. Luckily, most of the time the *him* or *her* or *them* for objects is the same as the *le* or *la* or *les* that you use with them for *the*.

So you get *Je le désire = I want him/it ; Je la vois = I can see her/it ; Je les déteste = I hate them ; Je l'aime = I like him/her or it* – *le* and *la* both become *l'* in front of a vowel, just like *le*, *la = the*.

This is particularly useful when you are talking about the past.

Je l'ai vu = I saw him/her/it. Je l'ai pris = I took him/her/it ; Il me l'a volé = He stole him/her/it from me ; Nous l'avons acheté = We bought him/her/it ; Vous l'avez vendu = You sold him/her/it – You don't have to worry about whether it's a masculine or a feminine word, *l'* is unisex!

If you are talking about things not happening, the *ne* & *pas* go round the whole lot: *Je ne l'ai pas pris - I didn't take it (honest, guv!) Il ne me voit pas - He can't see me.*

There are quite a few of these little pronouns that get popped in front of the verb and so more on this in later notes. The really frustrating thing about them is they are such an effort to get on top of, yet they whistle past in actual conversation, only being noticed when you get it wrong, prompting puzzled frowns and the French equivalent of *Who's he, the cat's father?* when you are really talking about the cat.